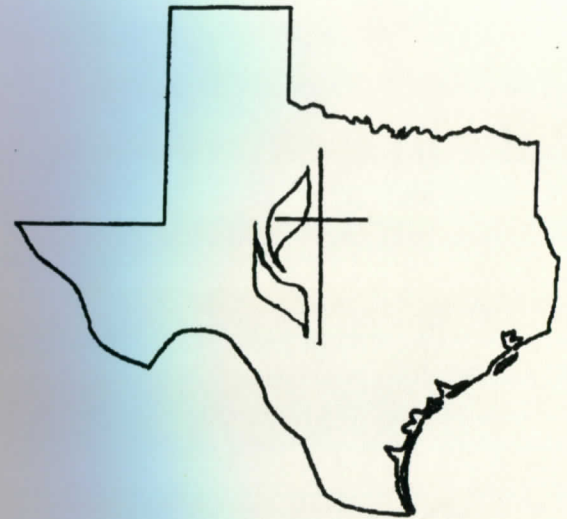


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WILLIAM VAUGHAN TUNSTALL, ITINERANT PREACHER

by **Barbara Mulvihill**

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William Vaughan Tunstall had the fortune, or perhaps the misfortune, of being an eccentric, polarizing man who lived, as the old saying goes, in interesting times. There have been no more interesting times in the history of the United States than the years before, during and after the conflict that nearly severed our country in two, the Civil War. William, or "Buck," as he was often called, came of age in the years before the war. Born in northern Alabama on August 2, 1828 to a family whose roots extended back to the very beginning of the country, William was a man of quick wit, intense emotion and an outspoken manner, whose unbounded restlessness drove him from place to place across the nation as a young man.¹ He even travelled outside the country, to Canada, Mexico, Central America and Cuba, before finally following his parents, siblings and extended family to East Texas in 1854.²

William was originally an anti-slavery Unionist Democrat who voted for Stephen A. Douglas for President in 1860, believing that the election of Douglas would preserve the Union. When the first Southern state seceded from the Union soon after the election of Abraham Lincoln, William left the South for the duration of the Civil War. Afterward he returned to aid in Reconstruction as a member of the Republican Party.³ For the remainder of his life he fought for civil rights and



education for freed slaves and labored to spread the Gospel to both Freedmen and Native Americans as an itinerant lay minister.⁴

William inherited his restless nature from his father, William Vicory Tunstall, an early newspaper printer and publisher, who moved his family from place to place across the Old South before settling down to work as a schoolteacher and farmer in Morgan County, Alabama.⁵ As the son of a schoolteacher, William likely received his basic education from his father. The seed of his anti-slavery beliefs was also passed down to him from his father. Although their Tunstall ancestors had been wealthy slave owners in Virginia and North Carolina for several generations, both men lived modestly and did not own slaves.⁶ According to family lore, during his travels as a young man, William visited New Orleans and, after witnessing abuse of slaves, was persuaded against slavery.⁷ The experience was a watershed moment for him, changing the course of his life from that point forward.



William and Martha Tunstall
and daughter Maxie



After joining his family in Texas, William studied and passed the bar at Pennington, just south of Houston County and, thereafter, worked in a variety of occupations in Anderson County, just to the north of Houston County.⁸ He participated in the life of the community by reading the Declaration of Independence at the Fourth of July celebration in 1857.⁹ In 1858, in his role as a lawyer, he helped establish the Tyre Masonic Lodge at Tennessee Colony and was employed as an advertising agent for the *Trinity Advocate* newspaper.¹⁰ The same year he served on a grand jury and ran for chief justice, but lost.¹¹ By March 1858, William was teaching in the Anderson County Public Schools.¹²

Anderson and Houston counties were originally part of Nacogdoches, one of the oldest areas of European settlement in Texas. Both counties lay between the Trinity and Neches Rivers and were heavily settled during the 1850s by families moving from the Old South. The population of Houston County increased from, 2,721, including 545 slaves, in 1850 to 8,058, including 2,819, slaves in 1860.¹³ The population of Anderson County grew from 2,884, including 600 slaves, in 1850 to 10,398, including 3,668 slaves, in 1860.¹⁴ In Texas, low property tax rates made ownership of large tracts of land possible, an ample labor force was available due to laws and a police force supporting the institution of slavery, merchant credit was encouraged and the building of railroads was endorsed in order to provide a cheap and efficient way to ship products to market. All of these factors served to increase immigration of settlers to the state, many of whom sought to become wealthy through the growing of cotton.¹⁵

The counties where the Tunstalls settled in East Texas were comprised of vast prairie grasslands interspersed with forests. The eastern parts of the counties lay in the Piney Woods, an area of dense forests of tall pines. The climate was



warm, with hot and humid summers and winters that only occasionally saw snow or ice. Railroads did not arrive in the area until the early 1870s. Prior to this, steamboats ran on the Trinity River, providing the primary mode of transportation of products to market.¹⁶

Two years after moving to Texas, William met his future wife, Martha Adair Goodwin.¹⁷ Martha was born on December 29, 1838, the eldest daughter of Rebecca Long Adair Goodwin and Hugh Walter Goodwin, wealthy slave owners who emigrated from Perry County, Alabama to Houston County, Texas in early 1856.¹⁸ Hugh died soon after arriving in Houston County, leaving Rebecca to run the thousand-acre plantation he had just purchased.¹⁹ Their daughter, Martha, was a highly intellectual and deeply religious woman who was anti-slavery despite having descended from several generations of slave-owning Southerners.²⁰ Martha taught school at the Crockett Ladies Academy in the summer of 1856 and at the old field school on the Daniel M. Coleman plantation in Houston County in the winter and spring of 1857. During her time teaching, she often attended religious services, and soon underwent a conversion experience. As a member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Martha dreamed of marriage and longed to become the wife of a minister.²¹ William must have already been a minister when she met him, since she addressed him as “Rev. W. V. Tunstall” in a letter she wrote to him in 1858.²² This was likely one of the qualities that attracted her to him.

