

# CROSS TIMBERS POST

CTGS Newsletter – Cross Timbers Post, April 2017

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## EDITORS' CORNER

Where does the time go? Planting season is behind us and the school buses will soon be idle. The children are counting the days!

This newsletter is a bit behind schedule due to spring chores, so please note two important events just around the corner.

Meeting: May 1<sup>st</sup>, 6pm  
Our guest speaker will be Lucy Sutton, Director and Curator of the Morton Museum.

Note change of location to the Activity Center at Pecan Creek Village, located south of Home Depot.

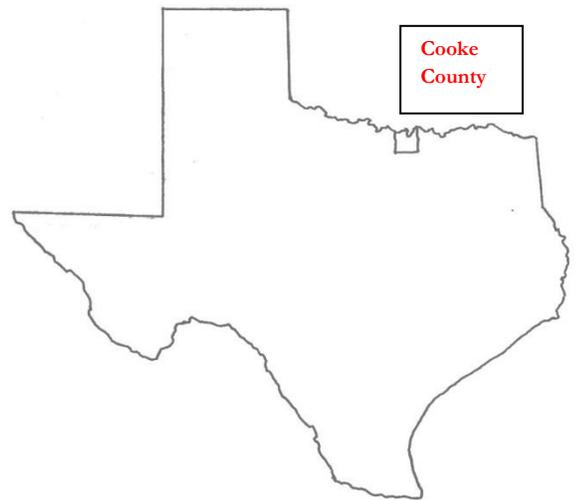
Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> – A cattle drive! Not really, but some great history about one in our neck of the woods:

*The Real Chisholm Trail Symposium* in Saint Jo (details on page 154)

Happy Spring, everyone!

Colleen Clark Carri

**Another very special thank-you to all the story contributors in this issue, Ronnie, Norman, Darlene, Mariella and Cass.**



## LET'S GET TOGETHER

Mark your calendars.

Cross Timbers Genealogical Society meets at **6:00pm** on the 1st Monday of each month (no meetings in January or July) at the Landmark Bank Conference room, Gainesville, Texas, unless change indicated below.

\*May 1 – Activity Center, Pecan Creek Village

June 5 – Landmark Bank

August 7 – Landmark Bank

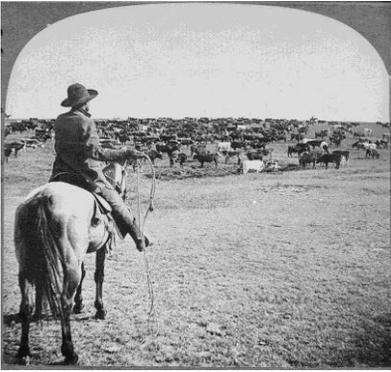
Belated thanks and kudos to our past guest speakers!

**Kit Chase** – Delaware Bend  
**Patti Gillispie** – DNA Reports  
**Ronnie Howser** – Ancestor, Will Karsteter  
**Pat Ledbetter** – Abolition & Slave Narratives

If you were not at these meetings, you missed wonderful stories and history. Please join us next month!



## Symposium on “The Real Chisholm Trail”



Researchers, professors, historians and prominent cattle driving families from Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas will gather in Saint Jo to present hidden and forgotten history of the pre- and post-Civil War cattle-driving era. A presentation and panel discussion in which panelists will present historical evidence detailing the cattle-driving industry, with a Q&A following. At the end of the day, a bus tour will travel the Red River cattle trail routes in Montague County.

The event will be held at the International Ordinance Museum, 201 S. Main St. in Saint Jo. Presentations begin at 9:30am and continue to 4:00pm. Bus tour will depart at 4:30pm and return at 6pm. (Source: Gainesville Daily Register – March 29, 2017)

This year is the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Chisholm Trail. The Stonewall Saloon Museum is located on the historic downtown square in Saint Jo. The Saloon was the first permanent structure built in Saint Jo in 1873 to accommodate thirsty trail drovers moving cattle along the Chisholm Trail. Visit [www.tomweeger.com](http://www.tomweeger.com) for additional information.

## Mathematics & Genealogy Quiz

257 boxes



Plus

1,182 hours



Equals



**Real answer:** A lot of hard work!

Thanks to Darlene Denton and her mighty team of volunteers, the preservation of Cooke County’s Probate Records from 1849-1930 is almost complete. The digitization step will be concluded by the end of June 2017.

### **The TEAM:**

Edna Shauf; Sandra and Milton Rogers; Rachel, Logan, Cassie and Everett Brooke; Alyssa Smith; Mecilla Keene; Noma Sachse; Lana Snowden; Jeannette Benson; Linda Jonas; Colleen Carri; Earl and Sylvia Deavers; Nona Stanley; Natalie Massengale; Marsha Smith; Betty Garrett; Ted and Jackson Beal; Larue Lybbert; Karol Fletcher; Susan Moss; Honey Easter; James Easter; April Brown; Janette Clinton; Lisa Evans; Bill Beavers; Elouise Larson; Carol Beck; Cindy Barnhart; Darlene Denton; Briana, Perla, and Jazmin Ballard

Thanks for all your hard work and dedication!

