

Block 1

January 1853 – December 1853

Albert G. Foster (Block 1 Lot 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5)

Williams Smothers (Block 1 Lot 6)

Thomas Simons & Son (Block 1 Lot 7)

Murchison Lodge/Peter McDermott (Block 1 Lot 8)

1853 January 28: Death of Peter McDermott survived by wife Ann. He owned one house and lot (Masonic Hall). Store merchandise sold at auction on August 11, 1853.

**Probate Minutes Vol. A*

1853 Fall: Abner K. Foster and M.B. Bennett purchased, at public auction, property from the estate of Peter McDermott a certain house & lot excepting the upper part of said house for a Masonic Lodge (Lot 8 in Block 1)

*Sale voided in 1854.

**John M. Bennett and Abner K. Foster vs. Lewis W. Layton, M.B. Bennett and John W. Kelly Lavaca County Civil Case #198*

In 1851 and 1852, McDermott had been in partnership with John W. Kelly in Peter McDermott & Co. After the death of McDermott on January 28, 1853, Kelly was involved in two Civil Cases involving unpaid notes. Even though the partnership has been dissolved in 1852, it was ruled that Kelly was still responsible for the payment of the debts.

**Marshall B. Bennett and Lewis Layton executors of Peter McDermott vs. Adam Coble and John W. Kelly Civil Case #148 no judgment*

**James E. North & Co. in Louisiana vs. John W. Kelly Civil Case #162 Debt on note. A/205 Kelly must pay note.*

Block 2

January – December 1853

Dr. M.B. Bennett (Block 2 Lot 1)

1853 September 1: Dr. M.B. Bennett sold Lot 1 in Block 2 together with all the appurtenances to Wilson Brooks

**Lavaca County Deed B/394*

1853 October 25: That I Wilson Brooks have purchased of M.B. Bennett the house and lot of his and for which I have taken the Bond of the said Bennett for title, said house and lot in ...known as the old drug store stand of Bennett & Sanford. Now for value received of the said Bennett, I have this day and do by these presents, release for myself, my heirs and all other persons the said house and lot and appurtenances belonging to the said Bennett his heirs and assigns forever and release all the right unto said Bond which is of Record in the Clerk's office of Lavaca County.

**Lavaca County Deed B/442*

A.W. Hicks (Block 2 Lot 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Block 3

January – December 1853

A.W. Hicks Hotel & Tavern (Block 3 Lot 1 – 8)

William Smothers (Block 3 Lot 1 & 3)

**While the B/207 deed states that the entire eight lots in Block 3 were reserved for Hicks, William Smothers had previously purchased Lot 1 & 3 in Block 3 via deed B/44.*

Block 4

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 4 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 5

January – December 1853

Albert G. Foster (Block 5 Lot 1, 2, 4, & 7)

**Note: While the B/207 deed states that Lot 7 in Block 5 was reserved for A.G. Foster, Lot 7 was the location of the Collatinus Ballard store.*

Dorothy McDonald (Block 5 Lot 3)

Collatinus Ballard (Block 5 Lot 5)

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 5 Lot 6 & 8) Dec 1853

In 1852, Jesse Sanders allegedly sold Lot 5 & 6 to Mary Dufner (now Mary Guthrie). In 1852 it was discovered that the deed was fraudulent and that Sanders was the rightful owner of Lot 5 but not Lot 6. The deed had been created, but was destroyed before it was officially recorded. In April 1853, the Guthries took Sanders to court, but the court ruled in favor of Sanders.

In October of 1853, Jesse L. Sanders & wife Margaret, William Smothers and George W. Guthrie sold Lot 5 in Block 5 to Collatinus Ballard where Guthrie and his wife now lived. It is hereby understood that this deed is not to interfere or prejudice any right or claim which the said William Smothers or the said Guthrie & wife may have against the said Saunders for and adjoining lot (Lot 6) to the above bargained lot, but all right, title, interest demands and claims it to stand as if this deed had never been made, as nothing relating to the additional lot is to be compromised by this deed...

