

Prairie View A&M University

Digital Commons @PVAMU

All Theses

8-1951

The Cultural Development of Negroes in Limestone County Since 1860

Walter F. Cotton

Prairie View A&M College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pvamu.edu/pvamu-theses>

Recommended Citation

Cotton, W. F. (1951). The Cultural Development of Negroes in Limestone County Since 1860. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.pvamu.edu/pvamu-theses/462>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @PVAMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @PVAMU. For more information, please contact hvkoshy@pvamu.edu.

THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF NEGROES
IN LIMESTONE COUNTY SINCE 1860



COTTON

1951

N
326
C829c
C.2

THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF NEGROES IN LIMESTONE COUNTY SINCE 1860

By

Walter F. Cotton

F
392
L54067

A Thesis in Education Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

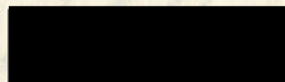
Master of Arts

In The

Graduate Division

of

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College
Prairie View, Texas



August 28, 1951

The W. R. Banks Library
Prairie View A. & M. College
Prairie View, Texas

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is without words to express his feelings and appreciation to friends and relatives who have kindly, generously and graciously helped him in his study. To them, I must say thanks.

Mrs. Lela Cotton

The writer wishes to express his appreciation also, to Dr. F. J. Brock, under whose direction this work was undertaken, for his helpful advice and patience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer is without words to express his feelings and appreciations to friends and officials of Limestone County, Texas, who rendered generous help in accomplishing this study. To them, I must say thanks.

The writer wishes to express his appreciation also, to Dr. J. L. Brown, under whose direction this work was undertaken, for his scholarly advice and patience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. Introduction.....	1
A. Purpose.....	1
B. Definition of the Problem.....	2
C. Scope.....	3
D. Source of Data.....	5
E. Procedure.....	6
II. Founding of the County.....	8
A. Topography.....	8
B. Occupations in the County.....	9
C. Valuation of the County.....	9
D. Government and Politics.....	10
E. Educational and Social Recreational Activities in the County.....	13
III. The Negro in Limestone County.....	17
A. Advent.....	17
B. Background of the first Negroes in Limestone County...	20
C. Forming Community Life.....	30
D. Springfield.....	31
E. Rocky Crossing.....	32
F. Sardis.....	32
G. Bethlehem and Woodland.....	33
H. Comanche Crossing.....	33
I. Sandy.....	33
J. Cedar.....	34
IV. Patterns of Culture of the Negro in Limestone County.....	36
A. Early Adventures in Education.....	36
B. Obstacles-- Dixie's Reign of Terror.....	36
C. Acquiring Homes.....	38
D. Recreational Activities.....	39
E. Political Activities.....	40
F. The Influence of Other Races on the Pattern of Culture of the Negro.....	41
V. The Reorganization and Progress.....	44
A. Home Life.....	44

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
Uncle Burk Simpson.....	4
First Negro School in Limestone County at Old Springfield... 15	15
Slave Cabin, Built in 1860.....	19
First Methodist Meeting House, Springfield Built 1881.....	35
Aunt Frances Medlock.....	43
Home of L. C. Kirven, Mexia.....	63

CHARTS

Table Number	Page
1. Population of Limestone County.....	8
2. Survey of Negro Churches.....	48
3. Survey of Negro Schools.....	50

MAPS

These records have been compiled through the co-operation of surviving ex-slaves of Limestone County, Texas, whom I have had the opportunity of interviewing for this particular purpose.

It is quite evident in our regular history text-books that the real happenings of our forefathers are treated in a wild way, though by no means glorifying the slave system, but giving the account to a civilized world in such a manner that when all of the survivors of slavery will have crossed the divide from whence we now come,

MAPS

Map Number	Page
1. Limestone County, Texas.....	11

as a distinct group of people, as they progress and learn to perfectity a written record of their deeds, should include the vice as well as the virtue; and with this thought, I give to the reader a list of the missing links that have been lost from the past covered volumes of these records.

This effort is especially dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Lela Carter.

FOREWORD

These records have been compiled through the co-operation of surviving ex-slaves of Limestone County, Texas, whom I have had the opportunity of interviewing for this particular purpose.

It is quite evident in our regular history text-books that the real happenings of our forefathers are treated in a mild way, though by no means glorifying the slave system, but giving the account to a civilized world in such a manner that when all of the survivors of slavery will have crossed the great divide from whence no man returns, this dark spot on American civilization will soon be forgotten.

It is deemed by the writer to be fitting and proper that a nation or a distinct group of people, as they progress and leave to posterity a written record of their deeds, should include the vices as well as the virtues; and with these thoughts, I give to the reader a few of the missing links that have been lost from the dust covered volumes of Texas records.

This effort is especially dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Lela Cotton.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The problem of this study is the past and present status of Negro culture in Limestone County, Texas. Growing out of this major problem are the following questions which this study proposes to answer:

1. What were the causes of the Negroes' presence in Limestone County, Texas?
2. What were the living conditions of Negroes during the period of involuntary servitude from 1860 until their emancipation (June 19, 1865 in the State of Texas)?
3. What were the chances of cultural development during this period of involuntary servitude?
4. What opportunities did Negroes of Limestone County, Texas have to develop themselves culturally immediately after the Emancipation?
5. What out-of-state agencies made contributions to the Negroes of Limestone County as well as to Texas and the south, to set up a public school system?
6. What attitude did the white people of Limestone County take toward persons who sought to enlighten the freedmen?
7. What progress was made culturally during the period of reconstruction?
8. What part did the church play in the cultural development of Negroes in Limestone County, Texas?
9. What are some of the out-standing changes that have been made

in the public schools of Limestone County within the past decade?

10. What are the tendencies which indicate the possibilities of further cultural developments in Limestone County?

Definition of the Problem

This study has been made to present the past and present status of the cultural development of the Negroes of Limestone County, Texas, from 1860 to 1951, and it is the aim of the writer to present a fair word-picture of the progress that has been made within these years. On the other hand, this study attempts to show the progress and improvements that are yet to be made in the development of a greater number of intelligent, wage earning Negro citizens of Limestone County, Texas.

It is true that for the past twenty-five years the greatest number of people of this county have migrated to the manufacturing centers of the states in the north and west, yet the fact remains that the majority of those remaining still live in rural areas. In fifteen southern states it was found that 67.4% of the Negro population were rural dwellers.¹

For the last fifteen or twenty years there has been a steady migration of Negroes from Limestone County to larger cities within the state of Texas, and to many sections of the United States. There are several reasons for this migration which has caused the problem of overcrowded living and working conditions in the cities where this group has moved.

¹ Ambrose Caliver, "Secondary Education for Negroes", National Survey of Secondary Education, Bulletin No. 17, 1932, Government Printing Office, Office of Education, Washington, D. C.

One of the main causes for this migration is the limited educational opportunities for Negro children. Charles S. Johnson made an extensive survey of various comparative studies of the two races, Negro and White, and concluded that inefficiency of Negro pupils is at least a function of a poor educational system and an inferior background, as an inferior inherited mental constitution.¹ Another cause can be traced to World War II, when a call for workers for the war effort regardless of race and color, sent men and women to many sections of the United States.