## My Cooke County Mystery

### By: Mariella Krause

For as long as I can remember, a portrait of my great-grandmother Jeanette Ballard (1866-1904) has been hanging on the wall of our family's home, but she's been a mystery. I've searched for the identity of her parents for several years without finding a single clue, but recently I had a breakthrough—one that led me to Gainesville and Cooke County.

Among my grandmother's things, I found a picture of James Curry Ballard (1872-1957). I didn't know exactly how he's related to us, but my dad remembered an "Uncle Curry." I was then able to trace James Curry Ballard and his family to Cooke County, where his family lived from 1860 until at least 1879.

My theory is that Curry's sister "Arnetta" might be my great grandmother Jeanette, the one in the picture. Some of my clues are:

- Their birth years match within a year (1866 vs. 1867).
- Arnetta's mother's name is Jeanette, same as my great-grandmother.
- Although the names aren't an exact match, my great-grandmother's grave in Ennis, TX, is marked "R. Nettie," which sounds a lot like Arnetta. They could be variations on a nickname for Jeanette, especially if the mom had the same name.
- If this theory is correct, it would make James Curry Ballard my grandmother's Uncle Curry, which is how my dad referred to him.
- I can't find any other record of Arnetta Ballard past 1870 to prove that she was some other person.

I contacted Norman Newton in October and he enlisted some help. A kind volunteer pointed me to property records placing the family in Cooke County through 1979, and they were also able to tell me where the eldest son David ended up.

So what's next? I'm still hoping to learn more to either prove or disprove my theory. Are there records of Arnetta beyond 1870 that I'm just missing? (Sadly, most of the 1890 census records were destroyed in a fire, so that leaves a big hole in my research.) I'd also like to know where the parents are buried. Did they leave Gainesville? Or are they buried somewhere there? And where did the other kids end up? So far, I can only account for David and James Curry, who got married in Hill County, TX, and settled in Ada, OK.

If anyone has any additional information about any of the family members listed below—or if you think we might be related—drop me a line at [krausely@gmail.com](mailto:krausely@gmail.com). Thanks, and happy sleuthing!

PARENTS: Andrew J. Ballard (1826 or 1829-1872) Jeanette Ballard (1833-1872)

SIBLINGS: (birth years are approximate based on census)

David (b. 1854, moved to the Austin area)

John Franklin (1856)

Ann M (1858)

William (1863)

Mary (1865)

Arnetta (1867)

Fredrick (1870)





## Following the Ancestor Trail

Research material and research locations in Cooke County

**MUENSTER LIBRARY,**  
418 No. Elm, Muenster, TX  
<http://www.muensterlibrary.com>

**COOKE COUNTY LIBRARY**  
200 South Weaver St., Gainesville, Texas  
Newspapers, family history, county history, various states, and counties

**COOKE COUNTY-COUNTY CLERK**  
100 South Dixon, Gainesville, Texas (courthouse)  
\*Death, Birth, Marriage records available.  
\*You can look up most records yourself.  
Copies are \$1.00 per page  
[http://www.co.cooke.tx.us/default.aspx?Cooke County/County. Clerk](http://www.co.cooke.tx.us/default.aspx?Cooke%20County/County.Clerk)

**MORTON MUSEUM of COOKE COUNTY**  
210 South Dixon, Gainesville, Texas  
E-mail: [mortonmuseum@att.net](mailto:mortonmuseum@att.net)  
Historical people in Cooke County, various books

**NCTC LIBRARY**—1525 W. California St., Gainesville

<http://www.nctc.edu/NCTC-Library>

Various genealogy magazines, papers, family information, obits

### Churches in Gainesville with Libraries and Archives

#### First Christian Church

401 No. Dixon 940-665-2053  
Started May 10, 1874 Open Daily  
Web site: <http://www.fccgainesville.com/>

#### St. Paul's Episcopal Church

415 E. California St. 940-665-4705  
Started August 6, 1885  
Open 9 A.M. to 12 Noon Only Look-up's

#### First United Methodist Church

214 So. Dixon 940-665-3926  
Started 1852  
Web site: <http://www.firstumcgainesvilletx.com/>

#### First Presbyterian Church

401 So. Denton 940-665-5153  
Started 1878 Archives Web site: [www.fpcgainesville.net](http://www.fpcgainesville.net)  
There is a section called Genealogy Room which has listings from the Session minutes from the 1920s through the 1940s.

#### St. Mary's Catholic Church

825 No. Weaver 940-665-5395  
Started 1879  
Web site: <http://stmaryscatholic.com/>

#### Red River Historian, Robin Jett

<http://www.redriverhistorian.com/>

This site is devoted to discoveries of the history of the "Old Southwest" – where the South meets the West: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.



*The editor sincerely welcomes any corrections or additions to these locations, contact information, links, etc. Thank you!*

## Hemming, Texas – Prosperity, Tragedy and Ghost Town

From facts contained in the Handbook of Texas:

Hemming was named in 1890 to honor Gainesville banker C. C. Hemming who donated land for the fledgling community's first school.

