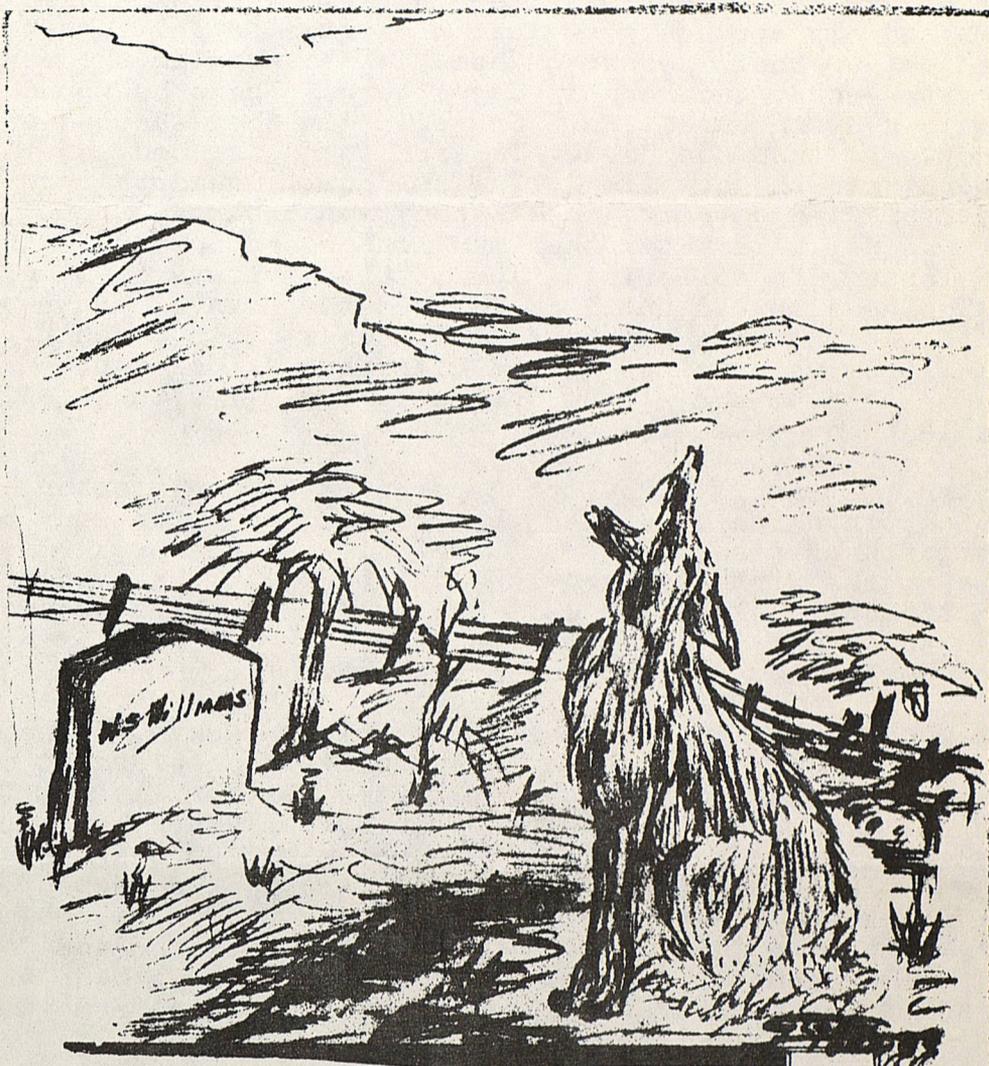


# Borden Citizen.

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W. S. WILLIAMS -- INDIAN FIGHTER AND TRAPPER

People react in various ways to cemeteries. To some they are places of sad, sacred memories, to others places of awesome dread, but to the genealogist and to history researchers they can be sources of vital information and inspiration for fascinating stories rapidly fading into obscurity. In the far northwest corner of the Gail Cemetery is a simple stone with only the name W. S. Williams -- not even a date. This stone was placed there many years ago by David Dorward and Sam Keene so that the grave would not be lost. Much of the history which lies buried there will probably never be known. It is a story which reflects much of the hardships, adventures and bravery which went into the settlement of West Texas.

