

# WHAT'S IN A NAME? RABBIT CREEK, DANVILLE, OR NEW DANVILLE, TEXAS?

By Patricia A. Kaufmann



Figure 1. Only recorded Confederate use of Rabbit Creek, Texas: Paid 5, Feb 26 (18)62, addressed to M(anoah) F. Stone.

The folded letter illustrated in Figure 1 is from a family correspondence never before in philatelic hands. It was the basis for the listing of the previously-unrecorded town of Rabbit Creek, Texas, in the *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*.

The rate of “Paid 5” and the town are all in manuscript with a date of “Feb the 26 / [18]62.” The pale markings are on a folded letter addressed to “M[anoah] F. Stone, Little Rock [Arkansas], A private in Captian (sic) Thompsons Company Green Regiment Mounted Cavelry (sic) Care Captain Thompson of Lock Regiment.” “Little Rock” has been crossed out and a double-circle datestamp of March 1862 applied and rerouted to Jacksonport [Arkansas]. The first page of the folded letter, shown in Figure 2, is headed “Rusk County Texas February the 24 1862” signed by “Mary T. Stone to Manoah F. Stone,” as shown in Figure 3.

Rusk County Texas  
February the 24 1862  
Dear Husband it is with pleasure  
I take my pen in hand to let  
you no that we are all tolerably  
well at present except Jeremiah  
he is chiling a little occasionally  
and I hope these few lines  
will find you well and enjoying  
your self well I have got my  
cloth in the loom and have  
wove some the girls is a spinning  
some dresses Jeremiah and  
Martin is a plowing a little  
There was a man here yesterday  
wanting to rent land he was to  
come back this morning to  
close the trade if he touch  
the land he has not come yet  
and I cant wait any longer  
for him and get the letter in  
this mail his name is J  
Linningham he is just from  
Cappel county Tennessee you can  
get his character from Mr. Thel

Figure 2. First page of the folded letter from Rabbit Creek headed "Rusk County Texas February the 24 1862."

he is a old acquaintance  
of his he has his family at  
Mrs. Trudman he wants  
all we can spare he will plant  
it in corn and give to the third  
the connexion is all tolerably  
well Mother is getting better  
I have nothing more at  
present so I must bring  
my letter to a close and  
wishing you and your company  
go luck and great success  
in victory so nothing more  
but remains your loving  
wife until death  
Mary T Stone to  
Marwah H Stone

Figure 3. Second page of the folded letter signed Mary T. Stone.

### Private Manoah F. Stone – Victim of an Epidemic

Manoah F. Stone served in Company G of the 10th Texas Cavalry, also known as the Rusk County Texas Troopers. Military records show that on March 6, the 10th Texas Cavalry was in Little Rock and on March 15 in Jacksonport, Arkansas. They had been at Camp Ector, but the water was unsafe, so they were called to go to Little Rock, Arkansas, where they contracted measles. From there, they were moved to Jacksonport, where more became sick.

Gen. Cabell wrote to Gen. Van Dorn that the regiment could not move, as they were getting sick at the rate of thirty per day. The Civil War took the lives of more Americans than all the other United States conflicts combined, from the American Revolution through Viet Nam. Bell Irvin Wiley, in his book *Life of Johnny Reb*, concludes that for every soldier killed in battle or of mortal wounds, there were three deaths from disease. Total deaths during the war for both sides has been estimated at 623,026, with an additional 471,421 wounded for a total of 1,094,453. In World War II, our total casualties were 1,078,162.

On April 15, the 10th Texas Cavalry was ordered dismounted and sent east to Memphis, Tennessee. Texas Governor Francis R. Lubbock wrote, “*The people of Texas, as it were, live on horseback, and it is with great aversion they enlist in the infantry.*” This explains why few infantry regiments were available to be sent to Arkansas. The order for the 10th Texas to dismount was very much opposed, but the choice was that or to disband. They decided to remain on foot, but they were not considered infantry and continued to receive the wages of cavalry.

