

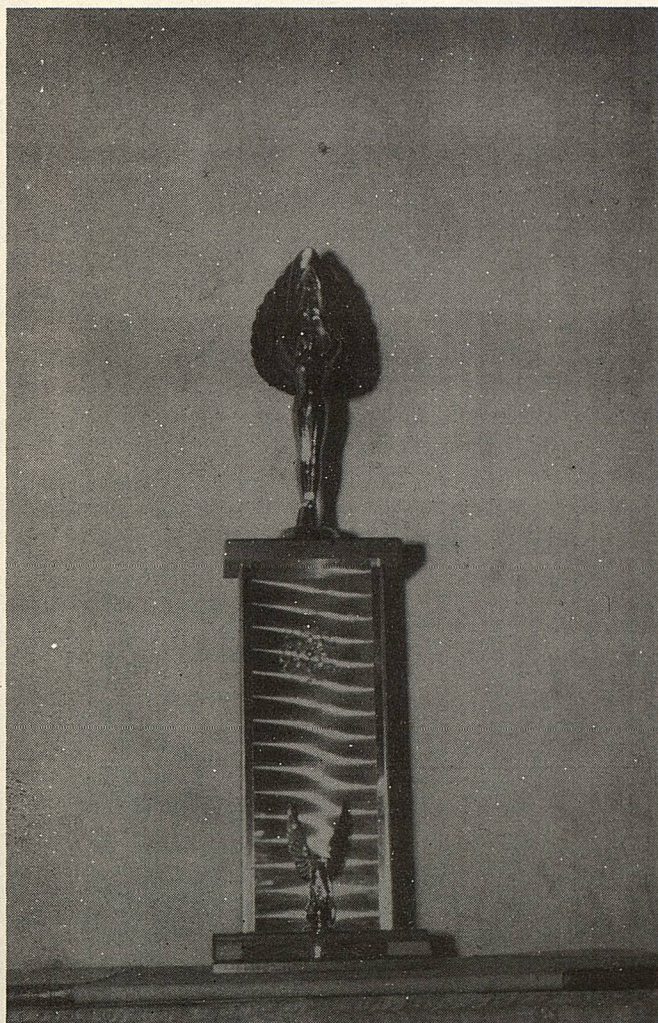
# Borden

# Citizen.

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## 1969 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION AND TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMITTEE.

We are sorry you didn't make it to Waco for the 1969 annual meeting of the Texas Historical Foundation and the Texas State Historical Survey Committee. The meeting was interesting, the tours wonderful and we needed you there to share the thrill and excitement of receiving the beautiful trophy pictured here - for, you see, we had the best Newsletter published in Texas in 1969! So again we share with you the pride of achievement meriting state wide recognition and again we send you the news of this award as our Holiday greeting. With it we express our appreciation for all you have done to help us achieve this award. Without your contributions of information, expressions of appreciation and financial support none of this would have been possible. We look forward to another interesting and successful year.

Highlights of the Convention, held on October 24-25 at the Alico Center Inn, were a presentation by our neighbor, Hugh Boren, on how Snyder became an "All American City"; interesting talks on Museums; publishing a county history, preservation and restoration; and a film on Williamsburg, Virginia.

On the social and fun side, we spent a lovely evening at Baylor University with dinner at the Student Union and visits to the world renowned Armstrong-Browning Library with its 43 beautiful stained glass windows and fabulous collection of works, portraits, articles and letters of Robert and Elizabeth Barret Browning, and to the Texas Collection, second largest historical collection in the State. There were also visits to several beautifully restored homes, one dating back to 1856, to Fort Fisher, a memorial to the Texas Rangers, and finally a wonderful picnic and presentation of the history of square dancing by Waco dancers. At the Awards luncheon special recognition was given to John Ben Sheppard who, as President of the State Committee, implemented and gave the needed impetus to carry the RAMPS program to undreamed success. Scurry County was one of the Distinguished Service Award counties and Mrs. Wayne Boren of Snyder received a trophy as best Sub-committee chairman. Garza County received honorable mention for Best Scrap Book and Mitchell County for best Program of Work. Both Garza and Scurry Counties were Distinguished Service Award winners. The meeting for 1970 is to be held in historic Fredericksburg. Plan to be there and learn something of our German heritage. I'm sure we will be royally entertained.

