

Capt. Ephraim “Eph” Merrill Daggett
June 3, 1810 - April 19, 1883

Ephraim, also known as E.M. and Eph, was born on June 3, 1810 to Eleazer and Elizabeth Daggett. A Canadian by birth, Eph was the oldest of 6 children. While Eph was still a toddler, the War of 1812 began and his father Eleazer moved to the United States to join the war effort. The family moved just over the Canadian Border to Batavia, New York. This act was considered to be treason to Canada and their Canadian land/property was confiscated by the British government. When Eph was about 10 years old, the family moved from New York to Terre Haute, Indiana. His father was awarded land in Indiana from the U.S. Government for his allegiance to the U.S. and participation in the War of 1812.

On December 15, 1835, Eph married his first wife Pheroba Strouse in Parke County, Indiana. What happened to Pheroba is lost to time as we are unsure if she died or if the marriage ended in divorce. They had at least one known child together named Ephraim Beck Daggett, who was born in Jackson County, Missouri in 1838.

Eph would arrive in Texas around 1839, along with his siblings and parents. His father secured land in Shelby County through a *Texas Headright Certificate*. He married his second wife in 1842, a widow named Carloine Matilda Adams. She brought 3 children into the marriage. At some point, Sam Houston and the Daggetts became friends, especially with Eph. It is likely the friendship became during the Regulator Moderator War of East Texas (1839-1844) as many members of the Daggett family, including Eph, were heavily involved in the conflict. Eph, alongside with his two brothers and sister Helen, become leaders of the Regulators. Sam Houston himself would negotiate with both sides in the conflict and a Peace Treaty was signed on July 24, 1844. In 1845, Texas entered the United States as the 28th State. Shortly after this, the Mexican-American War broke out and Eph fought in the war. He reached the rank of Captain and fought alongside Major Ripley Arnold, another notable name in Fort Worth history.

After the war, Eph became interested in the land that is present day Fort Worth and made his first trip to the area in 1849 in anticipation of receiving a land grant for his participation in the Mexican-American war. He continued to live in Shelby County and was a state representative for his county in 1851 and 1853. Eph's interests in Fort Worth continued to grow and in 1853 he bought a livery stable and hotel catty-corner from today's historic courthouse. In 1854, Eph moved his entire family and property in a caravan of drawn oxen wagons and settled in the southern part of downtown Fort Worth (present day Fort Worth Convention area and south.) This happened to be the land he was awarded from the land grant and it would later be known as “Hell's Half Acre” due to the lawlessness, brothels and saloons that popped up in this area. He continued to purchase large tracts of land throughout Tarrant County. In 1856, Eph was elected to the Texas State House of Representatives representing Tarrant County. By November of the same year, he was instrumental in obtaining the votes needed to relocate the Tarrant County Seat from Birdville, Texas to Fort Worth. Eph built the first courthouse located in Fort Worth, which was a wood frame structure with just three rooms. He would also financially help the building of the second courthouse.

During the Civil War, Eph was a Brigadier General for the Confederate Army but exact details of his participation are unknown. After the war, Eph was instrumental in bringing the Texas & Pacific Railroad to the city and donated 96 acres south of town for tracks and a train station. He also donated land to the Catholic community for the present day St. Patrick's Cathedral.

His involvement, promotion and generous donations to the City of Fort Worth has afforded him the title "Father of Fort Worth." A street just south of Downtown bears the name of Daggett as well as the schools E.M. Daggett Elementary and Daggett Middle School.¹

On April 19, 1883, Eph passed away and his funeral was held in the home of his son. At the time of his death, his estate was valued at \$125,000. This is the modern day equivalent of approximately 3 million dollars. He is buried in Pioneers Rest Cemetery alongside his second wife, one child, mother, and one sibling.²

¹ Smith, Melanie. "Origin and Lineage of the Charles Biggers Daggett Family of Fort Worth, Texas". 2022, pgs. 30-36.

² "Death of E.M. Daggett." The Daily Democrat. Fort Worth, Tex., Vol. 1, No. 134, Ed. 1 Thursday, April 19, 1883, newspaper, April 19, 1883; Fort Worth, Texas. Accessed 15 Sept 2023; <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph233636/m1/4/?q=%22E.M.+Daggett%22>.