W. S. Williams was the associate of such noted Indian fighters as Captain John Elkins, Kin Elkins and Sam Gholson in their forays to drive the Indians from the frontier of Texas and to protect the settlers from almost constant raids. Other men who were their neighbors in Coleman County and later became well known in this area were Clay Mann, whose "80" brand covered much of Kent and Borden Counties in the early 1880's, W. B. (Smokey) Brown and Boley Brown with his famous "24" brand and his fine horses, Willis Brown and Norman Rogers. George and Kin Elkins became well known Kent County ranchers and "Uncle Kin" is well remembered for the Elkins Camp Meetings. Sam Gholson was one of the most noted Indian fighters and later held an interest in the Curry Comb ranch with headquarters near Post.

Captain John M Elkins in his book "Indian Fighting on the Texas Frontier" (written for him by Frank McCarty) tells of the frontier "ranging companies" and of Mr. Williams story as follows:

"The State Legislature passed a bill authorizing several frontier counties to raise companies of minute men. Each county was allowed twenty men, who were

required to scout at least twenty days each month, at a salary of two dollars for each days service. Coleman County organized its company and I was elected its commander...The Indians were depredating and kept our company busy all the time that were allowed to scout. Then after we had served for twelve month the Governor sent Captain Ware, a mustering officer, to reorganize the company and muster it in. I was again elected its commander.

In 1873 William Williams and his family settled on a piece of land on Sand Creek in Brown County. His family consisted of a wife, one son almost grown, a little girl seven years old and an infant of a few months. They were camping and at this time Mr. Williams and his son had gone into the woods to get logs with which to build a cabin and set up their permanent home. That evening the son returned to camp before his father had finished his day's work. There he found his mother lying on the bed in a dying condition. She told him that the Indians had raided; that they had shot her; then she died. The son found the body of the little baby lying on the ground near the campfire. The evidence showed that the cruel Indians had shoveled coals of fire onto its tender body which burned it to death and the ground around it was wet with water that the mother had poured on the parched body in an attempt to lessen its suffering. The little girl was missing. They had kidnapped her. The news spread until it reached the town of Brownwood. The Brown county Minute Men, joined by a number of citizens went in pursuit. I being absent at that time, they were joined in the west part of Coleman County by a part of my Company under the command of Sam Gholson. For miles they followed the trail but were never able to overtake the cruel band.

Some time later, we saw in a Houston paper a letter written by Mr. Convers, a surveyor of Houston, in which he stated that he had found the body of a child hanging by the split girth of a saddle, to a tree. It was the mother's saddle which the Indian had taken the girth to hang the little girl. The evidence showed that they had scalped the child alive and left her suspended there because her hand was placed on her scalped head and was stuck there by the blood. Mr. Convers took the body down and buried it near a chinaberry tree.

Mr. Williams, who was anxious to locate his child's grave, joined my company within a short time after the murder of his family. I decided to make a twenty days scout in search of the child's grave. After setting the day for starting I wrote the Brown and Comanche companies to join me but when the time arrived to begin our search the two companies failed to be among the ones who went. But Captain Coney, who was commanding United States troops and camped on Hords Creek, and Lieutenant Cusick and Lieutenant Stedman from Fort Concho, Commanding about twenty men each, joined me in making the search. We reached the described place in about six days and found the chinaberry tree. Though we made a diligent search we could not find the grave." Note- These pages are from the chapter entitled "The Murder of the Williams Family".

