After Slavery: Exercising the Rights of Citizenship in 19th-Century Texas



- Subject and
GradeTexas History and Geography,
 7^{th} (can be adapted for grades $4^{th} 8^{th}$)
 - Authors Carol Schlenk and Laine Liebick, TEKS updated by Jason Terry (2023)

Time duration Two sessions of 45-60 minutes

- **Overview** Students will explore a variety of county government records to learn how Ransom Williams, an African American living in post-Civil War Texas, began the transition to freedom by exercising the right to vote and own property. Students will work with partners to analyze a 19th-century primary source document, then create their own county government documents and answer questions about Ransom Williams and the functions of county government.
- **Objectives** To learn about the role of county government in the lives of Texans, past and present
 - To use technology
 - To work cooperatively with partners

TEKS Social Studies, 7th Grade

(1A), identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including Natural Texas and its People; Age of Contact; Spanish Colonial; Mexican National; Revolution and Republic; Early Statehood; Texas in the Civil War and Reconstruction; Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads; Age of Oil; Texas in the Great Depression and World War II; Civil Rights; and Contemporary Texas

(1C), explain the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Texas

(14A), describe the structure and functions of government at municipal, county, and state levels; and

(14B), identify major sources of revenue for state and local governments such as property taxes, sales taxes, bonds, and fees

(15A), explain rights of Texas citizens

(20A), differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas

(22A), use social studies terminology correctly

		www.texasbevondhistory.net/ransom/index.ht
		website:
Materials	•	Access to Internet; Texas Beyond History (TBH)

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- student computers (iPods, iPads, etc.)
- Interactive Whiteboard (or document camera, overhead projector, etc.)
- The following documents (included) can be enlarged:

- 1860 Slave Schedule, Hays County
- 1925 Property Plat Map
- Ransom Williams' Property Tax Record, Travis County 1884
- Texas Voter Registration Application
- Ransom Williams' 1867 Voter Registration Record, Hays County
- Mark & Brand Record listing Ransom Williams (1872)
- Analyzing a Written Primary Source Document
- Ransom Williams: A Nineteenth-Century Travis
 County Citizen
- Photo of Ransom Williams' horse branding iron
- Mark & Brand Application Form (also available at <u>www.tscrabrands.com</u>)

Activities and P

procedures

Prior to beginning activity, teacher will:

- Familiarize students with all necessary technology tools and applications.
- Print out copies of: Analyzing A Written Primary Source Document form and Ransom Williams: A Nineteenth-Century Travis County Citizen form.
- Review history of slavery and emancipation in Texas.

Day 1

Step 1: Display the *Williams Farmstead* exhibit (<u>www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/index.html</u>) and briefly go over main titles and pictures with students. Explain that as they learn about the life of Ransom Williams, an African American freedman living in post-Civil War Texas, they will discover how the functions of his county government helped him succeed as a citizen and property owner.

Step 2: Display the 1860 Slave Schedule. This document illustrates how enslaved African Americans were listed only by age, gender, and color on U.S. Census Rolls. Point to the names of the slave owners, and show that the names of the enslaved themselves were not given, only a number and description. After emancipation, most freedmen had to establish a legal identity of their own.

Step 3: Display the Travis County 1925 Property Plat Map. Explain that before emancipation, African Americans themselves were owned as property. After emancipation, freedmen like Ransom Williams managed to buy their own land. To prove ownership of his land, he registered his property deed at his county courthouse. This plat is one county record of Ransom Williams' land ownership.

Step 4: Display Ransom Williams' Property Tax Record. Point out that this document recorded Williams' legal ownership of his land, horses, and wagon as well as his property's value.

Step 5: Display the Texas Voter Registration Application (included and available on your county website). Point out that all Texas voters must register to vote and that in most Texas counties, the County Tax Assessor-Collector is also the County Voter Registrar. Briefly go over the application questions aloud with students. Ask why so much information is required of voter registrants. Step 6: Display the Ransom Williams' Voter Registration document on the Interactive Whiteboard. Explain that enslaved African Americans could not vote or hold office. Becoming a registered voter gave Ransom Williams a legal identity that he hadn't had as when he was enslaved.

Step 7: Display a copy of the 1870s Mark & Brand Record (or distribute downloaded copies to students). Explain that Ransom Williams owned mules and horses, and wanted to be able to prove that they were his.

