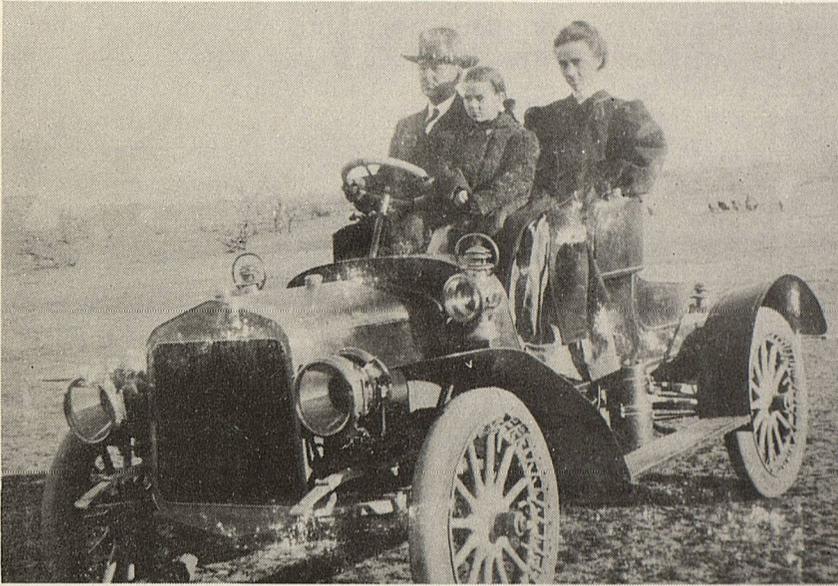


Borden Citizen.

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THE ADVENT OF THE AUTOMOBILE AGE



Dr. & Mrs. J. H. Hannabass & Miriam - 1908

Do you remember the first car you ever rode in? Now that probably sounds like a foolish question to our younger generation. But there were times when people had to use other modes of transportation. Yes, sometimes they even walked! And we didn't always have T.V., either. Even radios - transistor, electric or battery powered - had not arrived as yet.

It was probably a summer day in the year 1907 when the first car arrived in Gail. One could sense that something out of the ordinary was anticipated. There was the usual crowd of men and boys at the blacksmith shop and the saloon on the west side of the Court House Square.

Several had also gathered about the land office of L. A. Pearce and M. J. Thornton on the north side for the rumor had spread that this firm had sent young Guy Clark all the way to Roswell, N. Mex. to drive back an automobile. It would be the first that most of them had ever seen and he was due back anytime. Guy, had he lived longer and under more opportune circumstances might have been a great inventor himself. At 19, he was the only person in Gail who would attempt to drive the car. (Guy was killed in an accident at the Gail Gin in 1914.)

About 4 in the afternoon a strange sound was heard - John Johnson says: "You could hear it thrashing for five miles." From around the mountain where a wagon road meandered across the ranches past Old Chicago and the Caprock Trading Post on to Roswell, appeared this gasoline buggy - for it really was a buggy with a motor added. The two cylinder engine, which was cranked on the side, turned a sprocket from which a chain extended to turn the rear wheels. These high red buggy wheels had narrow iron tires filled with hard rubber. The seat was like a buggy seat and there was no top.

As the car pulled into town the people gathered around with great excitement. It was examined and discussed and Guy must have had many questions to answer. Finally a demonstration began and everyone was offered a ride at the break-neck speed of 10 to 12 miles per hour. They piled into and upon the car, six and seven at a time, for a ride over toward Peaces or up to Doctor Hannabass's
(cont'd Page 2)

No. 3 Borden County Fee 50¢

Automobile Register Receipt

Gail Texas June 9 1909

No. 3 is herewith issued to W. C. Mullilove
Residence Durham

Borden County, Texas, in accordance with Laws of the State of Texas.

The Number attached to the 3 Automobile Must be at least six inches high
J. S. Weatherman County Clerk
Deputy

Name of Car _____ Motor Number _____

This early day registration receipt and many other interesting articles are in our Borden County Museum.

as these were about the only roads in town. Four year old Ted Johnson was with his father in the group and was probably the youngest one having this experience. To climax the demonstration a saddle was strapped onto the hood of the car and Real Estate agent Frank Dent mounted the "critter" and rode it "all over town". It is hard to realize now that cars were once approached with much fear and that people drove them reluctantly. John thinks that it is possible that neither Mr. Pearce or Mr. Thornton ever learned to drive the car as Guy acted as chauffeur. Clyde Miller says: "They didn't do much with it". Just an experiment that didn't work out!