Much of this information was obtained from War Department records in the National Archives: "List of persons killed, wounded, or captured, Dept. of Texas, during the year ending Sept. 30, 1873." Various reports say that the raid occurred on July 6, that the surveying party which discovered the child's body on July 31 consisted of G. W. Angel, J. E. Elgin and Geo. W. Polk, and that the child was found on the Salt Fork of the Brazos. Local tradition gives the location as Mackenzie Mountain (20 miles north of present Snyder). The surveying party reported finding the child's scalp attached to an Indian's shield, abandoned nearby. Captain Elkins relates that, having failed to find the child's grave, the company traveled west for two days and then, because of scarcity of water, started their return along the divide between the Colorado and the Brazos rivers (probably the Borden County area). They encountered a band of Indians several of whom were on fine horses stolen from Kin Elkins and his son-in-law, Jim Jackson. Some of the Indians were killed and after a fierce chase one of the men captured an Indian which he discovered to be a squaw. She was riding Jim Jackson's race horse with a fine Mexican saddle and bridly ornamented with silver, and told one of the men that she was the daughter of a prominent Chief. At the Indian camp the men found thirty five head of Kin Elkins horses, many army supplies, and some pecans tied in an apron which Mr. Williams identified as having belonged to his wife. It was Captain Elkin's policy not to kill a squaw unless she was engaged in combat with whites, but when he saw Mr. Williams agitation at having to guard this person who had participated in the murder of his family, he offered to let Williams shoot her. Mr. Williams could not bring himself to do this. She was killed by another member of the company in disobedience of Captain Elkin's orders.

Captain John Elkins and his company of "Minute Men" were invited to accompany Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie on his 1874 expedition against the Indians. This expedition crossed Borden County. Captain Elkins was unable to go but sent some of his men to act as guides and to identify horses recovered from the Indians. It is believed that W. S. Williams was one of the scouts on this expedition which forced the Indians back to the reservation and brought an end to most of the raiding.

Captain Elkins says: "After this battle there was only one depredation in Coleman County..., however as late as 1878 there were some raids in Scurry and Kent Counties."

From the time his family was massacred until the Redman was cleared from the Plains, Bill Williams dedicated his life to revenge and to preventing similar tragedies for his friends and neighbors. When the Indians were gone he and his son, Willie, roamed over the country hunting and trapping. The first issue of the first newspaper printed in Borden County, The Borden Spokesman, edited by C. W. Simpson (a prized exhibit of the Borden County Museum) has this news item: "Mr. Williams of the Jumbo Ranch was in Gail last week inquiring after the lobos. He has been engaged in the trapping business in the west for many years, is now employed by the Jumbos to kill wolves. Mr. Williams had two pet lobo wolves with him. One of them was a black spotted fellow."

John L. Wallace, grandson of the J. I. Wilbourns, first citizen of Gail, told Tanner Laine of the Lubbock Avalanche Journal:

"I once had a friend, Willie Williams, who with his father was engaged in hunting and trapping lobos, back in the early days. They got a bounty for lobo ears, regardless of the age of the animal. They took a pair of young ones and made pets out of them. And used them to kill other lobos by chaining the wolves out near the camp on Moonlit nights. The captive wolves would howl and call others up to within rifle range. Willie always told me they were never able to break lobos from killing a fat cow if they got a chance. It always was necessary to chain the lobos to the wagon if there were any cattle around. The lobos could kill a coyote any time, by giving the smaller animal one shake. After one shake, the lobo would not touch the coyote again.

"Willie vowed lobos would not hurt a dog unless the dog made a fight. He said he killed a lot of lobos using a dog to 'bait' them. Willie had a wise old hound dog. The dog would make a bee-line for the lobo. But would fall flat on his back just before nudging an old wolf. The lobo would just bristle and not harm the dog. The old hound played this game of falling on his back until the wolf hunter got close enough for a rifle shot at the wolf...

"This Willie Williams was a cook on the U Lazy S Ranch a number of years. One day they were on the drive to Big Spring with a load of hides and to buy supplies. A few miles out in the wilds, they came to a little country school in session. It was a warm afternoon and Willie's two lobos were trotting along in the shade of the wagon. A big, fighting Newfoundland dog had followed some kid to school. The dog came charging out, looking for trouble. He soon realized his error and turned tail, running into the schoolhouse. The lobos ran to the schoolhouse door, but stopped. School was out! The kids saw the wolves and began jumping out of windows and fleeing by the back door - not near big enough for the situation."

Will Johnson, whose family settled in eastern Borden County in 1889, remembers the Williams coming by their house with a huge lobo wolf fastened to a chain across the back of the wagon. Will said they camped where ever they heard of a lobo until they killed him. The following quote from the book "Rollie Burns" by W.C. Holden help to explain why the Williams were in demand as lobo hunters: "The ranchman dreaded lobos more than he did prairie fires...A grown lobo or 'loafer' would kill from 10 to 20 head of cattle a year...The average ranch sustained more damage from lobos than from cattle thieves. In 1892 I employed two men who devoted all their time to hunting. I furnished them grub, horses and horse feed and gave them \$20 a scalp. Lobos are so smart it is practically useless to try to trap them. The only effective way of getting a lobo was to jump and run him down with hounds and horses. The two men killed twenty-five during the winter."

