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Borden County

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Dr. James N. Prince

FIRST BORDEN COUNTY DOCTOR

James N. Prince, was born Dec. 24, 1860, at Mt. Vernon, Texas. He was the son of J. W. Prince who was a teamster in the Confederate Army. James went off to war and left his family - wife and ten children behind. The war years rolled by and when he returned his little son didn't know him. James N. grew up in Rogers, Texas, where he lived from 1867 to 1889. He attended Missouri Medical College in St. Louis, Mo. and finished at Memphis Hospital Medical College, Memphis, Tennessee in 1887. He practiced medicine in his home town of Rogers for two years where his letterhead showed he was a Physician and Surgeon. His lodge affiliations were Masonic, Oddfellows and Woodman. He was married to Miss Susan Emma Green, a young school teacher who came to Rogers from Belton College. Her father, W.P. Green, was also in the Confederate Army with the title of Surgeon. Later on he became a Baptist Preacher. James N. and Susan reared five children - Arthur, Golda, Winnie, Mallie & James P. - all still living except Golda.

It must have been in the year 1889 that Dr. James N. Prince came out to West Texas three times. Two of these trips were to explore the country. He looked over the country west of Snyder, Texas, which included the Mushaway Peak area of Borden County.

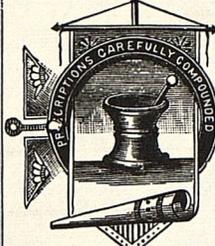
***** He must have liked it for here is where he headed to make his permanent home. Mrs. Prince had enough of the pioneering spirit to be all for it, too. The second trip out he filed on a section of land - section 32 - Block 30 - 5N - T&P - one mile east of the present townsite of Gail. Generally every other section of land was still owned by the State and each alternate section belonged to the Texas and Pacific Railroad Company. This was wild country. There was no Gail - it had not even been thought of then. There was no one here to think of it until later. But there seemed to be something irresistable about this country, the wide open spaces - the great distances and the clean air.

One of the first things they did after deciding to move west was to build the "Big Chest" or "Daisy Box." This was a sturdy wooden affair that the children remembered all through their childhood. It was three and a half feet deep, two and a half feet wide and five feet long, with a hinged lid. The chest was packed full of feather beds, quilts that Grandmother Barrett had made, pillows, framed pictures of their parents (the kind you used to find hanging on the walls of nearly every home) and many other items that needed protection from breakage.

Starting in the fall of 1889, about Sept. or October, from Rogers, Bell County, Texas, there must have been three wagons and a buggy that made the trip here. One wagon was driven by J. M. Searcy and his wife, Belle, sister and brother-in-law of Dr. Prince. Mr. Searcy was later to become County Judge of Borden County. Another wagon brought J. W. Prince, father of Dr. Prince, and his family. Dr. and Mrs. Prince drove the buggy. The "Big Chest" was on one of the wagons. The trip took about fifteen days. The travellers went through Comanche as Mrs. Prince had relatives there - then to Abilene and west by way of Sweetwater and Snyder. Dr. and Mrs. Prince left the wagons somewhere west of Abilene and started for Merkel where the Doctor



Mrs. James N. Prince



D. DORWARD & CO.
Druggists,
GAIL, TEXAS.

12-21-1901

For *Mr. A. B. Spear*

R. Antiseptic 3i

Calvert's Cordial 3i

Direct myronica 7/35

M. ft. sol.

sip. one tea

sp. every

3 hours

J. M. Prince M. D.

had visited on one of his earlier trips. There they awaited the arrival of their first child. Mrs. Prince tells about how late in the day they came to a canyon and could not find a place to cross. It began to get dark so they camped there. During the night they heard coyotes howling and many other noises that seemed strange to a young school teacher. Early next morning Dr. Prince set out on foot to find a way to cross over. He didn't have much luck but did see smoke in the distance. Leaving Mrs. Prince all alone in a strange country he set out in the direction of the smoke which proved to be coming from the chimney of a ranch house. The rancher insisted that he have breakfast with them and then he would go with the Doctor and show him the trail across the canyon and the way to Merkel. After a couple of hours that were endless to Mrs. Prince, the Doctor and the rancher returned to the buggy--to find Mrs. Prince badly worried for fear something had happened to her husband. Doctor and Mrs. Prince reached Merkel and their first child, Arthur, was born there in late November. They remained there until February of 1890.

