

JACK MOORE'S MAP OF THE CHEROKEE INDIAN CAMPAIGN

(Note: This map was originally published in the first issue of "Chronicles", Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1962. It shows the Neches Saline as well as many other sites of historical importance to the area. Since that issue is long out-of-print, it is reproduced here to further illustrate Mr. Gilbert's article that begins on the facing page. - ED.)

## MAKING SALT AT THE NECHES SALINE BY LOY J. GILBERT

The extreme southwest corner of Smith County, Texas, adjacent to Henderson and Cherokee Counties, was the site of one of the earliest and most historic settlements in Smith County, and possibly in East Texas. Over the years the area has been known by various names -- the Neches Saline, Bean's Saline, Gardiner's Saline, and Brooks' Saline, but the most lasting name has been the Neches Saline. The site is along Saline Creek, about one mile northeast of the junction of Saline Creek and the Neches River. The waters of Lake Palestine now cover the site which was the source of salt for the early settlers from over a wide area of East Texas. As the present day residents of Cedar and Emerald Bays' look out through their picture windows from the air conditioned comfort of their dens and kitchens, it may be difficult indeed for them to envision the sweat and toil that was expended by the early settlers to acquire this basic necessity which was so vital to their everyday needs. Early East Texans traveled miles to this site to obtain salt, either buying it or making the salt themselves.

As early as 1765, Calahorra, a Spanish missionary, made mention of the Saline. He left Adaes with one hundred warriors, seven soldiers, and five citizens to parley with the Tawakonis Indians on the upper branch of the Sabine. He traveled first to the Hainai village on the Angelina, and from that place he took a north-westward course to his destination. Calahorra reported that two leagues before reaching the Neches River they came upon salines.

During the dry seasons, thin coats of salt were visible on the surface of the Saline, and it was discovered that shallow wells dug in the area would fill with salt water. The simple process of manufacturing salt was to draw the water from the wells and pour it into pots to be evaporated, leaving only the salt.

It is generally believed the Spaniards and the Indians manufactured a small amount of salt at the Saline before the coming of the Americans to Texas. After the colonists began to arrive, they were not long in seeing the commercial possibilities of the salt trade.

Before the Texas Revolution, the white pioneers had ventured to the Neches Saline and established an isolated settlement. They braved the dangers and occupied the exposed Saline to manufacture salt and to engage in trade with the neighboring Indians.<sup>1</sup>

During the summers of 1970 and 1971 as piers and boat docks were being constructed along the north side of County Line Creek just east of its junction with Saline Creek (in what is now the Cedar Bay Subdivision), a number of Indian burial mounds were discovered from which were taken numerous intact and well-preserved artifacts, further indicating that Indians had used the Neches Saline for many, many years previous to the coming of white settlers.

One of the earliest white settlers to come to the Neches Saline area was George W. Bays, who had come first to Nacogdoches in 1821 at the ripe old age of 20 years. He moved to the Neches Saline in 1823, staying there until the outbreak of the Fredonian Rebellion in 1827 when he moved back to the safety of Sabine County. Again he returned to the Neches Saline in 1828, but stayed only a short time. This same George Bays resided in Jacksonville in 1842 and moved back to the Larissa-Neches Saline area about 1845.<sup>2</sup>

Title to the Saline League was petitioned for by William Bean and awarded to him by the Mexican government, February 27, 1827. William Bean conveyed this same land to E. P. Bean, or Ellis Peter Bean (known also as Peter Ellis Bean) on September 24, 1828.<sup>3</sup> On



SALT OF THE EARTH



September 24, 1828, by orders of Don Jose Maria Mora, Constitutional Judge of the town of Nacogdoches, James Gaines commenced surveying one league of land in a square for Col. Peter Ellis Bean.<sup>4</sup> This league of land included the Neches Saline.

On March 10, 1829, Bean filed a report with the Ayuntamiento (Town Council) at Nacogdoches in which he stated his intent to develop a salt lick for commercial operation at the Neches Saline.<sup>5</sup> However, some development of the salt lick must have been underway already for in 1830 the Indian trade of the area was supporting two large well stocked trading posts, one owned by Chates H. Simms and the other by James Hall.<sup>6</sup> It was not until March 19, 1833, that Bean entered into an agreement with Stephen Prather, a veteran of the War



Peter Ellis Bean  
(from "The Lives of Ellis P. Bean")

of 1812, for Prather to develop the salt lick. In order to understand more fully the customs of the times, a portion of the articles of the agreement follows:

"Wharas he the said P.E. Bean is possessed and the proper owner of a surtain Salt lick on the warters of the Natches . . . the sd. Bean hereby on his part leases or rents unto him the said Prether the said Salt Lick above mentioned for and during the tirm of five years." Bean further warranted to Prather "Peasabel posasion" and exclusivne use of the salt lick, with no one else being permitted "to make salt for sail at said lick," except that "ancy won may for his privit use won or two bushels make" -- a concession to frontier custom.

For the lease and the use of wood, water, and stone around the lick Prather agreed to deliver to Bean 3 barrels of salt the first year and 100 bushels "anualey" for the term of the lease. On termination of the lease he reserved "to himself the righ of Removing his Kittels and working tools leving all other Improvements to Benefit of said P. E. Bean."<sup>7</sup>

The agreement appears to have been written by Bean since the spelling is characteristic of other letters penned by him.

Prather died in June, 1833, and three years later Bean assigned the Prather contract to Bridget Najara.<sup>8</sup> There seems to be some confusion at this point as to who actually operated the salt works during this interval. One report is that Prather was operating the salt works as early as 1830, prior to his lease with Bean, and also that Martin Lacy bought the plant in 1834 and moved his family into the area.<sup>9</sup> Further confusion arises at this point in that although Bean assigned the Prather lease to Najara in 1836, he had sold the land to Archibald Hotchkiss on October 16, 1834,<sup>10</sup> and in April, 1835, Hotchkiss sold a 1/2 interest in the Bean League to Frost Thorne.<sup>11</sup>

In his book, TEXAS UNDER ARMS, Gerald S. Price states that after his discharge from the Texas Army on December 11, 1836, Martin Lacy established a trading post and operated the salt works at the Neches Saline, apparently temporarily abandoning his place on the old San Antonio Road. Because of the hostility of the Kickapoo and Biloxi Indians at his trading house in August, 1838, Lacy abandoned his station at the Saline and withdrew to his place (fort) on the San Antonio Road.<sup>12</sup>

As noted, one source refers to Martin Lacy's purchasing the salt works in 1834, and another source refers to his having the salt works from December, 1836, until August, 1838. It is possible that both sources are correct. It is known that Lacy was a private in Captain Costley's Company at Fort Houston in the fall of 1836,<sup>13</sup> therefore, in all probability, he had left the Saline and enlisted in the Texas Army at the beginning of the Revolution. In August, 1853, Lacy received Bounty Warrant No. 1340 to 320 acres of land for services in the Texas Army from September 10, 1836, to December 11, 1836.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of the Texas Revolution, Sam Houston negotiated and signed a treaty with Chief Bowles giving the Cherokee Indians a large area of land in East Texas. The lonely Saline settlement which then consisted of about 40 people was located within the territory allotted to the Indians, but Houston gave those settlers a certain amount of protection in section twelve of the treaty which reads as follows:

The parties to this Treaty agree that nothing herein contained shall effect the relations of the Saline, on the Neches nor the Settlers in the Neighborhood thereof until a General Council of the Several Bands, shall take place and the pleasure of the Convention of Texas be known.<sup>1</sup>

The Houston-Bowles Treaty was never ratified and was repudiated by the Texas Congress in December, 1837.