Visiting while in Waco with our Executive Director, Truett Latimer, and his wife we learned that Mrs. Latimer is truly a name-sake of Gail. Her father, Le Roy Johnson, in the course of his business travels, stopped in Gail on various occasions and must have been very impressed with the town, the people, or just the beauty of the name - maybe all three - for when his lovely daughter was born (he was in Gail when he learned of her birth) he named her Judith Gail!

by Edna Miller

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The September issue of our newsletter was the beginning of a new year and dues in the amount of \$3.00 are now being received. Please make your checks payable to Borden County Newsletter and send to Sybil Holmes, Box 137, Gail, Texas 79738.

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## PROGRESS REPORT ON MUSEUM

Work on the Museum has been slow, due in part to fall rains. But our handsome new building will probably be completed by the time you receive this newsletter. We hope to begin arranging our exhibits very soon and to welcome you to "Open House" some time in early spring. Several exciting new contributions have been made which you will be seeing when the new Museum is opened. We wish to express our appreciation to all who have made contributions and for recent gifts by Mrs. Dick Simpson of mementos from Mr. Simpson's military service and by Mrs. Myrtle Hopkins Pou of Dallas of some most interesting pictures and family history. We are hoping that many of you are gathering up your "museum pieces" and family histories that they may be preserved and enjoyed by all. Contributions of articles and monetary gifts to the Museum may be sent to Mrs. Pauline Clark, Museum Chairman, at Gail, Texas, 79738.

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Members of the Borden County Historical Survey Committee - Mr. and Mrs. Vivian Clark, Edna Miller, Ruth Weathers, Kathleen Umphress, Sibyl Gilmore, Opal Stephens and Iva Reeder - met at the courthouse at 9:00 A.M. on Saturday November 8, 1969, to start on a tour which included a trip to Wilson, Texas. We spent two hours going through their museum, looking and reading about their fine collection. They have a beautiful and historical museum well worth the trip to visit from where ever you are. Our next stop was Tahoka, where we ate a very fine lunch at the Tahoka Cafeteria. From there we drove to O'Donnell to attend the unveiling of the Historical Marker dedicated to the city of O'Donnell. This dedication was held in the city plaza where we witnessed the flag raising by the Boy Scouts and enjoyed the fine music by the O'Donnell High School Band. We heard the welcoming speech by Mayor Moore and then a history of "old O'Donnell" by their State Representative, Mr. E. L. Short. This history contained names of many of the well known residents of Lynn County and many of the old timers who helped settle the county and start the city of O'Donnell. Climaxing the activities of the day was a reception held in the community building. It was a very enlightening trip and every one enjoyed it immensely.

by Sibyl Gilmore

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Mrs. Bonnie Wilson died in Hereford on September 29 following a long illness. The Wilson family lived in Borden County for many years.

Charlie B. Smoot, 86, of Anson died recently. Mr. Smoot was the son of 'Uncle Ben' Smoot who lived on the Beal (Abney) ranch long ago. His mother is buried in the Gail Cemetery.

Mr. Tedford, father of Mrs. Fannie Hagins of Gail, died in Lamesa on Nov. 21. He will be fondly remembered by many Borden County people.

George Raymond Cathy, son of George and Alma Taylor Cathey, long time residents of Borden County, was buried in Lubbock on Sept. 29th.

James Norris Hopkins, 71, of Dallas died on Sept. 17 following a short illness. Jim was born in the Hopkins (Kincaid) Hotel on the west side of the square in Gail in 1898. His father was Hotel keeper, Postmaster and Justice of Peace here for many years.

Nell Chandler McClellan, daughter of J. W. Chandler whose "Blue Front Store" was the leading mercantile establishment in early day Gail, was drowned in a boating accident near Waco on October 1st.

William D. Moore, 64, of Kisse Mill, Missouri, died of a heart attack on Oct. 5 in Kansas City, Mo. He was the son of Billy Moore, the first County Clerk of Borden County.