When they reached Gail they settled on the land that he had filed on earlier. They lived in a dugout and tent for a good many years and did very well. There was no house--just a dugout, tents, corrals, pigpens, etc. After the county was organized in 1891, and the town was named, records in the County Clerks office in Gail show that Dr. Prince registered as a Licensed Physician on September 28, 1891.

With families miles apart, practicing medicine in early Borden County was strenuous and didn't pay too well. Dr. Prince built up a small herd of high grade cattle and held public office a term or so, which helped out. He was elected County Clerk in 1898 and re-elected in 1900 but passed away in 1902 before his term was out. He helped build the school house and was a school trustee in Gail.

Calls from patients sometimes came from far away ranches and of course he went by horseback. Cowboys used to marvel at how Dr. Prince could find his way back home when a blizzard would cut him off and heavy snow would hide from sight everything beyond his horse's ears. There were no lanes and no roads. The only thing resembling a road would be wagon tracks and they were easily hidden by snow. There were a few fences but they didn't go anywhere that anyone lived. One occasion that is still a vivid memory to their children was the day he had to ford the Colorado River to reach his patient. On coming back, the river was up and running high. He tried to swim his horse across but the current was too strong. The horse turned over on his side and was carried downstream. Dr. Prince, off in the water and holding onto the saddle, was able to stay with him. Some distance down stream they were washed close enough to shore that they were able to get out. In later years, Dr. and Mrs. Prince bought the 2½ section south of the mountain and built the house that John Johnson lives in now. (We have a picture in the museum of this house with Dr. Prince, Arthur, Golda, Winnie and Mallie in the front yard.)

In 1902 the slow fever (typhoid) epidemic came along. Mrs. Prince said the Dr. was so worn out from taking care of typhoid patients that when he came down with it himself he was unable to recover. He died at the age of 41, twelve years after coming to Gail and was buried in Gail Cemetery. We are told that Mrs. Prince, desiring her children's education, moved to Abilene, Texas, and that all of the children finished Hardin Simmons College.

The "Big Chest" had quite a career. It traveled by wagon, train, and in later years by truck - from Rogers, Texas, to Borden County - to Arkansas - to Colorado - to New Mexico. Finally, sixty-six years after it had been built, Mr. and Mrs. James P. Prince pulled the cut nails and dismantled the box at their home in Albuquerque. The Prince's still have some of the nails and lumber that went into it so many years ago. If you attended the 75th Anniversary of Borden County on Aug. 14, 1966 most of you saw Dr. Prince's "Surgical Tools" on display that day in you Borden County Museum through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. James P. Prince. We have one showcase that has prescriptions written by Dr. Prince. One is shown on this page. Dr. Prince was deeply loved and appreciated by all of his acquaintances.

Editors note - Our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. James E. Prince, Arthur Prince, Winnie (Prince) Goodwill and to friends for helping us compile this information. And a

special thanks to Mrs. Pauline Clark for putting it all together and writing this for us.

