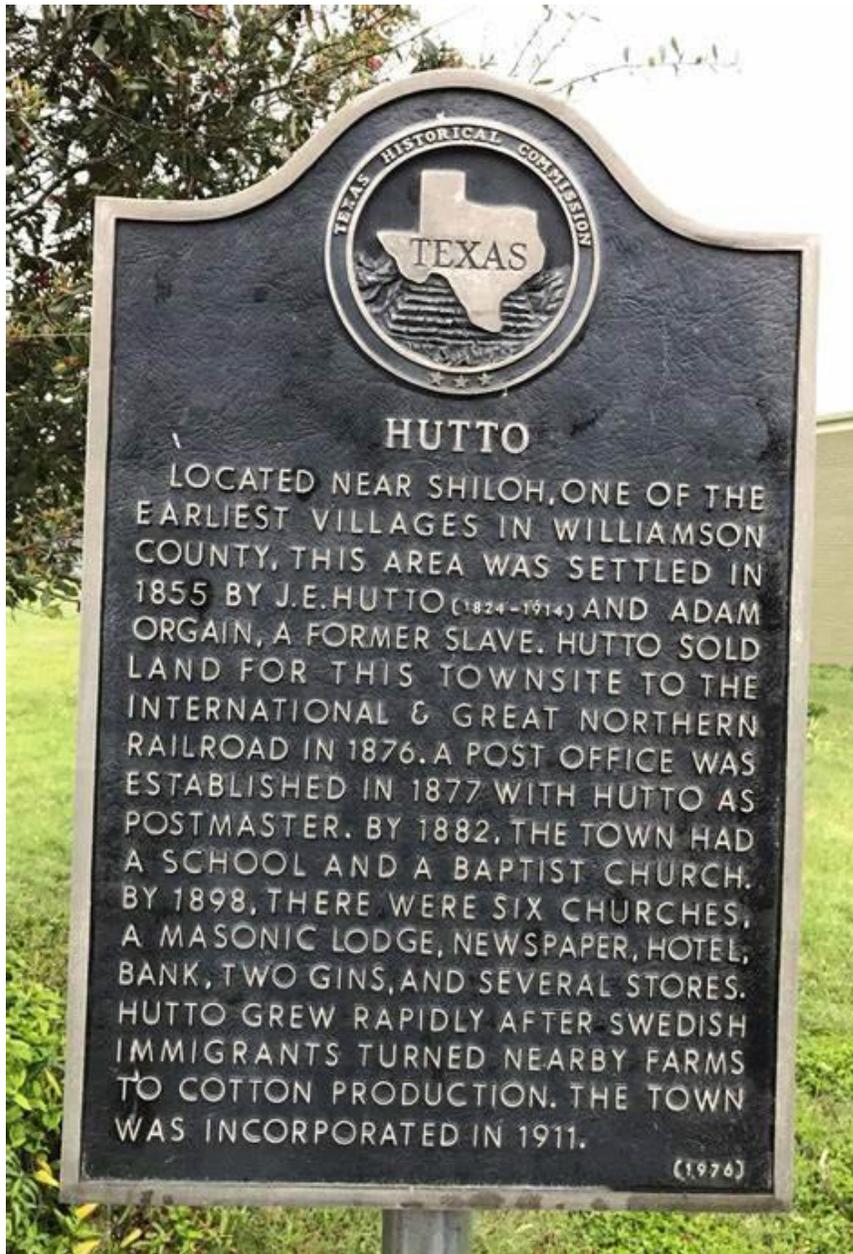


ADAM ORGAIN: ONE OF THE FIRST SETTLERS OF HUTTO

By Mike Fowler

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Many years ago, I started this original research article based on a small written portion contained within the 1976 Hutto historical marker of the State of Texas that stated: "and Adam Orgain, a former slave." Through the research that follows the birth date and death dates of 1837-1902 can now be determined for Adam Orgain along with many other findings about his interesting life. (Photo by Mike Fowler)

One of the first people to actually live in old Hutto, was not a Hutto, he was a Black man named Adam Orgain.

While the first settlement in Williamson County began in 1848 when various pioneers came to the Shiloh community on Brushy Creek approximately three miles south and a bit east on the northern bank of Brushy Creek. It was reported that “In Williamson County, Texas, the first community of Shiloh consisted of a school, a church, two stores, and a few residents who lived on or near Brushy Creek. This area was a cattle crossing during the days of and even following the Civil War, but before that, it had been a major route taken by many as they advanced southward through Texas.” In her book, Land of Good Water: A Williamson County, Texas, History, Clara Stearns Scarbrough wrote: “Nelson Morey is said to have opened the first general merchandise store in the county in 1848, located on the north bank of Brushy Creek near Wilbarger Crossing and Shiloh (south of present Hutto and south of the onetime residence of William Juvenal). In the fall of that year, Josiah Taylor settled on Brushy Creek near where Shiloh School later stood south of Hutto and sold goods there until he moved to Georgetown in 1850.” ... “About all the stores had was a barrel of whiskey, a few boxes of axle grease and some Sulphur matches.” This first Shiloh community did not last that long as the early settlers either died of smallpox or moved on.

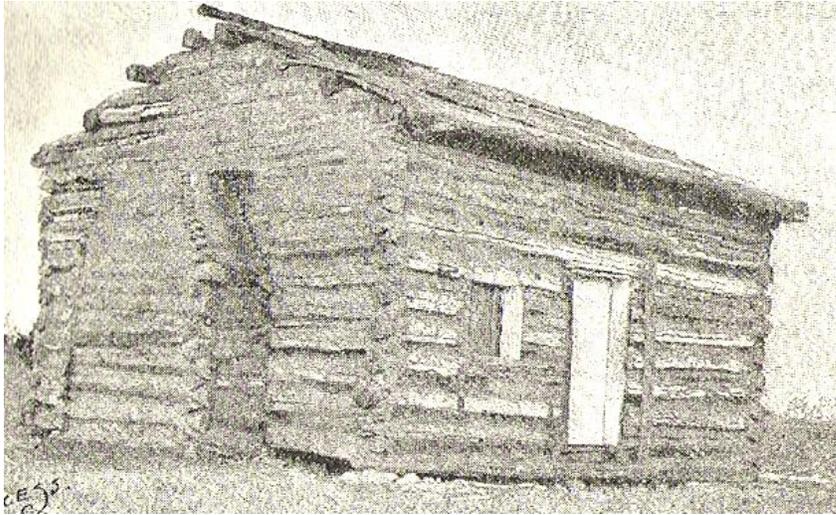
Six years later in 1854, Adam Orgain, a young slave just seventeen years old, was placed on the hostile prairie to take care of his master’s cattle in the general area that would later become Old Town Hutto and subsequent subdivisions. As a correction to the above State of Texas historical marker, it was not until 1862 during the Civil War that James Emory Hutto first purchased cattle land and settled here and then it was just fourteen years later in 1876 that the town was named after Hutto. Hutto’s legacy was established with his sale of forty-five acres of his land to the Texas Land Company of New York as a town site and five acres to the International & Great Northern Railroad for right of way and the establishment of a depot at what was first named Hutto Station. A mere six years later in 1882, James Emory Hutto left the town of Hutto and moved to the Waco area. It was not until 1911 that the City of Hutto was incorporated and formally named after him.

