

A Brief History of
I. M. DARTER, M.D.
AND ANNIE MARY GORDEN
of Fort Worth, Texas

Isaac Michael Darter was born in Lineville, Randolph Co. Alabama on the 19th of January, 1851. He was the seventh child of Francis Michael Darter (born 23 June, 1809 in Wytheville, Wythe Co., Virginia) and Mary (Polly) Boyd (born 6 March, 1816 in Kentucky). Wytheville, located in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of southwest Virginia, was the early birthplace for this important branch of the Darter family. Isaac's grandfather, John Darter (who was also born in Wytheville in 1775) and his grandmother Mary Pridemore were married in 1803. (Ref 1, 4)



Photo of Dr. Isaac Michael Darter, MD in the 1880's.
(No picture of Annie Mary Gorden Darter is available)

I. M. Darter, as he referred to himself in various documents, after many difficulties and hardships of growing up on the frontier, went on to graduate from the University of Louisville, School of Medicine to become a physician and to serve for some time as the City Physician of Fort Worth, Texas. His loving and dedicated wife, Annie Mary Darter, served

at his side as a nurse as they administered to the needs of hundreds of patients including particularly those not able to pay. Isaac and Annie had four boys, one died at 2 years and another died at 21 years, but two lived long and fruitful lives. Isaac and Annie's lives were cut short by diseases that they undoubtedly had treated many times in their lives. Their life's story shows that seemingly ordinary people through effort and courage on their part, can greatly improve their lives, be of great benefit to others, and actually achieve their extraordinary dreams. Yes, they both lived unfinished lives, but lives their descendants will admire for generations to come. This is their story.

I. M. Darter's Family & Early Life

Isaac's father and mother, Francis and Mary Darter, were married May 9, 1834 and moved from Wytheville, Virginia to Lineville, Alabama where he became a miner and farmer (large land owner) and where 8 of their 10 children were born. Almost nothing is known about the family during this long time period and further research is needed. They appear to have established themselves as a prominent southern family during this 25-year time period in Alabama.

In 1859, the family uprooted and moved west traveling by horses and wagons (also "by ox team" says a newspaper article, Ref 9) for almost 800 miles to what was then the rough and wild Texas frontier, settling in Erath County, six miles Northwest of Stephenville. A newspaper article (Ref 9) stated: "Indians were running rampant at this time and kept settlers in constant fear for their lives." They established a ranch on the Bosque River. This is about 86 miles southwest of Ft. Worth. Isaac was only 8 years old at the time. In his History and Biographical Record of North and West Texas, Mr. B. B. Paddock relates the following about the Darter family during these difficult times:

The county thereabouts being then new and sparsely settled, and but scant means being afforded for protection against the Indians, who were then causing the settlers so much trouble, he (Francis Darter and family) remained in his exposed location, only a season or two, and in the Spring of 1861, trading off his cattle for horses, brought all his household and movable effects to the northern part of Tarrant County, where, with less danger from the Red man, he permanently located his home (near Azle, which is just 20 miles north of Ft. Worth).

The two years spent in Erath Co., will be ever memorable ones to the family, for they were wrought with constant danger and adventure with the Indians. One of the most tragic of these happenings occurred in the Spring of 1860, when the Indians made a raid on the Lemley, Tucker and Darter ranches and carried off four women, three of them, the daughters of Mr. Lemley, and one of them the wife of Mr. Woods. The Indians killed Mrs. Woods and one of the Lemley daughters. The other two, after being horribly mistreated, were, after being kept out one night, turned loose, and

made their way back to the settlement.

James Ira Darter (son of Francis Darter who eventually gave his life in the Civil War) and about six other men quickly pursued the Indians for several days, when the trail was lost and they had to return home with the awful crime unavenged.

Constant care and watchfulness had to be exercised to protect home and property, and among other necessary precautions, was to secure their horses and mules by a long chain around a tree near the house. The Darter house had portholes in it for watching and defensive purposes, and on occasions, the Indians, violating their usual customs, would approach the place in the dark instead of the light of the moon, thus adding to the horror of their raids. (Ref 11)

W. A. Darter (born 1846, son of Francis Darter and brother to I. M. Darter) retold this same story in the following way in the 1920's (Ref 9):

They captured and killed a neighbor's wife. Another's daughter and released two after torture that fall. The Indians stole horses so extensively that a horse had hardly any value. The elder Darter owning a number of cattle, had a chance to swap his cattle for horses. He did so and the boys brought them to Tarrant county, near Keller. They moved later to Denton county and then back to Fort Worth, where W. A. Darter attended school in 1866-1867.

Francis and Mary Darter had 10 children, who given the above situation, no doubt, grew up rapidly traveling to and living on the Texas frontier. Eight were born in Alabama and two in Texas. The family was listed in the US Census at Stephenville, Erath County, TX, Post Office on 2 July 1860.