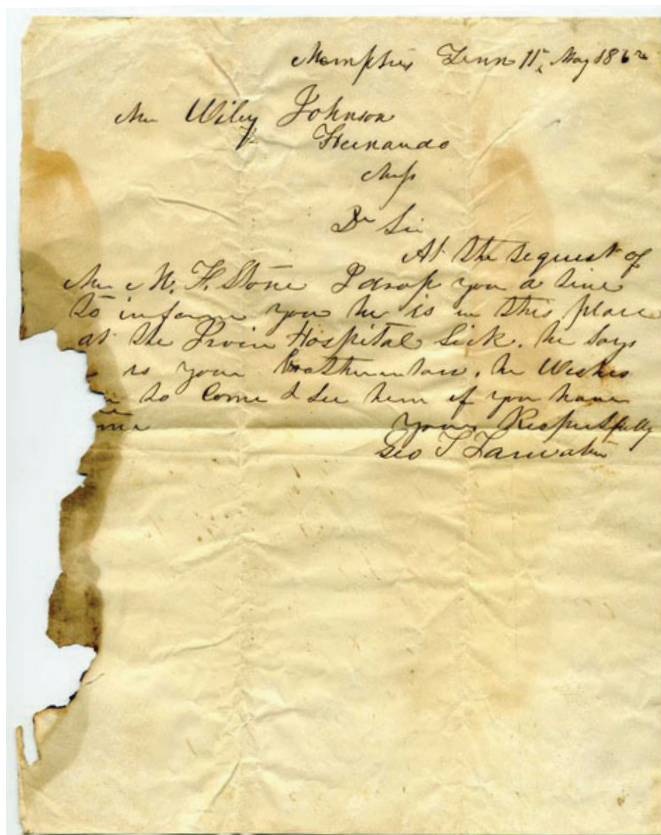


Figure 4. Letter written by a hospital steward to the brother-in-law of Manoah Stone saying he is sick and wishes him to come see him.

Records show that Henry Watson, a sergeant in Company F, wrote home from Des Ark, Arkansas stating, “*did not like to give up my horse much but our country needs our assistance and I expect to serve my 12 months out some way...*” He also noted the horses were being sent home.

Memphis had many hospitals and infirmaries. Men from the surrounding area were taken to Memphis for treatment on hospital boats. Some died on the boats, while others died in hospitals from various diseases and are buried in Memphis. The measles epidemic killed citizens and soldiers alike.

Figure 4 shows a letter headed “*Memphis, Tenn. 11 May 1862*” written by a hospital steward to Mr. Wiley Johnson at Fernando, Mississippi. It informs Johnson that his brother-in-law, Manoah Stone, is at Levin Hospital sick and that he wishes him to come see him if he can. We don’t know whether Johnson was able to make the trip, but three days later Stone was dead. He is buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Mem-

phis. He died with much of his cavalry unit under Matthew F. Locke. According to the family, Manoah Stone was under the command of Col. John Thompson, but got separated on December 3, 1861. He ended up with Col. Matthew F. Locke of the 10th Texas Cavalry. Locke was a Texas senator, in Congress, speaker of the house, and signed for Texas secession (only 166 people signed).

According to the family that provided these documents to the philatelic world, the Memphis hospitals were written about by many who were there. They were hiding soldiers at homes and in the woods because the Union army was coming. They were particularly after the 10th Texas Cavalry as they felt they had a score to settle. Stone was writing while Wiley Johnson was fighting with Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest until his capture later in Gainesville, Alabama.

Later, Wiley Johnson ran a mill for Company F, 18th Mississippi Battalion Cavalry, by order of Brig. Gen. James R. Chalmers. Company F was also known as the Pettus Rangers, raised in DeSoto and Panola Counties, Mississippi. This battalion was organized mainly from independent companies of partisan rangers which had been formed for the protection of the northern part of the State after the evacuation of Corinth.

### Rabbit Creek, Texas

Rabbit Creek was established in 1847 in what is today south-central Gregg County, Texas. The post office opened there under the name of Rabbit Creek on January 29, 1850, with William P. Chisum as postmaster, but was changed to New Danville on April 3, 1852.

According to *The Handbook of Texas Online*, at its height around the time of the Civil War, New Danville had three or four stores, several saloons, a blacksmith shop, and a hand-fed gin powered by two mules. The community continued to prosper until the early 1870s, when the International-Great Northern Railroad bypassed it. Many of the town's residents and most of its businesses moved to Kilgore on the railroad. In the 1940s Danville, as it was later called, still had a church, a cemetery, and two stores. Later the stores closed, and in the early 1990s only a few scattered dwellings remained at the site.