1894 was a landmark year for Hemming with the establishment of a store / post office and a cotton gin. After 1905 mail was rerouted from Pilot Point and the post office closed. Two additional stores were opened between 1900 and 1905.

At its zenith, Hemming's population was 125 - a healthy figure for the times. Hemming became the cotton-processing center for its region and it reportedly shipped between 1,000 to 1,500 bales annually.

In 1907 a tornado hit Hemming, killing seven and demolishing nearly the entire town. An attempt was made to rebuild, but the damage was too severe. The gin closed in the early 20s and in 1929 the school consolidated with other small schools. Material from the Hemming school was recycled into a Union Grove School District building.

Hemming was reduced to only a church and a few residences by the mid-1930s. After WWII the population was reportedly reduced to ten.

It suffered the cruelest blow any small town can receive when it was removed from county maps in the 1980s.

TexasEscapes.com – Ghost Towns

<http://www.texasescapes.com/TexasGhostTowns/HemmingTexas.htm>

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**HEMMING, TEXAS.** Hemming, 15½ miles south of Gainesville in extreme southern Cooke County, was established in 1889. It was named for Gainesville banker C. C. Hemming, who in 1890 donated land for a school there. A store and cotton gin were built at Hemming in 1894, and that year a post office opened in the store, with W. J. Pipkin as first postmaster. The Hemming post office closed in 1905, and rural free delivery came from Pilot Point. In 1900 B. R. Newton opened a general store at the community, and in 1905 Emberson and Alexander opened another. At its height just after 1900, Hemming had two general stores, a school, a cotton gin, a blacksmith shop, three churches, and a population of 125. In 1912 a Woodmen of the World camp was organized there and a second floor was added to the school building for a lodge hall. The town served as the region's cotton-processing center, and during the peak years of the cotton boom after 1900 the Hemming cotton gin handled 1,000 to 1,500 bales annually. The town's prosperity, however, was short-lived. A tornado hit the community on April 27, 1907, killing seven people and wiping out all but one of the town's buildings. Though several of its buildings were rebuilt, by the early 1920s Hemming was in decline. Its cotton gin closed in 1922. In 1929 the Hemming school was consolidated with the Mount Olive, Oak Hill, Bloomfield, and Walling schools to form the Union Grove school district. The Hemming schoolhouse was dismantled, and the materials were used in the new Union Grove building. Hemming's Methodist church members became affiliated with the Valley View congregation in 1934, and by 1936 Hemming comprised a church and a few scattered dwellings. In 1947 the community reported a population of around ten. By the late 1980s the town was no longer shown on county highway maps.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Gainesville Daily Register, Centennial Edition, August 30, 1948.

Odessa Morrow Isbell

Texas State Historical Association - The Handbook of Texas Online

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hrh27>

### A letter from former Cooke Countian L. D. Clark, prompted this entry for Hemming. His letter:

"I was looking over what you have about ghost towns in Cooke County. There is another one whose traces may almost have disappeared by now: Hemming. It lay about 15 miles SSE of Gainesville, almost in Denton County. There can't be much left of it. I was last there in 1950 or '51, and found only a few foundations standing. The whole town was blown away by a tornado around 1900 and was never rebuilt. I grew up a few miles north of the site. My father always called that storm "the Hemming cyclone." - L. D. Clark, Smithville, Texas

## **Hemming Cyclone - 1907**

Gainesville, Tex., April 29. – A cyclone started at Era, twelve miles southwest of here, at 4 o'clock Saturday afternoon and took an eastern course. At Era the school house was demolished and a family traveling by wagon injured and their vehicle blown away.

At Hemming, eight miles northwest of Pilot Point, the residence of John Alexander was the only house left, and it was converted into a hospital. The tornado followed a due course through the village, destroying, as it struck them, the homes of Will Davis, Charles Morris, Rev. Smith, John Reese, Dr. Riley, John Neill, B.R. Newton, G. Bodyston, H. Wilkins, Mr. Tillery, Charles Swindell, Dock Dobbs, Mrs. Westbrook and J. D. Strickland.

It also made kindling wood of the Christian church, the school house and Emerson & Alexander's store and gin, entailing a loss of approximately \$40,000.

A relief corps was hastily formed and, assisted by physicians, who did heroic work all through the night relieved the sufferers.

The dead, who number five, are:  
Ana Boydston, aged six years,  
George Beavers, aged fourteen,  
Leona Nell, aged seven,  
Will Alexander, aged sixteen.  
H. Wilkins (baby).

The following persons were more or less injured: Dr. John Riley and family, consisting of nine members, John Nell, Mrs. Nell, Albert Landers, Dillon Beavers, Mrs. Jennie Boydston, Morrill Boydston, John Alexander, Howard Wilson, Mrs. Tyson, Henry Wilkins, wife and two children, Jill Boydston, the Leach family, Jessie L. Dowson and Mrs. Ben Newton.