A lot of information about Adam (Addam) Orgain (Organ) is supposition. 1880 United States Census records show that he was born a slave in 1837 in Tennessee and that his name was “Addam Organ.” Numerous other records and writings, including Williamson County Probate Records, show his name to be “Adam Orgain,” which based on common spelling and his white owner’s family surname is probably correct; however, it is also known that some of his descendants did and still do go by the Organ last name.

Adam was born enslaved at birth by the Reverend Sterling Orgain, Sr. When his owner, Rev. Orgain, his wife Mary and one of their sons and later enslaver, John Henry Orgain and other Orgain (Organ) relatives, moved from Tennessee to central Texas in the early 1850’s, Adam was property of his enslaver and was forced to go to Texas as well. Growing anti-slave sentiment in Tennessee may have prompted the white Orgain families to move to Texas to protect their “holdings” and seek cheap land with new opportunities.

This same scenario had occurred with many other Tennessee and Southern State slave owner families that relocated to Texas around this time period, during the Civil War and even after its end.

In 1854, at the young age of seventeen, Adam was placed out on the Blackland Prairie not far from Cottonwood Creek in what is now Hutto to watch over the ranching and cattle interests of his first enslaver, Reverend Sterling Orgain and later his second enslaver John Henry Orgain, son of the Reverend, who later lived in nearby Round Rock and later Salado.



Photograph of single room log cabin with fireplace of the type that Adam Orgain probably lived in on the Blackland prairie of Hutto. This illustration above appeared on page 67 in [A Waif From Texas](#) written by Kate Alma Orgain and published in 1901 by Ben C. Jones & Co., Printers of Austin, Texas. Kate Alma Orgain was the wife of John Henry Orgain, one-time slave owner of Adam Orgain.

In 1854, some sources indicate in early 1855, Adam Orgain became and was amongst the first settlers in Hutto, living out in the wilds of the Blackland prairie grasslands north of Brushy Creek in Williamson County. As a young slave he would have worked hard ever since he was able to do so.

It was said and supposed that Adam watched over the Orgain cattle and land as a livestock handler. Decades later this land would be turned into cotton fields and other seasonal cash crops. Adam probably lived in a primitive one-room log cabin with a fireplace as was common for the time. In Adam's cabin, like the one pictured previously, it was typical that the gaps between the logs were filled with straw and mud, the floors would have been compacted dark dirt. Furniture would have been sparse and handmade. Beds were primitive structures usually nailed to the cabin wall.

Adam likely had a garden and grew vegetables that probably included beans, beets, peas, sweet potatoes, carrots, okra, corn, and greens. Adam would have also probably raised

some minimal livestock, possibly hogs and chickens. Tending to, watching over livestock, and protecting them from predators would have been an intensive effort. Adam would have likely hunted with snares and by other skills he had learned. Wild nuts and berries found locally could also be gathered when in season. Living mostly alone would have required an elevated level of self-sufficiency. Adam Orgain was present in the area in late 1854, years before James Emory Hutto first purchased land here in 1862. Hutto was the man for whom the future community, town site, and eventually City was later named.

According to Clara Stearns Scarbrough, author of Land of Good Water published in 1973, the first stores in Williamson County were located in an earlier settlement located at Shiloh by Brushy Creek. This small community established in 1848 was located just a few miles southeast of what Hutto would later be. Shiloh had two stores, a pioneer school, a church and two cemeteries. Other White families soon followed in the settlement of the Hutto area including the Orgain, McCutcheon, Hutto, Goodwin, Evans, Davis, Magle, Saul, Wright, and Farley families.

Just imagine what it was like in 1854 for the Orgain families to live on this free-range cattle land, coexisting with the nomadic Indigenous peoples (Native American Indians) and wild animals. Poisonous snakes were commonplace including rattlesnakes, copperheads, water moccasins and coral snakes. Seldom did you see another human being and when you did, caution had to be taken. In the 1850s it was the Tonkawa Indians who had long lived here and roamed large areas, and while they were primarily friendly, there was the constant threat of Lipan Apache and Comanche raiding parties.

During the early life of Adam Orgain in Texas, the black soil prairie land of Williamson County was vastly different from today. At this time, the area was dense grassland ecology that not only supported the large numbers of bison but also the free-range longhorn cattle (a tough breed that descended from the cattle that the Spanish explorers brought to the Americas). Thus, Adam would have witnessed an abundance of mostly native animals. Wildlife, and in turn food, abounded with bears, buffalo, mountain lions, wolves, coyotes, wild turkeys, deer, rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, opossum, quail, dove, turtles, fish and even alligators. The prairie was a large wild, wide undeveloped area of Texas that served as a great “grocery store” for the Indigenous people, the Orgain families and other settlers. It is certain that some level of fear and trepidation of both man and beast had to have been a part of young Adam Orgain’s daily life.

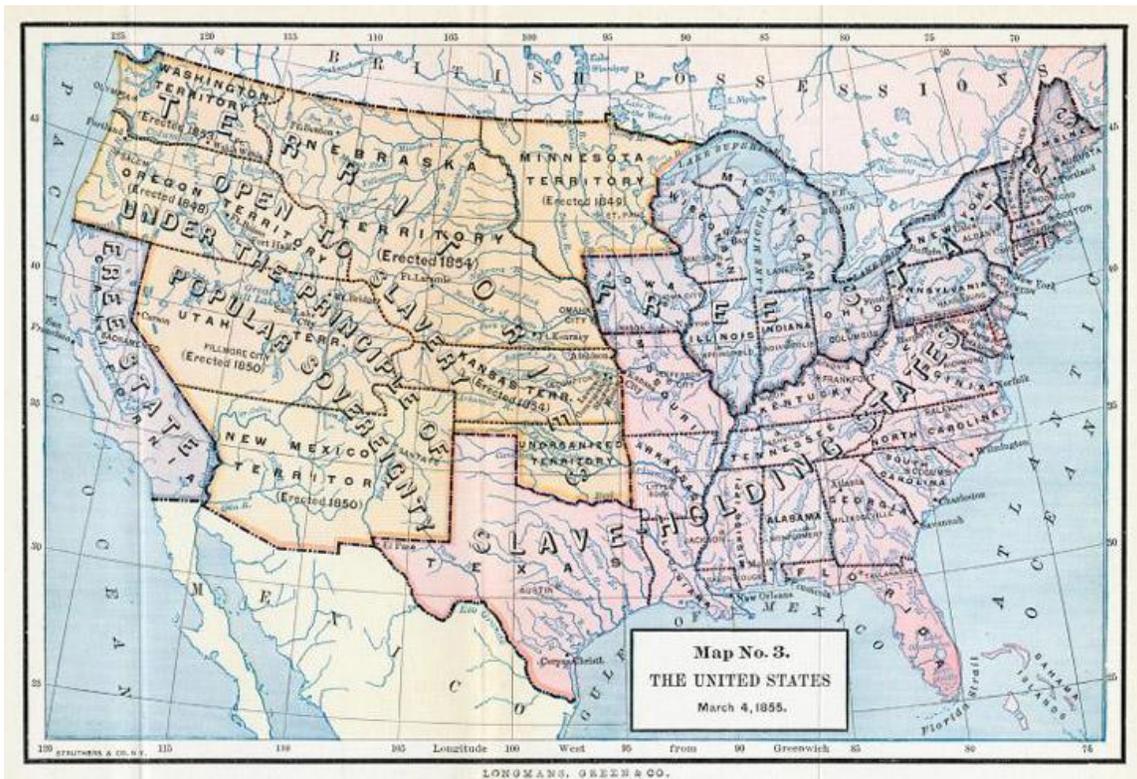
In the 1857 *Texas Almanac* it was stated: “For the past few years, the mass of our immigration has been composed of heavy slave owners, seeking more and better land than they possess in the old States.”

