

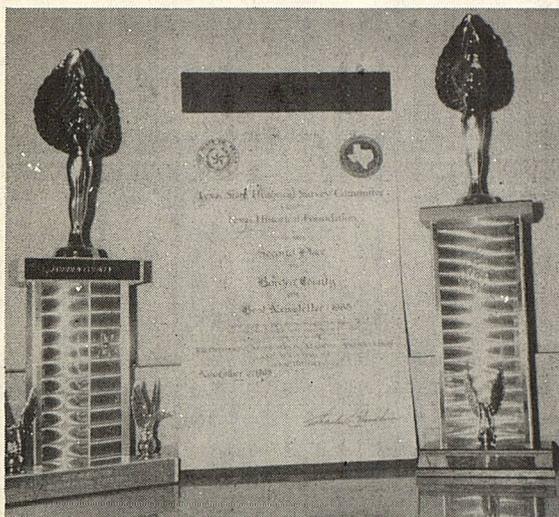
# Borden

# Citizen.

SOUTHWEST COLLECTION  
Texas Tech University  
LUBBOCK, TEXAS 79409

Published by the Borden County Historical Survey Committee - December 1970  
Vol. VI No. 2

## WE WIN AGAIN



No, you are not seeing double. There they are! Count them! Trophy for best Newsletter in - Texas Historical Survey Committee and Texas Historical Foundation annual meeting, 1970; Trophy for best Newsletter in Texas from Waco - 1969; award for second place in Best Newsletter Competition in State at San Antonio in 1968. So for the third year we send to you, as our Christmas Gift, news of our state-wide recognition and award, together with our appreciation of the help you have given us in our work. How's that for the second smallest county in Texas. Yes, the 1970 census gives us only 876 (unofficial) population.

Again, as in former years, our neighbors won many of the awards at the State convention. Coke, Crosby, Garza and Scurry Counties were Distinguished Service award winners. In addition Scurry County won second in the Best Newsletter competition. Garza County was awarded the Millard C. Cope trophy for the Best Program of Work. Brud Boren of Scurry County was the outstanding County Chairman in the State and Mrs. J. W. Adams of Crosby County was the best Sub-Chairman.

A new requirement for Distinguished Service Award is the publishing of a newsletter. Next year our competition in this field will probably be much greater. Miss Ima Hogg and Mrs. Mary Moody Northern were given special recognition for outstanding contributions to the preservation of Texas History. Mr. Lester W. Prokop of Houston was elected to head the Texas Survey Committee succeeding Mr. Charles Woodburn of Amarillo who has served as President for 6 years.

And so the 1970 annual convention of the Texas Historical Survey Committee and Texas Historical Foundation, held Oct. 23-24, was a most interesting and rewarding meeting. More than 300 delegates from across the state shared in the work sessions and the social activities arranged by the people of Fredericksburg. The 1971 convention will be held in Del Rio. The date will coincide with the elaborate Amistad Fiesta and gives promise of being a meeting well worth attending. Hope you will be there.

## HISTORIC FASCINATING FREDERICKSBURG!

Fredericksburg, where many of the traditions, practices and possessions of their pioneer ancestors are preserved, was host to the 1970 annual meeting. In this part of the country - where so many of us trace our ancestry back through Kentucky and Tennessee or the Carolinas into Virginia and then to England and Ireland - it sometimes is difficult for us to realize the contributions that have been made to our culture by those with different backgrounds. But this is easy enough to see in Fredericksburg, with its "Sunday Houses", its lovingly and authentically restored pioneer homes, its replica of the original Verein's Kirche - a community meeting hall which served also as school and church where all denominations worshiped. The original Verein's Kirche was built in 1847. Its dedication was a gala affair attended by Comanche Indians dressed in splendid regalia, who took part in the festivities by performing their tribal dances. John O. Meusebach, leader of the expedition which founded Fredericksburg, had, with much wisdom and courage, made a treaty of peace with the Indians. Meusebach gave up his title of Baron along with his German homeland that he might lead his colony to the Texas frontier in search of political and religious freedom. The Nimitz Naval Museum, honoring Admiral Chester Nimitz, is another Fredericksburg point of interest. It is housed in the building where Admiral Nimitz grandparents operated a hotel beginning in 1847. The history and guest list of the Nimitz or Steamboat Hotel reflect much of Texas and National history in the years before 1900.