James E. (Jim) Brigham, husband of Pauline Cantrell Brigham, passed away in Bakersfield, Calif. on November 10th at the age of 71. Mrs. Brigham is a daughter of an early day Borden County family. Her sister, Mrs. Lillie Harris, and brother, Mr. Dick Cantrell, still live in Gail.

Sam Millhollan, 85, member of a pioneer Borden County family, died on October 23rd in Maryneal.

Mrs. Kelv (Zera) Millhollan who lived to an active 95, died recently. Interment was in the Ira Cemetery. Kelv and Sam Millhollan were brothers of Mrs. Martin (Ruth) Taylor.



A Confederate Veteran's marker has been received for the grave of Mr. Caswell Porter Johnson through the efforts of his great granddaughter, Mrs. Opal Stephens and the Borden County Historical Survey Committee. It is our hope that receiving this marker will encourage us to increase our efforts toward marking all our Veterans graves in Borden County.

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Built 1900-1901 -- Burned 1936

#### CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Because the keeping of Christmas and the tradition of a community Christmas tree on Christmas eve is so much a part of Borden County history, we decided to ask some of those who lived in Gail and Borden long ago to recall some of their memories and share them with us. Our responses were so rewarding we hope more of you will be willing after reading these, to write us of your memories so we may all share them in a future Christmas issue. Ethel Morrow Everett is a gifted and experienced writer and her stories are always good reading. The photo reproduced on this page is of the Community Church where many of these Christmases were enjoyed.

#### CHRISTMAS IN GAIL - Ethel Morrow Everett

Our memories of Christmas in Gail - like, I suppose, those of all Christmases - are of two kinds, the public and the private, for Christmas in West Texas was a very public thing with all the community joining in to celebrate together. I remember the year 1907 was the last Christmas I spent in Gail, and it was one of the happiest. On Christmas Eve, school was let out a little early, and all the pupils would hurry down that one long street to the "business district" to gaze longingly in the store windows at all the tempting displays: the lamps and vases, picture albums and dressing cases, jewelry and clothes, and of course the toys and "Gee-gaws." Since early in the afternoon, the cowboys had been coming into town from outlying ranches. We loved to watch as they flooded into Mr. Dodson's and Mr. Chandler's, Mr. Dorwood's and millinery shop, their pockets fairly smoking with the money that was burning to be spent. We watched as they tied up at the court house and then hurried about, buying lovely gifts, and we wondered which local belle or faraway sweetheart would be the lucky recipient. Early in the week the men would have brought down a huge cedar from off the mountain and installed it in the church. All fall, every scrap of tinfoil, every bright bit of paper would have been saved, and everyone made decoration for the tree or contributed some treasured ornament. The paper streamers made by schoolchildren, popcorn and cranberry strings - every ingenious creation we could think of, and the tiny candles - all were festooned on the big tree which seemed to us to reach the heavens like the Star of Bethlehem. A committee was appointed each year to do the actual decorating, but there were always plenty around to offer advice. They also arranged beneath the tree and through its branches the huge array of presents, for every one brought their gifts to "The Tree" to be distributed. The committee also had sacked popcorn, peanuts, fruit and candy donated by Mr. Chandler, so each person would be sure to receive something.

On Christmas Eve night, everyone gathered in the church, and Mr. Dorwood took charge of the proceedings. A program of music and poetry by the various grades had to be presented before we could get down to what we kids considered the real business of the evening: the arrival of Santa. Mr. Hale, in his big suit stuffed with pillows, didn't really fool any of us, but we went along with fun. Santa would call out the name on the tag, "Ethel Morrow" and the receiver would call, embarrassed and delighted, "here!" and one of the little girls selected for the honor would deliver the gift from Santa's own hand. There was a place called Lynn Bros. in New York where you could get all sorts of gimcracks for 5¢; this was very popular since getting your name called out a number of times was part of the fun. That year I remember that the Wristen clan had sent off for a great number of these and the committee went them one better by tying them all together in one long string on the tree. Every one roared with laughter as Santa called out, "Dan Wristen, Rillie Wristen, Will Wristen, Dan Wristen, Rillie Wristen" and on and on. On the committee that year were Nell Hale and Harvey Everett and part of their duty was to hand down the gifts to Santa. Nell was wearing a beautiful white hat covered with feathers. As she reached out to take down a gift, she leaned too close to the tree, and the candle on one of the low boughs ignited the beautiful feathers. Everyone screamed



in horror but Harvey was quick to act. He reached out and took Nell's head in his arms (something he had probably been wanting to do a long time!) and smothered the flames against his jacket. Nell calmly removed the charred hat, smoothed her hair, and went right on handing out gifts! I guess I forgave Harvey for putting his arms around Nell, because we married the next year and moved away from Gail forever...

