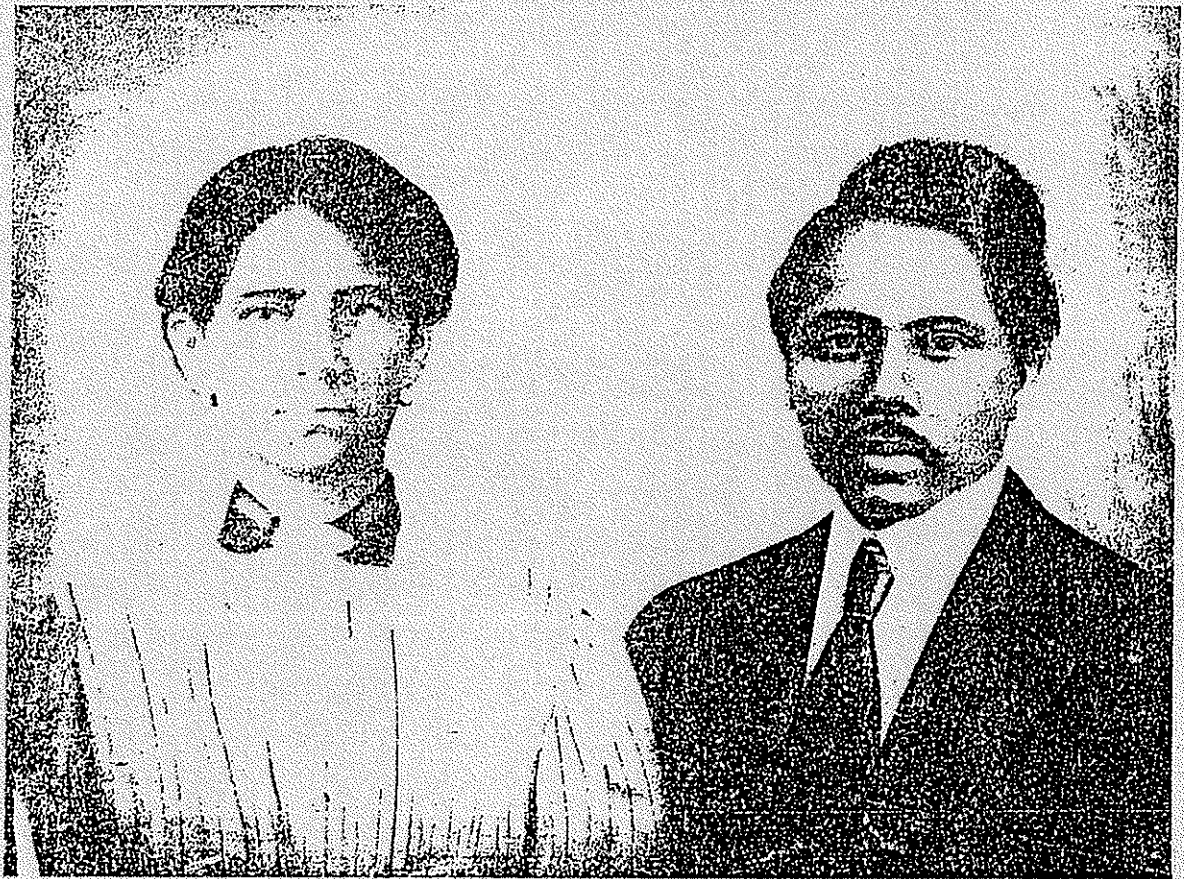
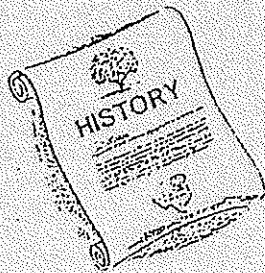


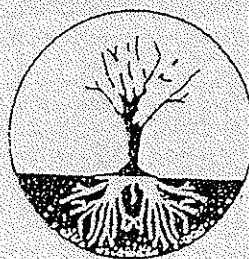
Ex-Slaves Martin and Sophia McDonald Legacy:  
From Human Property to Human Achievement



