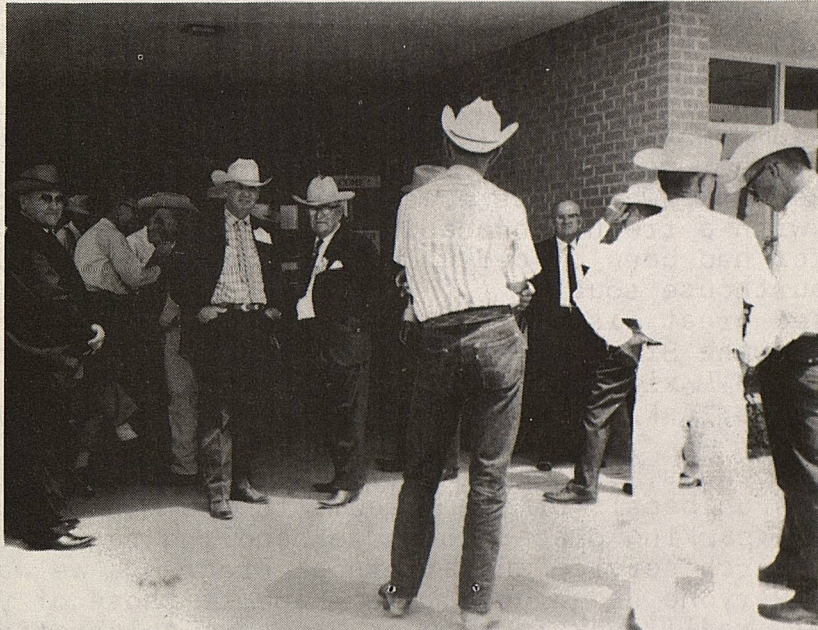


BORDEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
September, 1966

Vol. II. No. 1

THE BORDEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMITTEE
dedicates this issue

To each of you who contributed your
time, hard work, ideas, and financial
support in the preparation of our 75th
Anniversary. The success of the day
was the result of county wide cooperation!



Reunion with old friends: Left to right: Jess Slaughter,
Bud Cornett, Russell Dorward, Dewey Everett, Ernest Turner,
Gene Smoot, T. G. Hudson and Borden Reeder.

BORDEN COUNTY'S 75th DIAMOND JUBILEE

August 14, 1966 was a beautiful day for a celebration and a date that will long be remembered for some 1200 people attending the festivities. Registration began at 8:30 A.M. in Borden County Independent School and it was exciting to see the happy smiles as old friends met and began, "Do you remember when?" There were many family reunions - among them - the Jack Rogers; Reeders; Johnsons; Mitchells; Taylors; Jenkins; Kincaids; Millers and the Wilsons.

At 11 A.M. the high school auditorium was filled to overflowing. J. R. (Rich) Anderson was spokesman for the day. It was a privilege to have his brother, W.A. of Lovington, New Mexico as guest soloist. Accompanied by Brenda Reid of Big Spring, W. A. sang "Until Then". Even though one newspaper reported that Gail had no minister, we must correct it and say that Gail has three churches and three ministers of whom we are most proud. However, for this occasion the Survey Committee thought it most fitting to ask Rev. Mather Owen, now Chaplain in the State Hospital in Austin, to be our speaker. Mather is a former teacher in the Gail school and it was during his years with us that he decided to go into the ministry. Mather, his wife Janie and their children were welcomed by young and old alike. Everyone joined in singing old familiar hymns.

After a catered barbecue lunch and a look at old photographs on display in the gymnasium, everyone once more gathered in the auditorium for a short program. J. R. Anderson introduced John Ben Shepperd of Odessa, former state Attorney General and now president of the State Historical Survey Committee. "One of the facets we of the State Historical organization encourage is county history appreciation," Shepperd said. "Small towns like Gail are the grassroots of our nation. Look at your early day residents here," he stated. "They were not beset with worries about an atomic attack. When Indians and illness threatened and there were no soldiers or doctors to help, these folks got down on their knees. We could use some more of that today. And we could well recover the lost art of visiting. Return to the fundamentals that made Borden County great and America great, for that matter!"