Several residences near Valley View, seven miles from Hemming, were demolished and scattered over the prairie. Mrs. J.W. McGowan and Mrs. J.W. Nichols are seriously injured.

The house of A. R. Leach was completely destroyed and George Leach painfully wounded in the head and hand. Miss Effie Leach is seriously injured. Levy Leach, (a small boy), sustained injuries.

Mrs. Fowler's child received a broken leg. The residences of Mrs. Cora Daughtie, E. M. Moss, Cliff Moss, Bill Eldridge, E. M. McCallum, Tom Roane, J. W. Nichols and Mrs. L. A. Wiggins are completely destroyed.

The Baptist church and school house at Flat Creek, eleven miles southwest of Valley View, were blown down.

The second story of the cotton mill at Celeste, Hunt County, was blown off, entailing \$16,000 damage. Hail as large as hen eggs fell. Some cotton and corn fields are totally ruined.

Around Tioga Grayson County, stock was killed and crops damaged.

At Honey Grove a spring wagon was blown forty yards and the shafts driven in the earth a foot and a half. (Bryan Morning Eagle, April 30, 1907)

## **GAINESVILLE DAILY HESPERIAN**

Contributed by Cass Reasor

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**BACK TRAILING—95 Years Ago**  
**(Contributed by Ronnie Howser)**

**School Board Declares Monday Full Holiday on Account of Circus**      Saturday Oct 1, 1921

“Hullo, Johnny, did you hear the good news? Aint goin' to be no school Monday. Sure that's correct dope, cause I seen it down on the bulletin board in front of the Register office this morning. It says the school board met Friday night and decided most of the kids' be sick or their grandmothers' be dead or some thin' else on circus day and they 'lowed wouldn't be nobody at school but the teachers, so they just said we'll close up the eddycatum factories and go to the circus ourselves.”

Words to that effect could be heard all over town this morning soon after the decision of the school trustees to declare Monday a full holiday in the schools and allow the children to have all the time necessary to witness the parade in the forenoon and circus in the afternoon without the necessity of having mother write an excuse for the kids to take with them Tuesday morning.

If the domestic and religious life of Gainesville is slightly disarranged tomorrow, blame it partly on the Gentry Bros Show and wild animal arena; the youngsters of the household will probably be missing from their usual haunts, getting an “eyeful” of the unloading of the circus paraphernalia in the railroad yards, little boy's arms will ache from carrying water to the elephants, and peanuts will have a ready sale in the vicinity of the big pachyderms, who are always in an expectant and receptive mood for “goobers” and other delicacies.

The show will parade the business section of the city at noon Monday and the blare of the trumpets, the snappy noise of the show bands, the roaring of the jungle beasts and the shrieks of the wild calliopes will mingle with the every-day noise of the busy streets. Before the city is fully awake Sunday morning, the show grounds will fill up with all the paraphernalia that makes a trained animal show popular; the canvas men will cry their usual “heads up” while the big top is being erected, and then on Monday at 2 o'clock the first performance will be started with a complete night show at 8 o'clock.

Nearly every known species of domestic animal life and various wild animals take part in the performance; human riders, aerialists and European novelty acts are in the exhibition, while clowns run out all through the show, so it is reported.

The big white tents will be erected on the vacant lot east of the water works pumping station on California Street.

**Gainesville's First Disastrous Fire in Several Years Results in \$15,000 Loss This Forenoon**

Thursday Oct 13, 1921

About 10 o'clock this morning smoke was discovered pouring from the residence of Mr. and Mrs. **A. Cato** on North Denton Street, near the High school. Hardly before an alarm could be turned in, the entire structure was a seething mass of flames and it was impossible to enter the building to remove any of the contents. Fanned by a brisk southern breeze the flames spread to the home of Mr. and Mrs. **Walter Hudgins** to the north and only a shell remains to mark the spot of that residence. Practically all of the furniture was taken from the Hudgins residence by High school boys and energetic neighbors who rushed to the scene when the flames were devouring the structure. The Cato house was completely burned to the ground. Both Mr. Cato and Mr. Hudgins are Santa Fe conductors. Insurance to the amount of \$1600 was carried on Cato's house and \$800 on the contents. The loss is placed at about \$5000. Mr. Hudgins is reported to have carried \$2500 insurance on his home and \$1000 on contents. His loss will be between \$300 and \$5000.

Firemen assisted by business men who gathered at the scene, fought heroically to control the fire and their efforts were finally successful. Fortunately for that neighborhood, the wind quit blowing and the fire was confined to the two residences mentioned.

High school was dismissed because of the proximity of the burning homes to the school building. The older students rushed to the scene and worked faithfully to remove everything to the street that could be carried. To them is due much credit, for it is likely the loss would have been much greater in the absence of their assistance. Fire Chief **McCarty** extends thanks to the boys for their work to aid in fighting the fire. He also took occasion to

again warn the people of Gainesville that too much caution cannot be used in fire prevention. He is of the opinion had the wind continued blowing strongly the entire block would have been wiped out. The most insignificant trash fire may cause heavy catastrophe at any moment. When you burn trash or leaves, remain nearby with something to extinguish the flames if they spread.