After a courtship of a little over two years, the couple married at Martha’s mother’s home in Houston County on her twentieth birthday, December 29, 1858.²³ Martha joined William in teaching school at Ioni, a small village in southern Anderson County.²⁴ During the first year of their marriage, William and Martha unsuccessfully attempted to gain control



over Martha’s mother’s slaves. The attempt was made in the Anderson County courts, with Martha and William seeking to become the executors of the Hugh W. Goodwin estate. The couple was unable to post the required bond and the case was dropped.²⁵

By the summer of 1860, William and Martha had relocated to Homer Parish in northwest Louisiana, where William once again was employed as a schoolteacher.²⁶ He later explained that they moved in order to find a climate that would be good for Martha’s ill health.²⁷ It is probable that by this time she already suffered from consumption (tuberculosis), a condition she lived with for most of her life. She would finally succumb to the disease at the age of 72.²⁸

William and Martha likely had a second reason for their move to Louisiana. In the summer of 1860, feelings around the issue of slavery, and the possible secession of Texas from the Union, were running high, as the nation moved closer to civil war. Since William and Martha made no secret of their anti-slavery Unionist position, they may have been in danger in Texas. The area where they settled in Louisiana was notable for having a newspaper publisher with anti-slavery Unionist sentiments, which may have convinced them they would be welcome there.²⁹

The couple did not tarry long in Louisiana. In what must have been a carefully planned move, they left the South on the day South Carolina seceded from the Union, December 20, 1860.³⁰ Likely traveling by stagecoach and train, they arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio on Christmas Day, taking rooms at the Indiana House, a boarding establishment for working-class residents. During their stay in the city, it is probable that William and Martha attended the Methodist Episcopal Church at Carthage, just outside of Cincinnati.³¹ They remained in



Ohio until at least April 2, 1861 when Martha gave birth to their first child, Walter Goodwin Tunstall.³²

In the January 29, 1862 issue of a United Brethren newspaper, *The Religious Telescope*, a column of news on the Minnesota Conference of the United Brethren Church included a notice that the, “St. Peter’s mission is without a preacher, not a suitable man in the conference for the place.”³³ If William desired to work as a minister and saw this notice, he must have viewed it as an opportunity to work in the field. It would have been natural for him to be drawn to the United Brethren, since during the Civil War it was considered to be a “peace” denomination. Martha and William were also attracted to Minnesota due to its reputation of having a healthy climate.³⁴

After leaving Cincinnati, the Tunstall couple settled in St. Peter, Minnesota where William taught in the public schools.³⁵ Beginning in mid-summer 1862, William traveled to various cities in the southeastern part of the state, giving lectures on, “‘Secession’—its objects causes and cure.”³⁶ He is known to have given lectures in the Minnesota cities of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Anthony, Minneapolis, Hastings and Red Wing.³⁷ William charged a fee for admission, which must have helped him to support his family, but his anti-slavery Unionist beliefs also motivated him to give the lectures. William later recalled that while in Minnesota, “I taught some in the free schools ... I preached some, but labored most for the overturning of the most unprovoked, wicked, and God-forsaken rebellion in the annals of time.”³⁸

It was at about this time that William became an itinerant preacher with the United Brethren Church. William’s name appears in the journals of the United Brethren conferences during several years of his stay in Minnesota. At the 6th Session of the Annual Conference at Marion, Minnesota, on August 29, 1862, his desire to work as a



minister was finally fulfilled. He was appointed to the Lake Emily Mission, (which had earlier been St. Peter Mission) a little north and east of Mankato. On August 14th and 15th, 1863 at the 7th session at Blue Earth, Minnesota, there was a motion that William be given a License to Preach. After being heard, the motion was passed on to the appropriate committee for further examination. The Committee on applicants for License to Preach reported favorably of William and he was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Conference. He was appointed to the Richland Circuit in southeast Minnesota, near the border with Iowa.

In the spring of 1864, William was appointed to the White Water Circuit in the far eastern part of the state, near the Mississippi River. That fall he was presented for 2nd year readings and passed on to the Committee on Elders Orders. The Committee reported favorably and he was passed and ordained an Elder, likely remaining on the White Water Circuit. The 10th Session was held at Marion, Minnesota on September 22, 1865. The Journal of the Conference for this year reported that, “the name of W. V. Tunstall is erased.” It further stated that, “The Examination of Moral and Official Character of members was had and all passed favorably except W. V. Tunstall whose name was erased he having disrespectfully left the conference.”³⁹ It is not known what happened to cause William’s name to be erased, but given his proclivity for outspoken emotional expression, it is not hard to imagine how things might have gone wrong in his relationship with the United Brethren.

William and Martha must have left Minnesota soon after the 9th Session in November of 1864. The family slowly began making their way back to the South as the War neared its close, and by April 1865, they had journeyed as far as northeast Iowa. On Thursday, April 27th, 1865, William participated in a



procession to the church in Castalia, Iowa, which had been draped in mourning for the occasion. There he gave a eulogy for the recently slain president, Abraham Lincoln.⁴⁰

There is evidence that Martha gave birth to two sons while the Tunstall family lived in Minnesota.⁴¹ Martha gave birth to their fourth child, a daughter named Mozart, on June 23, 1865, in the town of Farmersburg, Iowa⁴². During their brief time in the state, William was a member of the Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, though no record exists of him having been assigned a circuit.⁴³

On the next leg of their journey back to the South, William and Martha traveled to Macon, Georgia, attempting to make their way to Marengo County, Alabama, to check on land that was still owned by the estate of Martha's father, Hugh W. Goodwin.⁴⁴ They were stopped by Federal troops in Macon and forced to retreat back north to Missouri, staying for a short time in the central Missouri town of Clinton, where William again worked as a circuit riding minister.⁴⁵ In December 1865, William left his family in Clinton and traveled to Washington City, as the United States capitol was called at the time. In Washington City, William attempted to intercede for a cousin, Virginia Tunstall Clay, in her attempt to secure the release of her formerly Confederate husband who was ill and in prison at Fortress Monroe, Virginia.⁴⁶ While in the city, William must have lobbied for a Federal government job in Texas, since on December 23, 1865 he received an appointment as Postmaster of Palestine in Anderson County.⁴⁷