In the years prior to the Civil War, Adam undoubtedly worked hard on the White Orgain ranchland and stayed remarkably close to home. Clothing was extremely basic, with male agricultural slaves traditionally being supplied with two sets of clothes, usually shirts and pants made of cotton or wool. Shoes and a hat would complete the outfit; socks and underwear were not generally provided to slaves. It is supposed that before the Civil War

ended, Adam sweated through eleven hot Texas summers from when he arrived on the Blackland Prairie and felt the cold of its eleven winters. According to custom of the time, slaves worked “from sun to sun” five days a week and a half of a day on Saturday. Adam’s existence was a Spartan, simple life.

It is highly unlikely that Adam Orgain was freed prior to the end of the Civil War and no proof of his being freed is found. Slaves were just far too valuable as property and for the work they performed to be set free. Adam Orgain was a slave!

According to the *Handbook of Texas*: “Slave prices inflated rapidly as the institution expanded in Texas. The average price of a bondsperson, regardless of age, sex, or condition, rose from approximately \$400 in 1850 to \$800 by 1860. During the late 1850s, prime male field hands aged eighteen to thirty cost on the average \$1,200, and skilled slaves such as blacksmiths often were valued at more than \$2,000. In comparison, good Texas cotton land could be bought for as little as six dollars an acre.” Prior to the later emancipation of slaves, free Blacks were a miniscule portion of the enslaved Black population in Texas.



This map from March 3, 1855, shows how the United States was divided into “Free States”, “Slave Holding States” and States “Open to Slavery under the Principle of Popular Sovereignty”. On March 6, 1857, the Dred Scott decision of the United States Supreme Court denied citizenship to Black people and denied the power of Congress to restrict slavery in any federal territory.

In 1850, prior to the Civil War, freed Black people numbered less than four hundred (397) of the approximately fifty-eight thousand (58,161) Black people in bondage in Texas. According to the 1850 United States census the Black population was 27.4 percent of the total 212,592 people in the State of Texas. By the 1860 census shortly before the Civil War, there were 182,556 slaves in Texas with only 355 freed Black people in the state. Due to the dramatic influx of slaves to Texas their numbers now comprised 30.2 percent of the total population of the State of Texas in 1860. Texas was often referred to as the last frontier of slavery in the United States.

The Civil War begun in Texas with succession from the Union in 1861 and was confirmed when at a state convention in Austin delegates voted 166 to 8 to secede from the Union. On February 23, 1861, Texas citizens voted for secession with 46,153 in favor and 14,747 opposed. On March 2, 1861, Texas Independence Day, secession by the State of Texas from the Union became official. Texas had now officially entered the Great War between the States.

The Civil War would last for four brutal years. Almost three million Union troops and a little over one million Confederate troops would be enrolled to participate in this bloody conflict. Combined lives lost between the Union and Confederacy forces would total over 558,000 with another 412,000 wounded. About one fourth of all the soldiers were killed or wounded. During the over four years of war the carnage was intense. There was a casualty rate of about 22.6 per cent for the Union troops and a much higher rate of approximately 31.5 per cent for the Southern troops.

It was on January 1, 1863, that Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation “that all persons held as slaves” in the Confederate states in rebellion against the United States “are, and henceforward shall be free.” However, Adam Orgain would not hear of his new “freedom” for another two and a half years.

1865 was undoubtedly an incredibly significant year for Adam Orgain. It is supposed that Adam stayed in Hutto during the Civil War, although there is a slight possibility that he was a man servant to John Henry Orgain while he was a soldier to the Confederate States of America. There are no known records for this time of Adam’s life. In a letter from C. N. Payne to his mother and sister during the last year of the Civil War, Payne illustrates just how racist that he and other people were. Payne, a Union soldier, wrote that while taking a steamboat southward from Cairo, Illinois along the Mississippi through Vicksburg (it was in 1863 with the Siege of Vicksburg that Union forces effectively controlled the Mississippi River) and ending in New Orleans, Louisiana that “We stopped at Vicksburg coming down. The place was all smashed up. As are most all of the places in the South. This is the prettiest place that I have seen on the Mississippi River. If it was not for the black apes that live here I think I should come down and live after the war is over. But I do not like to live among negroes. I had rather live among the Indians two to one.” Ironically, parts of the Payne family moved to Texas instead and became an influential family in Hutto, Texas following the Civil War. From reliable sources some of the Payne men were early members of the Hutto Klu Klux Klan.

The Civil War officially ended with the surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia to Union General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865. After the War Between the States ended, word did not reach Texas until June 19, “Juneteenth”, 1865 when Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and by General Order No. 3 ended slavery in Texas. It was after this time that Adam Orgain would have learned that he was a free man for the first time in his life. Adam’s freedom was much in concept only.

On December 18, 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that outlawed slavery was adopted. Adam Orgain, now twenty-eight years of age, had a major decision to make, and his decision was to stay in Hutto and continue working for his former master, John H. Orgain either as a worker or sharecropper. After emancipation, many former slave owners asked their former bondspeople to stay and work for wages or share in agricultural profits. Even with new laws, new freedom ... little would change for Adam. He would still have to work just as hard as he always had.

In Texas, the 1866 Constitutional Convention refused to grant the right to vote even to educated Black people. A series of laws known as the “Black Codes” were established that were very restrictive in providing any real economic opportunities for freed slaves. These laws prohibited Black people from voting, holding public office, jury duty, and interracial marriage. Finally on July 28, 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was passed, and its action made Black people citizens of the United States of America.