Sparks carried from the Denton street fires ignited the roof of the two story home of Mrs. **M. Z. Honeycutt** at the corner of Red River and Scott streets and before lines of hose could be laid the entire upper floor was ablaze. The flames were kept within that floor by heroic efforts of the fire boys. The loss is estimated at between \$4500 and \$5000 fully covered by insurance.

The conclusion most generally reached as to the origin of the blaze was that it came from defective wiring in the Cato house. Mrs. Cato was at the neighbors when the fire was discovered. She does not remember having had any fire at home when she left.

Speaking of this feature, **Jas. Piper**, manager of Texas Power & Light Co., urged that persons who live in homes wired many years ago, have them inspected by an electrician and be sure sufficient fuse blocks are on the lines to prevent fire should wires touch each other. The fuse is a safety device that cuts off the current when wires touch and begin sparking. The practice of placing pennies or copper wire at the switch block, as some persons do, is very dangerous and may result in fire at any time. Mr. Piper urges a consultation with an electrician if there is any doubt about the wires in your home being safe.

#### **Notice to Pecan Gatherers and Hunters** Oct 13, 1921

Farms owned and operated by the following named parties have been posted and anyone caught trespassing on same, will be arrested and prosecuted to full extent of law, so please keep out.

**M. E. Elliott, Will Davis, T. B. Elkins, R. M. Whaley, Will Garvey, J. M. Turner, C. B. Newton, M. W. Clopton**

#### **Branch Library Has Been Opened in the Rosston Community** Saturday Oct 18, 1921

Miss Lillian **Gunter**, county librarian, announces the establishment of a branch library in the Dickerman store at Rosston, making the fourteen branch of the county system.

#### **Ferocious Centipede Caught by Workmen at Local Brickyard** Monday Oct 17, 1921

**Zack Dobson** brought to the office a centipede ten inches long, which he caught under some rocks at the brick yard east of the city. This is one of the largest insects of the kind ever seen here and it is now on exhibition in the Register show window. Centipedes as most everybody knows, are very poisonous, it being said that human flesh rots when touched by the insect and their sting is deadly. The fact that Mr. Dodson caught this one alive speaks for his cool nerve in negotiating such a dangerous task.

#### **Old Resident Tells of Early Symptoms of Oil at Woodbine** Friday Oct 21, 1921

Seeing mention made in the papers occasionally of the "Woodbine sands" brings to memory of old residents that lived in that community in the 70's and 80's of some wells that once existed there. There were four of these bored wells, something near 100 feet deep, in the little village of Woodbine. The water was very unpleasant to drink, of yellowish color, and where it would stand reflect the colors of the rainbow. Finally the public spirited citizens dug the public well between the stores, that is a shallow well, and the water is good. The deep wells were filled up and the people carried the water from the shallow public well. Whether or not these wells bare any significance as to oil remains yet to be proved.

#### **Mrs. Buffalo Bill Cody Dies at Age of 78** Friday Oct 21, 1921

Cody, Wyo., Oct. 21 – Mrs. **William S. Cody**, widow of **Buffalo Bill**, famous western pioneer and Indian fighter, died at her home near here last night after a long illness. She was 78 years old.

Buffalo Bill died several years ago and his body was buried on the top of Lookout Mountain near Denver, Colo., at his request. His widow's body may be buried beside that of her husband.

## County Officers Destroy Booze Factory and Arrest Young Man      Friday Oct 21, 1921

The largest illicit whiskey still ever found in Cooke County was that discovered today on a farm 6 miles east of town, when Sheriff **Ford**, his son, and **Orby Wood** surprised a man giving the name of "**Kit**" **Odle**, as he was in the act of operating equipment. According to the officers, Odle ran about 300 yards before he was taken into custody. In his efforts to escape he lost his pistol that was carried in a holster fastened to a shoulder strap.

The officers have been closely watching this still for several days, Constable **Cochran** spending many hours lying in wait for the operators to appear on the scene, but each time the latter remained away while the officers were there.

About 11 o'clock today the three men named above reached the spot and it was not long before a young man appeared and commenced his operation. The plant consisted of a 50 gallon boiler, a completely equipped system of barrels piped together, and a long upper coil. The estimated capacity of the still is 50 gallons of whiskey per day. Some 6 gallons were "run" in the one hour and forty minutes the officers kept their eyes on the scene. Seventeen barrels were at hand, five of them containing mash. Five gallons or more of whiskey was confiscated together with the copper coil. The other equipment was destroyed.

About 2 o'clock the officers reached the city with the copper coil and had in custody "Kit" Odle, who was given a preliminary hearing before Justice **J. P. Hall**, his bond being set at \$2000 in each of two cases. The charges preferred against him are for manufacturing intoxicating liquors and another for having equipment in his possession for the manufacture of intoxicating liquors.

Odle declares he was merely "passing by" the place when the officers caught him.