Scope

The question of education for Negroes in Limestone County is practically the same as elsewhere in Texas and the south, and has been one of importance to the Negro population since the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation (Read in Limestone County, June 19, 1865). In later years after the period of reconstruction the question became uppermost in the minds of white people as they realized the importance of desirable training for all persons for good citizenship.

In the Constitution of 1866, provisions were made for education of Negro children:

" The Constitution set aside public lands for the support of the public school system and for the creation and the endowment of a university and for the support of institutions for the deaf, dumb, blind and insane of the state. It conferred power on the Legislature to levy a school tax, especially stipu-

¹ Charles S. Johnson, The Negro in American Civilization, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1930. pp. 273-4.



UNCLE BURK SIMPSON

1849

EX- SLAVE

1941

The writer is deeply indebted to Uncle Burk Simpson, who was his great uncle on the mother's side for much of the information given on Negro life in Limestone County, Texas which otherwise might have been lost to us forever.

He was 92 years of age at the time of his death in Groesbeck, Texas, and was owned as a slave by Mandard Stroud.

lating that all taxes collected for Negroes should be used in maintaining schools for Negroes."¹

In making provisions for schools for white and Negro children, plans were put forth for the establishment of separate schools:

"Separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored children, and impartial provisions shall be made for both."²

Since the schools are separate for white and Negro children, it often appeared in the past and the present that Negro schools are overlooked. Despite the fact that Negroes do not receive the same attention as whites much progress has been made in the schools to educate them.

Source of Data

The writer is deeply indebted to Uncle Burk Simpson, ex-slave owned by Mandard Stroud and Gouverneur Stroud, slave holders of Limestone and Freestone counties, for much of the information concerning Negro life as herein stated. He died in 1941.

Prof. A. R. Foreman, Mexia, Texas and Principal of the Woodland High School for 23 years and one of the founders of the Saint Paul Junior College. He was one of the most outstanding educators of this section.

Mr. Gus Jones, President of the Madison Mutual Aid Association and District Supervisor in Vocational Agriculture, of Caldwell, Texas.

Prof. J. R. Farris, Superintendent of the Woodland Independent School District, Mexia, Texas

¹ Stewart and Clark, The Constitution and Government of Texas. D. C. Heath and Company, New York. p. 17.

² The Constitution of the State of Texas. Article 7, Section 7, p. 56.

Mr. Sherman M. Merriwether, now deceased who served as the first Negro County Agricultural Agent for Limestone County.

Mr. I. E. Dorsey, now deceased, founder of the Dorsey Funeral Homes at Mexia, Marlin and Cameron; also the founder of The Peoples Burial Association.

Mr. T. M. Campbell, Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama, who advised in a speech made at Prairie View A. M. College in 1938, that all Negroes of the south should leave to posterity a written record of their past activities.

Procedure

In order to present to the reader an account of the cultural development of the Negroes of Limestone County, Texas from 1860 to 1951, it was very necessary for the writer to employ various methods to obtain facts concerning community life. As it existed in the dark days when the star of hope twinkled in the far away reaches of a trackless space and faith in God that some day and in some way they would enjoy freedom and develop as other people, was not an easy task.

To obtain these facts about Negro life in Limestone County, in the days of slavery, the writer made personal visits to the homes of the very few survivors of this period and there, face to face, heard and recorded their experiences.

The writer's grandmother was born a slave in Alabama in 1830, and brought to Texas when six years of age.¹ She was owned by Logan Stroud

¹ Logan Stroud, Old Plantation Record.

and was set free on the Logan Stroud plantation, seven miles south of the present city of Mexia, Texas on June 19, 1865 about 2:00 P. M. Her experiences have been told and retold with vivid descriptions of the many places of interest that contributed to the progress of Negroes of Limestone County. Her experiences have also been recorded.

The list of Negro families held as slaves in Limestone County and emancipated on June 19, 1865 to become the first freedmen, and from whence the present Negro citizenry sprang, was given to the writer by Uncle Burk Simpson, ex-slave of Mandard Stroud and Gouverneur Stroud, and was also a great uncle of the writer. This individual possessed an unusual memory as has been evidenced by his being able to remember dates and incidents with unerring accuracy.

Every section of Limestone County has been visited by the writer and both aborigines and recent citizens of Negro ancestry have been interviewed and pictures made and sketched of persons and places which made contributions to Negro development. Some of the said pictures are herein reproduced by the pen of the writer.

Other facts important to the clarity of this study have been obtained by the reading of books and publications as shown in the bibliography.

Year	Value	Year	Value
1885	2,307	1890	4,285
1910	21,001	1920	22,001
1930	14,374	1940	11,201

1. *See* *Arkansas Gazette*, *The Woodcock Journal*, *Arkansas Bellows*, *Ark. B.* Vol. XIII, No. 11.

Chapter II

THE FOUNDING OF THE COUNTY

Topography

In the early days of Limestone County, few Negroes could be found as most of the pioneers who ventured into this state were home seekers and blazing a way for a new civilization in the southwest.

This section consisted of heavy wooded land along the banks of the Navasota River, dotted here and there with tribes of Comanche and Tehuacana Indians who made life quite miserable for the settlers who lived in the county. To the west, until one reached the environs of the Brazos River, there were rolling prairies which abounded with all kinds of wild life adapted to Texas climes, which served for the sport of the Indian hunter as well as for his subsistence.

Out of this untamed region was carved Limestone County, which was organized in 1846.¹

The most prominent slave holders who migrated to Texas and Limestone County, were Logan Stroud, Gouverneur Stroud, Merith Miller and a Doctor Owens. These men owned the various families of Negroes who are the ancestors of the present Negro population of this particular section.

Population of the County

No. 1

Year	White	Negro	Total
1860	4,557	273	4,830
1940	22,521	11,260	33,781
1950	16,804	8,417	25,251

¹ Denny Parker Cralle, The Groesbeck Journal, Pioneer Edition, May 15, 1936, Vol. XLII, No. 13.

The preceding chart shows a decline in population in the past decade which has been traced to migrations brought on by World War II. ¹

Occupations in the County

The majority of the citizens of Limestone County are engaged in farming, with cotton as the leading money crop. In the towns of Mexia, Groesbeck (The County Seat), Kesse, Thornton, Coolidge and Mart, which are incorporated, the people engage in occupations common to small cities and towns throughout the southland, such as merchants, shopkeepers, garages, cotton gins, cotton compresses, cotton oil mills, etc. In Mexia some are engaged in oil field work as there was a discovery of oil here in 1921. In the past decade there has been quite a change over to beef cattle raising.

After the repeal of the 18th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, the citizens of Limestone County immediately took the advantage of the adjoining counties to the north and east which had voted to remain dry, voted to allow the sale of beer within its boundaries, therefore those who traffic in the alcoholic beverage have profited greatly from not only the home patronage but from the dry counties within a radius of fifty miles.

Valuation of the County

The county of Limestone has an area of 932 square miles with 3,427 farms and six incorporated towns. The farm acreage is 597,760 with a total of 479,380 acres in cultivation. Its oil production at present is 531,077 barrels annually. Together with all other minor industries.

