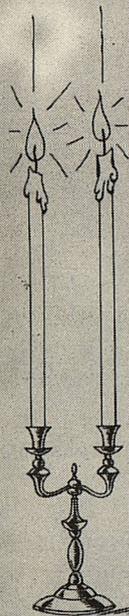


Borden Citizen.

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CHRISTMAS IN BORDEN COUNTY -- YEAR 1910

Peace on Earth



The festive Christmas dinner, shown in this picture, was held at the Stokes Hotel, just south of the Courthouse. For the young people of Gail this must have been the high point of the Holiday Season. Mr. and Mrs. Stokes and their son, Holt, are standing in the background. Among the young people enjoying this feast were Lilly Fields and Rodway Keen, Ethel Blankenship and Graham Whitaker, W. S. McClung and Ethel Atwood, Ruff Whitaker and Mae McClinton, Eli Whitaker and Nell Hale.

The original of this picture belongs to the Dorward family. Maurice and Margaret Dorward used it for their interesting Christmas greetings in 1964.

Doesn't that turkey look mouth watering? And how about those dresses! No mini skirts then.

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Christmastime is the pleasantest time of the whole year. At this time we think tenderly of distant friends. We strive to forgive injuries, to close accounts with ourselves and the world, and to begin the New Year with a trust that our lives will contain more notable entries, good actions, and fewer ugly blots than the past year.

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ANNUAL COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS TREE

Christmastime brings many memories to each of us, and one of the most pleasant memories is of the Community Christmas Tree in Borden County. This tree has been a tradition each year since 1901 and possibly even earlier. In the early days with great anticipation each family looked forward all year to the gala occasion (as no one had Christmas trees in their homes then). They had their eyes on the tallest and prettiest tree in the county to adorn the Union Church on Christmas Eve. Some old timers say the tree looked fifty feet tall. The tree was decorated with lighted candles, ropes of tinsel, the most beautiful dolls, horns, teddy bears, blocks and books. The women had drawn "Secret Pal" names and had their gift wrapped and placed under the tree with a note inside of them that read-Guess Who? Oh! the anticipation, the thrill, and the beauty of that tree. It was almost too much to bear. Every little girl knew that the beautiful doll in the center of the tree was hers, and the time until it was placed in her arms seemed as if it would never pass. Boys were busy tearing into packages and hoping for a new "aggie" and a "top".

With grateful heart the people listened to the minister read St. Luke, chapter two. They sang Christmas hymns and then each child that wanted to, recited a poem or said a little prayer. After the gifts were exchanged each family departed for their homes to hang up their Christmas stockings for old Santa to fill.

Today we are still carrying on the same tradition. The Baptist and Methodist Churches alternate each year with people of all Churches participating.

Let us remember as Christmas nighs that the Tree represents the tree on which Christ hung for our Salvation, and remember the Christmas Candle represents HIM - who is the Light of the World.

Contributed by Pauline Clark

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN -----?

Mesquite was not a pest in Borden County in years gone by, but was highly prized as fuel. No trees grew above the caprock and there were only scattered trees over the remainder of the county - no brush such as plagues us today. Those settlers who lived on the plains had an especially hard time obtaining fuel. Cow chips were used when available and many trips were made "under the cap" to haul loads of fire wood. Sometimes the settlers did not bother to secure permission from the ranch owners to collect wood on their land and this lead to some conflict and hard feelings. It wasn't easy to unload wood you had gathered and return those weary miles with an empty wagon to a cold house.

One year at Christmastime, as a gesture of good will, Mr. R. M. Clayton, grandfather of Mardes Clayton, offered every one in the county a free load of wood if they would come and get it. The only stipulation was that they gather only dry wood and not cut the green trees. Can you realized that we once preserved mesquite trees in Borden County?