## Gainesville Man Has Made Good on Stage and Now Enjoys the Benefits of Renown      Fri Oct 21, 1921

In the current issue of the theatrical magazine printed in New York City, a review on plays now holding the boards in principal theaters of the metropolis tells of the popularity and excellent work of **Willard Robertson** who takes the part of the rural lover in "The Detour" at the Astor Theater.

Some twelve or fifteen years ago Willard Robertson resided in Gainesville and at that time his mother was a teacher in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the East school. She is now in Washington as an employee of the treasury department, a position she is said to have obtained through the influence of Senator **Joseph W. Bailey**.

Willard will be remembered by many of his former school chums, among some are the **Cunningham Brothers**, druggists. Mr. Robertson is not only a playwright and actor, but he is said to be an excellent lawyer and maintains law offices in New York.

## First Monday Crowd Was Largest to Visit This City in Many Months Past      Monday Nov 7, 1921

One of the largest crowds that have ever assembled in Gainesville on First Monday market day was here today. They came from all parts of the surrounding county for distances of 25 miles and more, men, women and children, old, young and youthful were here in multitudes.

Market Square was literally packed with willing humanity and commodities they had brought along to sell to local buyers. Hundreds of horses from the "Old January" specimen to the thoroughbred were on sale. Mules – yes, they were there too, in big bunches, ready to change owners if the other fellow had the price.

Swine from the small pig to the big bacon hog were there, looking for buyers, and so were cattle, poultry, sheep, and numerous gobblers reminding the multitude that Thanksgiving is almost here, and they were ready to grace the family festal board of those who have enough dinero to meet the cost.

The farm products were abundant; sweet potatoes by the wagon load, corn by the hundred bushels, oats, oats and the same; apples, peanuts by the bushel; pecans, tomatoes, dried peas, hay, sorghum molasses, eggs, butter and other farm products to feed man and beast too numerous to name in the article.

The selling generally speaking was fairly good, and prices realized were in the main generally satisfactory to seller and buyer.

The local stores were filled for several hours during the day with country customers, who purchased various commodities most liberally. It was a great day, a big trade's day for the crowds and the local merchants, all of whom derived more or less mutual benefit by this coming together of the vast populi of the rural districts and the town folk.

In speaking today of the artesian water well on the Whaley & Jones Ranch in the vicinity which the Powell oil well is to be drilled, **F. J. Gates** of this city said he remembered vividly many of the circumstances with the origin, work, and abandonment of that enterprise.

The well site was located by a practical geologist named **Mahoney** from the east, who after a thorough investigation of that locality, pronounced the prospects good for the development of an oil field there and located the site where the big artesian water well was later on developed. The well was sunk under the management of a man named **Ferguson** from West Virginia, who later put the work in charge of his son. After drilling to a depth of some 1,700 feet and being unable to shut off the flow of water in the well, he abandoned the enterprise and returned to West Virginia. It is claimed that these promoters spent some \$30,000 on that project.

The main trouble they discovered in preventing them from making a deeper test was that they did not use casing sufficiently heavy to keep the pressure of the incoming water from mashing it together, closing it up until the drill could not be operated.

If a heavier casing had been used, in all probability a big production oil well would have been brought in, backed up by the geologist's report that deep down an oil pool existed there. It has been some 15 years since that test was made.

Hence the Powell well promoters can gather some practical conclusion from the history of the drilling of that artesian well which will enable them to avoid the obstacles met in that work while drilling the oil pool, which from most excellent authority lies deep down in mother earth.

**BACK TRAILING—50 Years Ago  
(Contributed by Ronnie Howser)**

**Valley Creek District # 66**

**School's Obituary Is Written by Formation of Camp Howze**      Wednesday Nov 27, 1963

Deep in the sparsely settled northeastern portion of Cooke County stands the walls of an old school building. They are all that remains of Valley Creek Common School District No. 66. Its obituary was written by the founding of Camp Howze, which took one-half of the District's land area and reduced it from a five-teacher school to a one-teacher school.

The Gilmer Aiken School Law of 1949 forced consolidation of Valley Creek School with the Muenster Independent School District. The law required districts not in operation for two years prior to its approval to consolidate with other districts. The Cooke County School Board chose Muenster as the logical district for consolidation.

For 14 years Muenster School District taxpayers have been paying on a tax incurred by the Valley Creek District. With the consolidation of Valley Creek came a \$17,000 note for construction of a new school building. Bonds for the Valley Creek School were dated May 26, 1944. They will be paid off on May 26, 1965 with the final payment of the last \$600 bond.

That new building was completed in 1940, prior to the announcement that the U. S. Army would build a camp at Gainesville. Camp Howze encompassed large portions of six school districts, forcing three to close their doors and consolidate with other districts. Two of the districts Valley Creek and Marysville went to Muenster. Valley Creek is located about four miles northwest of Marysville between that small Cooke County community and Bulcher. The other districts affected were Sivells Bend, which lost about one-half of its area and was reduced from a three-teacher school to a one-teacher school. Loving District lost its school house, most of its territory and all of its scholastics with the exception of three. All transferred to the Gainesville District. Marysville lost three-fourths of its territory and most of its pupils. It consolidated with Hays and later with Muenster. Hays lost one-half of its area and children and had to move its school house out of the camp area. Lindsay lost one-fifth of its area.

