

Austin Colony Pioneers - Ray

P. 84 - Washington Co. - Texas -

Maj David Conner - a distinguished farmer member of the Constitutional Convention (1819) of the State of Alabama died in Washington Co. in 1852. The following notice of his death appeared in the press:

Maj David Conner died 10th inst. Brenham, Washington Co. - He was a citizen of Polk Co, formerly of Alabama and served in the Legislature of that State - Texas Presbyterian Sept 18, 1852, p. 3. Col 3 - according to Owens History of Ala Maj Conner represented St Clair County of that State in the Constitutional Convention - Died Sept 10, 1852

St. Clair Countian Helped
Launch State in 1819

A county older than the State of Alabama, St. Clair County was virtual wilderness at the time of its creation, November 20, 1818, by the second session of the Territorial Legislature meeting in St. Stephens. Its houses were log cabins and its roads, such as they were, had been cut by Andrew Jackson's Tennesseans while fighting the Creeks in 1813-14. Earlier, the county was only Indian country through which hunters and hardy adventurers, such as Davy Crockett, passed.

The legislative act creating the county also provided for a circuit court. In the absence of a county seat or public buildings, it was to be held at Alexander Brown's house, meeting there first on December 7, 1818. The first case docketed was a damage suit filed by Joel Chandler against Alexander Brown. David Conner, or Conner, active during the formative years of both St. Clair County and Alabama, signed court documents as Sheriff, having been appointed to this position on November 20, 1818. Conner was of Irish descent, was above medium height, and had a fair complexion. "A keen trader, he was a good judge of men, in every way suited to gain the affections of the rough mountaineer veterans of the county."

In 1819 St. Clair County was on the Creek frontier, with a few widely scattered settlements. Across the Coosa River to the east and the south lay the vast lands of the Creek Indians, who remained a common sight in the county for a decade. In their first election, these early settlers, who had to travel from all parts of the county to the temporary court house to cast their ballots, chose David Conner, a newcomer like themselves, as delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Huntsville.

An able and experienced assembly of forty-four men, including the St. Clair County delegate, David Conner, met in Huntsville on July 5, 1819, to begin drafting the first constitution for Alabama. In session for less than one month, the Convention adjourned on August 2, 1819, after completing its work, and the new Constitution, signed by the delegates, was forwarded to Washington for consideration by the Congress. By joint resolution, which President James Monroe signed, Congress admitted Alabama to the Union on December 14, 1819.

Under the newly adopted state constitution, which provided for a general election to choose state and local officials, voters of St. Clair County selected David Conner to represent them as their first State Senator. Following his election as senator, October 28, 1819, he resigned as sheriff and met with the first Alabama State Legislature, which convened temporarily at Huntsville, because the town of Cahawba, or Cahaba, located at the confluence of the Alabama and Cahaba Rivers below Selma, had not yet been laid out, although it had been designated the permanent capital of the state by the Territorial Legislature.

Records show that in October 21, 1820, Conner entered land near Caldwell in St. Clair County, and later when he sold the property, he alone signed the deed. The voters were evidently pleased with the record of their first State Senator because they re-elected him to the office in 1822, while the capital was still located at Cahawba, and again in 1828 and 1831, after it had been moved to another "permanent" location at Tuscaloosa.

On March 24, 1832, the Creek Indians ceded to the United States all their land east of the Coosa River to the Georgia line. A decade prior to this time, white squatters, land speculators, and bootleggers had ^{begun} moving into the Indian lands and their actions and

greed provoked much of the conflict and disorder that prompted Andrew Jackson and other officials to press for removal of the Indians to the West. After the Indians were marched westward under military escort along the "Trail of Tears" and Talladega County created, David Connor left St. Clair County and moved into the fertile farmlands north of Checcoletto Creek, where for several years he reportedly "conducted" a store.

In 1841, shortly after the establishment of the Republic of Texas, following the defeat of the Mexicans and their President Santa Ana by Sam Houston and the Texans, David Connor felt once more the urge to move into a developing region. He joined the wave of settlers moving into the rich lands of the east Texas river bottoms, settling in Washington County, Texas, located in the basin of the Brazos River. On September 10, 1852, David Connor died in Brenham, Texas.

David Connor was typical of his frontier generation, always eager to develop the rich lands being opened to settlement as the frontier moved westward. He liked to be an initiator, to help organize affairs and then move on to regions needing men of his inclination, thus participating in the formative years of a county, a state, and a republic.

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