

DANIEL GILLELAND

(1795-1873)

Daniel Gilleland, early Texas settler, son of William and Nancy (Johnson) Gilleland, was born in Virginia on June 9, 1795. His father died in 1800, and in September 1802 Nancy Gilleland married Thomas Williams. The family then moved to Arkansas Territory. By 1817 they had settled on Williams Creek, a tributary of the Red River. During this time Daniel, his brother James Gilleland, and brother-in-law Robert H. Kuykendall, Sr., became Indian traders and buffalo hunters.

On February 3, 1819, Gilleland married Precilla Boatwright in Old Miller County, Arkansas Territory, probably at Jonesboro. The couple and their infant daughter, along with Precilla's parents, Amy and Thomas Boatwright, their children, and Sarah Gilleland Kuykendall and her husband, Robert, departed for Texas on October 18, 1821, and formed the vanguard of what came to be known as the Old Three Hundred. The Gilleland-Boatwright-Kuykendall party, accompanied by other families, followed the Old San Antonio Road and arrived at the Brazos River just south of the site of the future Washington in late December 1821. Gilleland, accompanied by Robert and Joseph Kuykendall, first headed downriver, and then followed the La Bahia Road to the place where it crossed the Colorado River. They pitched camp near the site of present-day Columbus on Christmas Day, 1821.

Afterward, the Gilleland family settled for a time on the Colorado River and claimed land there for farming and raising cattle. In the first election in Austin's colony, held in November 1822, Daniel Gilleland was one of a handful of settlers to cast a vote. He and his wife and daughter are listed on the census of those living in Colorado Municipality taken in March 1823, and he was one of fourteen men who elected James Cummins the first alcalde of the District of Colorado in August of that same year.

In 1824 Gilleland, then twenty-nine years old, received a grant of one labor of land from the Mexican government under the provisions of Austin's contract to settle Texas. This grant was located on the Brazos River in what is now Austin County. The Gillelands, Boatwrights, and other members of their extended family traveled back to Arkansas after 1825 in an effort to reclaim land that had been taken from

them by the federal government under the terms of a treaty with the Choctaw Nation in 1825. They returned to Texas in July 1830, and, by a grant dated on April 1, 1831, Gilleland received title to a league of land on the west side of the Colorado River some six miles west of Columbus in Austin's second colony.

In the early 1830s Gilleland and his growing family moved frequently and lived in various parts of Austin's colonies. They were residing at Moore's Fort at La Grange (later in Fayette County) in 1831, when their sixth child was born. The following year found them living in what is now Wharton County near Sarah Kuykendall, who had been recently widowed. In 1833 Gilleland was confronted by a band of hostile Karankawas, who demanded that he give them a portion of his corn crop. He stood his ground, forcing the Karankawas to abandon their attempts to coerce him and retreat to their camp nearby. He enlisted the aid of his closest neighbors, tracked the Indians down, and after a brief skirmish left several of them dead or wounded.

By the late 1830s he and his family had settled in Washington County, where they remained for most of the decade of the Republic of Texas. During this period Gilleland enjoyed a period of relative prosperity, during which he farmed and raised cattle marked with the registered DG brand. The 1840 census indicated that he owned six horses, 150 cattle, 600 acres, and several slaves. As a surveyor he cleared titles and surveyed tracts in return for a portion of the land. One contract dated 1838 called for him to receive 1,000 acres out of a league to be surveyed in Madison County. In 1837 Robert Alexander, a newly arrived Methodist missionary to Texas, held a camp meeting on Caney Creek. A list of subscribers, including Gilleland, pledged to support the first missionary society for the Methodist Episcopal Church in Texas. In February 1838 Martin Ruter, superintendent of Texas missions, preached his first sermon in Fayette County at the house of Daniel Gilleland, who then lived at Moore's Fort, La Grange. Gilleland and R. W. Chappell were founding trustees of the Cedar Creek Methodist Episcopal Church and Camp Grounds, formed in Washington County in 1843.

After spending the early 1840s in Harrison and Montgomery counties, the Gilleland family settled permanently in Milam County in 1847. There, on a homestead on the San Gabriel River, Gilleland spent the remaining twenty-five years of his life growing

cotton and other crops and taking an active role in the San Gabriel community and the Methodist Church. He and Precilla had thirteen children, ten of whom survived to adulthood. Before the end of the Civil War, six Gilleland sons served Texas in the Confederate Army; one died in battle under H. H. Sibley on his western campaign and another died a prisoner of war in a New Orleans hospital. After the war Gilleland signed the list of registered voters in Milam County, stating that he had lived in Texas for forty-five years.

Daniel Gilleland died at his home on the San Gabriel River on January 12, 1873, and was buried in the family graveyard there. Precilla Gilleland died there less than four months later and was laid beside her husband. The Gilleland family cemetery was discovered in 1986. It was partially restored in 1987 and was rededicated in October of that year. On October 29, 1988, a Texas historical marker was dedicated near the cemetery in Milam County.

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L. Richard Scroggins