

On July 22, 1859, Rance Durham-my wife's great-great-grandfather was born in slavery in DeSoto Parish, La. His father, Allen Durham, was born in Fairfield County, SC and was brought to Louisiana by his master. Grandpa Rance settled near Fairfield, Freestone County, Tx. when he was about ten years old. He spent the rest of his life there. he was very active in Pine Top Methodist Church and Pine Top Masonic Lodge. He was a farmer and operated both a cotton gin and a syrup mill. His farm became the regular meeting place for the surrounding communities. Rance Durham park was the scene of many Juneteenth celebrations. He married Alice McDonald. Four children were born to this union. Several generations have followed, and his descendants are too numerous to count. He was a father figure to many, providing legal and personal advice. In his later years, he lost much of his eyesight but his wit, cheerfulness, sense of humor and sharp mind was a lasting trademark until his death on March 6, 1950. The marker on his grave at Pine Top Cemetery contains the words "He died as he lived--a Christian." I regret that I do not have a photograph of this great man.