Step 8: Have students choose a partner to work with. Distribute copies of Analyzing a Written Primary Source Document to students. Explain that a primary source document is one that was created at the time under study, (e.g., this document was created during the lifetime of Ransom Williams). Read the questions aloud with students and have them complete the form with their partners.

Step 9: Students turn in completed Analyzing a Written Primary Source Document forms to teacher.

Step 10: Display Ransom Williams' Horse Brand photo (included) and explain that it was one of thousands of artifacts found on the Williams' farmstead site. Point out that this brand was most likely a discard, as it is backwards (the shank was on the wrong side) and it doesn't display the "A" shown on his brand application. The complete brand was registered at Williams' county courthouse.

Step 11: Ask students to create a working definition of the word "ownership". Then have them make a list of everything they, themselves, own. Ask them how they can prove ownership of each of their belongings. Point out that proving ownership of items can be difficult and in order to prove ownership of our vehicles, homes, and properties, we must register them with the government and pay taxes on them.

Day 2

Step 1: Have students pair up again with their partners.

Step 2: Distribute copies of the Ransom Williams: A Nineteenth-Century Travis County Citizen form. Read the questions aloud with students. Have them use the Internet to help them answer the form's questions and complete their brand registration forms.

Step 3. Have students attach their Ransom Williams: A Nineteenth Century Travis County Citizen form to their downloaded and printed Mark and Brand Record and turn them in to the teacher.

Step 4: Ask students to volunteer examples of services that their county provides. Possible correct answers may include: birth, marriage, and death records; land deeds and deed transfers; property tax and foreclosure records; livestock brand registrations; sheriff and sheriff deputies services; county court and jury information; child and adult protective services; automobile title transfers; etc.

Step 5: Explain that in the 19th century, county government was the most useful form of government to citizens because it directly influenced their everyday lives and was usually the closest government office to them geographically. Today, federal and state governments are important, too, but county governments continue to serve many vital functions.

Modifications: For students with specific learning needs or IEPs, have step-by-step instructions for the computer and all necessary applications available and allow more time for completing forms, if necessary.

ExtensionHave students play Counties Work, an interactive gameActivitiesabout county governments:

http://www.icivics.org/games/counties-work

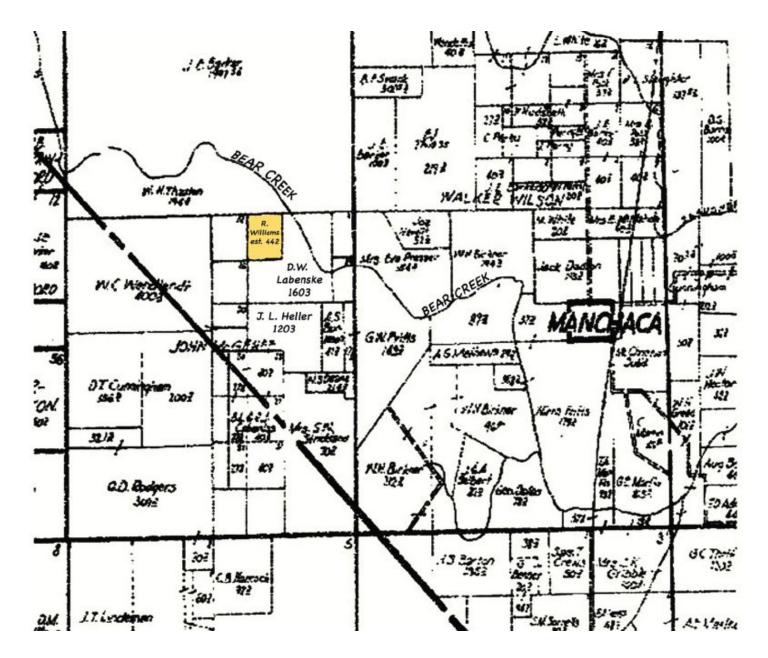
- Assessment Completed Analyzing a Written Primary Source Document form
 - Completed Mark & Brand Application Form
 - Completed Ransom Williams: A Nineteenth Century Travis County Citizen form

RelatedNational Association of Counties - interactive map:Websiteshttp://www.naco.org/Counties/Pages/FindACounty.aspx

Texas 4-H Organization: http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/ Texas Secretary of State - voting information: http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/pamphlets/larg epamp.shtml