¹ U. S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census, Sept. 22, 1950, Washington, D. C.; Series HC-1, No. 43.

Government and Politics

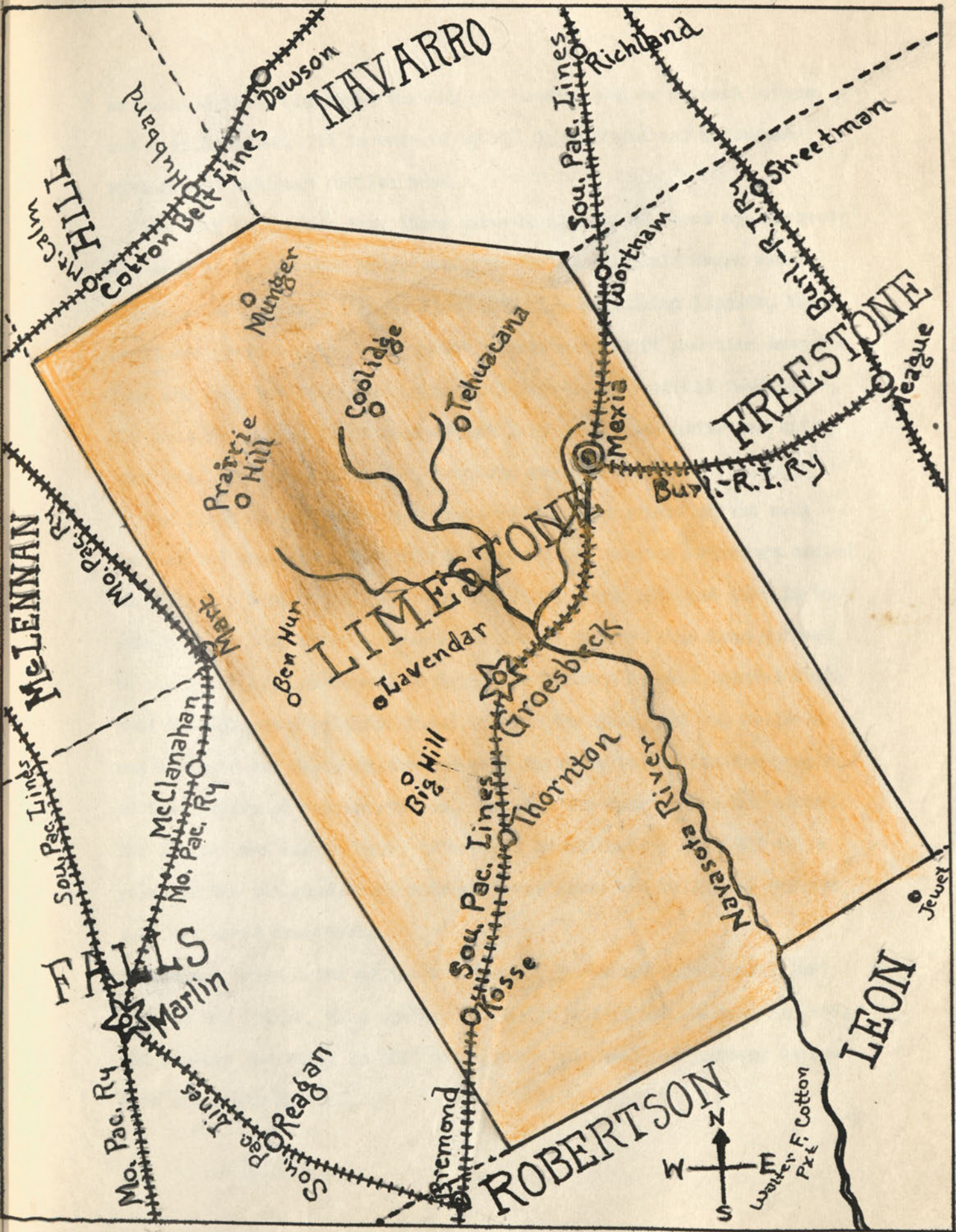
The county-- Describing thus: BEGINNING at the northeast corner of Leon County (This point is the present northeast corner of that county), on the Trinity River; thence with the line of said county to the Navasota River, thence up (It should be down) said river to the northeast corner of Robertson County; and thence with the said county line to the Brazos River; thence up the east bank of said river to the mouth of Tehuacana (Tewacana) Creek, where it empties into said river (About three miles south of the city of Waco); thence north 60 degrees east to the Trinity River (This line with the north line of the county at present, through Mt. Calm and just south of Hubbard); thence down the west bank of said river to the place of beginning.

The county as created embraces all territory of the county as it now exists and all of Freestone, and all of Falls County east of the Brazos River, and the southeast portion of McLennan east of the river and south of Tehuacana Creek, and also a considerable portion of Navarro County.

And by an act of the Legislature of April 18, 1846 it was enacted that: "The Seat of Justice of Limestone County shall be at SPRINGFIELD." 1

On February 5, 1850 Limestone was defined by the present boundaries. It contains 974 square miles and is in the form of a rectangle slightly elongated north and south with its northeast corner cut diagonally. Its surface is generally undulated and is drained by the Navasota Riv-

1 C. S. Bradley, The Groesbeck Journal, May 15, 1936, Groesbeck, Texas, Vol. XLII, No. 13, Section 3.



Map No. 1

er running north and south through the county, and by several creeks and many branches. It is watered by the Springfield and Tehuacana springs and numerous smaller ones.

Its soil is divided into three general classes of about equal areas; the east being timbered sandy soil, producing all field crops and an abundance of fruits and vegetables, and also containing lignite, brick shale and potters clay. The central portion is stiff, raw-hide mesquite land and very productive of cotton and corn as well as all feed crops. The western portion is of heavy black land, very productive and sticky when wet. It produces cotton, corn and small grain.

The first county seat was located at Old Springfield on the east bank of the Navasota River when the county was created, as before stated, on April 11, 1846. The little town thrived until 1871 and then it became a ghost town after the citizens led by County Judge Lynn refused to pay a certain assessment to bring the Houston & Texas Central Railroad (Now Southern Pacific Lines) through the town, and the railroad was surveyed two miles to the eastward in order to deprive the people of this medium of transportation. In 1874 the court house burned and the little town was no more. Everybody moved in 1874 and 1875 to a point on the railroad where another court house was built and the new town was named Groesbeck.

The new court house at the new town of Groesbeck stood until 1877 when it was burned, then another was built and it also burned in 1890, and another was built in 1891 which was used until the present structure was built in 1922.

Groesbeck(Population 2410) is situated near the center of the county on the Southern Pacific Lines (Dallas Division). The court house there is a modern fireproof structure costing \$500,000 and erected in 1922.

The county has two district courts, the 77th and 87th; County Judge, four precinct commissioners, County Sheriff and deputies, four Justices of the Peace, District Clerk, County Clerk, County Attorney, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, County Superintendent of Public Instruction and a County Surveyor.

There has been no attempt to govern the county by subversive or race hating groups like the Ku Klux Klan, etc.

