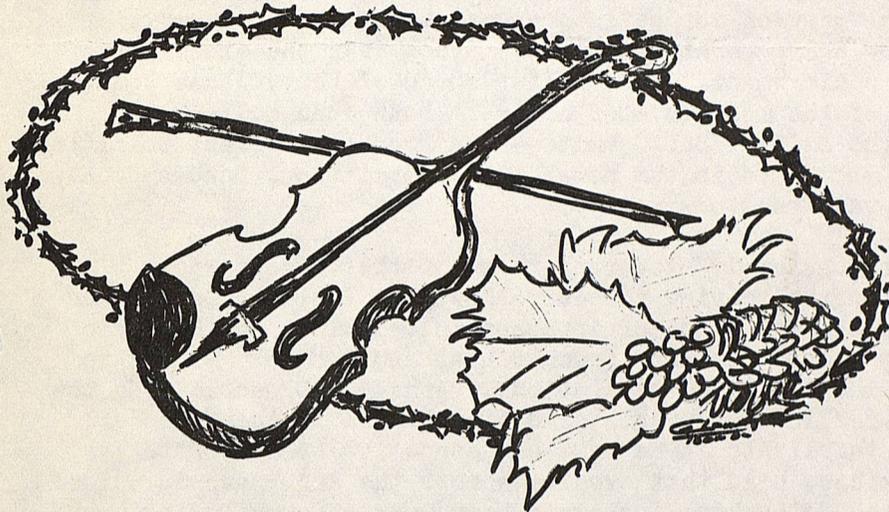


# Borden Citizen.

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## JUST FIDDLEING AROUND

By Vivian Clark



There have been quite a few old time fiddlers around Gail during the past eighty years or more.

When I was growing up, every boy wanted to learn to play the fiddle. The fiddle was a man's instrument. Some learned to play real well -- some not so well. But I believe most of them learned to play at least a little.

This is a talent that requires great virtuosity in its approach and is deeply sensitive in its interpretations. This is why most of the old-timers know the sound of a fiddle and how it should be played.

Each community around had its local fiddlers. Around Gail some were - Hugh Kincaid, Aquilla Spears, George Clark, Bob White, Bill Large, Max Millahunty, Bill Kincaid, Clem Milhollon, George and John Moore. These fellows were all good fiddlers and I am sure there were others. But these I knew and have heard most of them play. Mamie (Moore) Smoot - the only lady fiddler around Gail that I knew - could play right along with her brothers George and John. They say George Clark played for dances when he was a small boy and would pat that big bare foot to keep time. I think they usually had a guitar to accompany the fiddle. Maybe sometimes a mandolin or banjo. Some times only two fiddles were played.

Back in the old times there were a lot of dances in the court room of the old courthouse, especially at Christmastime. Cowboys would come long distances - some as far away as New Mexico. These dances usually lasted from sundown till sunup - and maybe for two or three days.

Some of you remember these old tunes that were played - "Nigger in the Woodpile" (but maybe we should say 'Colored Man in the Lumber Yard'), "Snowbird in the Ash Bank", "Coon on a Rail", "Piney Wood", "Leather Britches", "Sugar in the Gourd", "Forked Deer", "Natchez under the Hill", (there are a few I won't mention) "Arkansas Traveller", "Turkey in the Straw", "Irish Washerwoman", "Whistling Rufus" and "Grey Eagle". These were all breakdowns, but they also played many beautiful waltzes as well as Schottisches and Polkas, all of which are great musical accomplishments in their own right.

For many years there have been "Old Fiddler's" Conventions and contests in most states of the United States. I don't know just what rules and regulations are followed, but I heard of one in California that seems to me would be correct. The judges are experienced and know "Old Time Fiddling" when they hear it. They are isolated and judge only by numbers. No trick fiddling or fancy stuff goes - just the old tunes the way the old timers played them.

In closing I might add that I have been trying to play the fiddle for fifty years - and still hope to learn.

There have been violin players around Gail, too, but this article concerns fiddling. Violin playing is a Horse of a Different Color!!!

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This joyful Christmas season we are happy to share with our readers the many good things that have been ours this past year - the gifts to the Museum, our Newsletter award, and the interest of our many friends.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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## ANNUAL MEETING - 1971

Historic Del Rio was the setting for the 1971 Annual Meeting of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee, held on October 29-30 in the Del Rio Civic Center. One of the largest crowds ever, more than 425 persons, attended and called this maybe the best meeting yet. The convention opened with a "Festival of Films" on preservation and environmental topics, and throughout the meeting lectures and films stressed the preservation of our historic buildings, our archaeological treasures, and our native environment. Following the Friday night Fish Fry, Harry Middleton, director of the L. B. J. Library in Austin, told the overflowing crowd of the magnitude and importance of this magnificent addition to our country's history and culture.