William returned to Missouri to collect his family and on March 1, 1866, he began his job in Palestine.⁴⁸ The people of the city seem to have had mixed feelings about William's appointment as Postmaster. Some residents resented him because he took away the job of a local man, Eli Bailey. Stories have been passed down through generations of Palestine



residents about the exploits of William V. "Buck" Tunstall, carpetbagger, a name for a northerner who came to the South after the Civil War to take advantage of the region's downtrodden condition.⁴⁹ William was not a carpetbagger, but more accurately could be considered a scalawag, a derogatory term for a southerner who worked for the Federal government in the effort toward Reconstruction of the South. Although some residents of Palestine resented William, others expressed their appreciation of his efforts as Postmaster, since he brought the chaos of the Confederate postal system to order in the city.⁵⁰

In the fall of 1867, William received an appointment as County Judge of Anderson County, while continuing in his role as Postmaster.⁵¹ He was the clerk of the registration board of Anderson County, and he likely practiced law from an office he owned on the south side of the courthouse square.⁵² As county judge, William oversaw the Freedmen's First Vote in February 1868. The election was to determine if a convention should be called for that summer to write a new constitution for the state of Texas, the second new constitution since the end of the Civil War. The Reconstruction Constitution of 1866 had failed to grant suffrage even to literate blacks and so was considered to be inadequate to provide Texas with laws necessary for the state to be readmitted to the Union. The February 1868 election also decided on delegates to be sent to the convention in Austin.⁵³ William ran for delegate as a Republican, but ostensibly, lost.⁵⁴

According to an account later given by Martha, William actually won the election by 300 votes, but a group of former Confederates, "got one of the judges of the election drunk, gave him a suit of clothes, a beef, and \$7.50, if he would give them the ballot-box, which he did and in one night they changed votes enough to elect the rebel candidates."⁵⁵ Even so,



former Confederates made charges against William, saying that he,

Taught the natives how to rig elections--by 'losing' Democratic registrations, double-registering Republicans (especially blacks, who were given two or three different pseudonyms), and registering underage Republicans, as well as a few dead ones. He even denied some Democrats access to the polls.⁵⁶

No evidence has been found to support these claims. On the other hand, according to William, the election was marred by voter intimidation from former Confederates against Freedmen. In a letter written after the election to the Texas Secretary of State, he reported that,

On the matter of voting, the freedmen were allowed to vote, but told if they voted the Radical ticket, they would be turned off and were turned off. They were told they would be killed. They should not come on their places, nor ride by the houses of white men, and intimidated in every way. Thus 222 Freedmen voted against their wills under terror, voted the Conservative ticket.⁵⁷

Although the conservatives carried the election in Anderson County, statewide, Texas voted for a new constitutional convention to be held in Austin in June 1868.

After the Civil War, Anderson County was one of the most violent counties in Texas. Much of the violence was perpetrated by former Confederates against Freedmen and those representing the Federal government in the Reconstruction effort. Anderson County Clerk, Samuel R. Peacock, summed up the situation in a letter written in February 1868, saying, "Owing to the great prejudice that towards the Colored man and whites who entertain union principles there are reports for every little petty offence, while



the Rebels are rarely ever reported at all."⁵⁸ William, Martha and their family were threatened due to William's position with the government. William described an alarming incident involving his family in a letter written in March 1868 to Major General J. J. Reynolds, the commander of the 5th Military District in charge of Texas. He said,

A few days ago John Bordeaux, 14 years old, came into my door yard and garden and appeared to be hunting for something. Mrs. Tunstall asked him what he was hunting for. He replied, 'none of your business G_d d_m you.' I was not at home. Three days ago in walking from my office home I found my little son surrounded by three of Mr. Bordeaux's boys threatening to shoot him. One of the boys had an axe drawn. I took my little boy in my arms and told them bad boys they ought not to do so. They replied that they intended to do whenever [sic] they pleased. I went away and now keep my children at home. On each Friday these same boys repeatedly at my house threw stones endeavoring to hit the windows. I was away from home, and Mrs. Tunstall could not prevent them. They frequently came to my yard fence and tease my dog to provoke him to bark at them, for an excuse to throw into my yard. When told they ought not to do, they say they don't care for the damned Radicals. My Post Office sign and list of dead letters have been torn down and put upon a Privy in town. These things are done to provoke us to do something to give them some shadow of excuse to murder us.⁵⁹

William worked with other county officials and the local Freedmen's Bureau agent to attempt to keep the violence in check. He felt overwhelmed by the task, writing letter after letter to military officials, asking that more troops be sent to the



area, but reinforcements never came. He ended his final letter from Palestine to Major General Reynolds by saying, "When death stares a person in the face everyday he ought to speak."⁶⁰

William must have been desperate to move his family from Palestine to a safer location. He found a way of doing so by putting his name into contention for Secretary of the Texas Constitutional Convention of 1868, a paid position. Although he had lost his bid to become a delegate, he must have still desired to be involved in writing the laws necessary for Texas to be readmitted to the Union. Delegates from across Texas met at the Capitol Building in Austin beginning on June 1, 1868. William was nominated for Secretary and was elected over another candidate.⁶¹ As Secretary, he was responsible for the recordkeeping of the Convention and for publication of the new Constitution.

Soon after he was elected Secretary, William wrote one last letter to Texas officials about the violence in Anderson County. He reported that he had received a letter from Martha describing the dangers she and the children continued to face in Palestine.⁶² It is almost certain that William sent for Martha and the children at this time and brought them to Austin where they would be safe with him.