In 1837 Richard Sparks and a man named Smith were operating a trading post at the Saline. At this time Sam Houston had persuaded Cherokee Chief Bowles to



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contact the wild Indians on the upper Trinity River for the purpose of bringing peace between them and the Texans. The Sparks-Smith trading post furnished 22 Indians with lead, spurs, tobacco, etc., for the expedition, which failed to accomplish its purpose. The cost of the supplies was charged to the Texas Government, and the bill was approved by William Goyens, a prominent free mulatto from Nacogdoches, who was acting as the Indian Agent.<sup>15</sup> Apparently, both Lacy and the partnership of Sparks-Smith were operating trading posts in 1837.

Several military operations occurred at the Saline and in the surrounding area. The first one of importance was associated with a Mexican rebellion which began around Nacogdoches.

When the Republic of Texas was established, the Americans took over the government jobs, displacing the Mexicans who formerly held those positions. A number of prominent and wealthy Mexicans at Nacogdoches resented this action and felt they had been badly mistreated.

This rebellion centered around Vincent Cordova, a former very influential Mexican who had been displaced by the Anglos from his position of leadership after the Texas Revolution. After an altercation between Cordova and his followers and the citizens of Nacogdoches, Cordova fled to the Cherokee village in the vicinity of the Neches Saline. Cherokee Chief Bowles refused to aid Cordova and his followers and ordered them from the village. When General Rusk and his troops arrived at Bowles' village, it appeared that Cordova and his followers had fled the country. He had not fled, as was believed, but had hid out near the Saline in what is now Anderson County, a short distance southeast of present Frankston. These rebels remained in their hideout for several weeks before renewing hostilities. On October 5, 1838, Cordova and his followers of Mexican and renegade Indians carried out what is known as the "Killough Massacre." The Killough family was living on the south edge of the Neches Saline settlement, some six or seven miles south of the Saline proper. The Killough families numbered about thirty people and approximately 2/3 of them were killed in the massacre. The survivors fled to Lacy's Fort, where when challenged by the Fort guard, three of the women answered "women from the Saline."

Word of the massacre spread quickly, and General Rusk issued a call for volunteers to rendezvous at Lacy's Fort. From that point Rusk marched his troops in pursuit of the marauders. On October 15, at sunset, he arrived at the Kickapoo Village about 10 miles southwest of the Saline and encamped for the night.

Just at the break of day on October 16, the combined forces of Cordova's Mexicans and Indians opened an assault upon the Texans. Rusk ordered his men to charge, and they cleared the field in ten minutes, chasing the enemy for almost a mile. The rebels left eleven dead upon the field, including one renegade Cherokee. The Texans' losses were 22 wounded, including one mortally, James Hall.

After the Kickapoo battle General Rusk returned to Fort Houston. Because of Rusk's retreat, the rebels began to consider their defeat as a victory. Within a few days reports began to circulate that the insurgents had from one to two thousand men stationed at the Neches Saline and were boasting they would whip all the white men who could be sent against them.

The size of the rebel army at the Saline and the amount of their courage seem to have been somewhat exaggerated. John W. Middleton, one of the Texan soldiers, wrote the following account.

The next week we took up the march to the Neches Saline, and on our way we were joined by General Rusk and his command. The Indians had made headquarters five miles south of the Saline and had killed, robbed, and taken prisoners many persons. We reached within a few miles of the Saline and were preparing for camp, when our spies gaven information of the Indians at the Saline. We formed a line of battle eight deep and hurried to the Saline and attacked the Indians. Before the presence of the Indians were reported to us, our men had killed an Indian boy and a leading Indian by the name of Captain Jack. The Indians retreated immediately upon the arrival of the main body of our army. A few (five) were killed in skirmish with our spies. No general battle took place.<sup>16</sup>

In February, 1839, to protect the settlement at the Neches Saline, Major B. C. Walters of the Third Militia Brigade had been ordered to raise two companies of mounted men and establish a post at the Neches Saline. After raising one company, Major Walters went to the Saline in April. The Indians were claiming the land under the terms of the unratified treaty of 1836, and the Chiefs warned Walters not to build a fort on the land. Walters prudently withdrew to the west side of the Neches River and began work on Fort Saline. The fort was built in haste and probably consisted of a few log sheds and a stockade. It was abandoned in May, 1839, and the troops moved south about ten miles to Fort Kickapoo. The exact location of Fort Saline is unknown, but is believed to have been on the high west bank of the Neches River, about where Highway 155 crosses the river.<sup>17</sup> This would be the approximate site of present-day "Coffee City."

The last military operation at the Saline occurred at the beginning of the Cherokee War in July 1839. During the time the Texans and the Cherokees were negotiating for the removal of the Indians, the Texas army of nine hundred men under the command of General Kelsey Douglas, General Thomas J. Rusk, and General Edward Burleson, accompanied by General Albert Sidney Johnston, the Secretary of War, and David G. Burnet, the Vice President, were camped at the Dewberry Spring near the Saline.<sup>18</sup>

Subsequent battles of July 15 and 16 in what is now Henderson and Van Zandt Counties resulted in



the defeat of the Cherokee Indians, including the killing of Chief Bowles. The final Battle of the Neches in Van Zandt County marked an end to the Texas Cherokee Indian Nation which had centered in and around the Neches Saline for many, many years. Records are lacking as to the continuous operations of the salt works during the time of Indian and Mexican renegade turmoil.

In 1838 Dr. DeBard and Chief Bowles were operating a partnership in the manufacture of salt at the Saline<sup>19</sup> This partnership would have been dissolved of necessity in 1839 with the death of Chief Bowles.