Valley Creek's original school house was abandoned in the early 1900's and the school was moved to its present location. At that time the school was rebuilt on land owned by **E. G. Ramsey**, a member of the school board. Mr. Ramsey now resides on the Old Denton Rd. in Gainesville.

The school building burned in 1937 while classes were in session, Ramsey recalled. Everyone got out of the building however. He added "We voted bonds covering \$69,000 for construction of a new school." The new building is the one whose walls still remain today. It was built with stone hauled from east of Gainesville and with lumber hauled from Marshall. The school was constructed as a WPA project and government assistance was given the District in paying for the work. Enrollment at that time had averaged about 100, and a large community helped swell trade in the area.

**T. L. Lyons** of Gainesville owned a store near the school at the time, and Mrs. Lyons recalls that they served lunches to workmen who built the new school. They also operated a service station at the same location.

Ramsey said bond issues were held twice for construction of the building. The late **I. F. Pierce** was chairman of the school board at the time, Ramsey recalled. He was in ill health however, and took only a small part in the voting of bonds and the construction phase. Between 90 and 100 workmen erected the new school building, Mrs. Lyon said.

School at Valley Creek continued through 1942 as a one-teacher school. It was closed the following year, and the new school building stood vacant until it was consolidated with Muenster. After consolidation the building was sold to a Sherman man, who razed it in the early 1950's. The only remains visible today are the old stone walls, an archway, and walks around the structure.

The Valley Creek School was an elaborate one for such a small community. It even contained a gymnasium, and children of the Marysville area often played basketball after the school had closed.

Valley Creek School District, which was consolidated with Muenster on June 15, 1949, at any time encompassed an area of 9,123 acres of land, with a tax valuation of \$80,190. Fifty-five students attended in

1931, and the tax rate stood at 75 cents per \$100 valuation.

**Thomas Hardy** in a thesis on Cooke County schools described Valley Creek School as “crowded” before the new building was constructed.

No one knows exactly when Valley Creek opened its doors, but it was mentioned in 1883 as one of the 99 schools in the county. By 1900 districts were generally accepted as permanent. Between 1900 and 1917 rural schools reached their peaks as the county population hit 27,494, the largest ever recorded for Cooke County. Rural schools flourished during this time, but later with the improved methods of transportation, they faltered.

### **Saddlers Bend School**

In 1919 Saddlers Bend School consolidated with Valley Creek, and in 1937 Valley Creek and Brushy Mound and Mt. Hope all consolidated. The county school board approved Valley Creek School as a 10-grade school in 1941.

Mrs. **Carrie Hudspeth**, Cooke County librarian, recalls that the county's bookmobile regularly transported books to the Valley Creek School. The last trip there is shown as 1940, when 70 books were left for children. Mrs. Hudspeth also taught at Valley Creek in the early 1920's. Another former teacher of the school is Mrs. **Earl Robison**, wife of Precinct 4 Commissioner. The couple reside only a few miles from the Valley Creek School, which is located on land now owned by **Grady McElreath**. The last teachers of the school were identified as Mrs. **Nomie Witt**, Mrs. **Wilma Moon**, and **Imogene Ramsey**.

Other schools of the county affected by consolidation move in 1949 and the schools with which they were consolidated were Reed with Era; Mountain Springs with Valley View; Loving with Sivells Bend; Elliott, Whaley, Whaley Chapel, Fair Plains, Mt. Pleasant, Westview, and Downard with Gainesville.

### **Tax Assessor Rafe Piper Started Career in 1918**

Wednesday Dec 4, 1963

**Rafe Piper** started working in Cooke County's tax office on Jan. 1, 1943, when he went to work for **Tom Hayes**. Later he worked for the late **M. L. Helm** and tried his luck at the county political job for the second time in 1953.

Piper's mother was born in Ireland and came to the United States at 15 years of age. She loved Ireland and named her son **Rafe Ireland Piper**.

Born Jan. 13, 1890 in San Antonio, Piper probably inherited some of his political sense. His father was public weigher in Gainesville for a number of years and was active in city politics. When Piper first joined the county tax office, the assessor and collector were two different jobs. After he had served two years as assessor, the two jobs were combined in 1933. He was elected to that position in 1932. When he ran for the combined office he suffered the only political defeat of his career. He rebounded with his winning ways which have included handing out cards and thanking people for their votes even though he ran unopposed.

A broken hip has slowed Piper's physical movement but not his mental acumen. He is very active in his work and always greets his “customers” with a smile. After his fall and hip fracture in 1959, he recovered and returned to work with the aid of crutches.

### **Pioneer Resident**

The county tax assessor's father moved to Gainesville from Kansas City in 1857 and was a pioneer of this area. He resided south of Gainesville for a short period of time, and then moved to El Paso, and then San Antonio before coming to Gainesville in 1895.