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HI-JINKS IN THE SCHOOLHOUSE

In an age when most children call adults by their first names, I can remember when no school child would venture to call the schoolmaster by any name but "Professor". Whatever their qualifications, they were still "Professor" to the boys and girls in the five-grades school at Gail. And no one ever ruled the roost with a more authoritative strut than did old Professor Sewell. He would pace up and down amongst the scholars, often catching us at other than academic pursuits. At the age of fifteen, I was most often in the pursuit of male-type attention, which prompted me one plodding afternoon to manufacture a request for information about the day's assignment, slip it into my speller, and pass it stealthily to Cora Berry, signing for her to hand it to Max Dillahunty. At the precise instant that Max received the clandestine epistle, Professor Sewell appeared at his side and demanded, "Hand me the note, Max". Max looked wildly about, then wadded up the note, stuck into his mouth, chewed it up and swallowed it. Professor Sewell turned a most interesting color, then marched Max up to the desk and proceeded to give him a severe caning -- to the point that several of the girls burst into tears. I was mortified and remorseful that my bad behavior had resulted in Max's punishment, and I resolved to even the score. The next time the Professor switched importantly by my seat, I simply removed my huge red hair bow, reached out and pinned it quickly to his coattail. The rest of the afternoon was filled with hilarity on our part and bewilderment on the Professor's. Whichever way he turned, titters and snickers broke out behind him. He would whirl on the culprits, only to have a fresh wave of amusement from the other side of the class. After dismissal, he proceeded out of school, across town, into the post office, the general store, and to his home, with Ethel Morrow's familiar red hair ribbon pinned juantly to his coattail. The next day, needless to say, I received a lesser dosage of Max's punishment. But Max, I can say to you, across the space of sixty years and into eternity, it was worth every lick!

--Ethel Morrow Everett

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The Borden County Historical Society recently received the first copy of the first newspaper ever published in Borden County. Named the BORDEN SPOKESMAN it is dated Friday, July 31, 1891. A letter from the late John L. Wallace of Post, Texas, tells us: "Mr. Simpson, the editor, boarded with my grandfather, J. I. Wilbourn, who owned the section of land the town of Gail was placed on. When the press was set up and ready to go Mr. Simpson asked my mother, Ninnie Wilbourn (who was 15 years old at the time) if she would like to print the first copy. She agreed and this is the paper. Ninnie was Grandfather's oldest daughter. She married A. L. Wallace of Greenville, Texas, and I am Mr. Wilbourn's oldest Grandson. /s/ John L. Wallace of Post, Texas".

This newspaper will be sent to Austin to be silk-screened in order to preserve it and will be displayed in our museum.

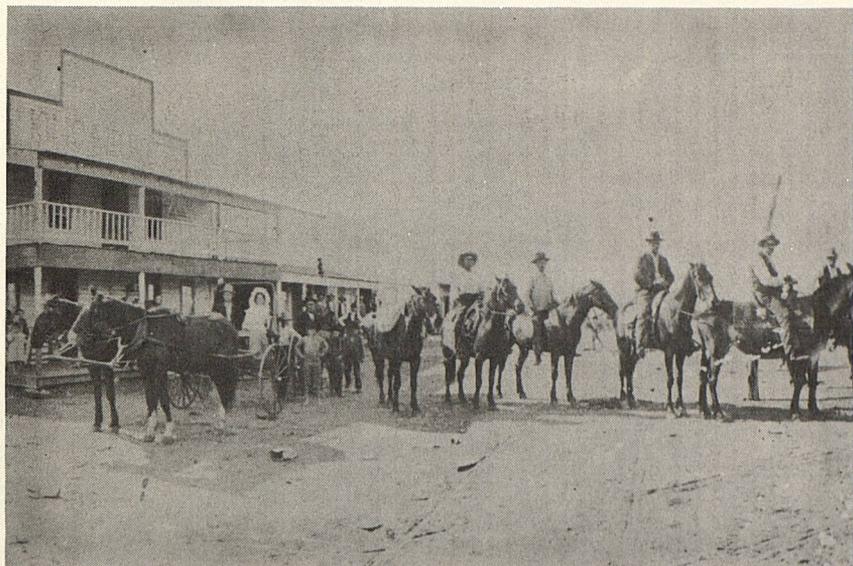
The Historical Marker for our jail has been received and will be installed soon. Tentative plans call for an official unveiling of this marker, probably in the spring.