Record



Family Tree



THE McDONALD FAMILY LEGACY

*Yours truly,  
Thaddeus A. McDonald*

MARTIN AND SOPHIA

FATHER AND MOTHER

Somewhere in the far distant past,  
The roots of the McDonald family was forever cast.  
We don't know where the journey began,  
But history tells, somewhere in Africa's varied land.  
On this land Martin and Sophia began the family tree,  
And generated all their posterity came to be.  
It is of record we know, they were united in 1874.  
On this land they came to dwell, established their  
roots and called it Hopewell.  
They brought up eight children in God's sight,  
Taught them honesty, perseverance, and to be upright.  
Don't strive to get, just strive to give.  
And the McDonald clan will forever live!

IMMEDIATE DESCENDANTS

Geneva McDonald Thorne

Albert McDonald

Martin McDonald II

Sophia McDonald Green

Robirda McDonald Moore

Lillian McDonald White

Oscar McDonald

Artelia McDonald Brown

EX-SLAVES MARTIN AND SOPHIA McDONALD LEGACY:  
FROM HUMAN PROPERTY TO HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT  
by  
Thaddeus A. McDonald

The story of ex-slaves Martin and Sophia McDonald of Bastrop County, Texas describes achievements exceeding the legendary epitaph of "from rags to riches." It is a story of African American Texans who advanced "from human property to substantive human achievements." Emerging from the anonymity of slavery, their legacy of accomplishments extends, through their descendants, to the decade of the 1990's.

Martin McDonald was born near Winchester, Tennessee to slave parents Henry and Mariah McDonald in the year 1848. He was one of a number of children born to his parents.

As the nation became more divided over the slave issue the threat of civil war loomed on the horizon. Many slaveholders came westward from the older slave states into Texas to escape impending hostilities between union and slave factions of the nation. In the year of 1850 when Martin was two years old, he and his parents were sold to John Moncure of Bastrop, Texas. The long trek by wagon train to Texas began. It took several months to reach their destination and their new home. Many hardships were encountered in making the long trip from Tennessee to Texas, including hostile Indians, inclement weather, illness, and breakdowns of wagons, etc.

Upon arrival at the John Moncure plantation in Bastrop County the McDonalds were assigned living quarters and jobs.

During his early years, Martin was observing, learning and assuming increasing responsibilities on the plantation. In time he was assigned duties of caring for the work teams - horses, oxen and mules. Another assignment was to ride the donkey to the grist mill with corn for grinding into meal for his family and others residing in the slave quarters. He later became herder of the sheep, and transporter of cotton freight from Bastrop to the central market at San Antonio, Texas.

As Martin grew towards maturity his yearning for freedom and to own something someday also grew. He dreamed and visualized having land of his own and becoming economically independent.

Meanwhile back in Bossier Parish, Louisiana a young girl was born to Mark and Mary Veal December 27, 1858. She was named Sophia. The Veals had a number of other children.

The Veals migrated to Texas from Louisiana in 1869 and, upon arrival at Bastrop, Texas, they settled on the Mark Young plantation as share-croppers. Sophia was then eleven years of age.

During the 1850s the United States was experiencing the continued abolitionist movement. The clamor that "no nation could long remain half slave and half free" was pervading the nation and were real threats to the evil institution of slavery.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in the fall of 1860, the Southern states began to carry out their threats to withdraw or secede from the Union. Seven states had seceded by February 1, 1861. Texas seceded in the same year.

The withdrawal of the Southern states from the Union presented Mr. Lincoln with a difficult problem when he became President of the United States on March 4, 1861.

Martin McDonald and Sophia Veal met on the Young plantation near Bastrop, Texas, and was attracted to each other. A courtship developed and they were married December 28, 1874. Young Martin then brought his new bride to the Hopewell area near Cedar Creek in Bastrop, County where they set up housekeeping in a log cabin.