Mrs. C. C. (Zada) Miller recounted some facts and recollections of early day Borden County, which is reprinted for you in this issue. Bennie Sealy, wife of George Sealy, a former County Agent for this County, was soloist. She was accompanied by her daughter, Laura.

The following prizes were awarded:

Traveling the farthest distance: the Tucker Johnson family from Tripoli, Libya. Johnson is the son of Lillie Rogers Johnson and was born in Gail. This was his first visit home since 1943.

Youngest person attending was Cody Newton, son of Mr. and Mrs. Doyle Newton. Cody was born July 27, 1965.

Oldest person attending was Mrs. Attie Jackson, who was born Dec. 1, 1873.

Jess and Myrtle Smith of Vealmoor were recognized for having lived in the county longer than anyone present. They first settled here in 1839 and his father helped survey Borden County.

Mrs. George Cathey received an award for having held public office in Borden County longer than anyone. She first went to work here in 1945.

The oldest person present who had taught school in Gail was Mrs. Beulah Weems Hampton, 74, of Big Spring.

At the conclusion of the program, everyone drove down for a look at the Borden County Museum - set up in the old Dorward Drug and located on Highway 180. Traffic on this thoroughfare was almost choked off from the crowd that gathered. The Museum contains some interesting artifacts pertaining to this county. Many wandered across the street to visit the rock jail, now carrying a Texas Historical Survey Committee marker. It was erected in 1391. The Courthouse was sporting a new look with a fresh landscaping job - and everyone seemed pleased that the County marker had been placed under the spreading mesquite tree at the corner of the Courthouse square.

Many had traveled great distances to meet with family and friends. Coming from South Dakota were the Bill Millers, the Buck Burdines and the Drums. Russell Dorward flew in from Old Mexico to meet Maurice. Some other families represented were: the Yorks; Sealys; Askins; Claytons; Clarks and Arthur, James and Goldie Prince.

To our Junior Hostesses, dresses in early day costumes; to the Homemakers' Club for their efforts on behalf of the Museum; to the men on horseback who helped everyone find a parking place; to those handling registration and to each who helped with our church service and afternoon program - we want to say THANK YOU. We hope everyone had a good time - and to those of you who weren't here - WE MISSED YOU! We'll look for you at the next celebration!

THE BORDEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMITTEE

RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY DAYS

Given by Zada Miller, August 14, 1966

When the Historical Committee asked me to review briefly the history of Borden County, they told me that I would be allowed about ten minutes. It has taken me over 65 years to live this history - how can I possibly tell it in ten minutes?

But seriously, I will take only a short time to give you some of the highlights of the story concerning Borden County.

By an Act of the Texas Legislature, in August 1376, Borden County, along with 53 other counties, was created from Bexar County. At first the county was attached to Shackelford and later to Howard for surveying and other administrative purposes - just as Garza was attached to Borden for some time after its organization. Our county was named for Gail Borden, a leading Texas patriot, co-author of the first Texas Constitution, newspaper man, surveyor, member of the group establishing Baylor University. But the accomplishment for which he is best remembered was the process for condensing milk. He also invented a prairie wagon pulled by huge sails. I'll bet he didn't get very far in that vehicle!

When the county was organized in 1891, the first site of government was at Durham - a small community about 12 miles southeast of Gail. There we would go for all day preaching and have dinner on the ground. This settlement included a Post Office and was named for I. E. Durham, who took up several sections of land in this area before the county was formed.

On April 7, 1891 the Commissioners' Court met and declared Gail the County seat. Attending this meeting were the first Borden County officials - T. D. Love, Sheriff; W. S. Moore, Clerk; C. L. Wasson, Judge; W. H. McCulloch, W. L. Danner, D. V. Carter and J. S. York, Commissioners. On April 8th they met once more and set the annual salaries for each - Judge, \$360; Sheriff, \$300; County Attorney, \$480; District and County Clerk, \$300. (Even though they set a salary for County Attorney, no one was appointed to the job) - the Commissioners were to receive \$6 a day for each they met.