In Limestone County as can be found throughout Texas and the entire southland, it is strictly a one party section politically. All voters subscribe to the Democrat Party. Any person who proclaims allegiance to the Republican Party is an unusual specimen of humanity.

Since Negroes have been permitted to vote in the Democrat Primaries, some of the political campaigns have been very colorful as it was soon recognized that the Negro vote was the balance of power, hence the attitude of candidates toward Negro voters took a sudden and decided change for the better.

Educational and Social Recreational Activities in the County

The first known educational institution in Limestone County was known as Central Institute, and was located near the Ward and Meridith Miller plantations. It was a fashionable school for white youths during the last days of slavery and through the period of reconstruction, after which another school for whites was built at Tehuacana

and was known as Trinity College. It was moved to Waxahachie, Texas and the building left was later to be known and operated as Westminster College. It still operates under that name as junior college.

In the towns and communities were public schools for whites since 1860 but no Negro schools were in evidence until 1867. The Freedmen's Aid Society organized immediately after the close of the Civil War in the north, realized the fact that if the freedmen would ever be integrated into American society, there must be some effort put forth to educate them. The vanquished south, smarting from defeat showed no immediate inclination to shoulder the responsibility for their education. It was often remarked: "The danyankees freed 'em, let 'em educate 'em." White teachers were recruited throughout the north as missionaries and sent into the southland to lay the foundation for Negro education.

In Limestone County at Old Cedar there was a little school house built of logs and there labored a white teacher named Dan Corey who taught the three R's to little lousy headed Negro boys and girls just freed from slavery. Incidentally, the mother of the writer was numbered with this group of children who sat at the footstool of Dan Corey.

Farther down and to the eastward along the Navasota River, Will Corey, the brother of Dan, also labored in the same field of endeavor. In Shady Grove community could be found John Russell, a Mrs. Sewell and a Mr. Fritz. These persons were also white. On account of the ill feelings brought on by the ravages of war and the loss of the slaves, as well as the activities of the carpetbaggers, these teachers were looked upon by the white people as undesirable. It became

AS TIME MARCHES ON



By Walter F. Cotton

First Negro School in Limestone County at Old Springfield
Built in 1871 - Still Standing

FIGURE No. 2

necessary for the Corey brothers to secure room and board in the homes of Negro families. Dan Corey died in Limestone County, thereby giving his life and all he possessed to the cause of Negro education. His remains were buried in the old cemetery in Mexia, Texas.

The period of white teachers in this section lasted from 1869 to 1875.

The most prominent slave holders who came to Limestone County were Logan Street, George Washington Street and Harshel Miller. These men of course, owned the Negro families who are the ancestors of the present population of the county.

About one mile west of the Neches River and about four miles north of the present town of Mexia was the site of the "big house" of Logan Street who as it is claimed by the surviving ex-slaves, owned more slaves and was one of the most prominent of slave holders in the last days of the evil practice.

Sam Wallack, an ex-slave now deceased, related to the writer that he was owned by Logan Street, and during the days of the Civil War a depression struck the north, and their "mistress", Mrs. Jane Street, wife of Logan Street would call the little Negro children around the kitchen fire and have the cook the one Sam Wallack's mother, to grease their hair with a hot oil and then parade them before the windows and point with pride as to the amount of money they had to their slaves.

Bill Wallack, Sam's brother also related to the writer the only son across his heart that he claimed was the result of a wicked

Chapter III

THE NEGRO IN LIMESTONE COUNTY

Advent

Some few Negroes were in this section prior to the Civil War and at the outbreak of hostilities a number of slaveholders in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and perhaps a few other slave states began to migrate into Texas in order to be farther removed from the conflict, since Negro slaves were deserting their masters and fleeing to the Northern armies and to freedom.

The most prominent slave holders who came to Limestone County were Logan Stroud, Gouverneur Stroud and Meridith Miller. These men of course, owned the Negro families who are the ancestors of the present population of the county.

About one mile west of the Navasota River and about four miles north of the present town of Groesbeck was the site of the "big house" of Logan Stroud who as it is claimed by the surviving ex-slaves, owned more slaves and was one of the most prominent of slave holders in the last days of the evil practice.

Sam Medlock, ex-slave now deceased, related to the writer that he was owned by Logan Stroud, and during the days of the Civil War a depression struck the south, and their "Mistress", Mrs. Jane Stroud, wife of Logan Stroud would call the little Negro children around the kitchen door and have the cook who was Sam Medlock's mother, to grease their lips with a meat skin and then parade them before the visitors and point with pride as to the amount of meat fed to their slaves.

Eli Medlock, Sam's brother also exhibited to the writer an ugly scar across his chest that he claimed was the results of bites of a vicious

bull dog that was set on him by the Mistress for stealing a plum from a fine plum tree that grew in the yard where the "big house" stood. He also said that one of the woman's sons rode up just in time to save his life from the dog. The mother of the boys, Aunt Mary Hogan was given her freedom by Logan Stroud in order that she might nurse the little Negro boy back to health.

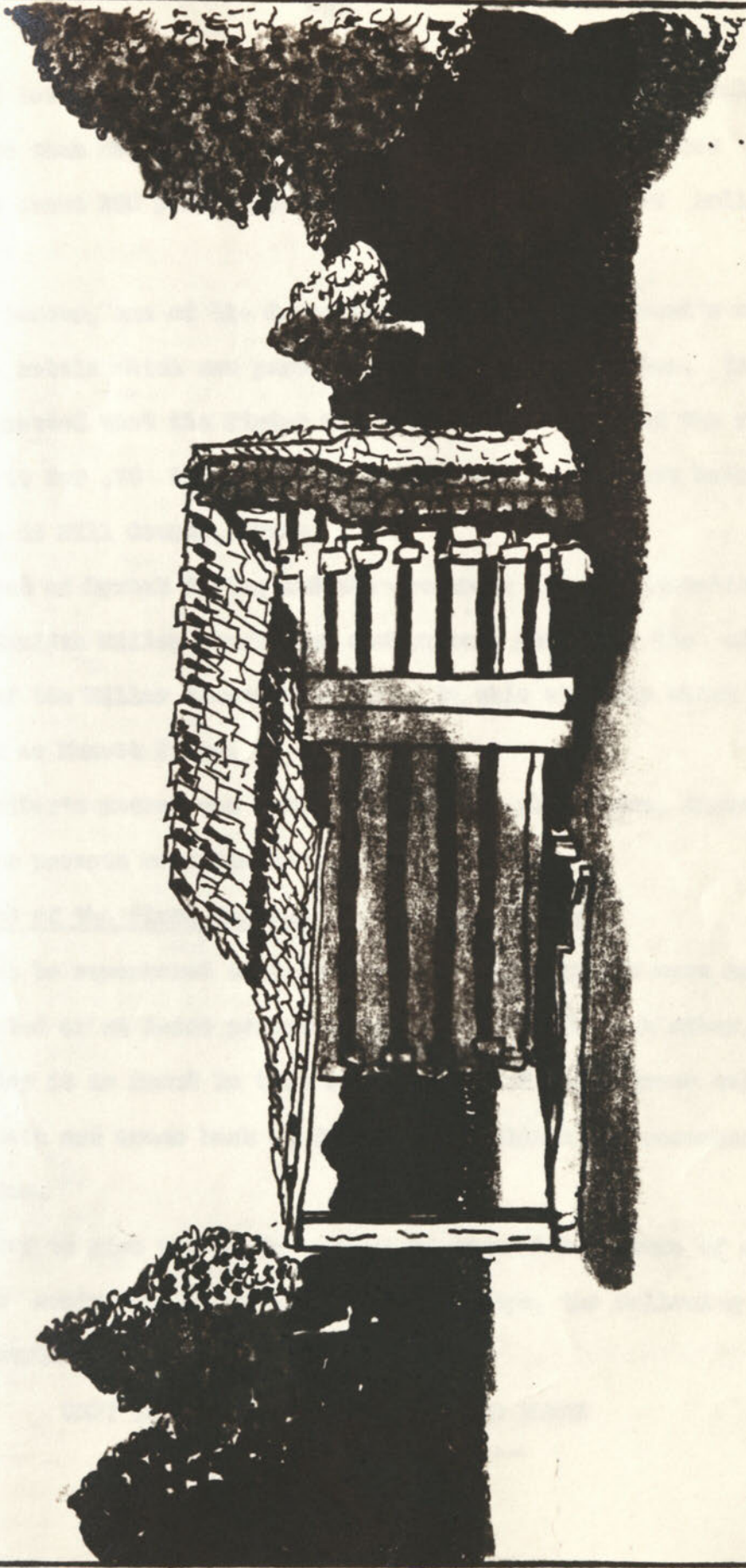
Farther north along the banks of the Navasota River near Old Bur-oak Spring was the plantation of Gouverneur Stroud, and to this day one can see the remains of chimney mounds of the old Negro quarter, as well as the rocks of the ruins of the old vat where hogs were killed for human consumption.