General Kelsey Douglas who led the Texas Army against the Cherokees in 1839 was reported to be a very shrewd business man, and doubtless he had seen the commercial aspects of salt making at the Neches Saline during his encampment at Dewberry Springs. An article in the "Telegraph and Texas Register," dated July 22, 1840, carried an interesting article on the Neches Saline:

THE NECHES SALINE. — We have learned with pleasure, that the salt springs on the Neches have been worked during several months, to considerable advantage, by a company of gentlemen of Nacogdoches. We believe, chiefly under the direction of General Douglas and Mr. Halsey. These springs already promise to become exceedingly valuable to the citizens of that section, as they yield salt of an excellent quality, and appear to be as inexhaustible as the celebrated springs of Onondaga, N. Y. These springs are situated in a small prairie, containing a few thousand acres, which is sometimes entirely overflowed by the rains to the depth of two or three feet, but generally it is quite dry, and resembles a salt marsh. The surrounding country to the distance of several miles is gently undulating, and overshadowed with dense forests. The surface of this prairie is often encrusted with a thin film of salt, through which the coarse marsh grass protrudes, presenting a singular contrast with the white ground beneath. In this prairie several wells have been sunk to the depth of from twelve to twenty feet. From these

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the salt water is procured by means of pumps rudely constructed. This water is received into potash kettles, and evaporated by boiling. As the fuel is easily procured from the adjoining forests, even by this rude process considerable quantities of salt are procured with but little labor. It is estimated that seventy or seventy-five gallons of this brine will yield one bushel of salt. The brine of the Onondaga Springs yields a bushel of salt from 41 or 45 gallons of water; but this is obtained at the depth of from 124 to 176 feet from the surface; possibly, therefore, by digging to a greater depth, the brine of this saline may be found to equal in strength that of the above mentioned springs. The strength, however, already attained is sufficient to yield a very fair profit to the manufacturers, and exceeds that of the brine of most of the springs of the United States; several of which, only yield a bushel of salt from 80 or 100 gallons of water.<sup>20</sup>

— The Telegraph and Texas Register,  
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This report appears optimistic since later reports indicate 300 gallons of water were required to make a bushel of salt.

Records are not available as to how long General Douglas and his associates operated the salt works at the Saline. In 1842, Archibald Hotchkiss sold his remaining half interest in the Bean League to Thomas Gardiner.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Green Bays, the son of George W. Bays, relates that his father owned an interest in the salt works in 1845 and that he, Thomas Bays, at the age of 13, hauled salt from the Neches Saline by wagon and sold it by the bushel in Larissa and Jacksonville. At this time the saline was known as Gardiner's Saline.<sup>22</sup>

sible that the office was abolished due to the decline of salt making at the saline and the resulting lack of activity there.

The report of "Products and Industries" for the fiscal year ending June, 1850, listed William Briggs as making salt at the Neches Saline and as having made 6,000 bushels the prior year with a value of \$4,500. This established the market value of salt at 75¢ per bushel. Briggs employed 8 hands, with a monthly payroll of \$120.<sup>25</sup> The operations of the salt works for the period 1850 to 1861 are problematical. Indications were that there was a decline in local salt making during this time throughout the South, as salt was being imported from England.



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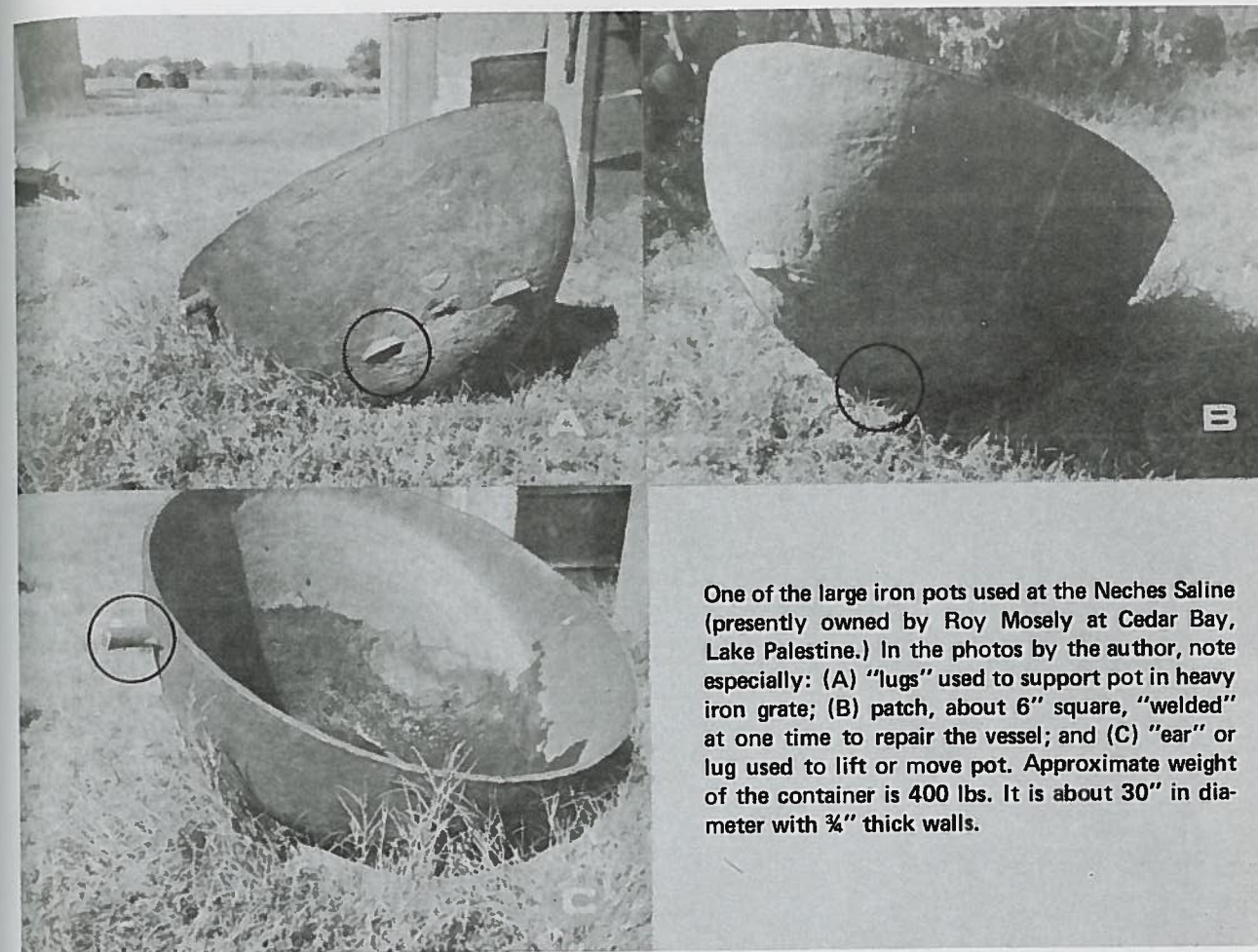
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One of the large iron pots used at the Neches Saline (presently owned by Roy Mosely at Cedar Bay, Lake Palestine.) In the photos by the author, note especially: (A) "lugs" used to support pot in heavy iron grate; (B) patch, about 6" square, "welded" at one time to repair the vessel; and (C) "ear" or lug used to lift or move pot. Approximate weight of the container is 400 lbs. It is about 30" in diameter with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick walls.