Nora Berry Nelson remembers Mr. Williams visiting in their home quite often and of his telling her father the tragic story of his life as he paced the floor in the anguish of his sorrow. Bertha Welbourn McKinney tells us that the son, Willie Williams, lived in their home in Garza County many years and practiced his professions of photography and trapping.

But the lobos disappeared as had the Indians, and another era was closed. Bill Williams looked back on the years of sorrow and hardships instead of ahead to more adventure. He and Willie built a small house in Gail near the mountain and there he died after a long illness. Willie took over the photographic studio which had been operated by Charlie Shropshire of the handlebar mustachios.

Some of the most treasured pictures in the Borden County Museum bear the inscription - W. L. Williams, Photographer, Gail, Texas. They date from 1905 to 1907. Willie Williams is remembered by Sammie Morrow Dent, Will Johnson, Miss Pearl and Olen Keene, and others who lived in Gail in those years, but no one seems to know what became of him. He just went away. And now all that remains of this segment of West Texas and Borden County history is a small stone with the inscription -- W. S. Williams.

By Edna Clark Miller

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Neva Cathey died on Jan. 14, 1971 at Lamesa. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Will Cathey came to Borden County in the late 1890's and lived at Gail and on the plains until 1926. Her sisters, Mrs. E. C. Harris of O'Donnell and Mrs. Luther Young of Denver City survive.

Mrs. Leona Berry Simpson, wife of the late Dick Simpson of the Berry Flat Community, died on July 20, 1971 in Lubbock. The A. H. Berry family had lived in Borden County since 1906.

Mrs. John Pou, who grew up in Gail as Myrtle Hopkins, died in Dallas on August 11 at the age of 81. Her husband, two sons and a daughter survive as do her sisters Mrs. Grace Roberson, Mrs. Mollye Davis and Mrs. Madie Sabo.

Lee B. Wooton worked in Borden County for many years as a ranch hand and barber.

He later became mayor of Slaton where he died on July 31, 1971. He was married on June 1, 1917 to Miss Docia Sealy, who survives, as does a daughter, Mrs. Bryan J. Williams of Post.

Word has been received of the passing of John H. Doyle, Jr. of Mountaineer, N.M. The Doyle family were among the earliest settlers in the '49' pasture.

Felix V. Cauhape, 45, of Hope, N. Mex. died Nov. 1970 as the result of injuries suffered in an explosion. His wife, the daughter of Mrs. Della and the late Mark Kincaid, and four children survive.

Mrs. Annie Gray of Denton, the mother of Nettie Rogers of Gail died August 25th. She had formerly lived in the Tredway Community in Borden County.

Mrs. Preston Sharp, 86, died August 15, 1971 after a long illness. Mrs. Sharp was born in Goliad, Texas and had lived in Borden County 29 years. Survivors include her husband and son S. C. (Buddy) Sharp of Gail and a daughter, Mrs. Bernice Henderson of Snyder.

Jesse Koonsman, 69, member of a pioneer Scurry and Borden County family died on August 29th in Snyder. He was a native of Scurry County and a Borden County landowner. His wife, Eula, and a daughter, Mrs. Wanda Eicke, survive.

Prentis Riley, former Borden County resident, died September 18, 1971, in Snyder. He was the nephew of Mrs. Clyde Miller of the Miller ranch. His wife was Julia, the daughter of Clements Von Roeder.

Claude Isaacs of Odessa, brother of Leonard Issacs of Borden County, died Sept. 7, 1971. Burial was in Lamesa Cemetery.

B. B. Forehand of Fluvanna died August 19th. Mr. Forehand lived in the Borden County area more than 20 years. His survivors include his wife, Opal, and a daughter, Betty Jo McIntyre of Abilene.