The Saturday Awards Luncheon is always looked forward to with keen anticipation. Pity the poor judges who must choose the winners in the competitions which represent such a superabundance of time and effort expended. Thirty six counties were represented at the table for Distinguished Award Winners, and as usual many of our neighbors were among them. Scurry, Garza, Mitchell, Coke, Midland and Crosby are perennial winners. Crosby was the winner of the Best Scrapbook Award - a tremendous achievement. Mrs. Walter Boren of Post, Garza County, won the Best County Chairman Award, one of the most coveted honors. Both June McGlaun and Jean Everett of Scurry County were honored as Best Sub-Committee Chairman and as Best Committee Member respectively. Crosby County won 3rd place in the newsletter competition, Borden County won 2nd, and 1st place winner this year was Freestone County.

Following this time of appreciation the assembly dispersed to go on the various sight seeing tours. One group took a bus to Langtry to view the Judge Roy Bean Visitors Center and the Pecos River High Bridge. Others toured the points of interest in Del Rio: the Historic Whitehead Memorial Museum, beautiful San Felipe Springs, Brown Plaza, and the only Winery in Texas where the Quaila family has made wine for three generations. Perhaps 150 people made the arduous climb into the canyon to see the fascinating prehistoric pictographs in the Fate Bell Rock Shelter. The wind, the climb, and the limited time were not conducive to elaborate costumes and coiffures for the Noche Mexicana held that evening across the Rio Bravo in Ciudad Acuna, but this did not seem to bother the delegates, for again there was an overflowing crowd and every one was in high spirits. Entertainment by Mariachis set the mood for the festive occasion, the Carne Asado and Guacamole was superb, and a great time was had by all.

The 1971 meeting will be held in Austin and it will surely be different but just as interesting.

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## MUSEUM MUSINGS

Exciting things have been happening at the Borden County Museum. Many notable names have been entered in our register of late including those of several pioneer Borden County families such as a granddaughter of Hugh Kincaid, Louise Arnett Miller and husband of Fallbrook, Calif.; Josie Good Howell and Dorothy Good McDowell of Kenna and Elida, New Mexico; Lillie Issacs of Odessa, of the Isaacs and Hill families and her sister Mildred Merworth of Naples, Texas; Mr. and Mrs. John Wilbourn of Big Spring; Alvin Whitaker; Jim and Eula Hollar Parker; Gladys Floyd; Mrs. Lillie Elkins Nance; Mr. and Mrs. Homer Skeen; the T. M. Hughes; Joe York and Joe Lemley; Bill and Winnie Chandler Miller of Rapid City, South Dakota, and Mrs. W. M. Woods of the Mullins family. Doesn't it sound like a roll call of early Borden residents?

Joe Lemley presented the museum with a copy of FIRST CATTLEMEN ON THE LOWER PLAINS OF TEXAS published by the Ranch Headquarters Association of Snyder, Texas. This book has stories of several Borden County ranches, and Joe York, Dorothy Dennis, Edna Miller and Jean Everett were among the contributing authors. A limited number of copies were printed and it is sure to become a collectors item.

Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Roberts of Snyder, Texas were recent museum visitors and Mr. Roberts, whose hobby is repairing old clocks, graciously offered to repair the 175 year old clock which had belonged to the Great Grandmother of Sam Skeen. This clock was presented to the Museum by former Postmistress Jean Skeen.

Two men from Dusseldorf, Germany, who were touring West Texas were shown through the Museum by Sheriff Slick Sneed and were quite impressed with it. Many visitors have expressed amazement that we have been able to establish so interesting a display in so small a community. Of course this has been possible because so many of you have helped. Two very significant items have been added to the Museum recently. One, the mounted head of the huge black baldfaced steer which for many years was a familiar sight at the York ranch, has been given to the Museum by Mr. York's sons. (See article and drawing on next page). The second item which we consider the Museum especially fortunate in securing is the back-bar from the saloon which was operated in Gail when our town was an oasis for dusty cowboys and thirsty nesters. This long bar with the huge mirror above it was used for many years behind the fountain at the drug store in Meadow, Texas. We do not know whether the bar was taken directly from Gail to Meadow. Doctor Moorhead at one time operated the drug store and Mr. Dan Swafford of Lubbock was a later owner. The bar is ours through the generosity of the last owner of the drug store, Mr. F. A. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson operated the drug store for twenty five years. After it was closed six years ago the bar was moved into an adjacent building where Mr. Wilson has an Insurance Agency. The bar had been in the drug store as long as Mr. Wilson has knowledge of it. Mr. Willson had several opportunities to sell the bar but chose to present it to our Museum for the enjoyment of Borden County people and their friends. The bar is in good condition and will be refinished and placed in the Museum in the near future, back again in Gail "where it belongs!" If that big mirror could act as a television screen showing scenes it has witnessed, what drama we might witness!

In addition to our many thanks to Mr. Wilson for the gift of the bar, we wish to express appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. B. W. Branch and to Naymon Everett, who were instrumental in helping us secure the bar, and to E. L. Farmer and Pat Hensley who brought it back to Borden County.