In 1857 Thorne and Gardiner divided the Bean Saline, with the Thornes taking the west 2,428 acres and Gardiner taking the east 2,000 acres.<sup>26</sup> In 1859, the two Thorne girls divided their 2,428 acres, in which division they valued the north 1,214 acres at \$2,380 and the south 1,214 acres, which included the salt works, at \$5,000, or a value of \$2,620 for the salt works alone. Fortunately, the Petition Deed between the heirs of the Thorne Estate included a hand-drawn plat showing the location of the saline works with the two major roads leading to it, one road being labeled "The old Saline Road" leading to Jacksonville and Nacogdoches, and the other being "The Shawnee Trace," going in northeasterly direction.<sup>27</sup>

In 1859 a man moved into Smith County who was destined to play a very important part in developing the possibilities of the Neches Saline. This man was James Skinner Oden Brooks, who moved with his family from West Virginia to Smith County. According to reports handed down by his family, Brooks came to Texas for the specific purpose of looking for a place to manufacture salt since he had been engaged in that business in West Virginia.

James S. O. Brooks was a graduate of Princeton. In his route to Texas, he and his family came down the Ohio River, down the Mississippi River to New Orleans,

up the Red River to Jefferson, and overland to Smith County. In addition to his family, he brought 19 slaves to Texas. The riverboat trip from West Virginia to Texas carried the Brooks family through Ohio, a "free state." In the journey through Ohio, it was necessary for the slaves to remain in the hold of the ship during the day, coming up on deck at night. When Brooks first arrived in Smith County, he tried farming, but this was not too profitable.<sup>28</sup> It is uncertain as to the exact time he began the manufacture of salt. The first written record of his being engaged in the manufacture of salt was his partnership agreement with Charles Chamberlain, dated April 7, 1861. This partnership was dissolved July 22, 1861. The firm of Brooks and Chamberlain operated at the Saline under a lease with the Thorne family. Apparently, at the time of the purchase of Chamberlain's interest by Brooks, the firm was well on its way into large scale manufacture of salt. Brooks gave Chamberlain his note for \$1,000 for his interest in the salt works, and this payment specified that it was to cover the labor of Chamberlain's Negroes for labor done at the salt works and for sundry purchases made by him. These purchases included \$117 paid for salt kettles at Wash's Foundry and \$100 paid for a salt pan at Shreveport. Brooks' note was to be paid at the rate of \$100 per month, and payment was to be made either in cash or in No. 1 merchantable salt

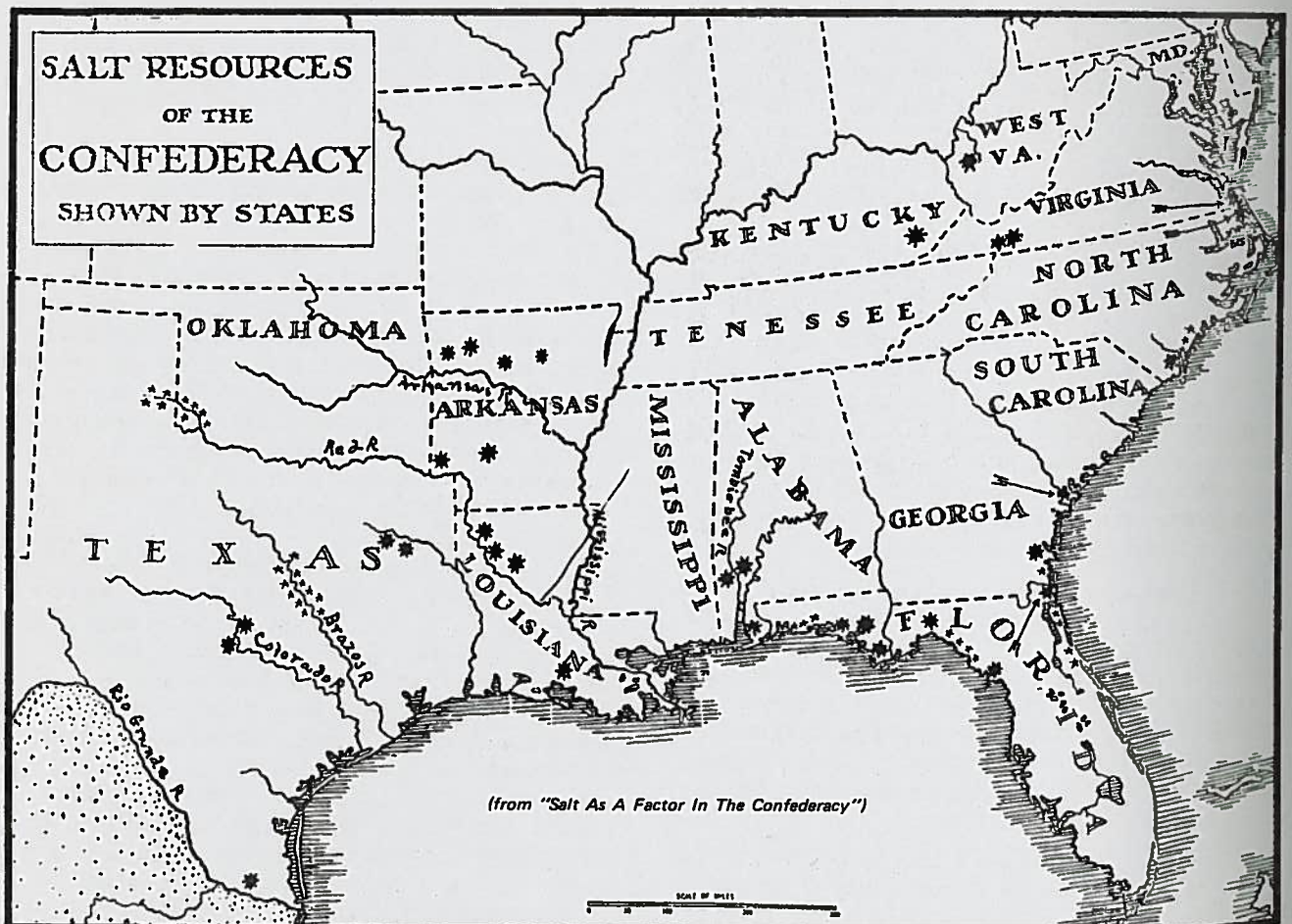


at the price of \$1.00 per bushel.<sup>29</sup> This indicated that more than one grade salt was being made. The various agreements entered into by Brooks and the manner in which he operated his business enterprises indicated that he was a shrewd business man. At this time, after acquiring the interest of Chamberlain in the salt works, Brooks was in position to put his knowledge of the more sophisticated methods of salt making learned in West Virginia to good use on the frontier of Texas.