In Texas between 1865 and 1868, many thousands of acts of violence were committed against Black people by Whites and more than 350 Black people were murdered.

No.	DATE OF RESIDENCY	SURVIVAL NAME (PERSON)	PLACE OF RESIDENCE	PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED	IN STATE	IN COUNTY	IN PRESENCE
200	July 23 1867	Adam Orgain	Williamson County Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
201		John Smith					
202		John Smith					
203		John Smith					
204		John Smith					
205		John Smith					
206		John Smith					
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240		John Smith					

Cora Carter, a direct descendant of Adam Orgain, provided the documentation above that shows that during the Reconstruction period following the end of the Civil War, Adam Orgain did register to vote in Williamson County on July 23, 1867.

On March 30, 1870, Congress ratified the Fifteenth Amendment prohibiting denial of the right to vote for Black people. While Reconstruction continued in Texas until 1873, these laws did change, but practices towards Black people did not. During the short-lived period of reconstruction in Texas little progress was made by Black people, however the soon to follow backlash of the “Jim Crow” era was horrendous. This prolonged period of racism that was institutionalized throughout the South to keep the Black population “in their place” with Black people being disenfranchised, discriminated against, beaten, and even murdered if they openly defied the White supremacy that was predominant.

It is not known in exactly what year Adam met or married Eveline. It may be assumed that their marriage occurred after the Civil War based on the known birth years of their two children. Eveline was two years older than Adam and had been born in Kentucky in 1835. Eveline had three children prior to her marriage to Adam. It is possible that Adam and Eveline did follow the “Jump the broom” marriage tradition common amongst Blacks in the South during their wedding ceremony.

Another particularly important year for Adam was 1876, the year his first son, Adam, was born. 1876 was also the Centennial of the United States as a nation and there was an excitement of change in America. While Texas had been admitted to the Union long before as a State on December 29, 1845, to the north and west, both Oklahoma and New Mexico were still territories.

Of significant importance locally in 1876, Hutto Station came into its own when the International-Great Northern Railroad Company laid tracks through the area creating towns as it went south westward from Longview, Texas.

James Emory Hutto, a cattleman, had sold fifty acres of his well-situated land to the Texas Land Company of New York for a town site and they reserved five acres grant of property out of the sale for railroad right of way. In 1876 the first railroad depot was built and W.H. Farley, Sr. served as its first depot agent. Hutto, Farley and John Henry Orgain had all served as soldiers in the Confederate States of America, in what they referred to as the War of Northern Aggression.

On December 28, 1876, the International-Great Northern Railroad reached Austin. By then Hutto had its own railroad depot, a post office, a general store, and a lumber business.

A Mr. Lloyd had the first store in Hutto, and it was located on the south side of the newly laid railroad tracks. Located nearby, Sam Monday was proprietor of the first saloon in Hutto. James Emory Hutto was appointed the first postmaster of Hutto on June 27, 1877. With the rise of the Railroads and the Great Immigration growth would quickly come to Hutto.

There is no doubt that Adam Orgain and James Emory Hutto knew each other, but the details of their levels of interaction are unknown. It is highly probable that Adam Orgain

was not treated with any real level of equality or kindness based on his skin color by Mr. Hutto or the other White settlers. Prejudice abounded and James Emory Hutto was a known racist who was not fond of Indians, Black people, Mexicans, and non-English speaking European immigrants. J. E. Hutto was a secessionist who was a Civil War soldier for the Confederate States of America, he was a member of the Masonic Lodge, it is reported that he was a local member of the Klu Klux Klan, he was the first Postmaster of Hutto and he proudly wore his Southern Cross lapel pin to show his service and commitment to the “cause”.

Racism abounded in Texas. In 1876 and following, the life of the Mexican Texans was challenged by extreme prejudice and was exceedingly difficult with the erosion of their status and rights dating back to Texas Independence in 1836. The Indigenous people of Texas were the various Indian tribes that lived here, and they were treated even worse as organized genocide was viciously promoted. On the date of June 25th, 1876, Indians annihilated General George Armstrong Custer and over two hundred of his 7th Calvary detachment at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. As news of the massacre reached the nation’s capital, reinforced backlash against American Indians was almost immediate. Across the United States, American Indians were slaughtered and driven from their homelands onto reservations. Soon to follow, new White people came into Williamson County as immigrants in droves, many of them Danish, German, and Swedish immigrant families. With the new immigrants, who were mostly farmers and businessmen, language became a new barrier within the changing local and Texas population and has been recorded the various ethnic groups from different countries tended to cluster, live, worship, and stand together. Growth and change were certainly in the air; however, prejudice abounded.

In 1879 a second son, Benjamin, was born into the Adam and Eveline Orgain family. In 1880 Adam, now forty-three was counted in the Precinct 8, Williamson County, Texas, United States Census records that indicated that he “works on farm”. Also listed in that same census was his wife, Eveline, age forty-five and their children; Adam Organ, Jr., son aged four, and B. D. “Benjamin” Organ, son aged one. This was another landmark year as it was in 1880 that John Henry Orgain sold to his former slave, Adam, five acres of land on which the Adam Orgain home was located for \$125 according to the Williamson County Records of Deeds, Volume 29, Page 153. Adam had finally gotten his little piece of Hutto land and could now grow crops for his family and for profit.

The November 1880 Map of Williamson County from the Texas General Land Office showed the county containing large tracts of Spanish land grants that predated the Republic of Texas and large surveyed tracts that had been acquired by early pioneer settlers. The Texas Homestead Act of 1866 had granted free acres for settlement and ownership ... for Whites only.

Generally, Black people found few land owners willing to sell them land or extend credit to them. By 1880, only about one-fourth of freed men owned their own farms or property. It was also during this time period there was a tremendous land rush throughout Texas as people came from everywhere to take advantage of the opportunities for free or bargain

priced properties. Black people were mostly not included. The railroad companies wrote of and promised free or cheap land on which cotton, corn and wheat would flourish. Cotton was by then commonly called “the white gold of Texas.” Early European immigrants wrote back to relatives in their native countries about this plentiful land of milk and honey where the soil was virgin and opened with a whoosh of fresh opportunity to the plow.

During the period of 1880 to 1890 many new faces were to be seen in the area as a new community developed very rapidly. It was reported that Hutto had two hundred residents, a school, three churches and five cotton gins by 1884. It is likely that Adam built or bought a small frame home at some point after the lumber business located in town.



Stock photograph of the famous Black cowboy, Bill Pickett. A commissioned statue of Bill Pickett was dedicated on June 2, 2017, in his hometown of Taylor, Texas. The bronze statue is prominently displayed at the intersection of 2nd and Main Streets in the downtown area.

