

*B. M. Estes*

S T A T E M E N T

Of

Judge B. M. Estes,

Granbury, Hood County, Texas.

I lived in Granbury in the 70's during the time that Finis L. Bates was a lawyer in Granbury and that John St. Helen ran a saloon in the town. I remember Bates as a very young lawyer, who was not considered by other Granbury Attorneys as particularly keen. As a matter of fact, he was chimerical and lazy. Until the time that Mr. Bates's book on John Wilkes Booth was issued, he was never thought of here in connection with St. Helen. The chances that they were as good friends as Mr. Bates would lead one to believe in his book are quite remote. There was a great disparity in their ages. St. Helen was a man forty or forty-five years old and Bates was just a boy seventeen or eighteen. St. Helen was a gambler, saloonkeeper and more or less the typical Western bad man of that period. I do not remember ever seeing Bates hanging around St. Helen's saloon or seeing them together. Bates was not the kind of boy to hang around saloons anyway. As to the confession that St. Helen is supposed to have made to Mr. Bates that he was John Wilkes Booth, St. Helen might have told him some such a story as a reason for not wanting to tell him of his true identity, knowing that if Bates ever told anyone that St. Helen was John Wilkes Booth, Bates could not prove it and no one would believe him. St. Helen was just the type of fellow that would tell a "kid" like Bates such a fool yarn if it wasn't true, but never if it was. St. Helen was rather tall and dark. He had a very deep scar across the right side of his neck and wheezed when he talked as though he might have had his windpipe cut. He was a very great friend of Bill McDonald, who was a terrible drunkard and gambler and was considered even around Granbury, in those days, as an old devil. McDonald was quite handy with the knife and used it often. I remember that he knifed one fellow across the loins and ruined

him. He was a sneak, coward and you couldn't believe a word that he said. I remember old J. M. Taylor, a Confederate private soldier who lived out east of town. He was a squatter on some property belonging to a Virginia family and I was the agent for their estate. Taylor was an odd half-witted old fellow and not able to make a speech if he had tried. He is the only J. M. Taylor that I remember of ever having lived around Granbury, and I do not believe that he ever made a speech at a Fourth of July celebration at Glen Rose in those early days or at any other time. I am quite sure that St. Helen did not have a colored or Mexican porter around his saloon in Granbury. I do not remember that St. Helen was ever sick in Granbury; that is, seriously enough to have someone take care of him.