Being among the first citizens to settle in the area and acquire land, they were considered pioneers. Armed with no formal education and being unable to read and write, Martin's early ambition led him to become attached to the soil. Sophia had some ability to read and write which was a great asset to their family living. In spite of martin's illiteracy, he was known to have the ability to commit to memory his annual farm expenses, income and profits.

On January 1, 1876 the McDonalds purchased their first parcel of land amounting to eighty (83) acres from John Moncure of Bastrop, Texas.<sup>1</sup> The first years were hard and back-breaking. The land had to be cleared to grow crops. In the year 1875-76 they cleared eight (8) acres of land by hand, with assistance of cooperative neighbors. That land produced primarily food for family sustenance. They continued to clear more land for cultivation in succeeding years. Their primary crops were cotton, corn, hay and vegetables. Cattle were produced for beef

and dairy products; hogs, horses, mules and poultry were also included in the farming operations.

The McDonalds soon earned the reputation of being "thrifty and thrivy." Martin's philosophy towards making a living was to earn something at every opportunity - daily if possible. He is quoted by his children to have said "earn some money at every chance you get; if you can't make a dollar, make fifty-cents (50¢) and; if you can't make fifty-cents, make a quarter." He persistently adhered to that practice, and above all, he encouraged and practiced honesty in their business dealings. A common practice of the family was to frequently sell produce from the farm. They would be seen with a wagon loaded with goods on their way to Austin, Texas several times a year. On arrival they'd provide customers with such items as wood, eggs, butter, meat and vegetables, providing year-around family income.

Martin and Sophia became crusaders for economic independence and self-reliance among the newly freedmen in the Bastrop County area. They'd urge other ex-slave share-croppers to leave the plantations and get on their own; seek a better life through land ownership and education. A number of them followed the McDonalds advice and moved to the Hopewell Community adding to its growth and development.

Martin and Sophia McDonald became the parents of fourteen (14) children, eight of which grew to adulthood. Namely:

Geneva McDonald Thorne  
Martin McDonald, Jr.  
Robirda McDonald Moore  
\* Oscar C. McDonald

Albert McDonald  
Sophia Ann McDonald Green  
Lillian McDonald White  
Artelia McDonald Brown

Realizing the prime importance of education, the McDonalds were very desirous of providing the best education possible for their children. All attended public schools and normals, and several became public school teachers in the Bastrop County schools.

The McDonalds early attached themselves to the Hopewell Church and reared their children in the admonition and nurture of Christ. They taught their children honesty, thrift, uprightness, patience, and perseverance and to be God-fearing which became a part of each of their daily lives.

Martin McDonald took no part in the 1889 uprising at Cedar Creek. As a peace loving citizen, he counseled his people to remain calm and the law would take its course. The white people's animosity toward the African Americans came to an all-time high immediately following the riot. Intimidations and various forms of hostilities were perpetrated against the newly freedmen. Nevertheless, Martin McDonald had the unusual favor a neighboring white prominent farmer named Frank Litton, who said: "Martin, if any of these white people around here come bothering you and your family, just pop your whip and I'll come to your rescue."<sup>2</sup> That reflected the general rapport the McDonalds had with some white people in the area.

The McDonald Family was noted for its generosity in helping those in need. They were always concerned about the well being

of their neighbors and exhibited that concern in numerous ways. The extended family was a frequent part of their lifestyle. A number of relatives and acquaintances came to live with them for a time until they were able to establish their own households. A number of orphaned children of relatives were reared in the McDonald household with their children. After becoming established himself, Martin assisted some other relatives and neighbors to acquire the necessary funding for establishing farm operations by cosigning banknotes securing their loans. The sharing of food and life's necessities were common practices from the household.

Meanwhile, Martin and Sophia continued to add to their land holdings until by 1906 their total agricultural lands exceeded eleven hundred (1100) acres.<sup>3</sup> Additional acreage has been added to the original estate in succeeding generations by their descendants.

Martin McDonald passed away April 3, 1912 at his residence at Cedar Creek, Texas. He is buried in the Mt. Olive Cemetery near Bastrop, Texas.