**Lavaca County Deed B/428*

Collatinus Ballard (Block 5 Lot 7)

Block 6

January – December 1853

Lavaca County (Block 6 Lot 1 – 8) Lavaca County Courthouse

Block 7

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 7 Lot 2 & 4) Dec 1853

John R. Whited/Collatinus Ballard (Block 7 Lot 1 & 3)

John R. Whited/Charles C. Dibrell (Block 7 Lot 5 & 7 & W ½ Lot 6 & 8)

1853 September 20: John K. Whited and wife Eliza sold Lots 1, 3, 5 & 7 and west ½ of Lots 6 & 8 in Block 7 to James A. York and M.B. Bennett. (Deed void if promissory note between Whited and Stephen & Lucinda Best is paid)

**Lavaca County Deed B/402*

1853 December 1: York & Bennett released all title & interest. (Note paid off; property remained with Whited)

**Lavaca County Deed B/402*

1853 November 25: Thomas H. Hawks sold to John K. Whited the west ½ of Lots 6 & 8 in Block 7.

**Lavaca County Deed B/466*

** Note: While the Lavaca County deed B/466 states that Hawks sold the west ½ of Lot 6 & 8 in Block 7, no deed has been located to document how Hawks received the property.*

1853 December 14: John K. Whited and Eliza H. Whited sold Lot 5 & 7 in Block 7 to Charles C. Dibrell. The two lots previously conveyed by Collatinus Ballard and wife to John K. Whited and wife (B/58). The deed also included the west ½ of Lots 6 & 8 in Block 7 being the two lots sold by Thomas H. Hawks to Whited.

**Lavaca County Deed B/467 (copy)*

1853 December 19: John K. Whited and wife Eliza sold a house and lots, Lots 1 & 3 in Block 7, to Collatinus Ballard. Eliza relinquished her right and “dower” to the above.

**Lavaca County Deed B/475*

Block 8

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 8 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 9

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 9 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 10

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 10 Lot 1 – 6 & 8) Dec 1853

Josiah Dowling (Block 10 Lot 7)

Block 11

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 11 Lot 1, 2, 5 - 8) Dec 1853

1853 September 21: Thomas H. Hawks to William Tate Lots 3 & 4 in Block 11

**Lavaca County Deed B/400*

** Note: While the Lavaca County deed B/400 states that Hawks sold Block 11 Lot 3 & 4, no deed has been located to document how Hawks received the property.*

Block 12

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 12 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 13

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 13 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 14

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 14 Lot 2 – 8) Dec 1853

Lavaca County Jail (Block 14 Lot 1)

In December 1852, bids were advertised for construction of the jail, a two stories, board laminated building, with an outside stairway 16 X 18 feet. L.W. Layton's bid for the building was accepted, and the building was completed in October 1853.

**Free State of Lavaca p. 159-160*

Block 15

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 15 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 16

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 16 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 17

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 17 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 18

January – December 1853

**Alma Male & Female Institute (Block 18 Lot 2, 4, 6 & 8 &
Block 22 Lot 1, 3, 5 & 7)**

When Margaret Hallet donated the town site of Hallettsville to the Lavaca County Commissioners Court, included in her donation was a lot for a church and one tract of 80 varas square for a school.

In 1852, the Alma Male and Female Institution was established on the property donated by Hallet (Lot 2, 4, 6 & 8 in Block 18 and Lot 1, 3, 5 & 7 in Block 22).

The long two story wooden structure was built by local builder J. W. Layton. The frame was of a rough-hewn timber covered with planking hauled from Indianola by ox cart. The building faced west and contained classrooms, a dormitory and a music room. The cost of the structure was \$5,000.00.

Between statehood and the beginning of the Civil War, the Texas Legislature granted 117 charters to institutions of higher learning. According to the Texas State Gazette of January 22, 1853, Colonel Amasa Turner introduced a bill to be entitled an act to incorporate the Alma Institute. By January 29, 1853, the bill had been referred to the state committee of Education. By February 5, 1853, the committee of Education sends the act back to the House and recommended its passage. The act to incorporate the Alma Male and Female Institution was approved by the Texas Legislature on February 6, 1854.

The Institute's first session ran from the first Monday in May 1853 to October 1853 with a curriculum based on all branches of a liberal education. According to an area newspaper announcement the tuition was comparable to other such neighboring schools. C. L. Spencer, a Methodist minister and a member of the James A. Baker Masonic Lodge #202 conducted the Institute as well as serving the local Methodist congregation. He was assisted by a Miss Flanagan. The dormitory, which was managed by A.G. Andrews, operated under two different rates, \$5.00 per month for students attending Monday morning to Friday afternoon and \$7.00 for students who needed washing, lights and bedding.