W. S. (Sid) Cathey, 81, who came to Gail with his parents in 1900, died June 6th in Lubbock where he had lived 35 years. He is survived by 3 sons and a sister, Mrs. Zettie Richards of Portales, N. Mex.

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The annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee will be held at the Convention Center in Del Rio, Texas on October 29-30, 1971. We hope some Borden Countians will be able to attend.

At the 3rd annual Ranch Day held in the Scurry County Coliseum in Snyder on September 11th, Borden County was represented by a display of pictures, maps and documents pertaining to the MK ranch which was established in Borden County in 1883. This ranch at one time covered most of Borden County and fenced the first big pasture in West Texas which enclosed approximately 600 sections. "Ranch Day" is sponsored by the Scurry County unit of the Ranch Headquarters Ass'n. as a benefit of the Ranch Museum which is being built at Texas Tech in Lubbock.

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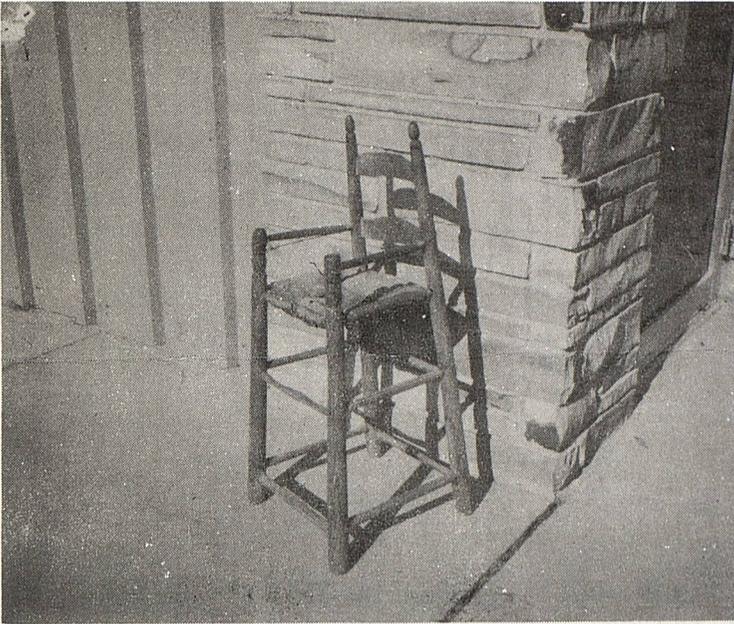
A group of interested Borden County citizens have purchased the Tri-County News and are now publishing under the banner of the Borden Star which will serve not only our county but the 5 surrounding counties - Garza, Lynn, Dawson, Howard and Scurry. This paper is sorely needed here as a means of communication for our people and we wish them success.

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## THE LITTLE HIGH CHAIR



Have you visited your Borden County Museum lately? If you decide to visit the Museum you may be as surprised as Mrs. Timmie McCormick of Big Spring was lately. In a letter written to Dorothy Browne, she said "I was so happy to find Dad's little high chair. I could have shouted when I saw it."

She was writing about seeing a high chair that had been used by her family and is more than a hundred year old. It was hand carved by a slave before the Civil War. The slave carefully chose the tree he wanted from the plantation, cut the tree, allowed the wood to cure and then carefully carved the wood by hand and made a child's high chair, putting a raw hide bottom in it.

Mrs. McCormick sent more history of the chair. "My dad, Mr. Joseph B. Hill was born in Brazos County, Texas in 1873. He had a twin sister and there was only one high chair in their family. His Aunt Till was 15 years old and was visiting the Hill family. She said that she had her high chair that her father's slave had made and given her as a present. Aunt Till lived one mile from them and she walked home and brought her chair and gave it to Daddy. All of his younger brothers and sisters used the chair. I sat in it and my younger brother and two sisters used it." The chair shows this use as the round rung of the chair where the children's feet would go is worn flat and thin.

Timmie was surprised to find the chair in the Museum because she had not known where the chair was for about 15 years. Her Mother had given the chair to Mrs. Rosa Davis Cotten. When the Museum opened, Mrs. Cotten's children decided to loan it to our Museum.

Come to see us at the Museum on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday afternoon and see if you find something that once belonged in your family for more than a hundred years.