An incident told to the writer by Aunt Lydia Mayes, ex-slave, now deceased, that during one winter day the Negro women were engaged in cooking up lard after the big hog killing down on the banks of the river near the spring, a fight ensued and in the struggle a kettle of hot lard was overturned and rolled into the river and of course the water was about twenty feet deep at this particular point, so the women quelled the disturbance and "mum" was the word because if it were revealed to the white folk, the loss of the kettle and the lard too, many black backs would be severely lashed.

This tale was told often but little credence was placed thereon, but during the period of the Mexia oil boom in 1922-23, The Humphries Oil Company obtained certain water rights to develop the oil field and the river was pumped dry along this point which there was no record of any human eyes ever seeing the bottom of this river be-

Slave Cabin, Built in 1860

YESTERDAY AND TODAY



By Walter R. Cotton

Slave Cabin, Built in 1860

fore; and lo! and behold, this kettle that Aunt Lydia Mayes told about more than 20 years before was found lying on the bottom of the river about 150 yards from the spot where she said it rolled in.

Floyd Dancer, one of the descendents of Gouverneur Stroud's slave found the kettle which was personally viewed by the writer. It is to be regretted that the finder did not know the value of the relic and sold it for .75 to a transient family and it was last heard of somewhere in Hill County, Texas.

Due west of Buroak Spring and the Gouverneur Stroud plantation, was the Merith Miller plantation and quite a number of the offsprings of the Miller slaves still live in this vicinity which is now known as Honest Ridge.

The writer's mother was born on the Miller plantation, August 15, 1869. Her parents were slaves of Merith Miller.

Background of the first Negroes in Limestone County

It must be remembered that the slaves of the Strouds were more or less related or at least personally acquainted with each other, and unto this day it is found in this section most of the Negroes call each other cousin and trace back as far as their elders can remember, the family ties.

In order to give the reader a more vivid mental picture of conditions that confronted Negroes during these days, the following is a legal instrument:

COPY OF BILL OF SALE FOR A NEGRO WOMAN

REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That whereas, that Telettha Powell hath sold unto John Anglin a certain negro woman named Sarah, about thirty years of age as her individual property which we hereby acknowledge as such in good faith and in furtherance and assurance of the same we, Alphonso Steele and his wife, Mary Ann Steele ¹ and Marion Powell, heirs-at-law of A. G. Powell, deceased, do on our part forever relinquish to said John Anglin, his heirs and assigns forever.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and affix our scrowls this the 4th day of May, 1843. Signed in the presence of B. B. Goodrich, Seth Bates, Alphonso Steele, Mary Ann Steele and F. M. Powell.

THE STATE OF TEXAS
LIMESTONE COUNTY

Before me John R. Henry, Notary Public for the aforesaid County of Limestone, personally came and appeared F. M. Powell, to me well known, whose name appears to the foregoing instrument of writing and acknowledged his signature to the same to be his act and deed for the purpose therein contained and expressed to certify, I hereby subscribe my name and affix my seal of office at Springfield this the 12th day of December, A. D. 1849.

John R. Henry
Notary Public, County of
Limestone, State of Texas ²

¹ Alphonso Steele was a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto, April 21, 1836. His name appears on the roll of the heroes of San Jacinto in the Monument at the San Jacinto Battle Ground.

² Hampton Steele, History of Limestone County, News Printing Co., Mexia, Texas

On a whole it was claimed by the ex-slaves that their lot was a hard one, but in comparison with descriptions of slave life gathered from other sections it could be considered fair.

For some reason the slave owners of this section objected to the slaves worshipping God, and in order to hold their prayer meetings they would gather secretly at night in the dark shadows of their cabins and turn a wash kettle down with a stone under one side, and they claimed that the sound of their singing would be caught under the kettle and the white folk would never hear it.

The writer's grandmother said that the favorite song during the Civil War was:

"Green trees a'bending,
Poor sinner stands a'trembling,
The trumpet sounds within a my soul;
I aint got long to stay here.

On the Logan Stroud plantation, one Negro, Giles Cotton, great grandfather of the writer, described by Uncle Burk Simpson, that in his life time that he was considered almost a giant. He stood six feet and four inches barefooted, red headed and his face covered with freckles. He was allowed to own a wagon and a team of mules, and did haul supplies from the port at Galveston to Armour and Springfield, the only towns in Limestone County in the days of slavery.

On account of his perfect physical body, the master would lead him as if he were a stallion from cabin to cabin and there required to cohabit with the young Negro girls, and it was claimed that this was an effort to stock the plantation with oversized able bodied slaves. In support of these sayings the writer has seen and knew two of his daugh-

ters of the same name (Mary) and there was another of that name also but she died before the writer was born. These persons, of course had different mothers.