By this time there were several schools scattered over the county - most of them were dugouts and the drinking water was kept in a barrel - the pupils sat on rough pine benches.

Several churches had been established. There was the Baptist with Rev. J. A. Petty; Presbyterian with Brother Werner; the Church of Christ with Brother Pruitt; and Methodist with Rev. T. L. Adams. Sunday School was held in the old

one room school with church every Sunday. The four denominations alternately held services.

At the turn of the century the County was almost devoted entirely to ranching. By 1902-1903 settlers began coming in. Naturally there was resentment on the part of the ranchers. The ranchers called them Nesters and tried to keep them off their land. The many prairie fires that occurred during this time were blamed on Nesters. The grass was fine and the fires severe! Of course there was no fire-fighting equipment. It was an unwritten law that all cowmen would turn out to help fight any fire, just as it is still an unwritten law to kill every rattlesnake you find. The only way they had to travel was on horseback - and a grass fire could gain great headway while men rode 10 or 15 miles. Their most effective means of stopping the fire was to kill a steer, split it open - then two horsemen would drag him along the edge of the blaze.

1904 was the year of the Land Rushes. On March 4th of that year, five sections of State land were to be sold in the Clerk's office. This is sometimes referred to as the War of Ribbons, since the ranchers wore blue ribbons on their sleeves and the settlers wore red. Hundreds of people were in Gail to rush for land. To prevent blood shed, Sheriff W. K. Clark had everyone deposit their guns and knives in a large barrel outside the courthouse. There was no law against shoving or fighting with fists - and many men had their shirts torn off. One man, whom many of you remember, brought his two sisters with him. Since those were the days of chivalry, they marched right in and filed on a share of the land. Not a man laid a hand on them. I doubt if they could get away with it now. I don't think the men in Borden County ever forgave that fellow for taking unfair advantage of them. By the time the Land Rush was over, Gail's eating places ran out of food. Mr. Rich Miller, my husband's father, took a hundred men home with him for breakfast. I have heard Mother Miller tell many times of how she cooked up 50 lbs. of flour into biscuits and fried 4 big hams that day.

Along about 1910, Gail was a thriving little town. I can remember business houses practically all around the square. On the west side there were: a two-story hotel, Mrs. Berry's Millinery Shop, a saloon (where little girls and their mothers were supposed to turn their heads as they passed the door - or better still, walk in the street and not across the porch). On the north side there were: Mr. Chandler's General Store with pot bellied stove and pickle barrel, Dorward's Drug Store, Mr. Dodson's General Store, the Post office, Mr. Thornton's Law office, A. B. Spears' Grocery and the Bank with J. D. Brown as Cashier and R. N. Miller, President. West along Main Street - a saddle shop, a grist mill, the newspaper office where the Borden County Citizen was published.

In 1918-20 the population of Gail was estimated at 1500, which is more than live in the entire county now. One man writes that there is little more than one person per section in this county of 908 square miles.

The first fence in the county was a drift fence erected by Tom and Jim Nunn several years before the county was organized. It began north of Snyder and reached west to Cedar Lake. This fence formed the south boundary of the R. N. Miller ranch. The first pasture to be fenced was part of the old MK ranch - Magnolia Land and Cattle Company in 1886.

Grandfather Dorward, father of Dave, Jim and Bob, built the first fence around the 49 Ranch. When this family first came to Borden County they settled on the 49, at what is still known as the old Dorward Place. Later this ranch was owned and operated by Elwood and Arnett. In 1899 my father, Edd Bills, became ranch foreman for Elwood and Arnett. He and my mother took up 4 sections of land in that pasture. In the very last days of 1900 I arrived at the 49 - in the middle of the night - and I beat the doctor there. But Mrs. Epperson was on hand to help and we made it just fine. (Do any of you remember Mr. Epperson? He was so fat he couldn't tie his own shoes.) Three months after I was born my father was killed by a horse on this ranch.

