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Historical Society

The Society meets in Parker Hall at 6 P.M. the last Monday of each month for a historical program presented by guest speakers. The program is preceded by a Society business/project status meeting and followed by refreshments.

Contact Information

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**Rent Parker Hall
For Your Event**

To reserve Parker Hall, contact:
Lee Krigar at 936-776-1161
or **936-257-0330**; or
Felix Skarpa at 936-776-1039.

Old School Museum

The Old School Museum is located next to Parker Hall at 111 West Houston St. in Dayton and is open Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

Dayton History News

Winfree – People, Place, Streets

Old River-Winfree, formerly known as Winfree, is a community with a total area of 1.6 square miles that straddles the county line between Liberty County and Chambers County.

Students who reside on the Liberty County side of the Old River-Winfree community attend Dayton schools.

The road that runs north-south from Dayton to Winfree was called Main St. but was changed to Winfree in honor of Winfree pioneers who arrived before 1830.

Although most Winfree pioneers settled in Cove and Mt. Belvieu, some became Dayton citizens.

First Baptist Church (located on South Winfree) records make mention of a soft-spoken Zachary Taylor Winfree who served as interim preacher in 1892.

Once on the pulpit, Zachary became a proverbial 'hellfire and brimstone' preacher.

He was baptized at age 42 and "from that moment on, he dedicated his life to the service of the Maker, he himself becoming an evangelist."

A Texas State Historical Commission marker (#9129) was established for the Winfree Community in 1982.

The marker, located on FM-1409 0.3 miles north of FM-565, states:

"Formed as a channel of the meandering Trinity River, Old River rises in southwestern Liberty County and

flows to the southeast, joining the trinity in northwestern Chambers County.

During the 1820s and 1830s the tributary was the center of early area settlement. Among the first pioneers to migrate here were Robert and Eleanor (Dorsett) Wiseman, who settled on nearby land grants in 1827.

Fertile soil for farming and abundant grassland for raising cattle made the Old River area an important early agricultural center of southeast Texas. Goods from the community, including animal skins, timber and charcoal, were shipped to market in Galveston. Commercial activity in the Old River.

Dr. James P. Alford pioneered in the area's shipping and business trade with Galveston, which led to the development of shipbuilding firms such as that of Capt. William Ice.

Other significant businesses here included the brick kiln of P. Almeras and river ferry operations. The early residents of Old River set patterns of

residential and industrial growth which are evident today.

Descendants of the pioneer southeast Texas settlers still live in the area."



The Munson Saga – Elizabeth

Imagine sitting on the banks of Day Lake fishing for perch. If the year was 1835, you would be trespassing on the property of Elizabeth Everett-Munson.

In 1824, Elizabeth moved from Louisiana to the Atascosito District with her husband Micaiah Munson and their two daughters – Ann Elizabeth (age 4) and Martha Caroline (age 1).

Although they took possession of a West Liberty league of land (4,428 acres) granted by the Mexican government, receiving the title wouldn't occur until the grant application was approved.

Her husband Micaiah was listed in the 1826 census as being a saddler, farmer and stock raiser with thirteen slaves.

That same year, Micaiah died (1 Sep) leaving his widow Elizabeth with 2 children, 13 slaves and a plantation.

Five years went by before Mexican Land Commissioner Jose Francisco Madero arrived on 5 May 1831 and approved thirty-six land titles, including Elizabeth's grant application.

She did remarry – a neighbor named George Orr (after he divorced his wife) and acquired a stepson, William Orr. However, heartbreak followed when George was killed by a falling tree. Then in 1836, her daughter Ann Elizabeth died at the age of 16.

Elizabeth re-married again. This time to Major Samuel Whiting in 1838. He was a printer in Houston and Austin during the Republic of Texas as well as being editor and publisher of several newspapers.

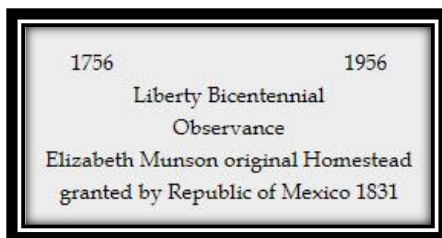
Their life together was blissful; however, she died 2 years later on 3 Feb. 1840 at her Munson plantation home near the Trinity River in South Dayton.

Elizabeth Everett-Munson is linked to Dayton's namesake Isaiah Cates Day.

He established his plantation on her "Elizabeth Munson League" land and is the man who married Martha Caroline, Elizabeth's only child who survived to adulthood.

He is the man who was father to Elizabeth's only grandchild who survived to adulthood, Martha Emilie.

And, he was grandfather to the six children that Martha Emilie Day-Davis bore and raised in Dayton – William Denson, Mannie Willis, Mary Cates, Eugenia, Mosie, and Douglass Rice.



A Texas Historical Marker was erected in 1956 during the Liberty Bicentennial celebration in honor of Elizabeth's land owner achievement.

South Dayton land transactions still bear witness when they reference the "Elizabeth Munson League".

A 2016 city of Dayton annexation notice included, "FM-1409 ROW – 30.0649 acre tract of land situated in the Elizabeth Munson League, Abstract 88."

The Munson Saga - Martha

When her mother, Elizabeth Everett-Munson, was granted a league of land by the Mexican government in 1831, Martha Caroline Munson was only 8 years old.

In 1842, Martha married Edmund Pruett (1819-1846). He was the youngest child of Beasley Pruett Sr. (1740-1839), one of Dayton's founders.

Beasley Sr. owned a league of land adjacent to the "Town of Liberty". His northern neighbor was Reason Green.

Edmund's siblings included Cynthia Riley Pruett-Green (1812-1871) and Beasley Pruett, Jr. (1816-1874).

Edmund and Martha had three children together – Elizabeth, Edmund Jr. and Lucinda – all of whom died before the age of 10.

Edmund had great potential as a provider. According to the Liberty County Tax Roll in 1840, he had title to a land league of his own, 19 slaves, 350 cattle and 22 workhorses.

Unfortunately, Edmund died in 1846, four years after their marriage.

By 1850, Martha re-married. This time to her step-brother William Orr, son of her deceased step-father George Orr.

She and William had one daughter, Amelia Caroline, who lived to be 7 years old. William was a cattle rancher. Unfortunately, he died by 1854, within 4 years of their marriage.

Martha re-married again. This time to Isaiah Day, a cattleman from Tennessee, who came to the area in 1830 at the age of 18 and now owned cattle in four counties. His brand was a rocking D.



**Mattie Day-Davis & husband Joe
Daughter of Isaiah & Martha Day**

Isaiah ("Poppa Day") was a widower as well due to the death of his first wife, Rachel Whitlock.

Isaiah and Martha's first child, Martha Emilie "Mattie" Day, was born on 9 June 1857.

Three years later, Martha Munson-Day died on 15 Jan. 1860 during childbirth of their second child – who also died the next day.

Martha was buried in the Pruett section of Dayton's French Cemetery and is the oldest gravesite.

Her daughter Mattie married Joseph "Joe" William Davis and they had 6 children. Mattie lived her entire life in Dayton – 83 years. (photo above)

The life of pioneers was difficult as evidenced by two brave women who are a key part of Dayton's history – Elizabeth Everett-Munson and her daughter Martha Munson-Day.