William spent the next nine months in Austin, helping to produce the Texas Constitution of 1869. During these months, he participated in state Republican activities.⁶³ In the summer of 1868 William was a leader in the Union League, an organization of Republicans and Freedmen that encouraged Freedmen to participate in the democratic process.⁶⁴ William was sought after as a speaker at various events, since he had a loud, booming voice, a valued asset in politics during the days before electronic media. Near the end of July, he preached at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Austin one Sunday evening, the first time that he is known to have acted as a minister in



Texas.⁶⁵ After the election of Ulysses S. Grant in November, he joined with a black delegate to the Convention, Benjamin Franklin Williams, in a torchlight procession of Freedmen and gave a speech celebrating the election of President Grant from the steps of the Texas State Capitol.⁶⁶

Martha also became involved in politics during the couple's time in Austin. During the Constitutional Convention, the body of delegates considered the issue of extending the vote to Freedmen. A group of citizens in Austin, the Friends of Female Suffrage, sought to broaden the issue to include the extension of the vote to women. Although the Constitution produced by the convention gave suffrage to Freedmen, the issue of the inclusion of women was dismissed. Martha gave a speech on woman suffrage at the final meeting of this organization.⁶⁷ She continued her involvement in woman suffrage after her time in Austin, as vice-President of the National Woman Suffrage Association from Texas for several years between 1869 and 1880.⁶⁸ Later she worked as an early organizer of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Oklahoma Indian Territory. In a letter offering her services to the W.C.T.U., Martha recalled that she had dropped her work with the N.W.S.A. because her husband was so opposed to woman suffrage.⁶⁹

It is remarkable that Martha participated as much as she did in the field, given William's beliefs on the subject. A leader in the woman suffrage movement in the nineteenth century, Matilda Joslyn Gage, reviewed William's views on women's roles in *Woman, Church and State*, written in 1893:

The Rev. W.V. Tunstall, in the "Methodist Recorder," a few years since, gave his priestly views in regard to woman, and by implication those of the Methodist Church. He declared woman to be under the curse of subjection to man, a curse not removable until



the resurrection. He said that under the Mosaic law woman had no voice in anything; that she could hold no office, yet did so in a few instances when God wished to especially humiliate the nation; that she was scheduled as a higher piece of property; that even the Bible was not addressed to her but to man alone; woman finding her salvation even under the new covenant, not through man; his points were:

First: That woman is under a curse which subjects her to man.

Second: This curse has never been removed, nor will it be removed until the resurrection.

Third: That woman under the Mosaic law, God's civil law, had no voice in anything. That she was not allowed her oath; that she was no part of the congregation of Israel; that her genealogy was not kept; that no notice was taken of her birth or death, except as these events were connected with some man of providence; that she was given no control of her children; that she could hold no office; nor did she, except in a few instances, when to reproach and humiliate the nation, God suspended his own law; and made an instrument of women for the time being. That she offered no sacrifices, no redemption money was paid for her; that she received no religious rites; that the mother's cleansing was forty days longer, and the gift was smaller for a female child than for a male; and that in the tenth commandment--always in force--she is scheduled as a higher species of property; that her identity was completely merged in that of her husband.

Fourth: that for seeking to hold office Miriam was smitten with leprosy, and that under the new covenant she is only permitted to pray or prophesy with



her head covered, which accounts for the fashion of wearing bonnets in public to this day; that she is expressly prohibited from rule in the church or usurpation of authority over the man.

Fifth: That to vote is to rule, voting carrying with it all the collaterals of making, expounding, and executing law; that God has withheld from woman the right to rule, either in the church, the state or the family; that He did this because of her having 'brought sin and death into the world, and all our woe.'

Sixth: That the Bible is addressed to man and not to woman; that man comes to God through Jesus, and woman comes to Jesus through man; that every privilege the wife enjoys she but receives through the husband, for God has declared that woman shall not rule man, but be subject unto him.⁷⁰

In August 1868, William resigned his position as Postmaster of Palestine, and in October 1868 he was removed as County Judge of Anderson County by General Canby, who had replaced J. J. Reynolds as military commander of Texas.⁷¹ William was likely removed because he had been absent from the county for so long while Secretary of the Convention in Austin.

The Constitutional Convention ended in a chaotic manner in February 1869. As Secretary, William was charged by General Canby with arranging the records of the convention so that they could be assembled into a constitution and sent to press. Ten thousand copies of the new Constitution were subsequently printed in pamphlet form at the office of the *Austin Republican*.⁷²

Soon after the end of the Convention, in March 1869, William entered his name in the race as a candidate for the United States Congress from the First District of Texas.⁷³



Martha returned to their home in Palestine, but soon was reported to have moved to Houston County to live with her mother.⁷⁴

During the 1869 campaign to elect a Texas governor and representatives to Congress, two types of Republicans ran for office, "Radical" Republicans and "moderate" Republicans. Radical Republicans took the position that Freedmen should be given full civil rights, including the right to vote and hold office. They were in favor of the Union League. They were hesitant to grant unrestricted civil rights to former Confederates, fearing that if they did so, the former Confederates would pass laws restricting the rights of Freedmen and preventing Texas from being readmitted to the Union. Moderate Republicans were in favor universal suffrage for both Freedmen and former Confederates. They did not support the Union League, fearing that doing so would increase the conflict between Freedmen and former Confederates.