By Dorothy Browne.

Note - After Mrs. McCormick visited the Museum and found her father's chair she sent us a dress to go with the chair. He father had worn it as a child. It is of fine plum colored wool, lined throughout with linen and trimmed with small soutache braid. The hem and sleeves are scalloped and every stitch is done by hand.

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## MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

Many exciting things have been going on at the Borden County Museum. Dewey Everett brought in a large stone which he and Bob Beal had removed from over the fireplace in what was left of the dugout occupied by Borden County's first sheriff, Tom Love, when he first settled in Borden County. We haven't been able to catch Bob to get the story of the rock. It has letter carved into the stone reading - WARRANTED to --- by T. D. Love. Other lettering is dim or obliterated.

Another historic acquisition is a scrap book kept by Florence Nunnally depicting the history of the "Borden County Belles" which was organized in 1953 as an auxiliary of the Sheriff's Posse. Charter members, membership, and other activities sponsored throughout the years are recorded in the scrap book. This organization was merged with the Posse in 1964 and is still functioning as part of that organization. Except for the Homemakers club this is about the only organization we have in Borden County to serve as a Civic or Social Club.

Out of State visitors to the Museum this summer have been from New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Virginia, California, Indiana, Wisconsin, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas and South Dakota.

Both Will S. Johnson of Elida, N. Mex. and Mrs. Eddie Smith Henkins of Athens have been recent visitors to the Museum. The Johnson and the Smith families were early day proprietors of the Kincaid Hotel in Gail.

Other visitors have included Mr. and Mrs. Ted Smithee of Abernathy and Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Williams of Amarillo. Mrs. Smithee and Mrs. Williams are granddaughters of the R. B. Shaws who settled in the '49 pasture in the early 1890's. Another early '49' settler was Paul Napoleon Ares, a French Canadian, whose grandson, A. L. Ares of Odessa, visited with us on September 19, 1971. The same day we had a wonderful interview and visit with Bertha Wilbourn McKinney and her daughter, Florene Ferguson of Lampasas. Mrs. McKinney was the first baby born in Gail, she and Ola Kincaid being born the same night - April 18, 1891. Bertha's father was J. I. Wilbourn, the founder of Gail. When the county was organized Mr. Wilbourn's section of land was "elected" the county seat and deeded plots to the school, churches, and for the Courthouse square. He also deeded the land for the streets and alleys and for the Cemetery. The Wilbourn Hotel, Gail's first hotel, was located on Wilbourn Avenue, the street which runs south of the Courthouse.

Nora Berry Nelson sent in a hand made child's high chair and a gold inlaid ladle. Ruth Weathers brought in a 45 colt revolver found on the 9R ranch and several other articles. Mrs. Fern Walker sent in a history of the H. A. Berry family and the Berry Flat Community as told to her by her mother, Mrs. Leona Berry Simpson. Mrs. Sam McMurtry of Shamrock writes that her mother, Mrs. J.F. Coates was 93 years old in July. The Coates bought part of the 2 Buckle and MK ranches in 1894.

The Borden County Museum has been getting a lot of publicity by means of a radio tape made by "Tumble Weed Smith" whose program is heard over a number of stations in the West Texas area. This interview with Pauline Clark, Museum Chairman, concerning the Museum and Borden County history has been aired over several stations and was heard last week in the Abilene area.

We wish to recognize generous donations by Jack Phinizy to the Borden County Museum and by Sid and Caroline Long to the Historical Committee..

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This issue of THE BORDEN CITIZEN begins our seventh year in our efforts to compile a history of the years gone by in Borden County. As time passes it becomes increasingly difficult to trace incidents and family histories, so we urge you now to send us any information you have pertaining to early days in Borden County.

Dues in the amount of \$3.00 yearly are now due. Send your check made payable to the BORDEN CITIZEN to Mrs. Sybil Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas, 79738.

Contributions to the Museum can be sent to Mrs. Pauline Clark or Mrs. Sibyl Gilmore, Gail, Texas, 79738.

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Editors note: We gratefully acknowledge the artistry of Glenn Toombs, Borden County Judge, for excellent sketch which illustrates our open-article. Thank you, Glenn.

## Borden Citizen.

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