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On Sunday, May 26, the Mitchell County Historical Survey Committee dedicated a marker at the D.N. Arnett home in Colorado City. Mr. & Mrs. Ford Merritt, the fourth generation of the Arnett family to occupy the house were hosts for the occasion. This lovely and gracious home has modern comforts but the charm of the quaint Victorian architecture has been retained. Mr. D. N. (Dick) Arnett as partner and ranch manager for Isaac L. Ellwood of De Kalb, Ill. (of barb wire fame) put together the "49" ranch - a 7 mile square pasture - in Borden Co. In 1899 he purchased land from R.B. Shaw and wife, who had settled near the Caprock. Other land in the "49" pasture was taken up by Lee Herman, D. Dorward, Sr., G.H. Cathey, N.B. Cathey and E.H. (Ed) Bills. Zada Mae Miller is the daughter of Mr. Bills - an "Ellwood & Arnett" cowboy - who was killed while attempting to save another man's life during the spring round-up of 1901. Ed and Julia Bills lived on the "49" ranch where Zada Mae was born. Stories are still told of the good times had at dances at the Bills home. Mr. O.K. Yantis was ranch foreman and lived at the "old ranch." There was much reminiscing among those attending the Marker dedication at the Arnette home. Mr. Otto Jones, Spade-Renderbrook (Ellwood and Arnett) manager for many years told of being sent as one of his first assignments as a "Spade" cowboy to dip the cattle on the "49". In the early 1900's the cattle ticks were causing "Texas fever" and cattle were dying - posing another threat to the cowmen who were already facing drouths, blizzards and nesters. Mr. Jones remembered--"When we started to work a young cowboy with 7 fine looking horses, one packed, came riding up and that was my first time to meet Gils Connell." (Gils lived on the O.B. Ranch several years). Gils inquired what to do with his horses and Mr. Jones replied: "Well, I'm going to ride two of 'em. We don't have but five in our mount, counting our pack horse, and they're rode down!"

The "49" was sold in 1910 to Clayton and Johnson. Otto Jones "turned over" the cattle which were red Durham to W.L. Ellwood and Sam Arnett. They were branded in a chute at the "49" with Sam Arnett's L7 brand and driven to Lubbock where they were delivered at a lake between what is now Texas Tech and downtown Lubbock.

Ellwood, Arnett, Dorward, Shaw, Sug Robertson, Jones, Connell, Bills, Cathey, Yantis, Clayton, Johnson - all names that make Borden County and Texas History. Zada Mae and Charlie Miller and Frank and Edna Miller attended the dedication from Borden County.

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Mr. Jack Best of Doucette, Texas was in Gail on May 17th to revisit for a short time the scenes of his boyhood. We were fortunate to have a visit with him and hear some of his vivid memories of Borden Co. The Best family came to Borden Co. from Jasper Co. in 1890 and lived for a time in a camp near the Colorado River. They then moved to a dugout southeast of the Peak, in what was known as the Johns-Knox settlement. Mr. Best went to school at Willow Springs. Mr. Best remembers many of the cattlemen of that era and their brands, the Buckle B of the Beals, the Triangle H Triangle of Bush and Tiller, the Mitchell's, Blum's, and others. Brands were much more a man's trade mark then and much better known than now. The Best family purchased 104 head of cattle for \$750. Their brand was Bar N. O.

A blizzard in Feb., 1893, put many people out of the cow business. Mr. Best says: "We were still skinning cows in April. The hides were dried and carried to Durham for shipment." Durham, our Ghost Town, was still a busy place in those days. It was the first stop on the stage route which carried mail and passengers north and west from Colorado City, and was a shipping and supply point for a large area. Mr. Best tells of a long forgotten industry which used Durham as a shipping point - the commercial trapping of Quail for marketing. The hunters went into the surrounding area and spread nets into which the Quail were driven. The Quail were then 'guttled' and carried by horse back or in buggies each day to Durham for shipment on the stage line to Colorado City and to points east by rail. Mr. Best says: "I have seen them piled up by the bushels." Borden County must have been a hunter's paradise in those days. Mr. Best inquired if we still have antelope and spoke of the great numbers to be seen in the 1890's. He told of having seen oxcarts used in Antelope hunting. The hunters would lie out of sight in the bed of the cart as the oxen approached the antelope unheeded, and when the cart was surrounded by antelope the shooting began. There were many Lobo or Loafer wolves on which a bounty was paid. Mr. Best mentioned a relative, Jack Youngblood, who was a deputy Sheriff at Gail and whom he said - if my hastily made notes are correct - was responsible for the name of our county seat. In the "Borden Spokesman" the first paper published in Borden Co. - July 31, 1891 - there is this item - "Our elegant Court House is about completed. Messrs. Weaver and Youngblood, the Contractors, have certainly done a commendable job. They had had expert assistance all the way through." (Cont. next page)

And so with much regret on our part our short interview came to an end. As I left Gail a bunch of Antelope was grazing near the Highway. I wanted to go find Mr. Best and show them to him and his daughter and son-in-law, who accompanied him. Mr. Best was an alert and active 88 year old. We do hope he comes to see us again.