While the charter name was the Alma Female Institute there is evidence that boys did attend the school. A project was undertaken in 1853 by the local Masonic

Lodge to construct a private school for boys, but the project was fraught with problem. (See Hallettsville Masonic College)

A Board of Trustees from the joint stock company had governed the school prior to the school being granted a charter. When the charter was granted, these trustees became the principal stockholders. Those trustees were: Major James C. Finney, builder L.W. Layton, Collatinus Ballard, A.G. Andrews, Colonel Amasa Turner, S. Bennett, A.W. Hicks and Dr. M.B. Bennett.

The charter, among other duties, gave the trustees the power to transact the ordinary business of the school, buy, sell and hold property, accept donations and confer degrees. The charter also stipulated that no religious screening would be required of any employee and not student or officer could be censured, suspended or expelled on account of his or her political or religious views. It also stated that the Institute could never be under the control of any particular domination of Christians or religious sect.

The Alma Institute was garnering state wide attention as evidenced in an article printed in the *Texas State Gazette* on August 27, 1853.

“Lavaca County – Mr. Rogers of Hallettsville, informs us that this county is settling up very rapidly. The emigration is composed mostly of farmers, mechanics, and such classes as build up a country. There are few better farming districts in Texas than Lavaca County and certainly none that can boast of better health. The crops are in flourishing condition.

Hallettsville, the country site, we also learn, is improving at a rapid rate. A large male and female academy has recently been opened and is now in successful operation. The building was gotten up and completed by individual enterprise, at a cost of about \$5,000, and all the necessary apparatus, instruments, library, etc., will be supplied at an early day. Such liberality is certainly entitled to, and will, undoubtedly, receive its just reward.”

Lavaca County Deed C/207

History of Lavaca County p.141

Free State of Lavaca p. 169-170, 172

History of Lavaca County p. 140-141

History of Lavaca County Schools

Education and Masonry in Texas 1846 – 1861 p. 189-190

Block 19

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 19 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

Block 20

January – December 1853

Lavaca County (Block 20 Lot 1 – 8)

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 20 Lot 1 – 8) Dec 1853

1853: In 1853 the Masonic Lodge undertook to construct a private school for boys. The Alma Institute did as much for the girls. A building committee of J. W. Kelly, Isaac J. Foster, Maryland Jones, B.B. Walker and J.J. Ballard was appointed. The committee and other solicited donations and pledges to finance the project, and in time they contracted with A.K. Foster to construct a building 60 feet long, 30 feet wide and 3 stores high, with an observatory on the roof. The building was located on a site donated by John W. Kelly and Josiah Dowling on Block 20 on Fourth St.

**Free State of Lavaca p. 171*

Fractional Block 1

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Fractional Block 1) Dec 1853

Fractional Block 2 Lot 2 & 3

January – December 1853

A.G. Foster/L.T. Harris (Fractional Block 2 Lot 2 & 3)

Lots 2 & 3 in Fractional Block 2 were reserved to A.G. Foster per the deed of Margaret P. Hallet and Collatinus and Mary Jane Ballard to John H. Livergood, County Judge of Lavaca County dated 21st June 1852

**Lavaca County Deed B/207*

**Note: While the B/207 deed states that the Lots 2 & 3 in Fractional Block 2 were reserved for Foster; L.T. Harris had previously purchased Lots 2 & 3 in Fractional Block 2 on February 22, 1852 vis deed B/175 from Collatinus Ballard. Along with the lots, the deed also included an additional ½ acre of land running 35 yards of Main St. then on a westerly course to Front St. The down payment and note on the property were to be paid to a William Pursley, not Ballard.*

1853 Dec 7: L.T. & Mary Jane Harris to C. Ballard Fractional Lots 2 & 3 and also ½ acre running 35 yards on Main street, hence a westerly course 70 yards to Front Street, hence 35 yards to Lot 2.

**Lavaca County Deeds B/460*

Fraction Block 3 Lot 4 & 5

January – December 1853

1853 May 4: Indenture from Lewis L. Layton and Marshall B. Bennett executors of the estate of Peter McDermott to Dr. Nathaniel Chambliss the gin lot in the town of Hallettsville together with the gin house and running gear.

**Free State of Lavaca p. 163*

**Lavaca County Deed B/325*

Fractional Block 4 Lot 6 & 7

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Fractional Block 4 Lot 6 & 7) Dec 1853

Fractional Block 5 Lot 8 & 9

January – December 1853

Lavaca County to Dowling and Kelly (Block 5 Lot 8 & 9) Dec 1853

1853 June 14: Josiah Dowling and John W. Kelly to Wilson Brooks

**Lavaca County Deed B/335*