

## DEQUINCY'S NAMESAKE TOLD

By W. T. Block

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Recently, having acquired a taste for the history of the Kansas City Southern Railroad and its Netherlands connections, I read that DeQuincy was named for a Dutchman named "Baron DeQuincy." So I cranked up the search engines in my computer and went fishing for that Dutch nobleman without any success.

Now about 1897, Arthur Stilwell, founder and head honcho of the railroad, had a propensity for Anglicizing difficult Dutch names, so I thought that DeQuincy was an Anglicization of an unpronounceable Dutch name.

As an example, one of the principle investors in the railroad's securities was an Amsterdam coffee merchant with the jawbreaker name of Jan "DeGeoeijen," so Stilwell shortened the name to Jan "DeQueen." DeQueen, Arkansas is named for him as well as some early streets and schools in Port Arthur and Nederland, Texas. Hence, although I thought it plausible that DeQuincy was just another of Stilwell's Anglicizations, I could not avoid pondering what its real Dutch name was. Actually, DeQuincy is truly a very baronic and noble name, but not in Holland, only in England.

Even before the last golden spike united the KCS rails 4 miles east of Mauriceville on Sept. 11 1897, Stilwell already had a party of the Dutch investors in the mid-Atlantic Ocean en route to New York for an excursion trip over the full length of the railroad. Some years ago, Dow Wynn, former director of the Port of Port Arthur, wrote an account of that trip, reprinted as the new Port Arthur Centennial History, page 29, which excerpt follows: "... On Oct. 15, 1897, the DeQueen Arkansas Bee ran this story: "...Mr. DeQueen, a guest of the city that was named in his honor; Pres. A. E. Stilwell, and others visited our thriving little city, and are delighted with its progress. Included with Mr. DeQueen and his wife, Mena, is Mr. E. DeQuincy of London. Stilwell had no problem with naming DeQuincy, Louisiana after his English investor..."

Another excellent source of Kansas City Southern history are the microfilm reels of Port Arthur Herald in the Port Arthur library, for the newspaper belonged to the railroad for many years. In fact its first issue was published on an excursion train en route to Port Arthur.

The issue of Sept. 9, 1897 described the rush to close the rail gap between Beaumont and DeQuincy, and of the 200 men who worked feverishly to complete the railroad. Also the issue of Nov. 4, 1897 told of the arrival in Port Arthur of Mr. DeQueen, of several other Dutch investors, and of Mr. E. DeQuincy of London. Hence, Mr. DeQuincy would have passed twice through his namesake city en route to and from Port Arthur.

DeQuincy is actually a French name, which arrived in England with the Normans under William the Conqueror. One royal source revealed that the "baronial family called DeQuincy from Quince, Maine (that's Brissac-Quince of Maine et Loire, France, not the State of Maine). LaRoque traces the house of DeQuincy to that of DeRotan in Bretagne (Brittany), whose arms they bore and for the Earls of Winchester..."

Saire (Saher) DeQuincy the Elder was the first of them to arrive from Brittany, and apparently he took over a former Anglo-Saxon castle at Winchester, the small town about 20 miles north of South Hampton. His son, Saire DeQuincy II, born in 1154, was appointed the first Earl of Winchester by King John in 1207. DeQuincy the Second had been governor of Normandy between 1180 & 1184; Steward of England, 1205-1207; and he was one of the 25 barons charged to enforce the provisions of the Magna Carta in 1215. He left England in 1217 during the 5<sup>th</sup> Crusade and either died or was killed during the siege of Darietta, Egypt without ever reaching the Holy Land.

There were other descendants who bore the title of Earl of Winchester, namely, Roger DeQuincy, Reginald DeQuincy, and Robert DeQuincy. The death of Robert is in dispute; one source noted that he died in Judea during the 7<sup>th</sup> Crusade, whereas another reported his death in London in Aug. 1257. The Earls of Winchester have been an “extinct barony” for many centuries, but DeQuincy, Louisiana can still take great pride in the origin of its name.