Edna Clark Miller

The Scurry County Historical Survey Committee observed 'Historical Appreciation Week' March 25-31 with the dedication of 15 historical markers. On Monday several markers near the Court House square were dedicated. On Tuesday there was a dedication at the Old Town of Camp Spring and Sunday the dedication of a Marker at Old Knapp Postoffice and at the campsite of the Marcy Expedition near Ira. This finished a week of activity which included Historical tours and exhibits in the school and the County Library and display of old records and pictures at the Courthouse. This week of Historical Appreciation was well publicized and supported by the people of Scurry County, many of who appeared in pioneer costume at the programs. From Borden County, Pauline and Vivian Clark attended the Camp Springs Dedication and Ruth Weathers and Edna Miller the dedication at the Old Knapp Postoffice.

Congratulations, Scurry County Historical Survey Committee !!

Thirty Cub Scouts of Borden County along with their leaders - Stell Cooley, Sue Smith and Barbara Anderson - toured the Borden County Museum on May 7th. Cookies and punch were served by the Borden County Historical Committee. Note: If you haven't visited the Museum lately, we hope you will soon.

ATTENTION: This newsletter finishes our 3rd year of publication. We hope you enjoy reading them. Subscriptions will be due with our September issue. Many of you are paid up past that time, but if your subscription is due please send your check in the amount of \$3 to Mrs. J. W. Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas - 79738.

Luther H. (Red) Ransone, 67, passed away in Big Spring, Texas, on April 8, 1968. Red Worked on Clayton Ranch many years and was loved by all. Burial was in Gail.

John F. Cathey, 76, passed away in O'Donnell, Texas on April 12, 1968. The family came to Borden County in 1900. Burial was in Gail.

Mrs. Tom (Clara Sanderson) Good, 83, passed away April 18, 1968 in Big Spring, Tex. She had been a resident of Borden County since 1905. Her husband, pioneer Borden County rancher, died August 23, 1961.

Charlie Rowell, 85, of Silverton, Texas, passed away recently in the V.A. Hospital in Amarillo, Texas. He was a cowboy on the Muleshoe ranch some 50 years ago.

Charlie Searcy, the oldest child of Judge J. M. Searcy, Borden County's second County Judge, passed away on May 21, 1968 at Elgin, Texas. The Searcy family lived here from 1890 until about 1903 or 1904

FROM THE PENS OF OUR READERS:

(Editors note - We receive such interesting mail from our readers that we are adding a page to this issue so you can share with us some of these letters. Let us know if you enjoy them.)

MAURICE DORWARD, Clifton, Texas - I'd like to start this letter with a report of a conversation between Mr. J.S. Chandler and my papa, the late D. Dorward, regarding the 'Land Rush' at Gail. They were discussing the events leading up to the release of land etc., when they got up to the day before the filing took place. It looked like real trouble as you have all read but just before night the Sheriff came over to Mr. Chandler's store and asked if he had any fresh .45 shells. Mr Chandler said that he did and tried to sell him a box but the Sheriff's reply was "Give me only twelve. If that is not enough, two boxes would not do me any good." How many remember the big revolving gun case Mr. Chandler had in his store? And I have played lots of times on that 'Gin Pole' and windlass that he had in his lot back of his store to load cotton bales. His first gasoline pump was on a platform at the northwest corner of his store - pumped a gallon. That was before he installed the 'Red Sentry' out front. . . . I used to wonder how many horses and mules had been shod when I would look at the two tall stacks of horseshoes in front of Mr. Clark's blacksmith shop - they were stacked around two tall posts and the front doors of the shop looked like a brand 'Registry'. I guess they had to let every man see how his Iron worked before he accepted it (and too it must be displayed, because as you know every man was proud of his brand.) . . . If you wanted a real smoke and real odor be in Gail when Commissioners Court would pay off on 'bounty' for rabbit scalps, wolf scalps, and bobcat hides - then when they were all counted they would get out away from the courthouse (according to wind) and burn them. . . . The Red Cross work days during World War I were sure busy - rolling bandages, knitting, sewing hospital garments, etc. . . . How many of you (Contd. next page)