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## FOX

A picture of FOX in the Museum shows him at three years of age weighing 2260 lbs. Before his death at age 15 he grew to weigh 3150 lbs. Fox, half Brahma and half hereford, was born on the Johnson ranch west of Gail. A wild calf, he was not gathered in the roundups until he was a yearling. By then he had enough horns it was decided not to dehorn him. He was placed in the feed lot with other steers but out gained them so fast that Mr. Jim York decided to hold him over to "see what he would do." The next year he was sent to Fort Worth with a load of steers but he was so large that the packing house machinery would not handle him and he was returned to Borden County. We suspect that Mr. York was quite relieved to have him home again. Fox was his special project - his pride and joy - until his death in 1961. Fox was then sent to the New Mexico ranch of Mr. York's son, Buster, near Fort Sumner. Fox had always been temperamental, not allowing many people to handle him. Now he missed Mr. York and he seemed to pine away. Four months after Mr. York died Fox slipped on the ice, broke a leg, and had to be destroyed. Buster had his head mounted and for several years it hung in the Martin Cafe at Fort Sumner. Now Fox is home again - back in Borden County.



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RHOME ROGERS, 71, passed away in Prior, Oklahoma, October 1, 1971. He is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters. Mr. Rogers worked for the Clayton ranch in the early 1940's.

GEORGIE MAE ISAACS passed away October 12, 1971 after a lengthy illness. Her survivors are her husband, Leonard, and two sons, Tony and Douglas, all of Borden County.

MRS. MARTHA SUSAN SUITS, 96, passed away October 14th, 1971. Mrs. Suits, a long time resident of Borden County, is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Minnie Cockerham, four grandchildren, five great grandchildren and twelve great great grandchildren.

MRS. BESSIE MAYNARD, 75, of Fluvanna passed away November 5, 1971. Survivors are four sons, Don Cox of Gail, Clyde Cox of Slaton, Murl Cox of Ajo, Arizona and Doyle Maynard of Natchitochas, Louisiana. Two sisters, nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren also survive.

BEN JENKINS passed away November 6, 1971. He was a brother of the late J. R. Jenkins, one time Sheriff of Borden County. He won the oldest citizen award at the Museum dedication and reunion in 1970. He is survived by a nephew Skeet Jenkins, and three nieces, Mary Mitchell of Lubbock, Sadie Tell Longbotham of Snyder and Frances Stockton of Big Spring.

MRS. CULVER HART, 72, passed away November 7, 1971. She was born in Gail and married Culver Hart at age 17. Her father, J. W. Chandler, ran the Blue Front Store in Gail for many years. Her husband's father was a Methodist preacher at Gail. Survivors are her husband and three

daughters, and also two sisters, Mrs. Winnie Miller of Rapid City, South Dakota and Mrs. Dove Patton of Carlsbad, New Mexico.

J. M. "BOOTS" TURNER died suddenly while fishing at Lake Hubbard on November 7th. He is survived by his wife, Jackie, one son, Dan, one grandson, Blaine and two grandchildren all of Borden County, and one granddaughter, Donna Curry of Denton. Mr. Turner moved to Borden County in 1943 and was buried in the Gail Cemetery.

C. R. SNEED, 80, passed away November 23, 1971. He is survived by three daughters and five sons. Among other survivors is a nephew, Norman Sneed, Sheriff of Borden County.

W. L. MATHIS, 51, passed away November 30th, 1971, after a long illness. He was a life-long resident of the Fluvanna area.

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We are very proud of the second place award that our NEWSLETTER received at the State Convention in Del Rio. We have now entered our Newsletter in this contest four times and have won two firsts and two seconds. We want to send our congratulations to Freestone County and their very active committee for their first place award in this category and also would like to commend Scurry County for their excellent Newsletter.

Recent donations to the Museum have been made by Bill and Sadie Ludecke of O'Donnell, Dr. and Mrs. E. E. Middleton of Abilene and Mr. A. N. Prince of Abilene.

Memorials to the Museum, in memory of Georgia Mae Isaacs, have been made by Mr. and Mrs. Vivian Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Sneed and Mrs. Edna Miller.

Our new year began with our September issue. If you have not already done so, please send your dues in the amount of \$3.00 made payable to the Borden Citizen in care of Sybil Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas 79738.

Once again we thank Glenn Toombs for his drawings we have used in this issue. Many times an appropriate picture is not available, so it is very nice to have some one with Glenn's talent so willing to illustrate for us.

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FROM THE PENS OF OUR READERS:

KATIE BELL CRUMP, Lubbock: My brother and I enjoy every word of your historical bulletin. As a little boy he made several trips through Borden County freighting from Colorado City.

ANNIE DOYLE RULE: My brother, Gibbs Doyle lives in Corpus Christi... Ethel Wilbourn, Mollye Hopkins Davis and I were together in our first school. Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Hathcock were the teachers.

F. C. HART, Artesia: ... I enjoy reading your newsletter very much. Around 1914 I helped set type to print the Borden Citizen Newspaper. The next time I am through Gail I want to stop and see your Museum.

CARRILEE CRAWLEY, Lamesa: ... Could this last issue of the Citizen be your best? Just might - just might ! (Editors note: Thank you - Thank you! )

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