According to Cora Carter (descendent of Adam Orgain) it is almost certain that the elder Adam Orgain and his family knew or knew of William “Bill” Pickett of the Taylor area, the famous Black rodeo cowboy, known for his special bulldogging skills. Bill Pickett was born December 5, 1870, in the Jenks-Branch community near Liberty Hill. The large Pickett family had moved to Taylor by 1888 and Bill performed in the town’s first rodeo and fair that year. Like other ethnic groups, Black people tended to be close knit and stay together.

As an interesting sidenote, below is a “Biographical Sketch of Manuel Orgain” found on “The Portal to Texas History” which contained the following fascinating and educational stories. It is not known the exact relationship between Adam Orgain and Manuel Orgain.

“Manuel Orgain, Negro cowman, who engaged in the work of handling livestock most all his life, and who died at his home in Georgetown May 30, 1939, was a unique character, a man of dependence. His life was filled with experiences of the cattle ranches and cattle trails from the Gulf to the Dakota Black Hills.

Manuel was born in Tennessee, September 19, 1848. His parents were slaves in the home of Rev. Sterling Orgain and, as Manuel related, “the person moved to Texas in 1850 and brought me with his family.”

Rev. Orgain located on Brushy near Hutto. Manuel remembers but little concerning events until the year 1857, however he recalled that he remained with Rev. Orgain until his death which occurred in 1867 or 1868. Rev. Orgain, Manuel said, had two sons and of these he was very fond. One son, Dock Orgain, settled on the San Gabriel, near Jonah and the other, Ed, in the same section, on what is known as “the old Magee place.” The farm is now owned by John H. McDonald, Jr.

At the age of 21 Manuel was employed as a teamster and drove freight wagons from time to time from this region to Brenham, Houston, and Indianola. He recalled that he was nearing Indianola when the great storm of 1879 struck, that he doubled back to Victoria where, after the storm he loaded his wagon with merchandise available there and returned. A round trip required six weeks and his team consisted of six and eight yoke of oxen.

Manuel’s first trip “up the trail” was made in 1871 when he went with a herd of 3,000 cattle as a mounted cowman to Elsworth, Kansas. The drive started in April and the personnel engaged in the drive returned in October. The herd belonged to Andrew Armstrong and Hamilton McNutt. Mr. Armstrong lived near Rice’s Crossing and Mr. McNutt near the present location of Stony Point.

IN 1873 he went again with Armstrong, this time making delivery at a “receiving station” on the Red River in Montague County. This herd was purchased by Cull Juvenal who drove them on to Baxter Springs.

Manuel’s last “trail trip” was in 1877. On this drive he drove 96 broke horses and 20 unbroke horses to Cheyenne, Wyoming for Andrew Armstrong, and Tinnen & Taylor.

“From there we went with a herd to Ogdon, Utah.” He returned in the late fall and spent the winter at the Armstrong homestead working for the family, Mr. Armstrong spending the winter in Wyoming.

Having saved some money, Manuel stopped freighting after the trip on which he was almost caught in Indianola. The city was fatally destroyed and went to farming. A panic broke, he could not sell his crop for anything and he “found himself busted.”

We asked Manuel what he considered his most exciting experiences, and he related the incidence of the terrible flood that swept the San Gabriel in 1869 which furnished him a night he would never forget. “I was on a place near Jonah and, with others, was watching the flood as best we could in the darkness. Our horses were saddled ready to leave if the water rose a foot higher.”

“About midnight, we heard a women scream. I mounted my horse and selecting a spot for entering the flood at a point where I thought horse and rider might expect to reach a little schoolhouse which, in normal times, was on high ground, and rode in. At the schoolhouse I found a woman and five children, took three of the children on the horse with me and re-entered the torrent safely reaching the spot a distance below the house I had left and where several were gathered for the safety it afforded. I changed horses and returned to the schoolhouse bringing back the lady and two remaining children.”

Reflectively, Manuel mused, “I was raised to do all the good I could, to help in any way I could anyone in trouble, even though the act might be dangerous to myself. Standing that night on the brink of that roaring stream, I thought of Parson Orgain and all that he had taught me and I had no more fear of entering that flood than I had when you ask me to come in your office and answer a few questions, but even if I wasn’t scared, I guess if I ever earned a leather medal it was that night on the San Gabriel when thousands of head of cattle and horses were drowned – no one ever knew how many.”

Manuel said he was the last of the Orgain family, including slaves, alive at the time he recounted the events of his life.

He knew and had worked for many of the great cattlemen of this area and recalled the following among others: John Tinnin, Andy Armstrong, Jim and Abe Taylor, D. H. Snyder, John Snyder, Tom Snyder, A. G. Boyce, D. W. Fant, Tobe Litten, Rankin Kennedy, Jim Kuykendall, Garrett King, Greenup Kuykendall, W. S. Brookshire, Joe Young, Albert Young, Prince Olive, Mag Smith, Bill Smith, Arthur Durant, John Burns, Alex Kennedy, Gal E. Barker, Jesse Barker, and others.

He recalled that Sinin & Armstrong and Jim Taylor bought the Tom Hillard Ranch which was traversed for fifty miles by the Snake River in Idaho. Also, at one time, the Snyder Bros. operated and controlled ranches from the headquarters ranch just east of Georgetown, to both North and South Dakota.

Manuel Orgain today, 1948, has four children surviving, John Orgain and Beulah Orgain Campbell, Georgetown; Joe Bailey Orgain, California; and Mark Orgain, Midland, Texas.” End of Manuel Orgain stories.

Storm damage proved to be hazardous to the early town of Hutto. In 1886 the first business center of Hutto located on the south side of the railroad tracks was heavily damaged when the one teacher schoolhouse and the Hutto Baptist Church were destroyed by a severe storm.

In Hutto on October 15, 1888, a Black male named Joseph “Joe” Joiner was arrested by the Sheriff and subsequently hung to death by a White mob for an alleged attempted assault on a twelve-year White girl, Rose Alma Woolsey, whose father, Samuel M. Woolsey, was a prominent local banker and businessman. From the October 17th reporting in the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper, it was stated: “On the road to the jail a mob of masked men seized the prisoner and hanged him to a tree.” This mob was the Hutto Klu Klux Klan sending one of many strong messages of fear and racist frontier injustice. This murder occurred on Tisdale Street, now FM 1660 South, near where Adam Orgain and his family lived.