William ran against George W. Whitmore, another Republican, and James Armstrong, a Democrat, in the election of 1869.⁷⁵ Whitmore was the Radical Republican candidate for Congress from the First District. He ran on a ticket with gubernatorial candidate, Edmund Jackson Davis, who had been President of the Reconstruction Constitutional Convention of 1868-69. William, who had moved into the moderate camp during his time in Austin in an attempt to find a middle ground between Radical Republican and Democratic factions, ran on the moderate Republican ticket with Andrew Jackson Hamilton, a former governor of Texas.⁷⁶ Since there was no viable Democratic candidate running for Governor, former Confederate Democratic leaders of the state decided to back Hamilton, hoping they could use him to further their agenda.⁷⁷

During the first week of November 1869, Hamilton and Davis met in debate at Henderson, in Rusk County, northeast



of Anderson County. The *Austin Republican* reported that after the debate, "there is but little left of E.J. Davis."⁷⁸ After Hamilton came to East Texas to debate Davis, William apparently began to fear that if Hamilton won the election, Democrats would use the former governor to obtain a level power that could keep the state from being readmitted to the Union. On November 13, 1869, William attended another Hamilton-Davis debate, this time at Rusk, in Cherokee County, just east of Anderson County. When Davis replied to Hamilton during the debate, he spoke of William, stating that he was, "unworthy of the confidence of the people and that the Huntsville Penitentiary surely could furnish men who would make better congressmen than he." In a surprise move, William, who was present in the audience, arose and announced that he was no longer a candidate for Congress.⁷⁹

Davis' denunciation of William likely stemmed from William's support of Hamilton, along with conflicts he had with William during the Constitutional Convention. When William was later asked about Davis' comment, he said that Davis, "wasn't loving me just then," and that Davis subsequently told a mutual acquaintance that he, "intended by the remark to compliment the citizens of Huntsville." William concluded by saying that he and Davis had put their conflict behind them after the election.⁸⁰

Edmund J. Davis, the Radical Republican candidate, won the election for governor and Radical, George W. Whitmore, won the Congressional seat from the First District of Texas. The Radical Republican candidates had received the endorsement of military leaders in Texas, as well as that of President Grant, ensuring their victory.⁸¹ It is uncertain how much William's withdrawal from the race affected the outcome. It is clear, however, that the reason he withdrew was to prevent former Confederate leaders from gaining influence



either directly or through Hamilton. At a “glorification” meeting at Palestine on December 11, 1869, William praised the results of the election, saying that he had, “withdrawn from the race in order that loyal men might present an unbroken front in the election.”⁸² His withdrawal was an apparently selfless act that set the stage for a family tragedy, changing the course of William, Martha and their family’s lives forever.

Soon after his participation in the victory celebration in Palestine, William sold off his property in that city and relocated to neighboring Houston County.⁸³ Martha’s mother, Rebecca Goodwin, deeded a part of her property 10 miles southwest of Crockett to William and Martha as an inheritance from Martha’s father.⁸⁴ She must have done so grudgingly since she and the rest of the Goodwin family largely ostracized Martha due to William’s political beliefs. William and Martha also bought a second parcel of land in the neighborhood and settled in to a farmhouse about 300 yards from the entrance to Shiloh Campground.⁸⁵

Shiloh Campground had been the site of summer religious camp meetings for many years and was also the site of a small log Methodist Church and schoolhouse. In March 1870, a new post office called Creswell was established at Shiloh, and William was made Postmaster.⁸⁶ He continued to be a leader in Texas Republican politics for the remainder of his years in the state, although his influence seems to have gradually waned.⁸⁷ At various times he was president of the voter registration of Houston County, United States Commissioner, a private in the Texas State Police, president of the Union League, president of the board of school directors of Houston County, president of the National Civil Rights Association, secretary of the Republican executive committee for the First Congressional District, and captain of a company of State Guards at Creswell.⁸⁸



William and Martha likely made the move from Palestine to Shiloh partly to escape the threats of violence they previously faced in Anderson County. This turned out to be a futile effort. Because of their affiliation with the Radical wing of the Republican Party, they were accepted no more in Houston County than they had been in Anderson County. For at least the next few years they were harassed by former Confederates. William later recalled that during the family’s first years in Houston County,

I had a valuable horse poisoned, and another abused in my own pasture, resulting in his death. My fences have been torn down, my stock mutilated, my tenants tampered with, and my well poisoned resulting in the prostration of my whole family, and the death of two of my children, as I have every reason to believe.⁸⁹

There is no record of anyone being charged with poisoning the Tunstall family well, nor did any surviving newspaper record the incident. William likely had no concrete evidence that the well was intentionally poisoned, however, he must have believed it to be true for the remainder of his life. In the early 1900s, after William’s death, one of his and Martha’s surviving sons, Edmund, reported on a life insurance application that he had two brothers, ages 5 and 7, who died of poisoning in 1870, but he did not give their names.⁹⁰

The Tunstall boys died during the second week of June 1870. That week the churches of Crockett joined together to hold a summer camp meeting at Shiloh Campground.⁹¹ Residents of the area traveled to the campground, pitched their tents and spent the week listening to preachers exhort the word of God and encourage sinners to be saved. The preaching continued from morning until well into the night, creating a commotion in the neighborhood that might distract from any mischief being done nearby. According to a circular published



by William the next year, he believed the local Ku Klux Klan group was responsible for poisoning the well and murdering his children. William listed the names of neighbors who were members of the group, including the husband of Martha's sister, Rebecca, Samuel George Hester.⁹²

Martha later recalled her own experiences with harassment by former Confederates, which often occurred while William was away from home. She said,

They had three barbecues here and near here ... within six weeks of each other; and at the one at this place they fired fifty anvils in front of our house, my husband being from home, and at every report they would halloo, 'G_d d__n the radicals;' and at each of them abuse of the Government and the radicals was their theme.

Martha continued,

The democrats yelled and whooped like demons around our house at night, and shot off guns and pistols; and one Robert Furlow shot at my house in open daylight. Our watch-dog was shot and killed ... some fiend knocked at my door, there being no one on the place but myself and two little children. I took the gun and would have shot him, but he ran off and escaped.