Mrs. R. H. Whitaker sends a memorial to the Texas Historic Foundation in memory of her brother, Marc B. Kincaid.

Our new year began with our September issue. Your subscriptions - \$3.00 yearly - make it possible for us to continue this newsletter. Checks may be sent to Mrs. J. W. Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas 79738.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF
BORDEN COUNTY

By Will S. Johnson



Will S. Johnson, of Truth or Consequences, N. Mex., who this year 'turned 8-Oh-', has vivid memories of Gail in the early 1900's when his family ran the hotel on the west side of the courthouse square. This two story structure with adjoining feed store and wagon yard witnessed much of the early history of Gail. It was built by David G. Kincaid who came to Gail around 1889 from Tennessee by way of Bastrop County. The hotel was built to accommodate passengers on the stage line which Mr. Kincaid operated, making daily trips half-way to Big Spring and back,

bringing express, mail, and 'Drummers'. (Quote from a letter by Hettie Kincaid Whitaker). The Kincaid Hotel was traded to J. N. Hopkins in 1899 for 100 head of horses and brand, range delivery. Marc Kincaid, grandson of David, remembered that Wes and Charley Berry were hired to help gather horses and what a wild time was had by all. Among the "regular boarders" whom Will remembers as staying at the hotel were Miss Julia McCarty - who was a Post-Mistress at Gail from 1902-1906; Dr. McDaniels and his sister, Miss Stella, a school teacher; Miss Sallie Fox, a music teacher who married Dr. McDaniels; Mr. Thornton, a lawyer, and his wife. Mr. Thornton lived at Gail until his death and is buried in the Gail Cemetery. For the privilege of room and board (three meals a day) the boarders payed \$30.00 a month. Of course, there was no private bath. Will's family operated the hotel until about 1906. The Simpson family and the Tom Smiths were later owners. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1913 - a spectacular climax to an exciting story.

In 1902, Mr. O. S. Johnson (Will's father) who came from Limestone County to Scurry County in 1890 and to Gail in 1900, traded a "three room house with fireplace, near the mountain, and 8 acres of land" to Mr. Hopkins for the hotel. So young Will was given a "ring side seat" to the goings on in the bustling young county seat of Gail. He was present for the 'land rushes' and tells of one in September, 1902. Bob Hunter, who had just sold his ranch west of Gail to Mr. D. W. Godwin of Fort Worth, stayed over to see the fun. A big Irishman named Pat McCollum, who ran the Godwin ranch, brought his cowboys in to participate. They found the hall of the Courthouse so packed with men that Pat just crawled over their heads to reach the door of the Clerk's office ahead of them. J. S. Webber stopped his chuck wagon just outside the window of the Clerk's office so his men would be on hand for any activity. And of course there was the much told story of the Turner sisters who stationed themselves at the door of the Clerk's office and yelled loud and long if any man put his hand upon them to attempt to dislodge them. They got their 4 sections, too!

Will reminisces about the good times had by the young people of Gail. There were always the dances at the ranches - the Cross C's - the Mitchells - and others - or in the Courthouse, upstairs, and at the home of Sheriff Clark. Some of the fiddlers whose tunes kept them dancing until morning were George Clark and Thompson Bostick. Later Max Dilleahunty set many a toe tapping. Echol Park was a favorite for calling squares but Will knew a lot of calls, too!

And the pranks they thought up!! Once they dismantled the Preacher's buggy then reassembled it, complete with tongue, on top of the county jail. Another time they roped a mule and tied a cowhide to his tail. Nobody in town got much sleep that night until some one finally caught the animal and relieved him of his distressing burden.