In 1890 another horrifically racist triple murder a bit north of Hutto near Monadale was committed on July 21st in what became known as the lynching of Vitolo Melena and his family. Although, not a true hanging, a newspaper reported that: “TRIPLE TRAGEDY IN TEXAS. Father, Mother and Child Shot Dead by Ruthless Assassins. Austin, Texas, July 23. – News was received here Tuesday night of a most horrible triple murder near Hutto, a small village twenty-eight miles north of here. A Mexican named Vitolo Melena, his wife, two daughters and a little son lived a few miles from Hutto. Monday night about 12 o’clock their little home was ruthlessly invaded, and without provocation Vitolo and his wife and a five-year daughter were shot and instantly killed. A daughter 17 years old and a little 4-year-old boy managed to escape and hurried to a neighbor’s where they told their story of the crime. The murderers, they say, were J. P. Gibbs and his son and John and Andrew Sutton, who had been arrested. The cause of the killing is supposed to be revenge, as it is stated that the Mexican induced a deaf and dumb daughter of Gibbs to run away and marry a Mexican.” These were the times when Adam Orgain lived in Hutto. One of the murderers, J. P. Gibbs was a former Confederate soldier who died thirty-five years later on September 6, 1925, and is buried in the Confederate section of the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, Texas. It is not known for certain where the Vitolo Melena family is buried; whoever, it is believed to be in now unmarked graves in a small Mexican American cemetery in Monadale just off FM1660 North.

In 1890 Hutto was rapidly growing and the first of many new brick buildings were constructed facing each other in two rows divided by East Street. During the early 1890’s a bank, hotel, many mercantile stores, two weekly newspapers (the *Church Helper* and the *Hutto Enterprise*) and other stores opened in the downtown area. In 1892, the Carpenter and Woolsey building was constructed north of the railroad tracks at 101 East Street in the newly relocated business district of Hutto. A partner in this building was the same S. M. Woolsey, a Mason, and a banker, who had witnessed the lynching of Joseph

Joiner just four years earlier. Soon the north side of the railroad tracks was viewed as the “right side of town” and conversely south of the tracks was viewed as the “wrong side of town.” This building spree took place in Hutto beginning in the 1890’s and continued until well beyond the turn of the century, when the town business area was relocated from the south side to the north side of the railroad tracks. Racism abounded in Hutto, Texas!

In 1893 a tornado destroyed the first Hutto Evangelical Lutheran Church on Short Street. The Hutto Baptist Church also had to be rebuilt in 1895 after damage from another storm. Across from the Hutto Baptist Church on Main Street and Farley Street was a local Masonic Lodge that also served as a meeting location for the Hutto Klu Klux Klan.

On September 13, 1893, Adam’s wife, Eveline, died at the age of fifty-eight. This was also in this year that Adam Orgain sold his five acres of land as recorded in the Williamson County Records of Deeds, Volume 66, Page 566 to Charles Hague, a land speculator, for \$2,000, sixteen times what he had paid for it. Adam had made his mark on the land sale document with an “X,” which was a good indicator that he could neither read nor write.

It is possible that some of these proceeds paid for the Orgain family tombstone (the base that was in the Chamber of Commerce Museum for many years and is currently in possession of the City of Hutto).

Soon after, on July 17, 1894, this land was subdivided and filed for record into twenty-four small lots by Charles Hague with three streets named Hague Street, Orgain Street and Walker Street.

In the 1890’s Tisdale Street, now Farm to Market Road 1660 South, was the east frontage street to this future subdivision. These lots would not be developed into home sites for another hundred years. It is probable that after he sold his land Adam purchased a small house on the south side of Hutto where he would live out his remaining years.

In 1896 the Hutto community had reached a population of seven hundred and was described by the *Texas State Gazetteer* as an “important cotton market”. By 1898 the Supreme Court of the State of Texas stated that all public government lands had been sold, granted, or reserved and declared that “no more vacant lands” existed in Texas. It was on May 18, 1896, that the Supreme Court in the Plessey v. Ferguson decision provided legal support to the concept of separate but equal public facilities for Black people. The schools and “facilities” were clearly not equal.

In 1898 the Hutto town site had quickly grown to include six churches, one school, one photography gallery, one confectionery store, one hotel, two drug stores, seven dry good stores, one bank, one tailor shop, eight grocery stores, one shoe shop, one meat market, four blacksmiths, one livery stable, one millinery shop, one lumberyard, one newspaper and job office, two hardware stores, two cotton gins, one gristmill and five doctors.

By 1900 most of the fauna of the area had been hunted to extinction except for deer, coyotes, and small game. Much of the land was now cultivated with cash crops such as cotton and corn.

In 1901 a group of Black Christians met and formed Ebenezer Baptist Church of Hutto. It is not known whether Adam was involved in the organization of this church. Christianity had long played an especially significant role in Black culture with its biblical teachings of deliverance from bondage and salvation.

In 1902, a statewide poll tax was imposed by constitutional amendment to further discourage the voting by Black people and Hispanics. The Fire of 1902 in Hutto burned down much of the east side of East Street and did considerable damage to the business district. It is noticeably clear that much of the early history of Hutto would be augmented significantly if Adam Orgain and early settlers could only talk to us today about the details of experiences that they lived firsthand and witnessed.

It was at the age of sixty-five that Adam Orgain died in Hutto on May 13, 1902. We do not even know where he is buried. Adam and Eveline could be buried at the Shiloh Black Cemetery located off County Road 139. They could be buried on private property off FM 1660 South. It is known that a local farmer had plowed up a number of graves with wooden crosses where “field hands” and possibly Joe Joiner were buried along the east side of Tisdale Street (FM 1660South) in the late 1920’s.

We simply do not know where the Black Orgain family graves are in Hutto.



A white marble base stone to a family tombstone inscribed “ORGAIN” was found behind a small house in Hutto on Jim Cage Street and Austin Avenue. This tombstone may possibly have belonged to the Adam Orgain family. No conclusive supportive evidence was found at either the Black Shiloh Cemetery located on County Road 139, or the old Shiloh-McCutcheon Cemetery located within what was the Wallin family property near the City of Hutto Adam Orgain Park and Amphitheater off County Road 137. Again, we simply do not know. The tombstone was located in the museum portion of the Chamber of Commerce building located at East Street in Hutto for many years, and is now in stored possession of the City of Hutto. No Orgains are living in the Hutto area today. (Photograph by Mike Fowler)

What we do know is that in 2021 upon motion by then Mayor Pro-Tem Dan Thornton, the City of Hutto named a premier park in honor of its first non-indigenous settler, Adam Orgain. This park is located less than three miles from the five acres that Adam Orgain once owned. The City of Hutto website stated that “Throughout July, the City will also showcase the recently named Adam Orgain Park, located adjacent to the Brushy Creek Amphitheater at 1001 CR 137. While there are no known photos of Adam Orgain, researchers do know that he was the first known settler in Hutto—a slave who was brought to Central Texas in the early 1850s and eventually started a family here. Today, this serene 65-acre park, just a couple of miles from where Adam Orgain built his homestead, is nestled along the cliffs of Brushy Creek, and is also the site of Brushy Creek Amphitheater. Adam Orgain Park is home to the KOKEFEST country music festival, Juneteenth Celebration, Holidays in Hutto and many other events throughout the year, along with beautiful pavilions and natural spaces to picnic, fish and just relax in the outdoors.” Wouldn’t Adam Orgain have been surprised and hopefully pleased?