Sadly, Martha also recalled that she was, "mocked at the grave of my two babes, while strewing flowers upon their dust."⁹³ It is notable that the man named Robert Furlow, who Martha said shot at the Tunstall home, was the husband of Martha's sister, Virginia.⁹⁴

After the death of the two Tunstall boys, William disappeared from the public stage for several months. He reappeared in November 1870, working to organize a Union League in Houston County.⁹⁵ Later that month he served as foreman of a Grand Jury in Crockett composed of 20 persons,



of whom five were colored, "the first colored grand jurors ever in the county." However, even in his role as foreman, with several black people on the jury, William was unable to change the culture of overlooking white crime and charging mainly Freedmen.⁹⁶

The ongoing harassment and destruction of his property by former Confederates made it difficult for William to make a living and support his family in Houston County.⁹⁷ This may be one reason he travelled again to Austin in January 1871 to become a candidate for chaplain of the Texas House of Representatives. There was fierce competition for the job, and William eventually lost out to another candidate.⁹⁸ He spent the month of March 1871 in Austin as a witness/clerk for the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the State Senate in an election fraud case involving James E. Dillard. William wrote the majority report for the committee in this case, stating that Dillard was not legally entitled to a seat on the senate floor and recommending that his position be declared vacant, due to evidence that , "the election was not justly and fairly conducted", and had been marred by, "violence, intimidation and fraud."

The Dillard case was marked by scandal after several depositions in support of Dillard went missing. Both Dillard and William had access to the papers at various times. There was an investigation into the loss of the depositions, with the Republicans on the Committee on Privileges and Elections concluding that Dillard lost the papers and the Democrats concluding that William lost them. The majority opinion ruled and the final report, as written by William, remained intact.⁹⁹

William joined the Texas State Police as a Private near the end of March 1871, believing that doing so would help protect his family against further violence.¹⁰⁰ The Texas State Police had been formed by Republican Governor Edmund J.



Davis the year before in an attempt to control the violence in the state. Although necessary to help curb violence in Texas, the organization was widely criticized, in part, because it was established by the Radical Republican governor and because those on the force included Republicans and Freedmen.¹⁰¹ William was relieved of his position on the Texas State Police for one month in July 1871 because he held a position as United States Commissioner, but was reinstated to the police force after resigning his commissioner position.¹⁰²

In April 1871, William was named as a member of the Republican Executive Committee from the Third Senatorial District of Texas. On the Fourth of July, he spoke at a Republican celebration at Crockett and, “delivered a very able, eloquent and patriotic address, speaking of the great principles, of civil, religious liberty, and the rapid strides of the American people to greatness ...” A week later, he spoke again at a large Republican meeting in Rusk.¹⁰³ A visitor to the Tunstall home at about this time commented,

Some people think Mr. Tunstall is too severe and impudent in his remarks about rebels, but perhaps if they had been fretted, annoyed and outraged by the rebels the way he has, they would be better qualified to judge him and his actions. It is no child’s play to be an active organizing Republican in this latitude ...¹⁰⁴

Near the end of July 1871 another wave of crises were visited on William and his family. A rumor was circulated that William had stolen letters and cash while Postmaster at Palestine, but no proof of this was ever produced and he was not charged in the matter.¹⁰⁵ Then the log church and schoolhouse at Shiloh was burned, and William was accused of being the arsonist. When he proved he was away from home on political business that night, Martha was accused of setting the fire. Eventually, even the two eldest living Tunstall children,



10-year-old Walter and 6-year-old Mozart, were blamed. William responded to these accusations by charging that former Confederates set the fire in order to blame him.¹⁰⁶ Authorities never determined who the arsonist actually was.

Not long after the fire, about 30 of William’s neighbors signed a petition demanding that he leave the county.¹⁰⁷ In response, William published a circular accusing his neighbors of harassing his family and poisoning his children the year before.¹⁰⁸ A few weeks later, in September 1871, William was at a political meeting at Rusk, Texas when he was notified that his son Walter had been held and beaten by four boys at a mill in Houston County. William reported that, “they used very gross and insulting words to him about his mother and then mobbed him.” According to William, Martha’s youngest brother, 15-year-old Hugh William Goodwin, was a part of the mob and, “tried to force my little son to admit that either he or his mother did burn the Shiloh school house ...”¹⁰⁹

Despite the attacks on his family, William continued to work for education of Freedmen. In his role as President of the Houston County Board of School Directors, he wrote a letter published in the *National Era* of December 14, 1871 saying, “We need immediately five hundred teachers for colored schools in Texas.” William explained that not enough educated black people or white Republicans could be found to teach, and white former Confederates refused to teach black children. He continued, “... our only prospect is to get teachers among the educated colored people of the North or Christian white people who are willing to endure privations among the heartless whites of the ‘sunny South,’ ... Send us teachers.”¹¹⁰ In addition to his work with the Houston County Board of School Directors, William also personally endeavored to educate Freedmen. In early 1872 he stated that he was the, “superintendent of a Sabbath-school composed of colored



people, and have a literary colored school in my door-yard ...¹¹¹

William was removed from the Texas State Police force in July 1872 by Governor Davis at the urging of another Republican leader in Houston County, A. T. Monroe, who had apparently had a falling out with William. One of the primary incidents cited in William's removal from the force was that he called a meeting of the local Republicans while Monroe was away from home and then was disruptive while Monroe was speaking at another Republican meeting, refusing to take off his badge and six-shooter when ordered to do so. Some Republicans backed Monroe while others came to William's defense, saying that there was disagreement on both sides and that it was acceptable for policemen to wear their badge and six-shooter during meetings.

After charges were brought by Monroe, an investigation was launched into William's performance with the police force. William was accused by other citizens of Houston County of neglecting his duties. Only one record of an arrest by William has been found, however, when his job was threatened, he claimed that he had travelled over three hundred miles and made four arrests during his time on the force. Later, he admitted that the head of the police, General Davidson, did not require him to leave home, since it would be unsafe to do so, and that it was understood that he was to stay in the county. A letter written by a Republican leader, R.J. Blair, to Governor Davis may shed some light on William's actions. Blair wrote:

I would as a special favor ask that Judge Tunstall be not removed from the police. I fel [sic] some interest in him for the manner in which he has bore the banner of the republican party ... Tunstall don't care so much for the office as the effect it will have on the democrats. I ... believe if he is take off the Police he will loose [sic] his



crop. This year is the first time he has been able to keep hands on his farm, and it is from the fact he is on the police.

