



A Feast of Reason

By Karen Gerhardt Fort

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James Madison Hall kept a journal from 1860 until just before his death in 1866, in which he recorded a daily log of events in his life and the lives of his family, slaves, and friends. It also served as a record of business dealings, money borrowed and repaid, and cost of items during the war. Hall lived in Houston County, Texas, where he was a farmer, and in Liberty County, Texas, where he was a merchant and mayor of Liberty.

This book illustrates the home life of Texans during the Civil War and includes Hall's relationship with blacks, especially a man named Billl Hicks, who became Hall's miller when Hall was away. This book traces the changing relationships between slaves and masters during the early post-war transition, before Congressional Reconstruction began. Hall's feast of reason was to refuse to go into the military, even though he favored secession; to adapt to changing needs and circumstances; and to remain a voice of fairness and moderation during these trying times.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

KAREN GERHARDT FORT is a 6th generation Texan, born and raised in Waco. She earned a BA in Spanish from the University of Houston and an MA in Museum Studies from Baylor University. Her first book, *Bale O' Cotton* (Texas A&M University Press, 1992), received two awards (American Association of State and Local History and the San Antonio Conservation Society). Other publishing credits include book reviews, short fiction, poetry, and articles. Her research into the Civil War in Texas has led to articles, a film, websites, and podcasts. She has written extensively about Texas history, and this is her 8th book. She is married to historian Thomas A. Fort. Their son and his family live in the Seattle, Washington, area.

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