One and one-half (1½) acres of land were deeded from the McDonald estate January 29, 1919 for a church and school to serve Hopewell Community.<sup>4</sup> Both buildings stand today on the estate.

Sophia McDonald passed away January 17, 1935 at her residence and was buried next to her husband in the Mt. Olive Cemetery.



In January, 1986 the Bastrop County Commissioners Court recognized the McDonald legacy to the county by officially designating Bastrop County Road Number 242 as McDonald Lane, running through the Hopewell Community at Cedar Creek, Texas.<sup>5</sup>

The Texas Department of Agriculture honored heirs of the McDonald estate November 15, 1988 at the State Capitol in Austin through the Family Land Heritage Program. The honor is given to those families who have owned and continuously operated a farm or ranch 100 years or more.<sup>6</sup> The official citation was presented by the then State Treasurer, and ~~now~~ Governor of Texas Ann Richards.

Among the third and fourth generation decedents of Martin and Sophia McDonald are large numbers of college and university graduates. They are in varied, responsible and productive professions around the nation. Included are: agriculture, engineering, medicine, science, social services, law, clergy, professional athletics, school teaching (elementary through university), journalism, communications (radio, television, newspaper), music, professional military, law enforcement and entrepreneurship.

A McDonald family reunion is held every two years commemorating and perpetrating the family legacy. A memorial was erected in 1987 on the original tract of land at the Hopewell Church and school site on Texas Highway 21, seven miles east of Bastrop, Texas. It was a reunion project.

Ex-slaves Martin and Sophia McDonald truly left a perpetual legacy of inspiration for substantive achievement and; to love and serve humanity.

## NOTES

1. Eighty-three (83) acres conveyed by J.J. Moncure to Mart McDonald, by deed of date January the 1st, 1876. Recorded in Volume V, Page 376 of deed records of Bastrop County, Texas.
  2. A story told from time to time, in oral conversations, by children of Martin and Sophia McDonald.
  3. Excess of eleven hundred (1100) acres of land in partition deed May 26, 1937. Recorded in Volume 99, Pages 277-285 of deed records, Bastrop County, Texas.
  4. One and one-half (1½) acres of land for Hopewell Church and school deeded January 29, 1919. Volume 69, Page 108 of deed records of Bastrop County, Texas.
  5. Minutes of the Bastrop County Commissioners Court Proceedings January, 1986. Item submitted by Commissioner of Precinct 3 Jerry Alexander.
  6. The Family Land Heritage Program was established in 1977 by The Texas Department of Agriculture. It is designed to honor those families who have owned and continuously operated a farm or ranch for 100 years or more. Each honored family is given a certificate in the name of the land and listed in Family Land Heritage Registry at the Texas Department of Agriculture, Austin, Texas.
- \* Father of the Author.

This paper was presented to the Annual State Convention of the Black Texas historical Society July 17, 1992 at Austin, Texas. A copy is on file at the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas at Austin. it is dedicated to the ideal of preservation and resurrection of our rich African American heritage. Much African American history is walking around today unrecorded. It is urgent to recognize its importance and "get turned on to recording it."

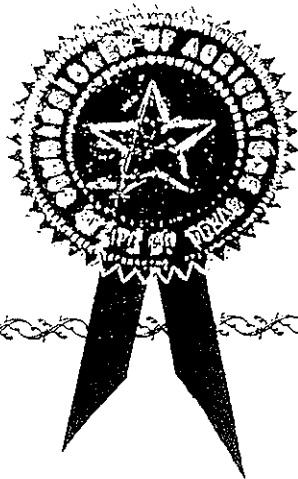
# FAMILY LAND HERITAGE



Certificate of Honor  
to

**May-Thad  
McDonald Farm**  
founded  
**1883**

For a century or more of continuous ownership and operation as a family agricultural enterprise. To the dedication and perseverance of the founders and heirs of these lands, we owe the basic wealth of Texas.