The plaque above dedicated February 25, 2023, honoring the memory of Adam Orgain and naming the park “Adam Orgain Park” is mounted inside the pavilion near Brushy Creek that was constructed by previous landowner, Lisa Pollard. Lisa Pollard was an oil and gas consultant in Washington, D.C. and Austin, Texas who was originally from Alpine, Texas. Ms. Pollard personally worked extremely hard maintaining her property and had fabulous parties there with headliners such as Ray Benson and “Asleep at the Wheel” and Rusty Weir to name a few. Lisa Pollard also did her original metal artwork that she constructed under the pavilion. In my capacity as a real estate Broker, I

initially suggested to Lisa that rather than sell the land to a developer, to turn her land into a park. An earlier handshake agreement for the purchase of the fifty-four acres for \$1 million was reneged on by then elected officials of the City of Hutto. Another previous owner(s) was the Dr. J.J. Johns family (Johns Community Hospital in Taylor was named in his honor) who eventually sold fifty-four acres to Lisa Pollard and 390 acres to Triple Crown Dog Academy, now Starmark. Lisa's original fifty-four acres was eventually expanded by her to sixty-five acres, the size of the park today and was sold in early 2018 to the City of Hutto for \$1.7 million thanks to renewed negotiations by then Assistant City Manager, Helen Rameriz, City Manager Odis Jones, and the approval of the then City Council. Adam Orgain Park is now home to KOKEfest and a premier venue for many events and celebrations. This park land was originally the home and hunting grounds to the many Indigenous Native American peoples who lived there for thousands of years. (Photograph by Mike Fowler)

JOHN HENRY and ALMA KATE ORGAIN: EARLY SETTLERS OF SALADO

Adam's second owner, John Henry Orgain was from near Paris in Montgomery County, Tennessee before coming to Texas. The Tennessee Orgain family can be traced back to the Orgain family of Lunenburg County, Virginia who were substantial slave holders. A few of the Virginia Orgains' had moved to Tennessee circa 1810-1820. John Henry Orgain was born near Paris, Tennessee in 1829. It was from these roots that John H. Orgain came to Texas in the early 1850's as a young man and lived in Round Rock.

During the Civil War, John Henry Orgain and Sterling Orgain served together in the Williamson County Grays, 7th Regiment, Company C, and Texas Mounted Volunteers as privates.

On October 7, 1861, the Williamson County Grays, also referred to as Captain Burrows' Company, were enrolled in Georgetown, the Williamson County seat of government.

John Henry Orgain was thirty-two years old when the Civil War was begun. Sterling was listed as being twenty-five years of age at enlistment. Captain Burrows' Company served in the Western Louisiana Campaign. John was wounded in the Civil War at the "Battle of Yellow Bayou" also know as "Norwood's Plantation" that took place in Avoyelles Parrish, Louisiana on May 18, 1864. This back-and-forth battle was viewed as a strategic victory for the Union forces in that it allowed their army to escape to fight another day. There were an estimated 860 casualties with five hundred lost to the Confederacy and 360 lost to the Union. It is highly likely that John Henry Orgain returned to Salado in Bell County after he was wounded and would visit Round Rock and Hutto in Williamson County.

It was on February 4th, 1866, after the Civil War that Adam's former master, John H. Orgain married Kate Alma (Gavin) Orgain. This information was gleaned from Cazenovia Seminary in New York where Kate attended in 1855. Kate was from a wealthy family that lived in Waukegan, Illinois and as a girl she had moved to Louisiana with her mother. After Kate's formal education was completed, she moved to Round Rock to teach school. Kate taught music and art. It was in Round Rock that she met and married John Orgain. After the Civil War, the Orgain newly-weds moved from Round Rock to Salado in 1866 to begin their life together.



An 1890 stock photograph of the Norton-Orgain house built circa 1871 by Edward R. A. Buckles, who was the owner of the famous Stagecoach Inn and one of the founders of Salado. Buckles sold the house to Nimrod Lindsay Norton of Texas State Capitol fame who later sold it to John H. and Kate Orgain in 1882. It is possible that the lady sitting on the porch is Kate Alma Orgain. The Norton-Orgain house is a fine example of the Texas Greek revival style and was built next to the then Goodnight Cattle Trail.

It was in 1880 that Norton was selected to serve as a Capitol Building Commissioner to plan for the new Texas State Capitol building overseeing design, materials review, and construction. It was Norton who was instrumental in the selection of the Texas pink granite for the exterior building material. While Norton chose not to continue as Building Commissioner through the completion of the State Capitol, his leadership was of immense importance. The Texas State Capitol was built between 1882 and 1888.

It was in September of 1882, that Mr. Norton sold his home to John H. and Kate Alma Orgain. This was not the Orgains' first home in Salado as they had lived there since 1866. It is, however, the home that became known as the Norton-Orgain house and is now a bed and breakfast.

A number of years later Nimrod Norton moved to Austin and in 1893 he built his home in Austin. Ten years later in 1903 Norton died and he is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Austin.

John Orgain and his wife, Kate Alma, were quite notable in Central Texas living in Round Rock, Salado, and Temple during their lifetimes. John Orgain was considered to have been one of the founders of Salado when he came there in 1859 while still managing the family farm near Hutto. It was in early 1866 that Orgain returned to live with his bride to the Salado area to pursue his business interests.

In 1866 Kate gave birth to their first child, Edwin. Kate taught school at Salado College in the late 1860's. It was during this time that Kate served as the first President of a reading society called "*Amasavourian*", whose name means "love of knowing". Kate Orgain raised funds for the purchase of books which later evolved into the Salado circulating library.

In 1870, at four years of age, young Edwin died and was buried at Salado Cemetery. This was without doubt a time of great despair for John and Kate Orgain.

It is likely that John Orgain was involved in the 1873 founding of the first "*Grange*" in Texas in Salado. The Grange was for the economic benefit of farmers and ranchers to encourage social interaction, reading and communication amongst those involved in agriculture.

John also would have also been involved in the "*Euphradians*" which was a debating group for men that encouraged leadership and public speaking. John Orgain was later instrumental in the organization of Thomas Arnold High School in Salado and served as County Superintendent of Schools in 1898.

Beginning in 1890, Kate taught music for several years at Thomas Arnold High School. Frustrated at the lack of reading and teaching materials available, Kate wrote or edited several books from 1900 to 1904 which included, Southern Authors in Poetry, Supplementary Reader, and A Waif from Texas. In A Waif from Texas, Kate wrote of her sentiment towards Black people: "The negro is ever an aristocrat if he has only a half a chance to show it."

In her obituary notice from the Temple Daily Telegram dated Tuesday, April 28, 1913, contained the following information and excerpts about Kate Alma Orgain.