Blair also told the governor that he believed that removing William from the force would, "... cause a split in the republican party of this county." Despite Blair's plea, Governor Davis removed William from the force. William wrote a final letter to the governor saying, "I shall press my claims no further. I shall support your administration in the future as in the past."¹¹²

Although William was removed from the police, he continued to be active as a leader in East Texas Republican politics for a time. He was Secretary of the Republican State Convention in Houston called to nominate delegates to the National Republican Convention in Philadelphia.¹¹³ However, after 1872, his name only occasionally surfaced in connection with Republican politics.

The year 1874 marked a change in William's life. Texas had been readmitted to the Union in 1870, although the state had not formally met all the requirements for readmission. In late 1873, Edmund J. Davis lost his bid for re-election as governor to a Democratic candidate. In 1876 a new constitution, written mainly by Democratic leaders, replaced the Constitution of 1869. Unaccountably, William spoke out in favor of the new Constitution.¹¹⁴ Reconstruction was failing and the Jim Crow era was on the rise. William's focus moved from politics to his work as a minister with the Methodist Episcopal Church.

William first shows up in the Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Marshall, Texas on January 7-11, 1874. The conference minutes show that William was admitted on trial and was stationed in Crockett.¹¹⁵ The next Texas Conference was held in Brenham, Texas on January



6-11, 1875. The minutes for this year show that William remained on trial and stationed in Crockett.¹¹⁶

On March 11, 1875, a letter from William was published in *the Southwestern Christian Advocate*. He reported on a quarterly meeting of the Trinity District that had just been conducted by the Rev. Samuel M. Kingston, presiding elder. William wrote:

The weather was inclement, the house bad, and attendance, small. We had however, a joyous meeting. Brother Kingston is a veteran of sixty-five, a real old Irish gentleman, with a good share of native wit, a fine scholar, and a forcible, practicable preacher. This district was created at the last conference and embraced some dozen counties in Southeast Texas. It is a portion of the State where but few moral agencies have ever been put in force from any quarter. The people hardly know that the war is over, and it is said that at some precincts they still vote for Jackson. The influence of free schools has rarely been felt in most of these counties. It is Bro. Kingston's intention to thunder the gospel in their hearing, and arouse their latent, moral energies. Our ministers have never visited most of these counties. With the help of Bro. W. L. Molloy, who was then my presiding elder, and a man devoted to the church, I organized this circuit during the last conference year, with six classes, two local preachers, two exhorters and eighty members. I also organized six Sunday-schools, with three hundred scholars and eighteen teachers. I obtained different donations of Testaments from the American Sunday-school Union, amounting in all to one hundred. I also obtained from the Depository at St. Louis, two hundred Sunday-school books, several hundred cards, one thousand tracts, and



five hundred copies of the Good News, paying express charges out of my own funds. Since I have been preaching here, there has not been a crime alleged against a single member of any of my congregations, not to say church members. The members of my church own more land and stock, pay more taxes, owe fewer debts, drink less whiskey, chew less tobacco [sic], and get along more quietly with the white people, than the same number of freedmen anywhere else, within the bounds of my knowledge. I urge upon them the importance of bringing up their children free from the current vicious habits and customs, and I think they are making an honest effort to do so. Crops were short here last year, times are hard, and the very severe winter, has thrown serious drawbacks upon all things, spiritual as well as temporal, but the spring seems now to have opened very prosperously, and hope revives, Pray for us.¹¹⁷

William and his cohorts in the Trinity District were ministering to the black population in the southeast part of the state of Texas. The circuits included in the Trinity District in 1875 were: White Ridge, Wallisville, Liberty, West Liberty, Montgomery, Cold Springs, Livingston, Moscow, Sabine, San Augustine, Nacogdoches, Crockett, Walker and Huntsville.¹¹⁸

In December 1875, another letter written by William was published in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. This letter sheds some light on his beliefs in regard to black people:

I was opposed to secession—left the South when South Carolina passed the ordinance of secession—remained North until the close of the war. Came home and aided all I could in reconstruction. Bore all the persecution incident to that line of conduct. Am proud of the course I pursued in all this, and then



joined with the M. E. Church to enlighten the colored man with the Bible, the Sunday-school book and paper, also helped to procure aid to build him houses of worship and for free schools. I have preached to him, organized Sunday-schools and day schools among them, and have even taught them, but it never occurred to me that, social equality, miscegenation, mixed schools and mixed congregations, were necessary to effect their elevation as a people. My theory of the Negro is, that God for purposes known to himself only, somewhere in the annals of time (say at the birth of Shem, Ham and Japheth, and I have never seen a better one) have the three colors to the descendants of Adam and divided the Earth among them. And further, that having done so, it is a great sin to obliterate these color lines by miscegenation. Further, that God in His providence brought the Negro to our shores as he did the children of Israel to Egypt, and that he freed them. That these ex-slaves are the people to redeem Africa to the Lord, and I have been working to that point since secession and that therefore, I must most respectfully, but heartily, dissent from the views of the Southwestern upon the doctrine of miscegenation.

God has established a boundary line between the races, and neither church nor state dare cross it. Rights equal, but not identical.