In order to fully comprehend James S. O. Brooks' contribution to the Cause of the Confederacy and to the East Texas area in general, it is necessary to deviate here briefly from the history of the Neches Saline to prevailing conditions throughout the South and the Confederacy. The first battle of the war had been fought in April, 1861, and in the next few months, the federal embargo on Southern ports created shortages of all basic necessities of everyday life. In the few years immediately preceding the outbreak of the War Between the States, the South was growing tremendous amounts of cotton, almost all of which was being exported to England. Ships returning from England could buy salt cheaply in England, bringing it back to Southern ports as ballast. Because of this, salt could be imported much more cheaply than it could be manufactured, but with the federal embargo, the South had to depend upon getting salt made locally.

In the decade prior to the outbreak of the War, the average yearly consumption of salt throughout the South was 50 lbs. per person, most of the salt being imported from England and the West Indies. A fourth of these imports, or 350 tons daily, came through the Port of New Orleans.<sup>30</sup> In order to understand why the vast amount of salt was being consumed, it must be remembered that salt was the only preservative used at that time. It cured meat, packed eggs, dried butter, cured hides, and set the dye in cloth. During the winter of 1860-61, three million hogs were killed and processed in the South. Two bushels of salt were required to cure each thousand pounds of pork and 1 - 1/2 bushels required for each five hundred pounds of beef.<sup>31</sup> In 1864 the soldier's ration per month included 10 pounds of coarse meal, 7 pounds of flour or cold bread, 3 pounds of rice, and a pound and a half of salt.<sup>32</sup>

By the fall of 1861, all the states in the South realized the seriousness of the salt shortage, and each state appointed a Salt Commissioner who attempted to acquire an adequate salt supply for his state. At the start of the war, April, 1861, imported salt sold at shipboard in New Orleans at 50¢ per 200 pound sack. By August 1861, the price had risen to \$1.00 per 200 pound sack. In September, 1861, salt was selling in Richmond at \$6.00 per sack and in Raleigh, North Carolina, at \$8.00 per bushel (50 lbs.). By January, 1862, salt was



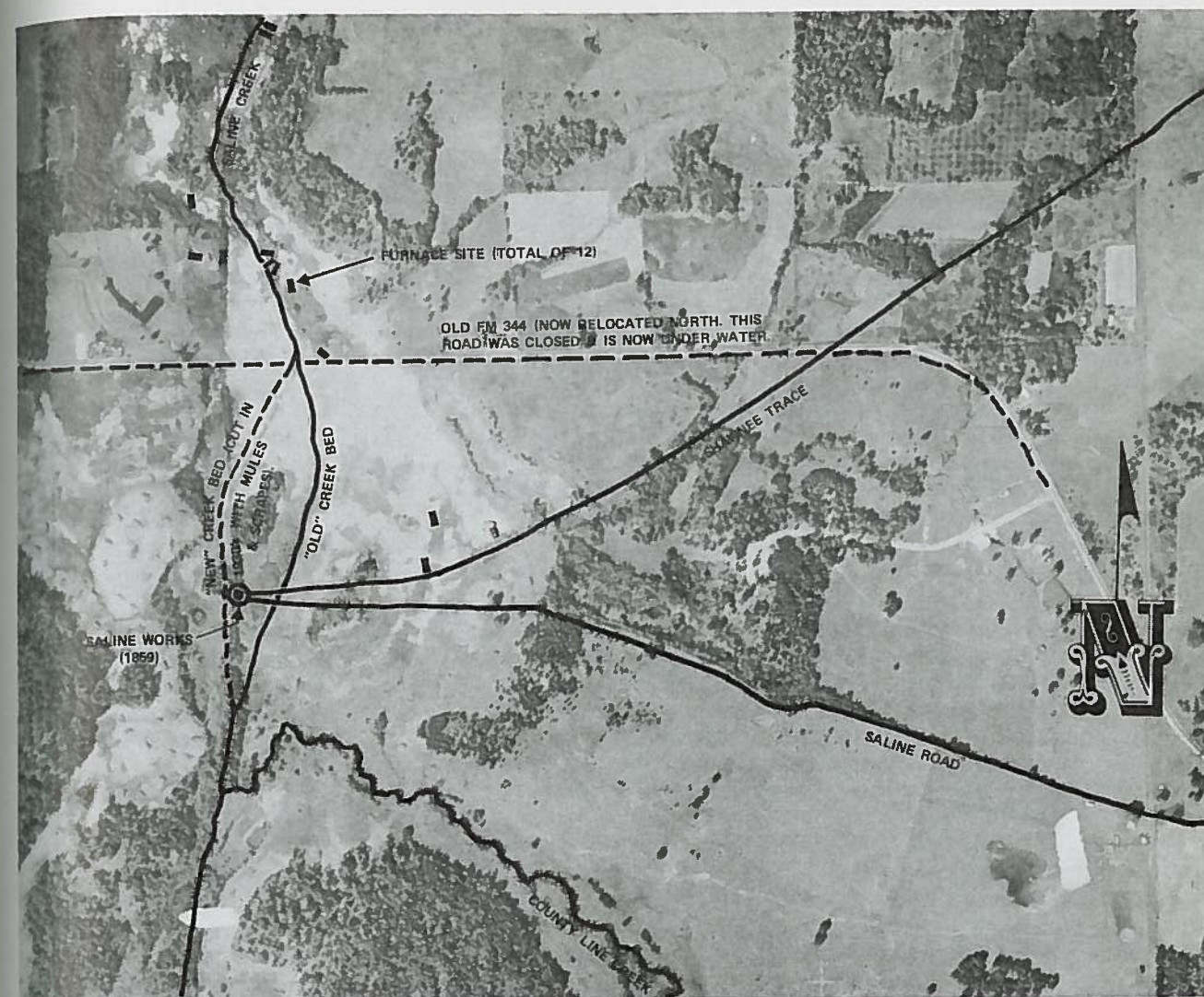
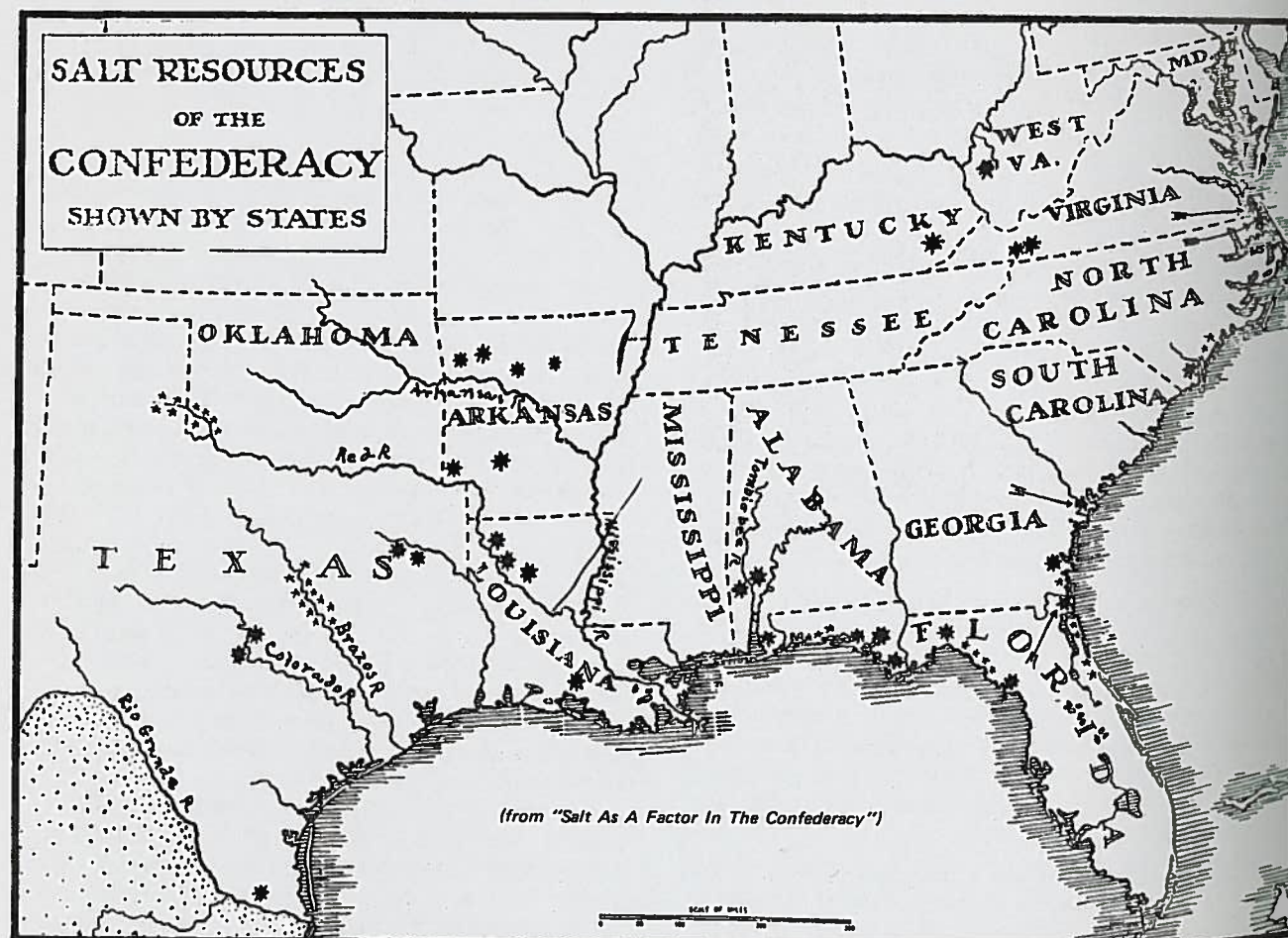


