Guide

LEDGER
JEFF DAVIS COUNTY SCHOOL ACCOUNTS 1889-1895
BANKING RECORDS 1917-1920

Archives of the Big Bend
Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library
Sui Ross State University
Alpine, Texas
It is not known how this ledger came to the Archives of the Big Bend. As much of the collection in the Archives came to the University from the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society in 1968, the Society is a likely source. The members of the Society, scholars from both the university and the community, researched the Big Bend area, collecting artifacts and papers for the Big Bend Museum. This record may have come into the collection through Society member Barry Scobee, Fort Davis historian and a Mason when the Fort Davis Masons purchased the old Carlton store for their meeting hall (1929). Jeff Davis County historians Lucy Miller Jacobson and Mildred Bloys Nored report that the E. H. Carltons opened a banking operation in the store in 1913 (page 509). Although the business is not named in the ledger itself, It seems likely that the banking records in the ledger are Carlton's as a memorandum with "E. H. Carlton Co." written on it was found loose in the book. Scobee is a likely source even if the ledger did not come from the Carlton/Mason building as he collected widely while researching the history of Fort Davis and also had an office in the courthouse for many years where he could have come into possession of old county records.

Other possible links in the chain of title of the book are O. M. Keese, County Judge and School Superintendent from 1887-1894 and his brother, Whittaker Keese, whose firm, W. Keese & Co., served as the Depository for Jeff Davis County funds "until 1906." Jacobson and Nored state {p. 169} that E. H. Carlton's "unincorporated bank" was appointed the County Depository when the Keesey bank resigned in 1906 (cf. date of 1913 given to Carlton's bank above). Quoted phrases and page numbers refer to the Jeff Davis county history cited below.

The Ledger is a "County Treasurer's School Account Register" issued by the State of Texas and printed in Austin in 1891. Pages 14-29 and 119-131 record the 1889-1895 public school accounts of the Jeff Davis County Treasurer, James Edgar, appointed to the post in 1889 when the former treasurer absconded with County funds. The following term, 1891, Edgar, formerly Inspector of Hides and Animals and Sheriff for the County, was elected to the position of County Treasurer, which he held until his death in 1902.
School districts, established in 1884, were District 1 - South, District 2 - Newtown, and District 3 - Ranch Schools. District one had a "white" school and a "colored" school (for the children of the Buffalo soldiers stationed at the Fort). The teacher of the district one- "colored' school, Carlos Abrams, a British subject from India, was paid $30 a month in these years; the teacher of district 3 - ranch school, Sally Hiler, was paid $50; and the teachers at District 1 - white and District 2 - white, R. S. Patterson, J. R. King, and M. B. Anderson, were paid $75. Mrs. Anderson's daughter was her assistant at $44. Mrs. Anderson has left an account (reference below) of her teaching experiences. Common expenses listed for the schools were janitors (Abrams was both teacher and janitor), rent (before Newtown school was built), wood, supplies and materials (which one year included an encyclopedia and a flagstaff), and a census taker.

On pages 32-81 are what appear to be records of a bank. Daily, from August 1, 1917 through May 23, 1920, amounts of deposits, interest, checks, and "loans and discounts" are recorded and balanced. Although the business is never identified in the ledger, a memorandum with "E. H. Carlton Co." written on it and listing amounts labeled "not[es], sil[ver], cur[rency], gold" was found in the book. E. H. Carlton, orchardist, owner/partner in Fort Davis Auto Co., a founder of the Methodist Church, owner of Pioneer Cemetery and charter member of the Fort Davis Cemetery Association, was also the proprietor of a general mercantile store and "unincorporated bank" which became the County Depository in 1906. Perhaps the old county school ledger came into his hands at that time and, no longer in use for county records, was appropriated for bank records. Although the memorandum seems to identify the banker as Carlton, perhaps it should be noted that two other banks were in existence in 1917: Limpia Banking Company (which became the Jeff Davis County Depository in 1917) located in The Union Trading Company (which was W. Keesey Co. prior to 1908) and the Fort Davis State Bank, organized in 1911 and still in operation in 1996.

The ledger is housed in a single archival box.

Gaylan Corbin
Archival Assistant
April 25, 1996
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Sources:

Anderson, Mattie Belle. "Starting a School in Old Fort Davis", 1928.


Also See:

Barry Scobee Collection
Whittaker Keesey Collection
West Texas Historical and Scientific Society Collection