According to Uncle Burk Simpson who was owned by Mandard Stroud and later by his brother, Gouverneur Stroud, and had an unusual memory gave to the writer a record of the slave families owned by Mandard Stroud and later by Logan Stroud, dating as far back as 1860. This record has been checked by the Logan Stroud plantation record book which was in the possession of Bob Stroud, son of Logan Stroud in 1939 and found to be authentic:

<u>FAMILY NO.</u>	<u>PARENTS</u>	<u>CHILDREN</u>
1.	Sia Phillips-Tamer Phillips	Sam Kelley Exia Robinson Box Phillips Kealo Phillips Puss Phillips Crockett Phillips Ailder Phillips Neloc Phillips
2.	Miles Kelley-Leathie Kelley	Nace Kelley Kem Kelley Ormalet Kelley Healon Kelley Elbert Kelley Cannon Kelley Files Kelley Babe Kelley Dinah Kelley Mary Ann Kelley
3.	Hilliard Stroud-Harriet Stroud	Matt Stroud Noble Stroud Rhena Stroud Mint Stroud
4.	Lee Stroud-Sophia Stroud	Lee Stroud Angie Stroud Ayers Stroud

FAMILY NO. PARENTS

CHILDREN

FAMILY NO.	PARENTS	CHILDREN
		Eb Stroud Zelphia Stroud Green Phillips
5.	Cynthia Stroud-No husband	Edd Stroud Neet Stroud Charlie Stroud Jim Stroud
6.	Wesley Giddings-Ella Giddings	Yeck Giddings Bowie Giddings Suet Giddings Harris Giddings Beck Giddings Inez Giddings Fawton Giddings Hickory Giddings Scott Giddings
7.	Betsey Stroud-No husband	Missouri Stroud Annie Corilla Stroud
8.	Caroline Phillips-No husband	Martha Cotton Mandy Cotton Cynthia Ann Cotton Beazinaï Cotton Elizabeth Medlock Giles Giddings Smilie Medlock Spencer Giddings John Giddings Henry Giddings Lum Giddings
9.	Files Giddings-Martha Giddings	No children
10.	Jane Stroud-No husband	Jace Stroud Berry Stroud
11.	Box Phillips-Not named	Sarah Phillips Laura Phillips Pulley Phillips
12.	Steph Faughton-Mary Faughton	Veston Faughton Tony Faughton Vick Faughton Dump Faughton George Faughton Allen Faughton

FAMILY NO.	PARENTS	CHILDREN
13.	John Kelley-Elvina Kelley	Chaney Kelley
14.	Isaac Simpson-Nellie Simpson	Burl Simpson Burk Simpson Isaac Simpson Mary Simpson Caroline Simpson

These families belonged to Gouverneur Stroud:

1. Dave Medlock-Betty Medlock
Dave Medlock
John Medlock
Nace Medlock
Willis Medlock
Zear Medlock
Jim Medlock
Rachel Medlock
Martha Medlock
Nellie Medlock
Becky Medlock
Betsey Medlock
2. Alfred Connor-Eliza Connor
Annie Connor
Square Connor
Eliza Connor
Amie Connor
Hagar Connor
Sillar Ann Connor
Catherine Connor
Enzy Connor
Sim Connor
Warren Connor
Cass Connor
3. John Freeman-Caroline Freeman
Zack Kelley
Zeno Kelley
Taylor Kelley
Edna Kelley
Sarah Freeman
Mary Freeman
Richard Freeman
John Freeman
Eliza Freeman
4. Dan Freeman-Hildy Freeman
Mary Cotton
Hark Phillips
Man Freeman
Parthena Freeman

FAMILY NO.	PARENTS	CHILDREN
		Link Freeman Hannah Freeman Essex Freeman Ryann Freeman
5.	Ned Watson-Emily Watson	No children
6.	Gus Hinton-Ellen Hinton	Samantha Hinton Millie Hinton Docie Hinton Green Hinton Gaston Hinton
7.	Andy Williams-Delilah Williams	Andy Williams Redrick Williams
8.	Lum Cotton-Frances Cotton	Jesse Cotton Frances Cotton

Original families belonging to Logan Stroud.

1.	Anthony Trammell-Lucy Trammell	Jiles Trammell Wade Trammell Rachel Trammell Jennie Trammell Amanda Trammell Hiram Trammell Charity Melton Merritt Trammell Wood Trammell Chap Trammell Ann Trammell Martha Trammell Elizabeth Trammell Puss Trammell Dock Brown Charlie Brown Eliza Brown Eylma Ables Matilda Melton
2.	Bill Stroud-Susan Stroud	Allen Stroud Manervia Stroud
3.	Limas Kelley-Dinah Kelley	Giles Cotton Cannon Kelley Quince Kelley Chance Kelley

FAMILY NO.	PARENTS	CHILDREN
	Wink Pinkard-Hannah Pinkard	Edna Kelley Chillie Kelley Sam Kelley Miles Kelley Files Kelley
4.	Summins Stroud-No husband	Monroe Knight Houston Daniels Warren Henry Cannon Eurin
5.	Abe Johnson-Charlotte Johnson	Nace Johnson Dick Johnson Jeff Johnson Amie Johnson Frank Johnson Katie Curry
6.	Giles Cotton-Rose Cotton	Mitch Cotton Adolphus Cotton Lum Cotton Nan Cotton Amelia Cotton Mary Ann Cotton Mary Cotton Mary Cotton Rose Cotton * Hickory Cotton * Anderson Cotton Tilman Cotton March (Stalcup) * Cotton John Cotton *

Other Negro families not owned by the Strouds, but brought into the county in the late 1860's by a man named Posey.

1.	Wink Pinkard-Hannah Pinkard	Rance Pinkard Lee Pinkard Mattie Pinkard Louise Pinkard
2.	Warren Pinkard-Caroline Pinkard	John Pinkard Louis Pinkard Caroline Pinkard Julia Pinkard

* Rose Cotton was the mother of only four of the children named in Family No. 6.

FAMILY NO.	PARENTS	CHILDREN
3.	Buck Pinkard-Betsey Pinkard	Frank Pinkard Dock Pinkard Albert Pinkard Rena Pinkard Wood Pinkard Shack Pinkard Pomp Pinkard

Negro families that belonged to Memory Stroud who migrated to Limestone County immediately after freedom and could be classed as early settlers.

1.	George Echols-Sarah Echols	Joe Echols Pim Echols Frances Echols Zeno Echols Malinda Echols Elvia Echols Tolitha Echols Matilda Echols Ann Echols Sallie Echols Put Echols Paralee Echols George Echols Exia Echols
----	----------------------------	--

2.	Joe Echols-Mary Ann Echols	Sy Echols Edna Echols App Echols Jane Echols George Echols Leathie Echols Nick Echols Put Echols Fannie Echols Joe Echols
----	----------------------------	--

1

First Steps After Freedom

It was Saturday morning, June 19, 1865 when Logan Stroud appeared in an unusual mood, dressed in a long Prince Albert black coat, accord-

1 Records of slaves kept by Logan Stroud, now in the possession of the family of the late Bob Stroud, son of Logan Stroud.

ing to eyewitnesses. After summoning all of the slaves to the front yard of the "big house", there "Massa Logan", as he was called by all of the slaves, read the Emancipation Proclamation. There was great shouting and singing, and on into the afternoon the Negroes gathered up their earthly belongings, including a few banjos and began celebrating this great event by dancing the "Pigeon wing" and perhaps other steps that were in vogue at this time.

Uncle Alfred Connor who had spent the best part of his life in slavery, walked down through the line of log cabins and listened to the wierd music and began to think seriously as to the future of the freedmen who were penniless, illiterate and no place to call their homes. It is claimed that those who refused to remain on the plantation, were made to empty the straw from their pillows and mattresses and take to the woods as dumb driven cattle.