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The Neches Saline area (the southwest corner of the Bean League) as shown in an aerial survey map of the 1950's. Indicated on it also is information compiled by the author showing the approximate site of furnaces (in 1860) and the old roads and Saline works (in 1859).

selling in Savannah, Georgia, at \$25.00 per sack, and by November, 1862, it was 50¢ per pound in Richmond. Some sales as high as \$1.30 per pound were recorded.<sup>33</sup> Salt was so precious that in some instances small bags of it were given as wedding presents.<sup>34</sup> Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Virginia, West Virginia, and Alabama had sources -- springs or salt licks -- from which to manufacture salt. Mississippi, Georgia, North and South Carolina had to rely upon sea water as their source of salt, other than what they could import from other Southern states. With these circumstances abounding, speculation and profiteering was the order of the day. In 1862 the situation prompted one planter to write to the Governor of Georgia: "Blessed are they that have no hogs for they shall be saved from the profiteers."

As noted from this map, Texas and the Trans-Mississippi Department had adequate sources of water from which to manufacture salt, needing only the necessary labor and supplies. Because of their salt supply,

Texas and Louisiana were spared the high cost of salt that faced the other states of the Confederacy. The Trans-Mississippi average price of salt was \$4.00 per sack (200 lbs.). The Texas Military Board in 1864 established the price at \$2.50 per bushel.<sup>35</sup> Three prime sources of salt in East Texas -- the Neches Saline, Steen Saline, and Jordan Saline at Grand Saline -- furnished much of the supply of salt for the Trans-Mississippi, but there are no records to show whether or not this salt was exported east of the Mississippi River. In November, 1861, a joint resolution by the Texas Legislature appointed a Salt Agent and authorized \$50,000 for the Military Board of Texas to aid in salt making in the Double Mountain area of Stonewall County and in any other place in Texas. Records in the Austin Archives indicate that some of this money was used to aid in salt making at Grand Saline, but nothing has been found to indicate that any of the money ever was advanced to Brooks in his operation at the Neches Saline.<sup>36</sup>

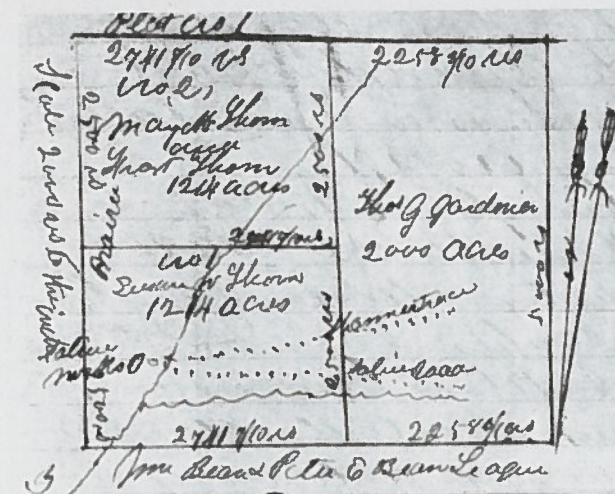


It would seem that after he purchased the interest of Chamberlain in the Neches Saline salt works, Brooks began enlarging his operations. The plat of the saline works in 1859 indicates it to be at a single location on the west side of Saline Creek. Records of the number of furnaces in use during the war were not in agreement. The numbers quoted as being in use varied from seven to twelve.<sup>37</sup> Buckley, who prepared the 1874 Texas Geological and Agricultural Survey, visited the area in June, 1874, and reported that 7 furnaces had been operated during the war, making 100 bushels of salt per day.<sup>38</sup>

