

Christmas Angel for December 21, 2008
By Carol Taylor
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This fall the Northeast Texas History and Genealogy Center has truly been blest by a total stranger. In the most unlikely of circumstances, Dr. Eleanor Duke attempted to contact me last summer while I was out on medical leave. When I returned, I promptly responded to her e-mails and we began an online friendship that has benefited the Genealogy Center in a remarkable manner.

Dr. Duke is a PhD. who taught for many years at the University of Texas El Paso. Her late husband was with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. I gather they had no children. Last spring, Dr. Duke celebrated her ninetieth birthday. But how Dr. Duke learned about our library and decided to donate her genealogy library to us is amazing. I have never actually met Dr. Duke nor her distant relative in California who has donated some wonderful papers about Henry and Emerson College in Campbell. But both ladies are descended from Rev. Wiley SoRelle and the Mackey families of the Campbell area. The SoRelle family was here during the days of the Republic of Texas and present when the county was organized. The Mackey family was very supportive of education and probably behind the movement to create an educational district before the incorporation of the town of Campbell.

Dr. Duke has collected excellent genealogical and historical reference books relating to the Eastern Seaboard colonies from Maryland to Georgia. She has offered us 150 volumes that have trickled in all fall. Every one is in fine condition. It is taking us a while to process and catalog them but we now have eleven on the shelves now. There are some family histories like *The History of Virgil A. Stewart*. The materials from Maryland

and Virginia are primarily colonial, such as *History of Maryland: Settlement to Restoration*, *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century*, and *Elizabeth City County, Virginia* with records for selected years from 1634 to 1702. As her families moved further south, Dr. Duke collected materials from the Revolutionary Period, such as *The North Carolina Gazetteer: A Dictionary of Tar Heel Places* and *King's Mountain and Its Heroes* by Lyman C. Draper. Anything by Lyman Draper is a treasure of the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods. You find things in Draper's work that you won't find in other places.

The South Carolina materials include *Saint David's Parish, South Carolina: Minutes of the Vestry 1768-1832, Parish Register 1819-1924* compiled by Brent Holcomb. Again, anything Holcomb does is excellent. Since South Carolina kept no civil marriage records until the 20th Century, Holcomb's work in old parish records is extremely valuable, considering what Sherman did to South Carolina. The other South Carolina book is *An Index to Deeds of the Province and State of South Carolina 1719-1785 and Charleston District 1785-1800*, once again valuable materials. One of the books that deal with Georgia is a companion piece to one that we have in our collection. Jeannette Holland Austin had compiled a number of books dealing with Georgia genealogy. We had her *Index to Georgia Intestates* but needed the mate, *Index to Georgia Wills* and Dr. Duke proved to be the perfect donor. However, through no fault of Austin, many of the records from northwest Georgia were destroyed in 1864 so don't be surprised if probates from Walker and Whitfield Counties are missing. We have Saunders' volume of Alabama history, but Dr. Duke reports that her donation, *History of*

Alabama: Annals of Alabama 1819-1900 by Pickett and Owen is much better. I must admit I haven't yet compared the two.

But what an honor it is to receive such valuable books from a total stranger!