Uncle Alfred soon met Grandpa Davey Medlock who at this time was a very old man, and the sad plight of the Negroes was laid before him; and it is said that he pondered a few minutes and then called Uncle Alfred over to a corner of the fence and with his assistance laid three cedar rails cross-wise, forming a triangle which served as an improvised pulpit, and at once they got down on their knees and prayed to God that He would lead these poor helpless Negroes to the light. Grandpa Davey arose singing a hymn. By this time a crowd had gathered and then the old man began preaching, and it was said that this sermon planted the first seeds of Christian citizenship in the hearts of Negroes in Limestone County. The older ones still claim that it saved them from destruction.

Forming Community Life

The present day communities of Limestone County are built upon the old plans laid out by these ex-slaves more than eighty years before, and still bear the names given by them.

Beginning on the west bank of the Navasota River in 1870, Merrit Trammell, son of Anthony (Andy) Trammell, felt the urge to become a minister and founded a church which he named Mount Zion.

Merrit Trammell was looked on by the white people as a person who spreaded dissension among his group. He was quick to anger and ready for a fight at any time. It is claimed that when he preached in his church he kept his loaded shot gun leaning against the pulpit.

He teamed up with Mitch Cotton, who was also personae non grata, and became involved in a shooting scrape with the authorities which resulted in the death of some of the white men. Mitch Cotton was wounded but later escaped across the Red River into the Indian Territory (Now Oklahoma) and changed his name. He lived there until he became a very old man and died in 1929 without ever returning home or revealing his whereabouts to his relatives. His identity was discovered by an acquaintance a few years before his death.

Merrit Trammell retired to a cave on the banks of the Navasota River and there like a lion at bay, fought off his attackers. A white man named Harcrow who was also afoul of the law made a deal with the authorities for his freedom to trap Merrit Trammell, and in some way he made friends with him, and through the use of whiskey Trammell became unconscious and was shot while in the cave.

After the death of Merrit Trammell, the old church was moved about a mile across the river to the eastside and it was re-named Mount Gilead

Primitive Baptist Church, and to this day it is active and has a good membership.

Springfield

In 1870 and '71 the Houston & Texas Central Railroad had built as far north as the present town of Groesbeck and was pushing on toward Corsicana. The county seat of Limestone County was located at Springfield which was on a direct line to the temporary terminal. It is said that Judge Lynn then County Judge with others of the town who shared his views, refused to pay certain assessments to the railroad for building its line through the town as other towns had done which were served by it. The railroad retaliated by building its line around to the east about a mile thereby creating a little stop called Canaan Switch. Later on a Negro community sprang up called Shady Grove under the leadership of Mack Jackson, a Primitive Baptist preacher and also the first pastor of Mount Gilead Church in 1875.

A little stop was formed at Groesbeck when the steam trains began running and Springfield being an inland town was doomed under the march of progress and finally "gave up the ghost" and moved to Groesbeck six miles to the south after the burning of the old court house as has been stated elsewhere in this study.

Springfield became a Negro community after the exodus of the whites, and a Methodist church was built under the leadership of Button Evans and wife, Amanda, Jim Reynolds, Sam Hawkins and others.

Other Negroes of note in these early days were, Ralph Long, Negro politician, Sam Rhodes, Ephraim Foster and Amanda Curry.

Rocky Crossing

At a point on the Navasota River south of the old Gouverneur Stroud plantation there was a rocky ford where the Indians and early settlers crossed the stream for how long, nobody knows, and on the west bank, a Negro who had been freed in this section by the name of Davey Taylor, founded a church under a brush arbor, and named it Rocky Crossing. At a later date a school was there and the Methodists worshipped in the building for more than twenty years, when a church building was built under the leadership of a Reverend George A. Shanklin, Pastor. The present structure was erected under the pastorate of the Reverend S. A. Keesee, who had a stone altar placed on the grounds and dedicated the spot as permanent seat for the Waco District Institute of the Methodist Church.

Some of the early settlers were; Sam Hawkins, Sam Medlock, Eli Medlock, Lum Cotton, Tom Taylor, John Pinkard, Rance Pinkard, Lee Pinkard and Frank Pinkard. These persons were once slaves.

Sardis

This community was founded by an old slave and a Primitive Baptist preacher, named Teemer Johnson, who strayed northward in the county after freedom. With the aid of an old bachelor, Uncle Dave Holly who was perhaps more than fifty years old when freed, Joe Echels, Jack Arbuckle and Wylie Brown.

This community flourished for a number of years, founded a public school, but in later years it has declined and is looked upon as a old land mark.

Bethlehem and Woodland

Bethlehem, the Primitive Baptist Church being the first enterprise in the county to establish Negro community life, was begun by Thornton Carter, Ell Ross, Joe Ross, Clem Carter and Peter Mofett. Woodland was the name given the public school and in later years this school was merged with Sardis and Smith Chapel.

On the fringes of the community can be found two other churches, viz: Smith Chapel A. M. E. Church and Bethsadia Missionary Baptist Church.

Comanche Crossing

It seems that from the deeds of Grandpa Davey Medlock that he was imbued with an evangelical spirit as has been stated elsewhere in this study, that the first thing he did on the day of his emancipation was to preach a sermon. This old man, the father of all of the Medlocks in Texas, cut some logs and erected a temporary church near a ford on the Navasota River at the site of the camping grounds of the Comanche Indians who lived there many years before. He named his church Mount Zion (Methodist).

He was aided by Andy Williams, Jeff Johnson, Zack Kelley, Taylor Kelley, Warren Connor and Sim Connor.

The church was moved to the east bank of the river after the bridge was built, and it served by some of the old circuit rider preachers, among whom were, Dan Humphries and Gabe Wilson. The church is still known as Mt. Zion Methodist Church.

Sandy

Farther to the north in Limestone County, the trail of Grandpa

Davey Medlock is still in evidence. He and Uncle Sawney Henry, another old ex-slave settled down and bought homes and at once built another church which they called Sandy. This community and church started sometime between 1870 and 1875. The old records of the church shows that Uncle Sawney Henry gave the land upon which the church and school were built.

Quite a few of these early settlers of this community were the slaves of a Captain Barber of which little is known.

Some of the early settlers who were ex-slaves of Captain Barber were, Sam Favors, Phil Favors, Bill Hobbs, Lige Hobbs, Dow Hobbs, Easter Medlock, Nan Briscoe, Bettie Johnson, Manervia Carroll, Sawney Henry, Allen Sparks, Alfred Sparks, Terrill Sparks, Jane Dancer, Timan Henry and Ben Thomas.

Cedar

To the west side of the county in what is commonly known as the edge of the black land, the freedmen who drifted from the plantations of Meriath Miller, the Davidsons, the Wards and Burneys, under the leadership of Uncle Berry Baker built the Cedar Methodist Church and a little log school house: This community was composed of Negro families numbering about three, and they are, the Bakers, Magees and Busbys.

