

A short time before the late B.F. Gearhart died, he was asked by some of his people to trace the line of his descendancy from his forebearers. He had a remarkable memory and was in possession of the facts which enabled him to write the following paper, a prized record of the Gearhart family. The letter was written when Benjamin Gearhart was 72 yrs of age. Letter back to Tennessee: Celina, Texas May 27th, 1924. My grandfather Gearhart's given name was Valentine. His wife's maiden name was Exonia Packwood. I think my father, William Gearhart, was born in Virginia, July 22, 1809. His father moved with his family from there to Overton County, Tennessee in 1812, settled on Jake Gates place, on the north of Obeds River. His wife died while he lived there and was buried one hundred yards or so east of where the house was. She left nine children, seven sons and two daughters, all of which lived to marry and raise families. Three brothers, Peter, Samuel and John Packwood and one sister, Edith, were older than my father and three brothers, Abraham, Valentine and George and one sister, Ruth were younger than he.

Soon after the death of his wife, I think, grandfather moved to the place known for many years and until now as the Fitzgerald place. About that time I think it was, he was fortunately married to Miss Nancy Chowning, who always had the reputation of being a stepmother who filled full the place of a mother. They finished bringing up the children there and spent the remainder of their lives and their graves are there still. Nancy Chowning was a great aunt of Dr. John Tom Chowning, who still lives in Livingston, Tn., and by the way, she was the only grand parent who lived to see me. We always felt like we were related to the Chownings. All nine children remained in that county until they married. Only two of them, my father and Uncle Valentine, who was cousin Ann Fitzgerald's father, remained there until death and was buried by his father. My father built a home not more than one hundred yards from his father's home, perhaps where all of his ten children were born, eight of which lived to maturity. He died there June 11, 1862, just at the time Celina (Tn.) was burned by the Federals. He was buried with my mother's people on Hugh Roberts place just south of Celina (Tn.). My uncle Peter Gearhart, married an Alexandria near Burksville, Kentucky. He left that country in an early day and finally died in Garyson Co., Tx. and was buried at White Mound Cemetery in that county. He died in the early sixties, during the Civil War. Uncle Samuel and Uncle Valentine's wives' maiden name was Smith, sisters of Henson, who died near where the New Town or Celina, Texas now is. Many of the old settlers there now will remember him. Abraham married Nancy Chowing Harris, a daughter of Sterling Harris, I think of Sugar Creek in Jackson Co., Tn. She lived there and had one brother, I think named William who was the father of Marion Harris, an able preacher of the gospel, who still lived there perhaps. Uncle George, the youngest of all, married Sarah Roberts, daughter of Jimmy Roberts of Tinsley's bottom in Jackson County. She was an aunt of Jerry Roberts Jr., and Turner Roberts who are still with you there. I don't know what happened to any of the Davises there so far as I remember.

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