If you lived in Gail before 1910, the second car you saw was most likely the Buick which Dr. J. H. Hannabass bought to replace the horse and buggy he had used to make trips over the county, delivering many babies, some of whom are probably reading this article. This awe inspiring machine was the subject of much conversation and speculation, as many thought it would never be a successful replacement for the horse and buggy. It was also the cause of quite a few "run aways". Nervous horses couldn't stand "hitched" when the smoke spouting monster approached. When the 'new fangled critter' was seen or heard it became customary for drivers to 'light' and 'hold their horses' until the car was well on its way. Dr. Hannabass's Buick was a chain and sprocket drive machine. To start the engine a long crank was inserted in front of the right rear wheel, and then you cranked and cranked. From a carbide tank on the running board, gas was piped to the Y shaped tubes in head lamps which were lighted with a match. There were coal oil side lamps and rear lamps to supplement the carbide lights -- if you didn't forget to fill them. Those high red wooden wheels would make an antique car buff's mouth water, and if you think bucket seats are new take a close look at this picture. That high seat was shaped like a figure 3.

Another early car and a "first" for many of us was the Cadillac registered by Frances E. Abney in August, 1909. The Abneys came to Borden County in 1900 and purchased land from Tom Love, S. A. Morrow and others who had homesteaded south of the river and put together the ranch later sold to H. D. and J. H. Beal. Picture a summer day about 1911, when a small freckled face girl with long pigtaails, wearing a split bonnet and a "cook apron", a drab garment buttoned down the back, with small round collar, pocket and halfbelt, was trudging along the dusty road toward Uncle Quillie Spears grocery store. From an approaching cloud of dust a breath taking machine emerged - a shiny black touring car. The car slowed to a halt and the child was invited to ride to town. Magic carpets and chariots of fire were never more wonderful than this.

Mr. Abney came to the Miller ranch to buy some cows, driving the beautiful car. Frank Miller was allowed to accompany the men as they drove over the pasture, his first car ride! Vivian Clark was not offered a ride in this car but he managed to make it a "first" anyway by hanging on to the high wooden wheel of the spare tire on the back of the car as it was driven away from the Clark's "place on the river". As the car labored up an incline nearby Vivian hopped off, and the driver never knew he had a passenger.

Mr. W. C. Fullilove came to Borden County about 1900 from Louisiana along with the Waskoms and the Harrisses. He ranched in the east part of the county. Automobile Register Receipt No. 3 was issued to him on June 9, 1909. Faye Reeder Everett remembers her first ride in this Buick. Mr. Fullilove came to the Reeder home and Mrs. Reeder and the children - Faye, Roy, Sid and Don - were invited to go for a ride. They accepted with mixed feelings of eager anticipation tempered with fearful awe of what might happen to one riding in this untried vehicle. Mr. Fullilove later moved to Snyder and became a car dealer there. He and Mr. Walcott, the Ford dealer in Big Spring for many years, supplied cars to many Borden County people. In a previous issue - Vol. III No. 1 we mentioned the "pick-up type car with umbrella" of Ed Davidson, telephone operator. Thad Durst who also worked in the phone office had a chain-driven gasoline buggy. Within a few years the car was accepted by most people, for some a challenge, for some a convenience and a necessity, and for some a means of "keeping up with the Joneses".



THE OLD INTERSTATE

The "Interstate" which we picture was owned by L. A. Pearce, later County Judge, and was a real status symbol. To be invited for a Sunday afternoon drive was a treat experienced by many youngsters in Gail, and a party of young people "going driving" was the envy of all others of the "young set".

Cranking the "Interstate" is Roy Pearce. His sisters, Esther & Lorene, are in the car and Miss Vera Kinnery, who taught many Gail children the rudiments of music, is behind the steering wheel - on the right side. Also on the right side and outside the door which wasn't there, were brake and gear shift levers for operating the car - the original stick shift! Near the steering wheel was a large brass horn with a rubber bulb on top which the driver mashed to signal his approach. Clara Pearce Johnson remembers that the car was only used on Sundays and very special occasions.

The "Interstate" was kept in the old Saloon building which Mr. Pearce had purchased for use as a car shed. Clara & Juanita would slip into the shed and honk the horn as silently as possible.

The advent of cars brought new fashions for driving. One had to be protected from the dust and wind. Women made for themselves full length light weight wraps. Some were linen - my mother's was ecru crash with hand crocheted buttons and trim. And so we entered the age of automobiles - complete with linen dusters.

Compiled by Edna Miller

Ed. note - A special thanks to John Johnson for his help in preparing the information about the first car.