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It was our privilege to visit a "Sunday House" built in the early days of Fredericksburg which had recently been purchased by a grand nephew of famous cattleman "Shanghai" Pierce. Mr. Pierce and his charming and talented wife, who live in Houston, are planning to restore the quaint cottage as a second home. Several restaurants and bake shops offer traditional German foods and the people in many of their social activities seek to keep alive the traditions of their brave pioneer forebears. If you haven't been to Fredericksburg a visit there would be most certainly pleasant and rewarding.

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The Borden County Homecoming and Museum Dedication received much publicity including good coverage by the Big Spring Herald, the Snyder Daily News, and the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal. Among the most interesting articles was one featured by the TEXAS CO-OP POWER complete with pictures of the "Land Rush" and of Museum displays. This Electric Co-op Newspaper, with the largest rural statewide circulation in the nation, carried on its cover an original illustration by artist Don Collins that pictures the Borden County Courthouse and the "Land Rush" participants. We are indebted to Mrs. Lois Greathouse and Mr. Ed Redwine of the Lyntegar Electric Co-op for this excellent article and the many pictures of our Day of Homecoming. Mrs. Greathouse has been a regular "booster" of Borden County and the work of our Historical Survey Committee.

Articles by Ethel Morrow Everett, Arthur Prince, Winnie Chandler Miller and Sammie Morow Dent, published in our Dec. 1969 edition of the BORDEN CITIZEN, have been reproduced in the "True West". Our apologies to our contributors. This was done without our knowledge or permission.

Just a reminder - dues in the amount of \$3.00 for subscription to our NEWSLETTER should be sent to Mrs. Sybil Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas, 79738. Contributions to our Museum should be sent to Mrs. Pauline Clark, Gail, 79738.

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#### CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

How does your family celebrate Christmas as compared to your neighbors? And where did your customs originate? How old are they? These are some of the questions we have been trying to answer in interviews with some of our Borden County Pioneers. We wish we could have talked to more of you.

The custom of hanging stockings at Christmas, we are told, comes from England whereas the putting up of a Christmas tree originated in Germany. This is borne out by the practices of Borden County families. Two of the families interviewed - the Orsons and the Pratts - came to Borden County soon after they left England. They brought with them the custom of hanging stockings. At the Pratt home on the edge of the Caprock, long black stockings were hung on the chimney. (In homes where there was no fireplace the stockings were hung on the bedposts or on the backs of cane bottom chairs). The few gifts were ordered from Sears, Roebuck or homemade and the fruit and nuts were once a year treats. Pop corn balls made of home grown pop corn, and dried peaches from the Pratt peach orchard were a big part of the Christmas goodies. Others were fresh coconut cake as white and light and beautiful as a snowdrift, and Jeff Davis pies.

Other customs brought from England were observed at the Orson home. There was always the traditional Plum Pudding made with suet and raisins and steamed for hours. Then there was Mother Orson's version of Lemon Cheesecake. Would you like the receipt? 6 eggs, 2 cups sugar, the juice of three lemons and the grated rind of two lemons, 1 cup butter; Stir and cook all together until the consistency of honey. Cool. This was kept in the milk cooler and to serve was poured over very thin layers of cake or pie crust and stacked. Doesn't it sound good! There was always "hog killing time" before the holidays so there would be fresh pork and sausage, and all the neighbors came in to help.

The Von Roeder family lived at the other end of the county. They had left Germany for Texas - then a part of Mexico - in 1831, bringing with them memories of evergreen trees trimmed with apples and oranges, strings of pop corn, and animal cookies decorated with frosting. Cookie cutters in many different forms were used and 140 years later the Von Roeder descendants still spend several

days baking the same cookies to trim their Christmas trees. These trees were not trimmed in early December as the custom is practiced now, but on Christmas eve, while the family was at supper, the sound of a bugle and bells was heard and everyone knew that Santa Claus had been there and left the tree complete with trimming and presents. When the door into the front room was opened Santa had gone but there was the lovely tree glowing with many candles. Presents may have been only "nigger shooters" or a homemade wagon for the boys and an old doll in a new dress for the girls, but it was an exciting gay time. Frieda Von Roeder Murphy said that sometimes when oranges and apples were not available to hang on the tree, women polished sweet potatoes (homegrown) for ornaments.