The 1862 List of U.S. Post Offices shows the town of New Danville in Rusk County, but not Rabbit Creek, nor is today's Gregg County listed – only Rusk County. As I am not a Texas historian, that observation sent me scurrying for more information since Mary Stone's letter was clearly headed Rusk County. I discovered that Gregg County was not created until 1873 when a bill was introduced by B. W. Brown of Upshur County to create a new county from parts of Harrison, Rusk, and Upshur counties. The proposed name was Roanoke, but it was later changed to honor Texas leader and Confederate Brigadier-General John Gregg.

The locations of New Danville and Rabbit Creek are shown in Figure 5. As you can see, Rabbit Creek flows throughout the entire area. Thus, in 1850, the entire area could have been known as the Rabbit Creek community. Vince King, who used to call this area home, feels certain the two post office

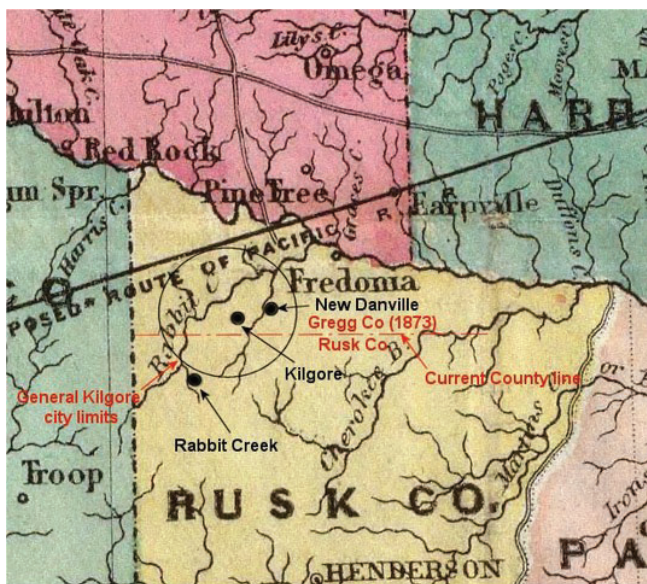


Figure 5. The locations of New Danville and Rabbit Creek, Texas, shown on a map created by Vince King.

locations of Rabbit Creek and New Danville were in different physical locations, not just a name change. Those communities evolved and vacillated due to transportation, road locations, railroads and so forth...but all within a five-mile radius of current day Kilgore.

Today, New Danville is simply known as Danville, an unincorporated community in Gregg County. More than three-fourths of the Kilgore city limits is in Gregg County with the remainder in Rusk County. The 2020 census recorded a population of 13,376 in Kilgore.

Vince explains,

For those of us discussing these locales today, we would say...Rabbit Creek, New Danville... oh...that is current day Kilgore. Back in the 1850s though they were more separate little communities or settlements...dying out from one to the other.”

As to the Danville/New Danville issue, I would say that it is apparent from the history books that New Danville (in Rusk County during the period) was called DANVILLE by its citizens/locals. Then when they applied for a PO in 1852, the PO department said...”no you can’t use that name because we have already have a PO, 150 miles to the south, in Montgomery Co. by that name that was created in 1847...you have to come up with a new name.” From that the name New Danville was probably created and became the PO. BUT the residents probably keep using the Danville name. As a result their local history records both names but the PO was only officially “New Danville.”

Confederate Post Office records show that there was a “special post office” of Rabbit Creek established October 18, 1861, in Rusk County with William P. Martin as postmaster. It was discontinued on November 5, 1866, after the war ended.

New Danville appears in the 1862 U.S. Post Office Department records and shows it continued until 1873. Regardless of the status under the Confederacy (discontinued, renamed, etc.) the U.S. Post Office Department retained post offices on their books under their name on May 31, 1861. After the war, almost all the offices were first discontinued. This took place over a long period from 1865 into the 1870s. Just because the U.S. records show a Southern post office in the late 1860s that does not mean it was operating. The actual U.S. Post Office Department records of appointments have to be checked in order to find when the office was discontinued and then reestablished.

There is a recorded Confederate manuscript Paid 10 marking from Danville, Texas, but this is in Montgomery County, Texas – not the same as the New Danville in Rusk County, which is referred to as simply Danville today, near Kilgore.

The story of the Rabbit Creek and New Danville postal markings are a perfect example of how entangled and confusing postal research can become with the changes of town and county names and even physical borders.

Acknowledgements: My sincere thanks to Vince King for his painstaking assistance, particularly his explanatory map created for this article. Charles Deaton was also involved in the discussion and concurred with Vince’s conclusions. My thanks to Frank Crown as well, who contributed during the early phase of this research.

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