VISIT BORDEN COUNTY

Let me tell you a little about Borden County. Gail, the county seat, is located at the foot of Gail Mountain. The altitude of 2500 feet is just right. Beautiful highway 180 passes through the center of the county. Here are the headwaters of the Colorado River - Tobacco Creek to the west - Gavitte and Bull Creeks to the north and east. The Caprock, lower escarpment of the Llano Estacado, lies northwest. Southwest is a pioneer land mark and campsite of early military expeditions - Mucha Que. Apaches and later Comanches hunted here. Quanah Parker and his braves camped on Double Mountain River. Col. C. C. Slaughter brought the first cattle about 1878. The first fences were built by Magnolia Land and Cattle Co. (MK) in 1884. Tom Love, first Sheriff, after a chase across the open plains into New Mexico, captured outlaw Bill Cook. Dick Ware, who as a Texas Ranger killed the infamous Sam Bass at Roundrock on July 19, 1878, ranched in this county. At this site occurred the "Wars of the Ribbon" July 25th and August 3, 1903 - struggles between the ranchers who controlled the land and the settlers who wanted to share it. Ranching, farming and oil production are the main industries. Antelope and Deer roam the ranges. In the Spring the country side is beautiful with Cholla Cactus and some species of Yucca - many beautiful wild flowers from Sweet Peas to "Nigger Heads". One can hear the Coyote howl - the Rattlesnake rattle - and birds chirping their melodies. Weathered buildings stand on the main street in Gail. Historical Markers adorn the Courthouse lawn and historical treasures mirror frontier days in the Borden County Museum.

On January 17, 1968, the Third Annual Governors Tourist Development Conference was held and Governor Connally named "Ten Travel Trails in Texas". One of these Travel Trails - "The Texas Plains Trail" - rambles across the Texas Panhandle - thru country initially explored by Coronado in 1540 - makes a loop coming south from Post, Texas, to GAIL - then west on Highway 180 and back north on Farm-to-Market Road 1054. We join the Governor in welcoming each of you to Borden County.

Pauline Clark

Much of the work of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee in their efforts to record, promote appreciation, mark, preserve, and survey the landmarks, historical sites, and the history of Texas (the RAMPS program), is the outgrowth of work by the Texas Historical Foundation. This is a non-profit, educational organization with the purpose of preserving our State's unique and proud past. Your local committee is a part of this program. We look to the Foundation for support and information. The Foundation is financed mostly by public spirited individuals. Each county, as part of their RAMPS program, is asked to contribute \$200.00. Individual memberships of \$5.00 count toward this quota. Your committee members support the Foundation. We hope you do, too. Membership dues may be sent Texas Historical Foundation, in care of Mrs. J. W. Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas, 79738. In this way we can be sure Borden County is credited with your membership.

A most fascinating letter, containing much information, has come to us from Loudella Sowell Ness of Couer D'Alene, Idaho. She was born near Gail, March 25, 1907. Her mother, Anier McCarty Sowell, a niece of Hugh Kincaid, died later that year and is buried at Gail. We quote excerpts from the many interesting things she says: "My greatgrandfather, Andrew Jackson Sowell, was born at the Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson, near Nashville, Tenn., and was named by Rachel Jackson for her husband. He and his brother came to Texas (Gonzales) in 1829. They were the first whites to settle there and raised the first corn in the bend of the Guadalupe river on Sowell Creek. He was a Texas Ranger and missed the massacre at the Alamo as he and another ranger were out scouting for beef. His father was John Sowell who made guns for troops in the Revolutionary War and made the knife for James Bowie which still bears his name. He also made scrap iron used in the cannons at the Alamo, and they (the Sowells) were with David Crockett even in Tenn. --- A cousin, Historian A.J. Sowell wrote "Southwest Texas Rangers and Indian Fighters". (Ed. note: Historian Sowell, grandson of John Sowell, blacksmith, wrote several books which are used as reference works on Southwestern History. See J. Frank Dobie's "Tales of Old-Time Texas" for more about Sowell and the Bowie Knife.)"

Other relatives mentioned by Loudella are Aunt Binnie (Mrs. O.K.) Yantis (the Yantis family lived on the "49" ranch and later in Gail), her Grandmother McCarty, her step-mother, Ethel Wilbourne Sowell, and Great Uncle Hugh and Aunt Lou Kincaid. We expect to have other interesting stories by Loudella in later issues of our "Borden Citizen". Loudella tells of a late nite radio program - Herb Jepko's Night Caps, K.S.L., Salt Lake City, to which she listens and on which she has read some of her poems and played her 5 string Banjo. When our editor, Sybil Holmes, was visiting her mother in California soon after the receipt of this letter, she tuned in this program and who should she hear - Yes, thats right - Loudella, telling of her excitement over our "Borden Citizen" and of her memories of Borden County. How is that for a coincidence! And what about that coverage?