At the Mitchell home in Gail one thing that was always practiced was the baking of a special Santa Claus Cake. This was a tall, white cake completely covered with creamy icing and pecan halves. This cake was left out for Santa Claus to cut when he came to fill the stockings. One Christmas Pink and Oleta decided they were hungrier than Santa Claus and peeled all the pecan halves off of that lovely cake for themselves.

At the Martin Taylors', Christmas eve night was always celebrated by going to the Christmas tree at the Church and then home to dance the rest of the night. Maybe the music was Victrola records and only the family was present, but the night was danced away with joy and laughter.

At many homes the best remembered "trimming" for the turkey and dressing (only it may have been chicken, duck, or even rabbit) was Ambrosia. At the Mitchell it was made with layers of precisely sliced oranges, home made cranberry sauce, and fresh grated coconut with a sugar syrup poured over all. At the Jim Dorwards, oranges, pineapple and fresh coconut were used. We have added marshmallow and cherries and other things but it is still Ambrosia - the food of the Gods. Boiled custard was a traditional Christmas dish at the Beal home and is still made each Christmas at the Mitchells. At the Sealy's, east of Gail, a huge home cured ham, boiled and cooled in a wash pot in the back yard was part of the Christmas dinner. Fireworks - Roman candles, torpedos, sky rockets - were always part of our Christmas celebration. Do you remember taking a shovel full of coals outside to light your firecrackers?

The use of the Creche or Nativity Scene probably came to us from our French or Spanish people. We hope some of them will tell us of their Christmas customs.

A family relatively new in Gail - the Roland Bruns - practice a custom which is probably new to most of us - the lighting of the Adventwreath. Five candles, four purple - one white, are stood in a circle of greenery. Through the Advent season, the four Sundays preceeding Christmas, the Bruns family worships each day by lighting the candles - the first week one, the second week two, until on Christmas day the final white candle is lighted to honor Christ, the Light of the world. The first candle signigies Faith, the second Love, the third Hope and the fourth Joy. Isn't this a lovely custom to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas - the birthday of the Lord Jesus.

Do tell us of your Christmas Customs !!

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T. J. REA, 71, passed away Oct. 6, 1970. He is survived by his wife, the former Geneva Wills, one daughter, 5 grandsons, and one great-grandson.

BURNEY KENT, 78, passed away Oct. 12, 1970. He served in the U. S. Army from 1914 to 1919. He was with the Home Guard under General Pershing when it was federalized on the border and went into Old Mexico. He moved to Borden County some time in the early 1920's. He is survived by 2 sons, James Lamar, Calif., and Don Roger, Hawaii. Among other survivors is a cousin, Judge Sterling Williams.

MRS. RUBY ALICE COLLETT, mother of Mrs. Borden Gray, passed away Nov. 16, 1970, in Lubbock where she had lived since 1915.

DR. NOBLE H. PRICE, 65, died after a heart attack Nov. 25, 1970. He was a native of Big Spring, had practiced in Lamesa since 1933. He served as Borden County's physician and school doctor for a number of years.

JACK GRAHAM was killed in a car accident Nov. 27, 1970, while on a deer hunt. He is survived by his wife and a daughter, Montie Ray, who attends Borden County High School.

MRS. T. L. MABRY, Mother of Mrs. James McLeroy, passed away after a long illness December 2, 1970.

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## MEMORIES OF INCIDENTS IN PAST YEARS

(as told to me by John Johnson)