There were five other major ranches in operation in the county at that time. The Jumbo Ranch was established by Nick Beal. He and C. S. Boyd, who lives in San Angelo now, brought a herd of cattle here in 1879. They made camp on a draw in the northern part of the county near Bull Creek and spent the long, bleak winter in a pour-off with a tarpaulin stretched across it for shelter. The Square and Compass with J. D. Mitchell as ranch foreman and J. K. Mitchell as wagon boss - - the T.J.F. Ranch, owned by Frank and Will Bob Evans of Kansas - Alabama Cattle Company established a ranch in the late 1880s in the southeast corner of the county. This ranch was 15 miles square and comprised 225 sections. They shipped in mixed breed cattle of every description and are credited with introducing the first screw worms to this area. This company did not prosper and they sold their holdings to Mr. A. R. Bush, who was at one time president of the Texas Cattle Raisers' Association and a Mr. Tiller, who was a lawyer in Ft. Worth. Then the ranch became known as Bush & Tiller. The 9R Ranch was established by Thomas Trammell before the turn of the century. He bought land from the Houston and Texas Central Railroad Company and filed on alternate sections of school land, thus acquiring large holdings that stretched from the

Gail road on the north to the Bush & Tiller on the south. In 1900 Mr. Joe Monroe came to the 9R as ranch foreman. While working there he bought land from Trammell and filed on adjoining school land - this land is still owned by Monroe's daughter, Mrs. Hugh Taylor of Snyder. In 1888, Col. C. C. Slaughter established the Lazy S Ranch in south and western Borden County. This ranch eventually comprised over a million acres, with holdings as far north as South Dakota.

In compiling this paper, I came across a letter written to our historical committee from Mrs. Z. Robertson of Dallas. She is the former Grace Hopkins and she tells that her family came here from Mills County 72 years ago, when she was five years old. They had traded their place in Mills County - sight unseen - for the Taylor Place on Grape Creek and received horses and cattle to boot. They later sold this section of land, which is now known as the Jackson Place, for 50¢ an acre and bought the Kincaid Hotel in Gail. Mr. Hopkins paid Kincaid in horses. I wish I had time to read all of Mrs. Robertson's letter but she tells about the cowboys getting drunk and shooting up the town every evening. One night as a cowboy was passing the hotel he shot through the corner of their kitchen and almost hit her mother - splinters filled her face.

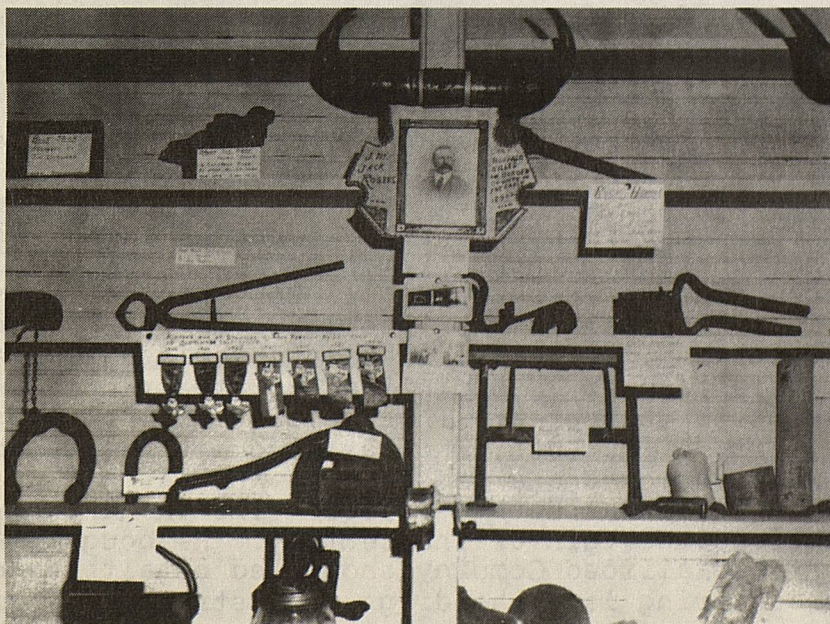
Then I found a letter from Mrs. R. H. Whitaker, the former Hettie Kincaid. She said her grandfather, David Kincaid and his son Hugh built, owned and operated the first hotel, feed store and wagon yard in Gail - all of which were on the west side of the square. They also operated the stage line which left the Hotel daily and traveled via Durham to Knapp, where a stage from Colorado City was met and the teams, mail and passengers were exchanged. From this same hotel, a stage left daily for Grassland to meet the stage from Lubbock. I remember my step-father, Will Clark, tell of a time when he was driving this stage. When he arrived at Mesquite Creek, it was level - bank to bank - with snow. Hettie tells that her family sold or traded the hotel to J. N. Hopkins, taking in 100 head of mustangs which ran wild in the Diamond pasture.