The editor of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* replied to William's letter by saying that William had misunderstood their position on the question of color. The editor went on to explain that, "The theory that God gave different colors to the three sons of Noah, beats us. It is almost too absurd to mention."¹¹⁹



In 1876 the Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was held in Houston, Texas from January 5-10. William was again listed as being on trial and was now assigned to the Crockett and Lovelady circuit. This year, the locations listed in the Trinity District were the same as in 1875, with several exceptions. Livingston was no longer listed, while Orange, Beaumont, Ironwood, Danville, Lower Sabine, Shelby, Crockett and Lovelady (with a separate Crockett circuit) were added to the list. For the first time, the Methodist Episcopal General Conference Minutes published statistics on the Texas Trinity District. The district included 13 churches and 14 Sunday schools. There were 13 preachers, 1,349 full members and 178 probationary members. There had been 122 children and 106 adults baptized that year and 549 scholars had attended Sunday school.¹²⁰

By 1877, William had changed careers once again. He was no longer listed as a minister in the Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the conference minutes no longer listed the "Crockett and Lovelady" circuit.¹²¹ What happened to the circuit is unknown. William returned to practicing as a lawyer in Crockett in 1876 as a member of the law office, Keel & Tunstall.¹²² In 1877, William, likely believing that he needed to update his knowledge of the law, attended a Summer Law Institute at the University of Virginia.¹²³ While in Virginia, he wrote and published a small book, *Pen Pictures of the University of Virginia and of Monticello and Environs*.¹²⁴

About the time William returned to the law, he and Martha sold their land and moved their family from Shiloh to Crockett.¹²⁵ In March 1879, William was charged in a criminal case in Houston County. It is unknown what the charge was, but he was found not guilty. At nearly the same time, an appeal in a case from Houston County was heard in the Texas



Supreme Court, but was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction.¹²⁶ Although William was not convicted in the cases brought against him, perhaps the charges made it difficult for him to maintain his law practice in Crockett. He was a census taker for the 1880 Federal Census of Houston County in Crockett, but not long after the census was completed, he and his family left East Texas, never to return.¹²⁷

When William and Martha left Crockett, they headed to Galena, Kansas, a boomtown in the mining of lead. In 1881 the last of their nine children was born in Kansas.¹²⁸ William practiced as a lawyer in Galena and Baxter Springs and occasionally spoke at events in support of temperance.¹²⁹ After two years in Kansas, William, Martha and family again relocated, this time to the Carthage, Missouri area.¹³⁰

In Missouri, William abandoned the law and became a minister in the Methodist Protestant Church, a small denomination that included predominantly lay ministers. In 1882, William was listed as a Lay Preacher, but no appointment was indicated. The next year, his name was added to the Ministerial Roll and he was assigned to the Grand River Circuit, serving the southern half of Cass County and the northern half of Bates County. In 1884, he was appointed to Warsaw in Benton County.¹³¹ At about the same time, William is known to have been pastor of the Mount Olive Methodist Protestant Church near Warsaw.¹³²

In October 1885, William and Martha packed up their belongings in wagons, left Missouri and headed to Arkansas, where the Ft. Smith Mission Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church had been established the year before to serve northwest Arkansas and Oklahoma Indian Territory.¹³³ On the trip, their twelve year old son, Willie, fell from a wagon he was driving, was crushed under the wagon wheels and died.¹³⁴ He was the third of the couple's children to perish. William and



Martha's remaining children, two boys and four girls lived to adulthood. After burying Willie, the family continued on the trip to Arkansas where William registered as a minister.¹³⁵

William and Martha lived for a short time in the Peoria Nation, Indian Territory, near Baxter Springs, KS, while William, sometimes accompanied by Martha in her role as a W.C.T.U. organizer, rode a circuit in Indian Territory.¹³⁶ Around 1887 the family moved to Delaney, Arkansas, a small town northeast of Fort Smith and southeast of Fayetteville. In 1888, they moved again, this time to Watalula, Arkansas, about 30 miles east of Fort Smith.¹³⁷

In 1890, William, Martha and their family relocated to Vian, Oklahoma Indian Territory, about 30 miles west of Fort Smith. William farmed and continued to work as an itinerant preacher, now with the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church.¹³⁸ A newspaper clipping from this time provides insight into William's ministry in Indian Territory. In the article, he described struggling down flooded roads and ferrying across swollen streams, driving a horse and buggy, to reach the various missions where he ministered. He visited two missions comprising the area between the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers, the Checotah Mission and the Canadian Mission. He also crossed to the south side of the Canadian River to visit Hoyt, a town in present day Haskell County. At each stop he supported the local pastors. His trip lasted seven weeks and then after a week at home he set out again for an appointment at Fort Smith. William commented on his life, saying, "I am now sixty-one years old, and an old-time itinerant, but I have never done as hard a winter's work in all my life as I have since the organization of the Indian Mission Conference, and I am still in the field and if I have felt old one minute in my life, I do not now remember it."¹³⁹



William attended the Methodist Protestant General Conference at Westminster, MD as a representative from the Indian Mission Conference in May 1892.¹⁴⁰ By about 1895, the family had relocated once again, this time to Collin County in north Texas, where Martha was appointed as Postmistress of Rhymer.¹⁴¹ William and Martha likely moved their family to Collin County not only because of Martha's job, but also to take advantage of assistance with living expenses and education offered to families of Methodist Protestant ministers at the newly founded Westminster College, several miles north of Rhymer.¹⁴² The family spent roughly a year in Collin County.

In 1898 William, Martha and family resided in Golconda, Oklahoma Indian Territory, a small village near what is now the eastern edge of Lake Eufaula.¹⁴³ William Vaughan Tunstall died in Golconda on November 15, 1898, after a short illness. He was buried in Enterprise Cemetery in Haskell County.¹⁴⁴ His grave is in a section of the cemetery reserved for veterans of the Civil War, although he never served. Due to the lack of surviving documents from that period in Indian Territory, an obituary for William has never been found. His contribution as a minister in the Fort Smith-Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church was acknowledged in the 1925 Conference Minutes.¹⁴⁵

After being widowed, Martha moved to the small town of Bluejacket in northeast Oklahoma Indian Territory, where she lived with her daughters and their families.¹⁴⁶ She attended the 1901 Fort Smith-Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, as she was still active in the Women's Mission Society.¹⁴⁷

Martha Goodwin Tunstall died of tuberculosis on April 16, 1911 and is buried in Bluejacket Cemetery, her tombstone bearing the epitaph, "Mother is sweetly sleeping Take Thy



rest."¹⁴⁸ After the difficult lives William and Martha lived as a result of their religious and political beliefs, and the times they lived in, it is to be hoped that they are both now at peace, resting in the arms of their Savior.

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