by Sibyl Gilmore

My father was raised near Weatherford and Baird, Texas. He was an only child. His father passed away when he was quite young causing him to start to work as a ranchhand very early in life. At the age of 13 he was working on a ranch near Benjamin owned by John Masterson. If my father were living today he would be 103 years old. So he worked there about 90 yrs. ago. My Mother was raised in Sherman, Texas. I remember her telling experiences of the Sherman cyclone. It still weighed heavily on her mind. Every time a cloud looked bad she kept us all in the storm house or cellar until it was over. Those cellars were traps for centipedes, frogs, and even snakes. We had beds in there to sleep on. My Mother was a Petty, one of a family of 3 girls and 2 boys. She was 2 years younger than my father. They were married in Jack County, coming to Borden County in 1892. They moved back to Jack County where I was born in 1896. We came back to Borden Co. when I was 5 or 6 yrs. old. We lived on my grandfathers place (Rev. J. A. Petty) 4 Miles southeast of Gail, then moved to the Ainsworth community south of Gail near the Colorado River. There weren't many neighbors in those days and I can still name them all. The Berryhill and Ainsworth families to the south, the Simpsons and Coats to the north, Rogers and Calloways to the east. That would be all close enough to visit except Professor Maldin, my first school teacher, and the Cottons. Professor Maldin married one of the Cotton girls. We walked the the two miles to school every day, which was held in a little house on Red Mud Creek. This was about 1902. Each summer at the Byson community there would be a brush tabernacle revival. People would come in buggies and wagons and camp for the duration of the revival, usually about a week. My grandfather, J. A. Petty, and a Mr. Lockhart were the preachers.

I think it was in 1904 when a big headrise washed away the bridge across the Colorado River. Father, Mother and us kids walked about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south from our house and were standing on a hill when we heard the crash and saw the bridge go under. There wasn't any place to go except occasions like the bridge washing out and sometimes a big fish fry with all the neighbors. There weren't any posts or wire much in those days and I remember my father building a round corral with tall mesquite cut from the creek bottoms. They were 5 or more feet tall and in picket form, close together and reinforced with two barb wires. A Mr. Tom Cade lived with us and broke our horses. He would ride them in the round corral.

Our main trading point was Colorado City. We <sup>went</sup> mostly in the fall of the year. It would take 3 days to make the trip with one bale of cotton. We moved back to Gail in 1905, living in a little 3 room white house on the Billie Cranfill lots. The Baptist Church secured lots from one of the Cranfill girls (Lottie) of Clovis, N.M.. Shortly after we moved in the little house, my little brother got real bad sick and Dr. Hannibas, our town Doctor, realized my brother was critical, so he called in an old Doctor from Colorado City to consult with. The Doctor came in a 2 horse buggy, arriving about sundown and my brother passed away about 9 P.M. Diagnosis: locked bowels. Nothing could be done back in those days. You could get medicine in Gail as David Dorward was our druggist. He and his wife, Minnie, gave their life service to our community of people. Minnie Dorward was at my mothers bedside when she passed away in November of 1913. A year or so prior to this, a wagon pulled into Gail. The man driving had 3 or 4 small children. His wife had died some time before from T B and he was still carrying her in the wagon. I helped unload her and Minnie and Hattie Dorward washed her and got her ready for burial. Her grave is in the Gail cemetery now. The county officials gave the man food, clothing and some money, and they went their way in the same old wagon.

I think I was around 9 yrs. old when the land rush occurred. I remember the blue ribbon men all riding dapple blue horses. They came in from the north. Next morning they cleared the Reds out of the courthouse hall. The Reds recruited and later regained the hall. W. K. Clark was sheriff at that time and he kept everything under control. The drinking men in the saloon were disarmed even to their pocket knives. I don't remember any fist fights. Will Clark, son of W. K. Clark, was deputy at the time and was later elected sheriff. He made one of Borden Counties best law enforcement officers in my years of memory and I remember every sheriff Borden County ever elected. J. D. Brown was school teacher and our banker here until the bank failed and closed in 1920. It had been established in 1906. J. D. Was a very useful and successful man in our Masonic Lodge and our Church Superintendant for years.

I remember the first ranch I worked on, for Bob Gray and Sid Johnson in the year 1912. It was the Cross C, a ranch they held lease on, 19 miles west of Gail - now the Joe Cannon Ranch. The Burns Bros. bought the ranch after Gray and Johnson moved off. The 1917-18 drought almost broke every rancher in the west. Drovers National Bank in Denver, Colorado owned everything that was left.