Arthur Prince wrote us of another side of Christmas. Here are some of his memories: CHRISTMAS AT GAIL - This was way back in the early 1890's. They had a Christmas tree on Christmas eve. I don't remember whether it was at the school house or at the Court House. Anyway I dimly remember the Cedar Christmas tree was covered all over with shiny things. I well remember that I was told that when it was over to get my presents (apple, orange, popcorn ball and firecrackers) and come straight home and not stop in town; that I couldn't go to town that night, for things are getting rowdy down there and going to get rowdier and before midnight was past there would be two armies of equal size armed with Roman Candles who would meet and battle it out to the last shot. It's a wonder some eyes were not lost. Pretty rough it was in town and I was forbidden to be there... In later years I remember some dances on Christmas Eve at the court room upstairs in the court house. Will Clark was doin' the callin'. I sure did love to listen to the shuffle of the feet and the callin' of Will Clark... One Christmas Eve, along in the evening, one of the drunk cowboys, whose name I won't mention here, got on his horse and was racing around the square. He came racing west past Chandler's store then turned south and was racing his horse past the buildings on the west side of the square. He was losing balance as he raced along and was leaning to the right more and more all the time so that one of the gallery posts of the Kincaid Hotel drug him off his horse, but he didn't seem to be hurt very much...

Winnie Chandler Miller, whose father contributed fruit, candy and nuts for the early trees, according to Ethel Everett, also recalls the use of fireworks and how the children went home from "the Tree" with excited anticipation to shoot their skyrockets and roman candles. She also reminds us that people walked to church in those days. Here are excerpts from her letter: Our Christmases were really something. I don't suppose anybody ever had a tree in their home - or I can't remember ever having one at home - always at the Church. Everyone came from far and near. The Church was always full and the tree loaded. We would always take our little red wagon to bring our gifts home in. Of course Dove was a baby and rode in the wagon, too... When I think back to our Christmases in Gail, Miss Minnie and Mr. David (Dorward) stand out clearer than the others. They were always helping in every way with our programs, the arranging of tree decorating, and who should take gifts from Santa and give to the one whose name Santa called out - now that was such an honor to be chosen for this. Just thinking back, so many, many old timers come to life. Mr. Jack Rogers for one was always so jolly (children always remember the happy faces)...

Sammie Morrow Dent was in the hospital recovering from a heart attack when she received our request. Her daughter writes for her: ...She has been laying here remembering Christmases of her childhood in Gail. The Christmas parties in the Union Church, the tree lit with many candles with presents all around. Brother Dave always said a prayer. And all the children sang Christmas songs and Santa Claus was there to hand out the gifts, candy and nuts. She remembers Brother Warner at some of those parties. Frank Berry was there to shell nuts for the girls and to share chocolate drops from the sack he carried. The boys usually gave the girls pretty vases and jewelry boxes decorated with shells. One Christmas an old beau gave her a ring... She remembers, too, after Christmas was over they made another party of burning the Christmas tree - what fun they had!... Some of the young people she remembers at those parties were: Grace & Myrtle Hopkins; Eula & Ray Lyons; Edith, Nora & Cora Berry and Wes & Frank Berry; Pearl & Eula Mullins; Guy & Sid Clark; Miss Lucy & Miss Bell Kincaid and Hatty & Ola Kincaid; Ella & Tennie Kincaid; Fred & Will Johnson; Jess Smith; Will, Luther & Maud Nevills; Maggie & Lorenzo Dow; Alma & Montie Taylor; George Cathy; Pearl & Eula Johnson and Nell Hale... There are others whose names have slipped her mind...

From:  
The Borden County Historical Survey Committee  
Gail, Texas 79738

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