Isn't it wonderful that so many have written down what they remember and have shared it with the historical society? I would urge every one of you old timers and young people as well to write down the things you remember. If you don't it will be lost to all of us and our descendants.

We have one author who is doing a wonderful job in preserving our history - Franklin Reynolds. He has written many articles about the west. In the July, 1966 issue of the Frontier Times he has a story about the man who accidentally shot and killed himself when and he, his wife and baby were traveling through Borden County. The wife dug a grave with her butcher knife and buried him east of Mushaway Peak on what the writer says was 'McCullum Creek'. Of course we all know it was on Hullum Creek - who ever heard of McCullum Creek? However, this is an error of the Texas Highway Map and not of the author. The story is well written and contains an interesting bit of our early history. We are indeed grateful to Mr. Reynolds for preserving this for us.

Last Christmas Maurice Dorward sent me a card with a picture of the dining room at the old Stokes Hotel. There were a number of people in the picture he hoped I could identify - and he added if I couldn't, just to ask some of the older generation. Well, it came as quite a shock to me to realize that I AM the older generation. There was no one I could ask. So write down what you remember while there is someone to help you. One of these days you will wake up and find that YOU are the older generation and then it will be too late!

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Just a sample of the interesting items that you will find displayed in the Borden County Museum. The buffalo horns are those from the last buffalo to be killed in Borden County. Jack Rogers was the hunter and you can see his picture below the horns.

THE BORDEN COUNTY MUSEUM

By Pauline Clark, Chairman

Already we can see that Borden County will have one of the best local museums in the state. Our plans were small in the beginning but now they are bigger and better, since we had such good response to our opening, August 14th.

We want this Museum to be one of the star attractions of the county and it can be with your help. It can become popular with tourists as well as provide continuous enjoyment for residents of this area.

We have a large collection of historical items and exhibits and there will be new items added. At present we have old sewing machines, a spinning wheel, an organ, furniture, old picture collections, saddles, horseshoes, barbed wire exhibit, farm tools, and fine china and glassware. Everything we have pertains in some way to Borden County or to the people who lived here.

We hope to expand our Museum program - provide more space so it will be more convenient for you to visit us. We are now located in the old Dorward Drug on the main highway (180). We welcome any gift or loan of items. Any object will be catalogued by our committee and handled any way you wish.

Local clubs, school and county organizations are urged to sponsor exhibits for the Museum. For instance - we would like to see complete rooms restored; old doll collections; gun collections, etc.

The Museum will have educational value for the area so now when your grandchild asks what Borden County was like in the early days, you can bring him to Gail and show him!

I have appointed the following people to serve on the Museum committee. Please contact any one of them if you have something for the Museum.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| George Gray | Mrs. J. R. Anderson | Mrs. Dewey Everett |
| Mrs. Roland Hamilton | Mrs. Mert Jones | Mrs. Doris Rudd |
| Van York | Mrs. Leonard Isaacs | Aubrey Rogers |
| Mrs. Allen Stephens | Pat Hensley | Mrs. Freida Murphy |
| T. L. Griffin, Jr. | Mrs. Norman Sneed | Naymon Everett |

THE MUSEUM WILL BE OPEN EVERY THURSDAY AND SUNDAY AFTERNOON. We will be looking for you!