We moved herds out of Borden County and had to hay the horses as there was no grass. I remember we moved a herd north west for Francis Abney in the summer of 1918. Coming back across the T. J. Slaughter country we located a bay locoed horse and threw him in with our remuda. Charlie Engle rode this silly pony until we left Cross C Country. Stage Coaches ran from Big Spring to Lubbock carrying mail, express, and passengers. Hacks were pulled by little Spanish mules. There were terminals every 20 miles to change mules. I drove from Gail to Luther. Buck Waters had the contract at that time. I was 14 and he paid me 75¢ a day. That was big money in those days. I worked for Walter Turner in the spring of 1914, 12 miles west of Gail. Later the same year I went to work for Francis Abney. I was "stray"man to rattlesnake pasture on the Slaughter Long S ranch. I worked with Jim Boatler and we would go to his house each nite. It was the old Crossett place 12 miles north of Big Spring better known as the Hattie Crossett Dorward home. Ophelia Blackard, her daughter, will remember the place. J. Y. Everett owned the section just west of the Crossett place. He was the father of my wife, Flossie. I think they moved to Borden County about 1906.

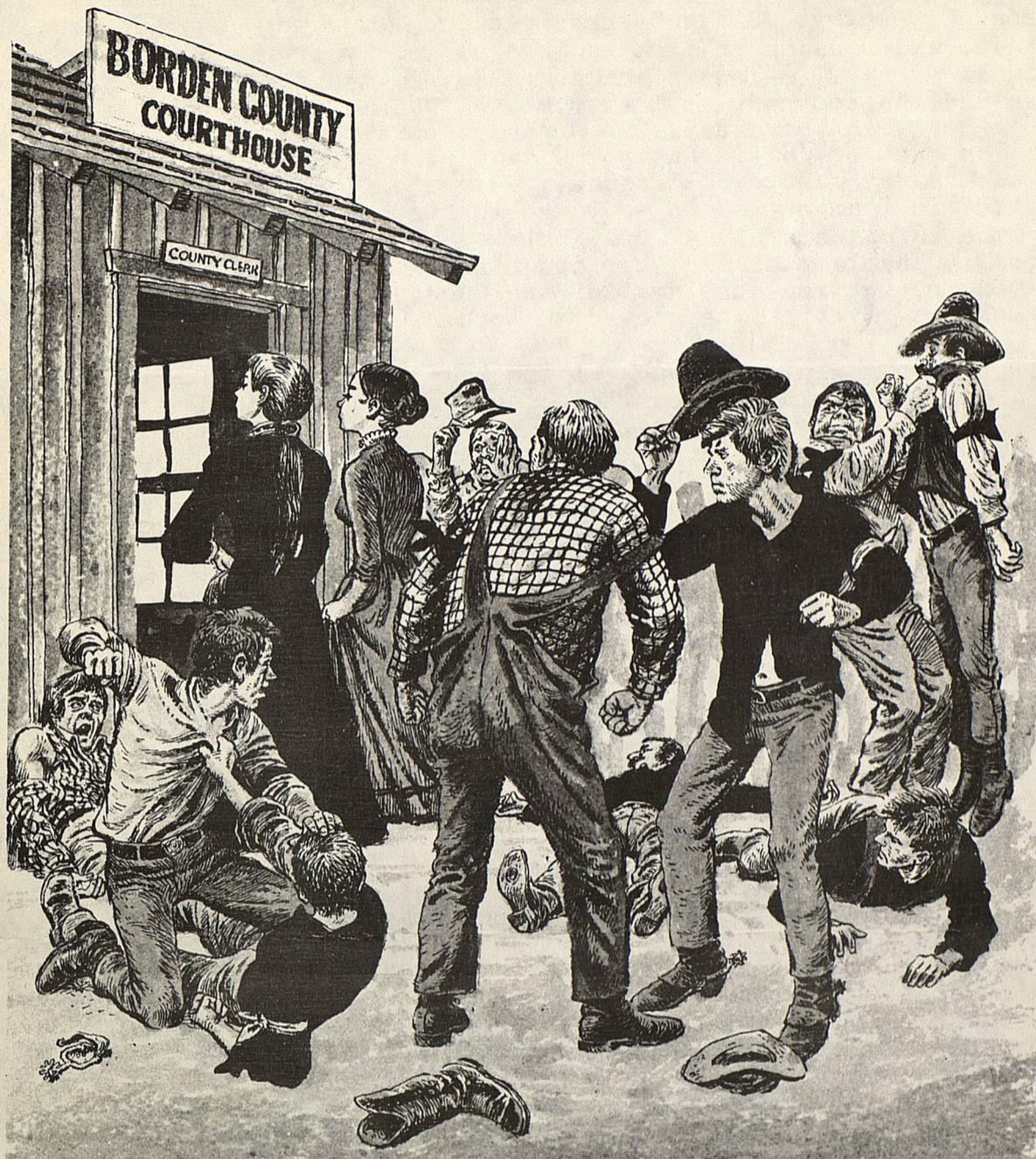
In the spring of 1916 I was back at the Muleshoe ranch. That was the first year that Franklin Company put out the blackleg serum a great boost to the cattle industry. We fed cake which came in bulk form and we only had small amount to feed the weaner calves. The last day of March and the first day of April we had sleet and rain that covered grass and weighted down the trees. A big percentage of the calves were already on the ground and cows were poor and weak. There was a lot of dead cattle on the ground when things thawed out. In the winter, Nick Holler, Garland Wolf, and myself worked on the O. B. ranch. The drought had already cut the grass short. We worked for R. N. Miller and Elmer Long. They had bought the entire 1914 calf crop from the famed King Ranch on the southern coast.. They were losing lots of cattle even before the drought. There wasn't any feed cake nor hay so we burned pears in the lowland south of the peak all winter. I left there in the winter and went to Guthrie with George Cathey. We worked for the Pitchfork Cattle Co., then I worked for Charlie Ellis and W. D. Goldsmith on the old Kruse ranch.

