

Johan Reinert Reiersen

Johan Reinert Reiersen left Norway in 1843 by way of Havre for New Orleans. From New Orleans he proceeded north to Illinois and Wisconsin and then down to Texas. There he had gone to Austin, the capital, and had been presented to the governor, who was anxious to get Norwegians to occupy the Texan prairies. He returned to Norway, published in 1843 his famous book, "Veiviseren," rounded up his family and a few others, and set sail again for America. He located in Henderson County and called the colony Normandy, but it was later changed to Brownsboro. He died at Prairieville, Tex., Sept. 6, 1864, but his widow was still living there in 1895. One of his sons was then a hotel keeper at Kaufman, Tex.; another son was a bank cashier at Key West, Fla. Prairieville, founded in 1847 by Reiersen, is the second Norwegian settlement in Texas. It was known also as Four Mile Prairie. One of the most remarkable Norwegians in Texas was Mrs. Elise Warenskjold. She came to Four Mile Prairie in 1847 as Mrs. Foyen, then married Waerenskjold in 1848 and lived with him until he was assassinated on account of his anti-slavery views. She had been an editor in Norway and wrote many articles for the Norwegian press from her far western home. She give much first hand reliable information about pioneer life. She organized a temperance society in her community; also a Lutheran congregation, taught school and prevailed on her husband to preach until a trained pastor could be secured. Through her Rev. Elling Eielsen made a missionary journey to Texas in 1849 and Emil Frederichsen was called as minister of the Gospel at Four Mile Norwegian Lutheran Congregation, 1854-1857.