Incidentally, if you have been wondering about our newsletter and who receives it, this one was

sent to Loudella's cousin, Cecil Terry, of Phoenix Ariz., (the Terrys, also related to the Kincaids, had visited in Gail and learned of our work). They in turn sent it to Loudella in Idaho who was sending it on to her sister in Ketchikan, Alaska, with the request that she forward it to a son in Everett, Washington! We now have readers in 16 states, including Alaska, and also the District of Columbia and Old Mexico.

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Viola Gail Wilbourn (Kincaid) Hudson, 86, passed away in Seagraves, Texas, in Dec., 1967. Viola was the first child born in Gail.

Sam Skeen, 70, long time resident of Borden County, passed away Feb. 11, 1968. Sam had lived here since 1902. He attended school at Fairview. Burial was in Gail Cemetery.

William Thomas Coates, born in Gail in 1905, passed away Feb. 18, 1968. He was the son of Wave Coates. Burial was in Big Spring Cemetery.

Mrs. Ruby (Montgomery) Sanders, who at 17 was the first music teacher in Gail, died at Sweetwater March 8, 1968. Her upright piano was brought to Gail from Sweetwater in a wagon. See Vol. I No. 4 of Borden Citizen for article.

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FROM THE PENS OF OUR READERS:

Ethel Morrow Everett - How many of you remember the thrill you had the first time you looked across the prairie and saw bumping through the sagebrush that wonderful machine, the "horseless carriage"? I well recall my first view of one, for it was very nearly my last view of anything. When my papa, S.A. Morrow, was farming the old "Price Place" ten or so miles from Gail, I loved to help him turn up the sweet-smelling earth with the harrow. One day as I was driving a four-horse team hitched to a sixteen disk harrow, a shrill creaky sort of sound came suddenly from the road. This heralded the appearance of Mr. Munger, in his marvelous new Tin Lizzie. The startled horses belted and raced across the open field, while Papa shouted, "Jump, Ethel! Roll off to the side!" Somehow I managed to scramble off, then took to my heels and headed for high ground! "Oh, Mr. Morrow, I'm so sorry my auto frigh tened your horses. I'll be glad to help you catch them." Papa shouted back as he high-tailed it after me, "Never mind the horses, Mr. Munger -- just help me corral that Jack-rabbit girl of mine!"

Don Simpson - I will be glad to do any research you may need in the Barker History Center here in Austin. (Ed. note - Don is a student at the University of Texas. Thank you, Don.)

Attie Martin - I look forward to receiving the newsletter and keep each issue in file for a keepsake. There is some sadness in each letter, the death of some old timer. But the articles on early day happenings bring laughter and some happy memories to me.

L.B. Wooton - Please send us a copy of the Borden paper published Dec. 1967. It's so interesting. I want to give a friend the one my sister sent me. Her husband is in the Hotel picture on front and she said it would mean the world to her. He's dead now. He was Grayham Whitaker.

Dorothy Wasson Ragan - Some of the people you mention seem familiar to me as my parents lived in the community when they were young people. They were Mr. & Mrs. Ira Wasson and my grandfather was the first judge in Borden County - Columbus Lee Wasson.

J. A. (Bud Rowell) - now living in Lubbock but who lived here in about 1908, remembers when he and his brother, Homer, hauled water from the tank up on the little hill and delivered the water around town filling all the water barrels in Gail. He also remembers an old bachelor who was in the habit of having a few too many, too often, and spent so much time in the jail, that he left his suitcase and fiddle there. The town children spent many hours outside the jail listening to him play. Mr. Rowell's father and Uncle had a freight line from Gail to Big Spring and hauled supplies for all the stores. They also hauled feed and hay to the ranchers.

Mrs. Billy Askins - recalls in 1917 coming to Gail on business from their ranch in a wagon driven by a span of yellow mules. She told the children, Elmer and Nettie Mae, not to ask for candy as she didn't have any money. Just as they got to Bull Creek they looked down and found a quarter in the road. After she had tended to her business, W. A. Clark, Sheriff, invited them to go over to his house in his new Ford - the first car they had ever ridden in. Mrs. Clark had the first fried mincemeat pies that she had ever eaten. That was a very memorable day - a quarters worth of candy first car ride - and first fried mincemeat pie!

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From: The Borden County Historical Society
Gail, Texas 79738

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