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OVERHEARD DURING THE 75th CELEBRATION

Members of the ISAAC family remembered when they arrived in Gail from Fannin County - a trip that had taken 21 days in five covered wagons. They went to the Courthouse and asked for some water in which to bathe. They were given a wash pan full of water and all ten children proceeded to clean up! Can you imagine this many using that little bit of water? They did and were most thankful for it. JIM HOPKINS recalled old school days. It seemed that the girl who sat in front of him had long hair that hung down on his desk. He kept threatening to put a cuckleburr in it - she dared him to - and that is all he needed to carry out his threat. However the teacher made a razor strap fly, but Jim was quick enough to step aside with the result that another student was hit with the strap - -poor Jim really caught it then!

BILL DRUM remembered when the Commissioners met upstairs in the old Courthouse. It seemed that a hundred or more cows grazed on the town section and watered at a big concrete tank in the square (the water was supplied by Mr. Roper's well north of town). The heel flies bothered the cattle and many was the time they stampeded right through the front door of the courthouse and out the back. Of course everyone rushed out of his office to see the commotion - -some of these were: Miss Maggie Williams, J. R. Jenkins, Tom Smith, J. L. Weathers, Lee Pearce, and H. D. Beal. The children of J. R. JENKINS, along with others, were touring the jail and were reminiscing about the time their father was sheriff of Borden County. The childrens' job was to clean the jail and they only received 25¢ a week for all their efforts

When Borden County celebrated its 50th Anniversary, WARREN BERZETT, then a teacher in the Gail school, was instrumental in the planning. Mr. Berzett was here for the 75th celebration and everyone who remembers back 25 years said he did a wonderful job. He lives in Dallas now.

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OPHELIA DORWARD BLACKARD has written a booklet entitled, "A DRIVE UP TRAIL" about her father, J. C. (Jim) Dorward. All the proceeds from this booklet will go to the Borden County Museum and you may have a copy by making a donation to the Museum. Just write to The Borden County Museum, c/o Pauline Clark, Gail, Texas, 79738, send a donation and a copy will be mailed to you. We are grateful to Ophelia for this generous gesture.

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MRS. H. E. BENNETT, 79, member of a pioneer Borden County family, died July 23, 1966 at the Bennett House in Big Spring. She had been in ill health for some time. She was buried in Gail Cemetery. She and her husband, the late H. E. Bennett, came to this county from Kress, Texas in 1913 with three children: Edith, Ruth and Blanche. Three more children were born to this couple at the Munger Ranch; Milton, Willis and Marie. She was a member of Dorward Methodist Church.

GEORGE W. DANIELS, SR., 63, a former resident of Gail, died July 27, 1966 of an apparent heart attack at his place of business, Rockwell Lumber Company in Big Spring. Mr. Daniels lived with his family in a dug-out in Borden County in the early 1900s.

MR. W. C. (BILL) ORSON, 84, well known Borden County rancher, died August 15, 1966 in the Medical Arts Hospital in Lamesa after a lengthy illness. Burial was in Lamesa. Mr. Orson was born in England and came here as a boy with his parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. Robert Orson. They established the family ranch on the Borden-Dawson County line. Surviving are his wife, one daughter, Mrs. James (Bess) Smith of Borden County and one son, Raymond of Lamesa.

ZONA ALBRIGHT BURKETT, 82, died August 19, 1966 and was buried in O'Donnell. The Burkett family lived in and around Borden County for many years. She is survived by eight children, one of whom, Jim M. Burkett, lives in Borden County.

MRS. COLLIE ANNIE STEPHENS, 86, pioneer resident of Borden County, died August 25, 1966. Burial was in Lamesa and she is survived by two daughters and six sons, two of whom still reside in this county - John and Bill Stephens.

BEN WEATHERS, member of a pioneer Borden County family, died August 27, 1966 in Snyder, following a lengthy illness. He is survived by his wife, Ruth - a sister, Mrs. Harley Smith and a brother, Watt Weathers. Ruth is a member of the Borden County Historical Survey Committee - she and Ben have devoted a great deal of time and effort in helping the Committee formulate plans for a Museum.

* * * * *

REMINDER!

If you have not paid your dues for the 1966-67 issues of the newsletter, please send in your \$3.00 today! Please don't forget to send your ZIP CODE! Mail to Dorothy Dennis, Box 85, Gail, Texas 79738.

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THE BORDEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Gail, Texas 79738

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