ROOTED IN TRADITION AND EXTENDED THROUGH LOYALTY

Marquart Family Tree Boasts 98 Aggies Over 5 Generations

BY LAURA SANDERS ’07
Many families have a detailed history that dates back many years, and it often becomes challenging to keep up with. But descendants from Mary Ann Curd and Bernhardt Marquart have been faithful stewards of their family’s story.

The Marquart lineage took root in Brazos County long ago, back in the days of covered wagons and iron horses, and it remains strong today. The Curd family came to Texas from Giles County, Tenn., in 1830. Isaiah Curd, Mary Ann’s grandfather, was one of the original settlers of Washington County (in an area that is now Brazos County) who had been part of Robertson’s Tennessee Colony. It was Isaiah who received a Spanish land grant from Stephen F. Austin in 1835 near Kurten. That same year, Isaiah sold half of his original land grant to Samuel Richardson, who later sold it to Henry Kurten in 1864. The land became the town that bears Kurten’s name, while the remaining land was known as Curds Prairie. Upon Isaiah’s deathbed, the remaining land was divided between his children, but no one in his family ever lived on it. Isaiah’s son, Ezekiel (Mary Ann’s father), lived on the west side of what is now State Highway 2154, north of Millican. According to Brazos County History: Rich Past—Bright Future, Ezekiel Curd deeded a 200-foot right-of-way across his property for the Houston and Texas Central Railroad to be built through to Bryan. The railroad crossing at Highway 2154 and High Prairie Road is known as Curd’s Crossing.

Bernhardt (later Ben Hardt) Marquart spent his early years in an orphanage in St. Louis, Mo. In 1878, Captain Thomas C. Clay took Ben out of the orphanage when he was 12 years old to work on his plantation, called Ingleside, near Independence, Texas. After he was released from indenture in 1886 at the age of 21, Ben chose to work on the Clay Ranch at Peach Creek in Brazos County. The Marquart family was among the first families to settle in the Peach Creek community. That was when Ben met Mary Ann Curd at a baseball game, and they were married in January 1891.

Ben recognized the need for a school and church for the community. Having been educated during his time at Ingleside, Ben took it upon himself to build and support these new additions (with the help of the Clay family) and became superintendent of both the school and the Sunday school. “He was the only person in the Peach Creek area who could read or write,” recalled Dr. Charles E. Baker ’55, grandson of Ben Marquart. “He started the school and taught Sunday school. He was also the substitute pastor of the church.” Ben and Mary Ann had seven children, one of whom became the first Aggie in the Marquart family, Louis Napoleon Marquart II, Class of 1923.

Their Aggie history that began with one of seven children who chose to attend Texas A&M continued to grow and the Marquart family tree took root in Aggieland. Spread out across five generations, their family truly lives out one of Texas A&M’s core values—loyalty. Today, the Marquart family boasts 98 current and former students who have attended and/or graduated from either Texas A&M University in College Station or Texas A&M University at Galveston. Numerous members of the Marquart family still reside in and around Brazos County, and the rest still make it back each year—the family gathers for a reunion in Wellborn on the weekend of the first conference home football game. Dr. Henry L. “Sonny” Presnal ‘57, grandson of Ben Marquart, is the director of the Stevenson Companion Animal Life-Care Center at Texas A&M’s Veterinary Medical Center and a lifetime resident of Bryan. He said his four children graduated from Texas A&M, along with several family members. “With so many family members, cousins and relatives attending and graduating from A&M, I am extremely proud of the legacy that has been established by our Marquart family descendants,” he said.

Sharyn Baker ’81, great-granddaughter of Ben Marquart, is excited that her son, Kevin Dwyer ’17, is the most recent addition to their Aggie clan, and she gives Charles Baker the credit. “My father loves Texas A&M deeply,” she said. “He was instrumental in steering his children and grand-children to this outstanding university. I am thrilled to have my children attend Texas A&M and have a deep sense of pride knowing they are continuing a remarkable tradition.”

The Marquart family legacy is still as thriving as the lush oak trees on Texas A&M campus. You can see remnants of the family’s history in the places around Bryan-College Station that we all know so well. For example, many of us pass by Texas O.S.R. and Texas World Speedway without a second thought. But, when the Curt family arrived in Nacogdoches with eight other families, they were told to turn around and head back to Tennessee. Instead, they cut a path around Nacogdoches toward the Brazos River and entered the territory illegally. The families from Tennessee referred to that path as “Old Tennessee Trail,” which is now known as Old San Antonio Road, or O.S.R. Additionally, Clay Ranch at Peach Creek once stood where Texas World Speedway is today. Just east of there, where Peach Creek Road and Rock Prairie Road meet, Carolyn Allen ’68, one of Mary Ann and Bernhardt’s great-granddaughters, still keeps a home. “I am so fortunate to have been born into this family with its rich history and to be the first female from the family to attend Texas A&M,” Carolyn said. “Both my family heritage and Aggie background have opened doors for me, professionally and personally. I look forward to spending more time near Aggieland where it all began.”