The winter of 1918 was a severe cold one. One morning in January the wind hit about 9 A.M. with freezing mist falling. Ed Holler and I had ridden about 4 miles from camp when the wind hit. We had to go back. Our line camp was a tent. We had gathered cow chips - called surface coal - and finally got a fire to going. About that time the tent blew down and we had to put out the fire and go to bed. It was only about sundown but we stayed there all night. We had 2 pigs, a goat, and a few hens. The pigs tails froze off, the goats ears, and the chickens feet as they were roosting on the coupling pole under the wagon. There was a good drift fence west of our place and we found 20 big 4 yr. old steers frozen, piled up in the corner. Cattle were rumbling bad, a world of creepy cows, not much traveling done during that January. During that same spell, back in Borden Co., a little 4 or 5 year old daughter of Dick Winfrey had backed into the fireplace and caught on fire burning to death. They couldn't get word out on account of the storm.

I was inducted into the Army in the spring of that same year. The flu was raging and I spent a big portion of my Army duty in the hospital and discharged with disabilities. When I came back to Gail in December the flu was still bad and had been fatal to a lot of people. The W. A. Sealy family lived 8 miles east of Gail. Mrs. J. Y. Everett and I went out there to take care of 4 seriously ill flu patients - W. A. Sealy, Mrs. Sealy, son Herbert, and daughters Nora and Cora. Mrs. Sealy and Herbert both passed away the same day. People were scared of the flu and hesitated on coming to help, besides it was so muddy you couldn't get over the roads. There was a red headed nurse there to help lay them out. She went back to Snyder the next day but I don't remember how she left. Mrs. Everett and I were there one day and night with 2 corpse and 2 sick girls. Mr. Jim Berry arrived next day with caskets from the Dorward Drug store.

Flossie Everett and I were married Dec. 31, 1923, by a Methodist Minister. In 1924 we moved to O'Donnell and I started barbering. I cut hair for 8 yrs. then went into the Sheriff's dept. where I stayed for 10½ years. Moved back to Gail and ran a grocery store. In 1944 I moved to Houston and worked in the Port Houston Iron Works as instructor of Plant Protection. Went from there to Huntsville where I worked for the Penitentiary System gathering livestock, etc. Returned to Gail in 1947 and have been here ever since.

I would like to add a few words of my own to John's story. He & Flossie raised 3 children, Margaret Lucille Thompson of Crosbyton, Billie Jane Rantz of Abernathy, & Dan Kenneth (Toby) of Dumas. John still farms and runs some cattle on his ranch south of Gail. He is a fine neighbor and good friend of all who know him. He has a colorful life and keeps the townfolk laughing and in high spirits with his many and varied rough and rowdy tales of yesteryear. Thank you, John, for letting me write your family history.



Two young ladies of Gail, Texas, profit from chivalry during 1904 War of the Ribbons. See "Land Rush Era Revisited," page 2.

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May the best of all good things be yours this Holiday Season and through the coming year. --- Borden County Historical Survey Committee.

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