Piper's first job other than “chopping cotton for as little as 75 cents a day,” was with The Gainesville Daily Register. He served as circulation manager for the Register from 1908 to 1918, when he was elected city tax assessor.

The senior deacon at the First Baptist Church, Piper and his wife has been members there since 1911. He was first named a deacon in 1919, and served as chairman of the church board for two years and as secretary for a number of years. Piper taught 13 year old boys on Sunday morning for 25 years. Also he taught in other departments, but does no teaching now.

The good natured tax collector has always found time to help his community. He served as a clown in the Gainesville Community Circus for a number of years and enjoyed “every minute of it.”

Piper and Miss **Nannie Pearl Hudson** were married in Gainesville on March 12, 1911. They reside in the same home Piper was born in at 818 E. Main St.

The county tax assessor plans to give up his political career with the expiration of his present term of office. He has served the public for 25 years as an elected official and has probably held office longer than any other in the county's history. His 42 years as county tax assessor collector is longer than any other person has held the office. He had been re-elected to the office three times, serving two year terms and two four year terms.

Piper has not always been in politics. After leaving the city tax post, he opened a collection agency here. He kept books for the old Fleming Gin and worked in a local lumber yard for 8 years. During the war he was named to a special rent control committee to assure reasonable rents for servicemen stationed at Camp Howze. He worked for 10 years in the tax office before seeking election to the post, spending most of his time handling car registration. Now several persons handle that job. More than 12,000 registrations are processed each year.

"Twice" Piper has been bumped out of an elected job. When the city manager form of government was adopted in 1929, he did not gain the appointment to the formerly elected city tax assessor post and lost in the run for the combined assessor collector position in 1933.

Piper attended schools in Gainesville and also the old S. R. Smith Business College, which was also located at Gainesville.

The Pipers have three children – **Rafe H. Piper** of Kingsville, Mrs. **R. E. (Becky) Pate** of McKinney, and Mrs. **H. E. (Bonnie) Meisell** of New Cumberland, Pa.

### **Gainesville Couple Serve As Their Own Art Critics**

Wednesday Dec 18, 1963

Mr. and Mrs. **Carl C. Dowlen** serve as their own art critics. And both are well qualified for the critic's seat since both are artists.

At present Dowlen's den at 1210 Elmwood St. is filled with an 18-ft. mural destined for the First State Bank of Temple, Okla. He expects to have his huge painting finished and delivered to the bank by the end of this week. It will hang on the wall of the bank and shows an area at the foot of the Wichita Mountains, which are located near Temple.

The mural nearing completion starts on the left with a wagon train heading west. Next comes a scene with cattle grazing around an old windmill with a house in the background. A cotton field and a corn field have been added to the second portion of the painting. In the third part of the picture, a maize field has sprung up. The final portion shows an electrical line and oil wells dot the area. Overall the canvas is 18 feet long and 32 inches wide. With the exception of the trees, which Dowden enjoys painting; the scenes have been sketched by pencil. It looks as if a person is standing on a mountain and looking down into a valley. The Wichita Mountains make up the background.

The Gainesville man has not always painted murals. For 42 years he worked at painting stage decorations. In the past few years he has spent most of his time painting signs. The couple resided in Lawton, Okla. until they came to Gainesville in January of this year. "We moved to Gainesville because of the water," Mrs. Dowden noted. The couple hauled water from Gainesville to Lawton for several months before deciding to make the move here.

Dowden says he can paint stage scenery in only a few hours while the oil mural is a different story. "A mural like that would take from five to six weeks to complete if I worked about six hours a day," Dowden said.

The Dowdens are retired now, but their love of art has not ceased. Mrs. Dowden studied art for several years in Temple, Okla., West Texas, and in Sulphur, Okla. She attended Texas Wesleyan College and Texas Christian University at Fort Worth and both she and Mr. Dowden studied for a short time at Santa Fe, N. M. with an art colony.

While Mr. Dowden spends his time painting pictures, Mrs. Dowden prefers painting china. "I had to slow down on my painting in recent months," she said, "because my eyes started giving me trouble." Mrs. Dowden also teaches organ and piano to area children. Mr. Dowden plays the organ too. At times they play these instruments together.

Dowden is the artist who painted the stage curtain which is still in use at the Dexter Community Center Building. He remembers painting the curtain, but added he didn't sell the community on the painting job. He had three salesmen working for him during that time and one of them brought the order to him.



If history and genealogy interest you, please contact one of our officers and/or members who would love to speak to you. We love to share history!

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**Cross Timbers Genealogical Society** was organized in 1977 to provide a forum for those interested in genealogical research and preserving records for the future generations.

Funds raised by the CTGS are used to research, preserve and publish records relating to Cooke County family histories. As a service to other researchers, CTGS has published several books which are for sale. For more or additional information, please contact any of the officers listed on this page.

The *Cross Timbers Post* is generally published four times a year: March, June, September and December. However, based on schedules and content, it may be reduced to three times yearly. Subscription is by membership in the Society. Annual membership dues are \$15.00 yearly per household. Memberships run from June 1<sup>st</sup> to May 30<sup>th</sup> the following year.

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