In 1969 a team of researchers from the Archaeological Department of Southern Methodist University, under the direction of S. Alan Skinner, did extensive professional research at the furnace sites. This team recorded the location of ten furnaces at eight sites.<sup>39</sup> One of the furnace sites was excavated completely to reveal the walls, boiler remains, kettle fragments, fire-box, etc. This site remained open for inspection until it was covered by the waters of Lake Palestine. All the



The excavation of the fire area showing remains of a boiler section.



furnace remains extended several hundred yards along Saline Creek and north of the original works shown on the 1859 plat. These furnaces, apparently, were constructed by Brooks to meet the salt needs of the Confederacy and were built of native stone and hand made brick. The investigations of the author and his associates revealed what was thought to be twelve furnaces. One of the sites appeared to have had three furnaces with a common chimney, with the furnaces extending out from the chimney as the spokes of a wheel extend from the hub. This type construction was present at other salt works in the South.<sup>40</sup> It is possible that Buckley was referring to 7 furnaces operated commercially by Brooks and the other furnaces were maintained for rent to individuals.

Examination of the earliest aerial photos of the area, taken about 1940, reveal what appears to be well sites 10' to 15' in diameter. Each of the well sites is in close proximity to the furnace sites. Lee Horton (age 68) whose farm included several of the furnace sites,



View of the southern furnace excavation as executed by Skinner and his team from SMU. The rocks were carefully hewn and fitted to form the thick walls and chimney.

(from "Historical Archeology of the Neches Saline, Smith County, Texas" by S. Alan Skinner)

Plat made in 1859 when the west half of the Bean league was partitioned between the 2 Thorne heirs. Notice especially the Shawnee Trace and the Saline Road, leading back to Larrissa, Jacksonville, Rusk & Nacogdoches.

(from Deed Records of Smith County, Texas Vol. L, Page 85.)

related that on his first visit to the Neches Saline as a young boy of about 13, at least one of the wells was still open. According to him, this well was approximately 10' to 12' in diameter and about 20' deep at that time, although, it had been partially filled by overflows and natural conditions. This well was located on what was then called the Lasater place and later the Roy Baker Ranch, near the south end of the Saline.

Unfortunately, there are no known written records regarding the mechanics of actual salt making at the Neches Saline. The terrain of this area is much like other salt licks or salt springs throughout the South, concerning which there are written records. Throughout the South it was customary for the plantation owner to take his slaves to the salt works during the summer months to manufacture a sufficient amount of salt for the ensuing year. Usually, two or three of the smaller families would combine their resources and manpower to manufacture their next year's salt needs. According to Roy Moseley (age 65) of Bullard, his grandfather related stories to him of such similar methods being used at the Neches Saline. According to Mr. Moseley, rental fee for equipment to make salt was 10¢ per pot, and it was necessary to reserve a furnace and pots several months in advance, with the salt maker furnishing his own wood.

The earliest methods of making salt employed the use of large pots set ten or more to a furnace, the larger pots being placed toward the front of the furnace and the smaller ones to the back near the chimney for "graining." The then finished salt was dipped from the pots and taken to the salt house to dry. Crude pumps pumped water from the wells, and hollow logs carried the water by gravity to the furnace.<sup>41</sup> Roy Baker, whose ranch encompassed a part of the Neches Saline, and T. N. Winn, one of the early employees of the Soil Conservation Service, like Mr. Moseley, related having found evidence of hollow logs, some of them cypress, which had been used at the saline for transporting water to the furnaces. The furnaces varied from 20' to 40' in length, were approximately 2½' wide, and were lined with rock or brick, having the fire box at one end, the chimney at the opposite end, and the flue underneath.

By 1861 a more efficient salt pan had begun to replace the salt pot to conserve fuel. The salt pan usually was about 3' wide by 5' long, 10" deep in the center, tapering to a depth of 5" on the side. These were placed over the furnace end to end to make a continuous pan, thus conserving all the heat possible for the evaporation of the water.<sup>42</sup> The furnace excavated by the Southern Methodist University team gave evidence of having been altered twice for a more efficient operation.<sup>43</sup> From evidence of boilers found at the Neches Saline, and from Brooks' knowledge of salt making in West Virginia, it is felt strongly that steam was used for power in pumping water. The output of salt from the Neches Saline during the War Between the States is listed as 300 bushels per day, necessitating a huge amount of water since only one bushel of salt could be obtained from 300 gallons of water. In order to manufacture this amount of salt, it would have been necessary to

have had a huge labor force to bring in the wood, pump the water, store the salt, dry it properly, etc. According to oral reports from the Brooks family, Mr. Brooks operated his salt works with 200 Negro slaves.<sup>44</sup> As reported earlier, Brooks came to Texas with 19 slaves. The Smith County Tax Records of 1862 show that James S. O. Brooks, acting as agent for Jane Brooks, rendered six Negroes at a value of \$3,500. The rendition for 1863 is not itemized, but in 1864, James S. O. Brooks, among other things, rendered twelve Negroes at a value of \$3,600, indicating Brooks leased or rented slaves from someone else. In 1863 John Williams and his son-in-law, Dick Pugh, came with their slaves from La Fouché Parish, Louisiana, and leased farms in the vicinity of Old Larissa. The Tax Records of Cherokee County for 1864, disclose that R. L. Pugh owned 69 Negroes valued at \$44,850, and that John Williams owned 116 Negroes valued at \$91,300. The business papers of John Williams and Dick Pugh, beginning in September, 1864, reveal that Pugh's slaves were engaged in making salt at the Neches Saline and that Pugh was taking his rental in salt. In September, 1864, Pugh exchanged 30 sacks (6000 lbs.) of salt worth \$2,400 in Confederate New Issue to the Government Iron Works near Kickapoo, in northeast Anderson County. On December 12 the Kickapoo firm offered to sell this same salt at \$5.00 per sack in specie. In May, 1865, Williams made a settlement for the hire of three of his slaves for 37 days, two of them to be hired at 58¢ per day and one at 38¢ per day. The settlement was made in salt at a value of \$6.00 per sack. Correspondence in October, 1864, between John Williams and General Martin at Nacogdoches reveals that possibly 27 Negro slaves owned by Gen. Martin were hired out for work at the Neches Saline. In his letter to Gen. Martin, written from Larissa, Cherokee County, October 16, 1864, Williams stated that he had received Martin's letter of the third and had been to the Neches Saline to secure answers to Martin's inquiries concerning salt and the possible employment of his slaves for the next year. The following quote from Williams' letter very likely pictures accurately the economic conditions then facing this area of East Texas:

Wheat can be readily exchanged for salt, say 5 bushels for a sack. . . . There is a demand here for negroes & a high price, could be obtained payable in Confederate Notes. The usual way of hiring (sic) here however, is to fix the hire at old prices say from 10\$ to 15\$ for men & from 8 to 12\$ for women, (without incumbrance,) and take produce at old prices. . . . When you want salt send to me, & I will try to obtain it. . . (for both you and your landlord).<sup>45</sup>

The foregoing correspondence indicates that Williams, Pugh, and General Martin had sufficient slaves for hire to Brooks to enable him to work the Neches Saline with the 200 slaves previously mentioned. In addition



to the labor force required to evaporate sufficient water to make 300 sacks of salt daily, a tremendous labor force would be necessary to supply enough wood to keep the fires going under the furnaces on a 24 hour basis. One Alabama operator reported in May, 1863, that he had on hand 2,000 cords of wood but that it all would be used by November and that he would have cut all the trees within four miles of his salt works.<sup>46</sup> During a wet winter or spring all salt making was limited at the Brooks Saline since it, like all other salt licks or salt springs throughout the South, was located in a "bottom" and was subject to overflow. Supplies of wood were laid in during the wet months, and normally, salt manufacturing reached its peak from April to December.

Salt was listed as a contraband of war, along with lead, powder, and other war supplies. The Federals maintained what was termed a "Salt Fleet" to destroy the coastal salt works of the Confederacy. In the last stages of the War, salt works were destroyed in Virginia, Alabama, and one on the coast of Texas.<sup>47</sup> Had the Federals been successful in the Battle of Mansfield, no doubt the salt works of the Neches Saline, as well as those of the Steen Saline, would have been destroyed.

As previously noted, the Thorne Estate owned the saline and leased it to Brooks, but in July, 1863, James S. O. Brooks purchased the Bean League, which included the Neches Saline, from the Thornes.<sup>48</sup> On September 8, 1865, James S. O. Brooks leased the Neches Saline to his son, W. B. Brooks. The salt lease from Jas. S. O. Brooks to W. B. Brooks is dated September 8, 1865 and covers the following:

"All salt works, kettles, furnaces, pumping equipment and salt wells used by Jas. S. O. Brooks in the manufacture of salt on said premises and also all other salt works fixtures and appendages heretofore used and operated on said land by any other person or persons".

The personal property included in the lease was 23 yolk of oxen, 11 mules and harnesses, 2 horses, 4 wagons and 2 carts. All the personal property to be used in farming and in the operation of the salt works. The agreed value for the personal property between the 2 Brooks was \$3,000. The lease was for a term of 10 years at \$2,000 per year payable \$500.00 per quarter with notes for each of the \$500 given at the date of the lease. The lease further provided that W. B. Brooks was to move the salt works within the 10 year period to the vicinity of the Neches River near the south corner of what was then known as the Dewberry Farm. For moving the salt works W. B. was to receive a credit of \$1,000 on the next 2 quarterly notes falling due after the completion of such move.<sup>49</sup> The reference to "fixtures used by others" in the instrument indicates that in addition to Brooks' commercial operation during the War, the custom of leasing kettles, etc. to others for salt making had been continued.

The scope of W. B. Brooks' operations of the salt works is not known. W. B. Brooks entered into the Con-



Dr. Wm. Bradford Brooks, apparently the last owner and operator of the salt works at the Saline.



Fannie Wilson Brooks, wife of Dr. Brooks.

federate Army in 1863 at the age of 20 and served under the command of General Kirby Smith on Galveston Island, but before that time he had worked with his father at the salt works and was familiar with its operation.<sup>50</sup> Two ads in the "Tyler Reporter" on March 18, 1866, intimated that local salt no longer commanded premium prices and that probably there was an excess supply on the market. J. W. Brooks placed one ad to sell a boiler and steam engine which was listed as being on the Palestine Road, 20 miles SW of Tyler, which would be the approximate location of the Brooks Saline. In the second ad, D. H. Ray listed for sale 3,000 sacks of first class salt at the Steen Saline for a good price for cash or he would take a limited amount of good bacon in trade. E. E. Horton, aged 82, states that his



Home of Dr. Wm. Bradford Brooks in Ft. Worth. This house had a telephone to the Brooks drugstore, two blocks away . . . the first telephone in Ft. Worth!

grandfather moved to Whitehouse in 1867 and that his father, as a small boy, helped haul salt from the Neches Saline, revealing that salt was manufactured at least on a limited scale after the War Between the States. W. B. Brooks married in 1869 and moved to Troup, and he and James S. O. Brooks agreed in November, 1870, to terminate their salt lease.<sup>51</sup> In 1871, W. B. Brooks purchased the land from James S. O. Brooks,<sup>52</sup> but there are no records to show whether or not he ever again operated the salt works at the Neches Saline. It is doubtful that W. B. Brooks ever returned to the Saline after 1869 for he graduated from St. Louis Medical School in 1875 and did graduate work at Tulane University in 1882. He maintained his home in Ft. Worth, Texas, where his was the first telephone in that city, the line extending from his drug store to his residence. James S. O. Brooks died July 4, 1895, at the age of 74, and W. B. Brooks died October 4, 1896, at the age of 53. Both father and son are buried in Pioneer Cemetery in Ft. Worth.<sup>53</sup>

The Tyler City Directory of 1893 refers to the excellent quality of salt made at Brooks and Steen Salines

during the War, but does not mention any commercial operations after that time.

Although almost all of the activity around the Neches Saline has to do with salt making and the need for this basic commodity, one of the few outcroppings of limestone in the East Texas area is located at the Neches Saline, where again the saline played a very important role in the early settlement of the East Texas area by furnishing a source of lime for mortar used in the construction of brick buildings. Reportedly, limestone was hauled by wagons from the Neches Saline to New Birmingham, near Rusk, to be used in iron making at what then promised to be a potential steel mill center. In recent years this limestone deposit was analyzed as a possible source of agricultural limestone but was found to be unsuitable for that purpose.

Today all traces of these early industries lie buried beneath the "beautiful blue waters of Lake Palestine." The only tangible reminders of the once thriving salt industry are the few scattered and much coveted heavy iron salt pots that have been preserved and are on display in the locality.