"Mrs. Kate Alma Orgain died April 26, 1913, at the family residence on North Seventh Street in Temple due to paralysis. Funeral services were conducted at the residence where

she had lived for the last sixteen years of her life. Kate was the mother of four children, H. K. Orgain and Charles M. Orgain of Temple, Mrs. Mary Chamberlain of Burnet, Texas, and Edwin Orgain, deceased.”

The obituary notice further read: “Kate Alma Orgain was an artist, musician, and writer. As an artist her portrayal of the dumb beast was her favorite subject. As a musician she was fondest of the classical side of the art. Among her best-known writings are her "Waif from Texas," "A Thread of Gold," "Southern Writer in Prose and Poetry," and her collection of prose and poetry used as supplementary reading in public schools. She was public librarian in Temple for several years. She was a member of the Woman's Press Club of Texas, and of the Daughters of the American Republic. She was a well-known newspaper contributor. She had one of the largest collections in Texas of the works of Southern writers.”

Kate Alma Orgain was described as “one of the sweetest characters who ever trod this green footstool of Texas.”

“Some of the most valuable and strongest sentimental stories that are honored with publication came from her pen. She elevated the frontier and the lowly with the aspirations and the worths which are superior to time, place, and condition, by her the human heart was sounded in its longings and manifestations.”

“Mrs. Orgain drops out of the chain and severs the almost last connection with the days which, though not far removed as by calendar's measure, are immeasurably separated in the progress of human affairs. She kept step with the progress and to the end she was the cultured, gentle, helpful woman whose every day of life was benediction. The world is very much better for her having lived in it.”



A photograph of Kate Alma Orgain from her book, A Waif From Texas published in 1901 by Ben C. Jones & Co., Printers of Austin, Texas. This picture is about thirty-six years after she had married John Henry Orgain. Many of the stories in her book seem to be reflective of Kate's own early day experiences in Texas.

In 1913, Kate Alma Orgain at age seventy-five was laid to rest in Temple, Texas at Hillcrest Cemetery. Five years later in 1917, John Henry at age eighty-five was buried beside his loving wife. A number of other relatives of John Henry Orgain including his father and mother are buried in Shiloh-McCutcheon Cemetery near Hutto in Williamson County, Bastrop's Fairview Cemetery in Bastrop County, Salado Cemetery in Bell County and Temple's Hillcrest Cemetery in Bell County.

ORGAIN FAMILIES TODAY

No one really even begins to know or understand much of what went on with either of Orgain families; the Black Adam and Eveline family or the Anglo John and Kate family. The way these families lived, believed, felt, acted, and eventually died is all to a high degree only supposition, much is like an extraordinarily complex puzzle with mostly missing pieces. Kate Alma Orgain has helped through her writings to provide at least some basis for life in early Texas. The differences in rights, status, wealth, education, and privilege between the Black and White Orgains was staggering. It is known that no people with the surname of Orgain or Organ, Black or White are currently living in Hutto. It is also known that John Henry's father, the Reverend Sterling Orgain, who was born on January 31, 1787, and died on January 4, 1878, lived in the Hutto area with his wife, Mary E. Orgain, who was born on January 17, 1798, and died on January 23, 1878. Reverend Orgain was the original enslaver of Adam Orgain and at least ten other enslaved human beings including Eveline Orgain, Manuel Orgain and in all probability many more slave children as offspring of their slave parents. Both Reverend Sterling Orgain and his wife Mary are buried in the Shiloh-McCutcheon Cemetery in Hutto.

For that matter, there are also no known Hutto family members living in Hutto. It is known that both Orgain families contributed to the deep heritage of their respective communities.

It should also be noted that a number of relatives of John Henry Orgain were living in Bastrop and were very prominent in that community. The Benjamin Darby Orgain home located at Church Street and Cedar Street is said to be the largest Victorian house in Bastrop County.



The B. D. Orgain House is on the National Register of Historic Places and State of Texas Historical Landmark and has a description that reads: “This double-galleried Victorian residence was constructed in 1888 for Benjamin Darby Orgain (1843-1917), a prominent area banker, attorney, and civic leader. His wife, Drucilla (Johnson) (d.1931) was an assistant teacher in the local Colorado Institute. The exterior of their home features intricate detailing and fish scale shingling. The interior includes woodwork of pine, cherry, mahogany, and walnut. Orgain family members owned the house until 1947.”

B. D. Orgain was born in Paris, Tennessee on September 10, 1843, and died in Bastrop, Texas on February 18, 1917. His wife, “Dru” Johnson Orgain was born in Pulaski, Tennessee on July 2, 1843, and died in Bastrop, Texas on July 9, 1931. Fairview Cemetery in Bastrop was established in 1832 and has a substantial number of Orgain family members buried there, including E.J. Orgain (Born: August 9, 1823, and Died: December 21, 1905) and S.J. Orgain (Born: June 13, 1830, and Died: July 25, 1924).

One of the descendent members of the Bastrop Orgain family was Will E. Orgain. He was an attorney and served as a member of the Texas House of Representatives during

the Thirtieth Texas Legislature. Will Orgain was a founder of the renowned law firm of Orgain, Bell and Tucker in Beaumont where he resided after leaving Bastrop.

Orgain or Organ descendants, of both genealogies, have since moved away, died, and continued to their next generations. A cornucopia of added information was received from Cora Carter of Hobbs, New Mexico, a descendent of Adam Orgain, and that 'new to me' information resulted in some revisions to this article as more children than originally thought were part of the Eveline and Adam Orgain family.

All of this research serves as just a small tribute to all of those who came before us! Much has changed in the past one hundred and seventy plus years since the Reverend Sterling Orgain and his son John Henry Orgain first came to central Texas and saw to it that the young, enslaved Adam Orgain was placed on their property of rugged Blackland Prairie range in Hutto. Racism and hatred still exist here, as some things have clearly not changed enough ... leaving much room for continual improvement in thought, word, and deed regarding our collective treatment of others and ourselves.



This article is intended to be free-of-charge for institutional, non-profit, public and media use and distribution if credit as to authorship is provided when and however utilized. For additional contact information please reach out to Mike Fowler at 512-736-2000 or mikefowlertexas@gmail.com Mike Fowler is an author of The Capitol Story: Statehouse in Texas; Hutto Lutheran Church: A Century of Community Faith; Vee Fowler... An Amazing Woman; and Images of America: Hutto as well as numerous other publications. Mike is also working on new books on his father, Mel Fowler, and on his wife, Donna, and himself including their history in Hutto. Mike also is a retired State of Texas employee and served for twenty-five years as Councilman and Mayor of the City of Hutto. Mike is a founder and the first life member of the Hutto Chamber of Commerce. Mike was the first chair of the City of Hutto Historical Preservation Commission and served as a member of the Williamson County Historical Commission. He is also a licensed real estate Broker who owns TEX US Real Estate and has a degree in government from the University of Texas at Austin where he is a life member of the University of Texas Ex-Students Association. In 2025 Mike Fowler was selected by community vote via iHutto as the "Best Hutto Citizen".