There was work as well as play for Gail youth. In 1903 A. B. Robertson of Colorado City sold his ranch just east of Gail to Frank and Andy Long. This ranch which 'Sug' Robertson had purchased from the Magnolia Land and Cattle Company (MKS - later O.B.'s) was used for their horse pasture. It is now known as the Elmer Long ranch. The cattle were trailed to Robertson's LANC ranch at the mouth of Yellow House Canyon and Will Johnson went along to drive the calf wagon. Mr. Hancock, father of Milton Hancock of Slaton, was ranch manager and in charge of the drive. (Note for tenderfeet - the calf wagon was used to pick up and haul calves too young to keep up with the herd).

Will Johnson married the daughter of 'Warloopy' Sam Jones and lived on the Abney ranch several years. He was Tax-Assessor of Borden County from 1914 to 1918 when he left for New Mexico.

Thank you, Will, for sharing your memories with us. We hope we have 'put them down to suit you'.

Editors note: This information was gathered by Edna Clark Miller in an interview with Mr. Johnson and other issues will contain more of his interesting recollections.

A.M. Clayton, Sr., 84, a member of a prominent ranching family of West Texas and New Mexico, died Sept. 28, 1967. He had lived in Borden County since 1912.

We learn from Annie Doyle Rule of Corpus Christi of the death of John H. Doyle, Jr., of Mountainair, N. Mex. on June 15, 1966. The Doyle family first settled in the "49" pasture and later moved to Gail.

John H. Wallace, grandson of J. E. Wilbourn who owned the section of land on which Gail was built, died on Sept. 21, 1967. The Wilbourn family has been associated with the history of Borden County since its beginning.

Mrs. Thomas O. Edwards died in April of 1967. The Edwards operated a post office called Kingsmere in their home 11 miles east of Gail from 1916-1923 and lived in Borden County many years.

A fatal highway accident on October 21, 1967 took the lives of Mert and Ruby Jones. Mert was a member of a pioneer family of the Fluvanna Community and was married to Ruby Faye Sims on January 15, 1926, by Jas. H. Tate, pioneer Presbyterian Minister. Mert and Ruby were leaders in community affairs and their lives gave much pleasure to a large circle of friends.

E. A. Bills, retired District Judge and prominent church and civic leader of Littlefield, died October 17, 1967. He taught his first school at "Possum Trot" in our county and also taught school at Gail and Fluvanna while studying for his Bar examination. He was married in Gail on Dec. 27, 1911, to Miss Sallie Hubbard.

Walter Suites, 74, who lived with his mother in the Plains community, was killed in a highway accident on November 20, 1967. The Suites family came to Borden County in 1905.

We note the passing on November 13, 1967, of Earl Smith who lived many years in southern Borden County.

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The fourth annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee was held in Galveston on Oct. 26-28. A most interesting program was presented and it is with regret that we report that no one from Borden County was able to attend. This is the first state meeting in which Borden County has not been represented.

Although our Borden County Survey Committee has not been able to compete with more populous counties for many of the honors and awards given, we feel that we have some of the most dedicated workers in the state. Many hours and miles of travel are spent compiling our newsletters. Much effort has gone into our Museum, and there are many other demands on the time and energy of the committee members. Our Newsletter has attracted wide attention and is being circulated to a large group of readers. We hope that you are finding it worth the effort which goes into producing it. Our Museum has been visited by many interested and interesting persons, many from other States.

May I here express my deep appreciation for the cooperation and interest of all those who have assisted us, and especially the unselfish and untiring efforts of our committee members. Our regular meetings are held each first Tuesday at 2 P.M. at the courthouse and any one interested is invited to attend.

To you all the sincerest of Holiday wishes and

MERRY XMAS & HAPPY YEAR

/s/ Edna Miller, Chairman

Borden Co. Historical Survey Committee.

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From: The Borden County Historical Society
Gail, Texas 79738

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