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Ransom Williams' 1867 Voter Registration Record, Hays County 1867 Hays County, Texas

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Mark & Brand Record listing Ransom Williams (1872)

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Analyzing A Written Primary Source Document

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Circle one):

Newspaper Letter Census Report Magazine Telegram Map Advertisement Government Record Calendar

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCUMENT (Circle one or more):

Interesting fonts Inform Dates Drawin

Information typed Drawings Information hand-written Notations

3. What is the subject/purpose of the document?

4. Why would the information in this document need to be recorded?

5. What is the range of dates on this document?_____

6. On what date did Ransom Williams register his brand?_____

7. List two things this document tells you about life in Texas at the time it was written.

8. Write a question to Ransom Williams that is left unanswered in this document.

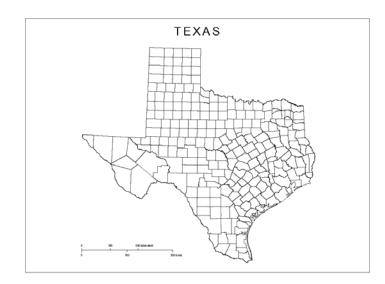
Ransom Williams: A Nineteenth-Century Travis County Citizen

In 1872, Ransom Williams had to travel approximately 13 miles by horse or wagon (which would have taken the better part of a day) from where he lived near Manchaca, Texas to the Travis County courthouse in Austin, Texas, to register his horse brand and take care of other county business. Color Travis County red on the map below.

Download and print out a current brand registration form at <u>http://www.tscrabrands.com/</u> and use information on that website to help you design a brand and complete the form.

Completed registration forms would have to be taken to the courthouse in your county. What county do you live in?

Use the online map at <u>http://geology.com/county-map/texas.shtml</u> to locate your county and county seat. Color your county green on the map below. If you live in Travis County, draw a blue circle around it on the map.



Each of Texas' 254 counties has a county seat, a town or City where the County Courthouse is located and where county business is conducted. In what town or City is your county seat?

Search the Web for your official county website. On it, find five services your county provides and list them below. Draw a star by any services that would not have been available to Ransom Williams in the 1800s.

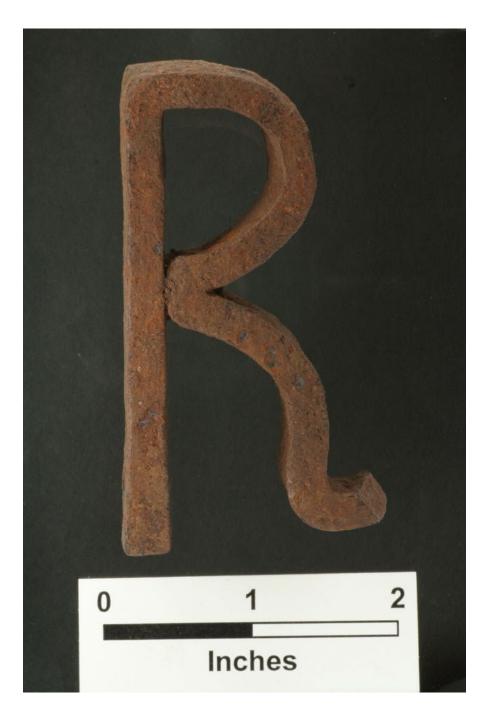
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MARK AND BRAND APPLICATION

THIS FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE COUNTY CLERK IN THE COUNTY IN WHICH YOUR LIVESTOCK RESIDE

THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS APPLICATION IS AUGUST 31, 2011 TO AUGUST 31, 2021 Renewal of this Brand/Mark must be filed during the period August 31, 2011 to February 29, 2012 This form shall only be used to record a single brand or mark for one or more locations on an animal.

Please print or type information (* Required information):

The undersigned hereby makes application for the registration and recording of the following mark(s) and/or brand(s) by the County Clerk of *_____ County, Texas:

* New: Renewa	al: Release:	Transfer:	
Contact Information:			
* Owner/Agent:			
Ranch/Business Name:			
* Address:			
* City:	* State:	* Zip:	
Phone:	Email:		
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* Brand Description:		10 Socrat States	29
* Signature of Applicant: (Owner/Agent)		*0)ate:
By:	Deputy,		County Clerk
(Deputy's Name)	(County Clerk's Name)	
		C	ounty Seal