*Jim Hightower*  
Jim Hightower  
Texas Commissioner of Agriculture

**Black Texans Historical Society, Inc.**  
"Enhancing The Confluence of Texan Culture and History"  
P.O. Box 141038  
Austin, Texas 78714

David A. Williams,  
Executive Director

(512) 837-14  
(512) 836-14

April 5, 1991

Mr. Thaddeus A. McDonald  
8507 Adirondack Trail  
Austin, Texas 78759

Dear Friend:

It is my happy privilege to inform you that you have been cited for honorable and exceptional service to your fellow African-American Texans, in particular, and to all of your fellow Texans irrespective of race, color, or creed. On the basis of recommendations made to the Board of Directors, you will be inducted into the Black Texans Historical Society's Hall of Fame. The Society is a state-wide consortium and is dedicated to the recognition, research, writing, and preservation of the culture and history of the African-Americans in Texas.

We congratulate you for the achievements which have led to your selection. At your earliest convenience, please send us your resume and a recent 8 x 10 photograph. Both of these, along with any other photos and documents you wish to donate, will be placed in our archives collection which is housed in the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas.

The Testimonial Banquet, at which you are to be honored, will be at the Howard Johnson Plaza-Hotel North, in the Pedernales Room, 7800 IH-35 North, Austin, Texas, on Tuesday, April 23, 1991, at 7:30 PM. Tickets are \$15.50 each. Thank you for your cooperation; we look forward to seeing you at the Testimonial Banquet.

Sincerely,

*David A. Williams*

David A. Williams  
Executive Director

DAW:nm

Lloyd Bentsen  
United States Senator

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 19, 1990

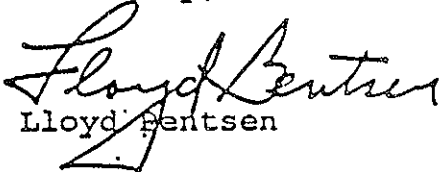
Dear Mr. McDonald:

Mrs. Bentsen and I would like to join the Black Farmers Conference and the Texas Department of Agriculture in saluting you on your outstanding contributions to agriculture.

Your farm being in production for 100 years is quite an achievement and we commend you on your success. Despite the problems facing Black farmers today, your endeavors will inspire others to consider agriculture as a viable business.

Best wishes and continued success.

Sincerely,

  
Lloyd Bentsen

Some  
First McDonald Family Reunion Members  
Cedar Creek, Texas  
July, 1979



1979

Grant security:

The Martin and Sophia M<sup>rs</sup> Donald Estate deeded 1 1/2 acres of land January 29, 1919

One and one-half acres of land from the Martin and Sophia M<sup>rs</sup> Donald Estate January 29, 1919 ~~form~~ a Church and school to serve the Hopewell Community with education and community development.

The M<sup>rs</sup> Donalds, as crusaders for education, economic efficiency, independence and self reliance sought the school to be established on their property on Texas Highway 21 near Cedar Creek, Texas

The Hopewell school began in the fall of 1922 sponsored by the Resemond Foundation, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. It was <sup>one of</sup> among the \$~~5,000~~ thousands provided African Americans thru out the former slave states of the South United States. The school served as a "beacon of hope" and stimulant to high citizenship expectations. ~~The earliest education~~ <sup>It succeeded</sup> ~~which was~~ provided ~~in~~ in the local churches

The school build historically <sup>was</sup> used as an educational institution, temporary church services, holiday observances, civic meetings and ~~and~~ different socials. The building was abandoned in 1960 during rural school consolidation with the Bastrop School District.



Down

Tutoring; organized  
(Adult education <sup>Leapers</sup>  
The ~~promotional~~ <sup>Hopewell Church</sup> has undertaken a project to

The project seeks to provide needed training ~~is~~ for students having difficulties in their classes. There is a need for more to achieve higher scores on the required tests.

The first concern is to seek to prepare our children to become higher achievers in their academic school work. They are to be brought up to full potential by systematic guidance of competent teaching professionals, as well as motivators.

The Hopewell Church has undertaken an effort to provide needed training for students having difficulties in their academic performances. A large number needs assistance in meeting testing requirements. Teachers and motivational professionals are sought, tutors as well as motivational specialists.