Francis Darter, 50, Farmer, \$2300 (real estate), \$800 (personal estate), VA

Mary Darter, 44, Housekeeper, born KY

John H, 22, schoolteacher, (note, cannot read where born)

Elizabeth, 20, schoolteacher, AL

James I, 16, student, born AL

William A, 13, born AL

Margaret, 11, born AL

Michael, 9, born AL

Mourn(ing), 5, born AL

Susanna, 1, born TX (note that this child's name was later changed)

Here is a short summary of each child.(Ref 4)

1. Henderson Darter was born 22 February 1833, died the same day in Lineville, AL.
2. John Henry Darter was born 20 March 1838 in AL; he served in the Civil War and

married Arbeta Ada Gambrell on 12 December 1867. He lived to be 45 years old and died 21 June 1883 and is buried Pioneer Rest Cemetery, Ft. Worth.

3. Martha Elizabeth Darter was born 12 January 1840 in AL. She married A.Y. Lester, 16 December 1870. She was a schoolteacher for many years in Stephenville, Erath Co., and Mr. Lester was the first County Clerk. She lived to be 80 and died 7 April, 1920.
4. James Ira Darter was born 12 November 1843 in AL. He served in the 24th Texas Cavalry in the Civil War and was fatally wounded in the fighting at the siege of Atlanta. He died soon after on 21 August 1864. James was only 21 years old and is likely buried in one of the war cemeteries near Atlanta.
5. William Alexander Darter (referred to as W. A. Darter herein) was born 3 November 1846 in AL. He married Martha Louisa Adelia Gambrell, 27 March 1873. At the early age of 17, he saw his service under Cooper's command, in the Indian Nation in the Confederate Army. Later, he traveled with his father and others on a long and dangerous trip (of 1,500 miles) that involved fighting off attacking Indians at several places along the way from Fort Worth west to California in 1868-1870. He was in Sacramento on May 10, 1869 and helped celebrate the driving of the last "golden" spike that connected by rail the Atlantic and Pacific states. After that he traveled on one of the first trains east to Utah and across the plains to Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky and back to Ft. Worth early in 1870. He then returned to Ft. Worth and became a very prominent citizen becoming the first Tarrant County surveyor (1872) and preparing the first county map in 1876, serving on the city council for 10 years, assisting in bringing railroads to the city, and instrumental in bringing Texas Christian University to Ft. Worth. He lived to be 83 and died 5 October 1929 in Ft. Worth and is buried in the Pioneer Rest Cemetery.
6. Margaret Jenkins Darter was born 14 June, 1848 in AL, married in 1866 to Meradeh G. Ellis and died 22 November, 1932. They had six children. When Ft. Worth decided to move the old Pioneer Rest Cemetery (where her father Francis and mother Mary were buried), Aunt "Jenk" took a rifle and sat down at the gate to Pioneers Rest Cemetery and told them if anyone tried to move any of the graves, she would shoot them down. The plan to move the cemetery was abandoned.(Ref 4)
7. Isaac Michael Darter was born 23 June, 1851 in Lineville, Alabama; he married Annie Mary Gorden 8 April, 1877 and died after 42 years on 11 October, 1893 in Ft. Worth. He is buried in Pioneer Rest Cemetery.
8. Mourning Christobel (Belle) Darter, was born 19 June, 1855 in Lineville, AL; she married James W. Shirley in 1876 and died 9 January, 1930. They had eight children.

9. Lucy Emma Darter was born 9 January, 1860, in Stephenville, Erath Co., Texas; her family moved to Ft. Worth in 1866; she married John Wallar Burton in 1878 and died 11 April, 1951 at the age of 91 years. She is buried in Pioneer Rest Cemetery. Note that in the 1860 census, she was named Susanna Darter. She must have later changed her name to Lucy Emma.
10. Jefferson Franklin Darter, born 23 April, 1871 (4 months after his father's death when his mother was 55 years old) near Azle, Tarrant Co, Texas; he died at the age of 3, 29 December, 1874, he is buried in Pioneer Rest Cemetery.

Isaac lived with his family after moving to Azle in 1861. He went to school (he may have attended school in Denton with his brother W. A. Darter) and grew up observing the life and death on the frontier. The family moved to Fort Worth in 1866 and is listed in the 1870 US Census of Tarrant County, Texas (they registered at the Ft. Worth Post Office) as follows on July 19, 1870.

- ! F. Darter 63, Farmer (gross worth \$1,000)
- ! Mary Darter 55, Housekeeper
- ! William Darter 24, Surveyor
- ! Isaac M. Darter 19
- ! Belle Darter 15
- ! Emma Darter 10

Isaac's father, Francis, took a long and dangerous trip across the west to California in 1869 and died shortly thereafter in 1870 when Isaac was 19 years old. While the family lived in the "wild" west, they must have had a lot of culture because Isaac learned to play a violin very well, which he played throughout his life for family and friends. Isaac's son Francis relates that his father would play his violin every night at home and his mother Annie would play the organ with their children and sing along with their friends and neighbors. Isaac's beautiful old violin somehow survived the Galveston hurricane and more than 120 years since his death and is still in the possession of the Darter family.

Education & Dream of Becoming a Doctor

Not much is known about Isaac from 1861 (age 10) to 1877 (age 26) when he married. He is listed in the 1870 US Census at age 19 in Ft. Worth as a member of his father's family. One skill he developed was carpentry as he was listed as a carpenter in the 1880 US Census in Ft. Worth and later on during his medical practice his sons said that he bought and restored several houses and offices.

As he observed the often life and death occurrences in Ft. Worth, he must have acquired an intense desire to become a medical doctor. Perhaps it was in seeing the suffering around him and the unsanitary conditions and disease that took so many lives that he developed a great

desire to be able to help people who became ill. Isaac must have worked hard during these years to prepare and educate himself in the preparatory subjects (math, chemistry, biology, etc.) and also saved every penny he could. It is highly likely that Isaac was able to assist and become an intern to local doctors whom his family knew in Fort Worth and thereby gain valuable experience and education. This was often done as an initial step in those days wanting to become a doctor.

Anna (or Annie) Mary Gorden

A young lady named Anna Mary Gorden (she was called Annie throughout her life) was born in Chicago, Illinois, on 7 September 1858. Her son Frank recorded this birth date on a sheet of paper in May 1907 that was read at the funeral of her youngest son Michael. He also recorded her place of birth as Chicago, IL in his journal in 1957, however, there is no independent proof available. Annie's father was Joseph Thomas Gorden and her mother was Amanda Ann (Boyd) Gorden. The first official record of her and her family was located in Pleasant Gap, Bates County, MO in the 1870 US Census. This location is just south of Kansas City, MO. The record dated 30 June 1870 shows the following information:

J. T. Gorden, 34, Farmer, born IL
Amanda Gorden, 31, House Keeper, born TN
Anna M. Gorden, 12, At School, born IL
Thomas Gorden, 9, born IL
Ira A. Gorden, 5, born MO

The family must have moved from Illinois to Missouri after 1861 based on the birth of her brothers Thomas and Ira. No record of her family has been found yet in the 1860 US Census.

It is believed that Annie's family moved to Fort Worth, TX some time after 1870 but before 1877. One piece of evidence that she was living in Fort Worth by 1877 is that she recorded the following in her family bible when she was married: "Annie Mary Gorden of Fort Worth Texas"(Ref 18). Unfortunately, no photo of Annie survives but she was according to her sons a beautiful and dedicated woman.

Marriage of Isaac and Annie

There is no record about their meeting and courtship and falling in love, but it likely occurred in Fort Worth. Isaac no doubt went through the ritual of the day and asked Annie's father Joseph Gorden for her hand in marriage. Isaac and Annie were married on the 8th of April 1877 in Fort Worth as shown below by their marriage license located in the Tarrant County courthouse. Isaac was 26 and Annie 19 years old. Her father (Joseph T. Gorden) served as a witness to the marriage as shown on their marriage page in the Isaac M. Darter family bible (Ref 18) and John Darter (Isaac's uncle) was the other witness. One can only imagine the large wedding and the participation of many members of the Darter family and the Gorden family gathered in Fort Worth, Texas. It certainly was a happy time and the beginning of their remarkable life together.

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MARRIAGE LICENSE.

State of Texas, }
COUNTY OF TARRANT. } **To all who shall see these Presents.--GREETING :**

Know Ye, that any person legally authorized to celebrate the RITES OF MATRIMONY, is hereby licensed to join in marriage, as husband and wife I. M. Darter and Miss Annie Mary Gorden and for so doing, this shall be his sufficient authority; and due return make in sixty days after solemnization.

In Testimony Whereof, I as Clerk of Tarrant County Court, hereunto subscribe my name, and affix the Seal of said Court, this 8th day of April 1877.

J. P. Woods
County Clerk

TEXAS, TO WIT: TARRANT COUNTY, ss.

This Certifies, that I have joined in marriage, as husband and wife I. M. Darter and Miss Annie Mary Gorden on the 8th day of April 1877.

W. Y. Taylor

Marriage certificate of I. M. Darter and Annie Mary Gorden, April 8, 1877
(Tarrant County Courthouse, Fort Worth) (Ref. 6)

After their marriage, they remained in Fort Worth because their first child, Joseph Francis Darter, was born on 13 September 1879. The baby was named after Annie's father "Joseph" and Isaac's father "Francis." It was previously thought that Joseph was born in St. Louis,

but the following information from the 1880 US Census indicates Fort Worth Texas (as also does a St. Louis city death database for Joseph to be subsequently shown):

Mike Darter, 28, born AL (H. Carpenter)

A. M. Darter, 21, born IL

Joseph Darter, 9 months, born TX

This information makes it clear that Joseph was born while they were still living in Fort Worth, prior to their move to St. Louis for medical studies.

One other possible piece of evidence that Annie's family moved to Texas in the 1870's is that her mother was located in the 1900 US Census living and working in Waco, Texas as a nurse at age 61.

A. Gorden, age 61, born January 1839, nurse, place of birth TN, father born in TN, mother born in TN, 5 children, owned her own home.



Isaac M. Darter Bible

Marriage information page filled out in the I. M. Darter family bible (it is believed that the handwriting is that of Annie Gordon Darter).