First Methodist Meeting House, Old Springfield, Balt 1881

A REMINDER OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

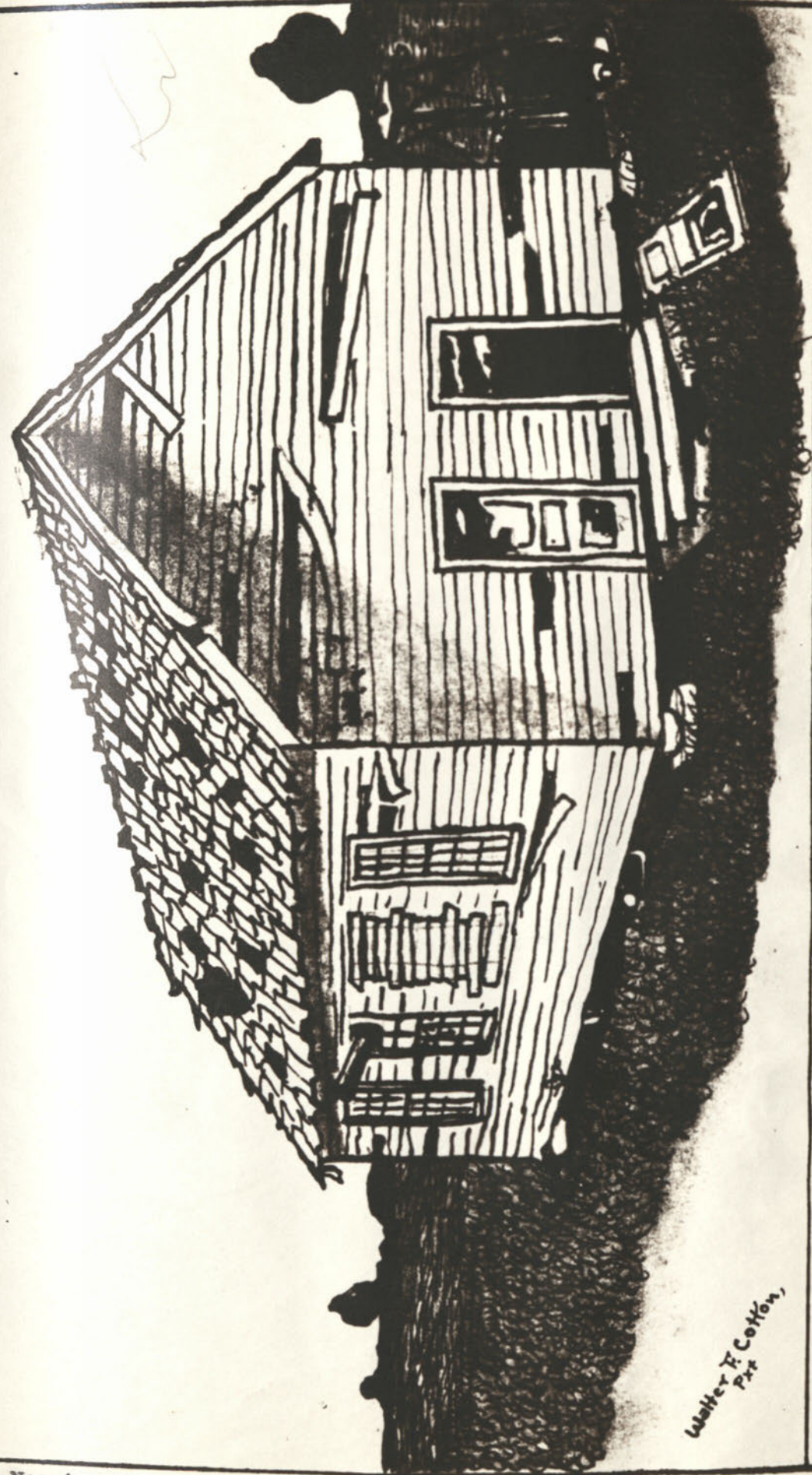


FIGURE No. 4

Walter F. Cotton,
Pvt

First Methodist Meeting House, Old Springfield. Built 1881

Chapter IV

PATTERNS OF CULTURE OF THE NEGRO IN LIMESTONE COUNTY

Early adventures in Education

When the Negroes of Limestone County as well as every other place in the southland were freed, they were totally illiterate, because during the days of slavery it was unlawful for Negroes to be caught looking on a paper and stiff penalties were meted out to persons caught teaching Negroes to read.

In making his first steps in education after being left alone by the white teachers, it became necessary that they provide themselves with teachers from their own group. As there were no particular need for a highly educated man or woman, the requirements for a teacher would be that he or she attain the grade of about the fourth year level in grammar school, and then go forth and impart their newly acquired knowledge to those who were less fortunate.

Some of the reconstruction period Negro teachers were, D. C. Lacy, a Mr. Calloway, a Mr. Brown, Walter David and Jack White.

Of these early teachers, D. C. Lacy was also a Methodist preacher, and was one of the leading men of his church. He served as District Superintendent of the Austin District and a member of the Trustee Board of Samuel Huston College, Austin, Texas. He lived to a ripe old age and died in the city of Austin, December 25, 1925. His remains were brought to Limestone County and buried in the old Bend Cemetery, that at his request, he might sleep with his fathers.

Obstacles-- Dixie's Reign of Terror

After reading the Emancipation Proclamation, the path of the freed-

men was by no means rosy. As an aftermath of the war, there appeared in the vicinity around old Springfield a white man who in some way acquired a warped idea that he could avenge the wrongs done to the south in freeing the slaves. This man was known as "Dixie". He proceeded unrestrained to murder Negroes whenever and wherever he caught them conveniently.

A piece of rope dangled from a bending tree over the old Springfield-Groesbeck road for more than thirty years, and it was claimed by the older folks that it was the remains left which was used to hang two Negroes named Seymour Ables and Norville Rhodes by this terrible "Dixie".

Another incident told that during the reign of "Dixie", that he chanced to meet an old Negro woman by the name of Aunt Daphne who had been fishing, so at once at the point of a pistol forced the old woman to dance until she was exhausted and then told to get on her knees beside a log and pray; and while praying he shot her in the back and went on his way.

During this reign of terror the Negroes closed their churches and schools which they had recently organized, and even left their homes at night and slept in the woods. Those who had the courage to stay in their cabins saw to it that no lights were burning and all doors were securely barred.

Martial law was still in force in certain sections of the south and during this period there were several companies of Federal soldiers stationed at Waco, Texas, and Merritt Trammell, the slavery-

time preacher and acknowledged leader of Negroes in his section rode horse back to Waco and brought back a company of soldiers who surprised "Dixie" in a deserted cabin near the Springfield bridge on the Navasota River. He was cut off from his horse, but in his attempt to flee, was shot by the soldiers.

It is claimed by the older folk that while he lay on the ground grievously wounded, he threw handfuls of silver money in every direction before he died.

An inspection of the building revealed a low fire in the old fire place and a portion of pork ribs were cooking slowly on live coals. Evidently "Dixie" was preparing a meal before his untimely death.

Acquiring Homes

The new Negro as has been stated elsewhere in this study, emerged from bondage penniless but thanks to Providence, he had physical stamina. He was practically saying: "Turned a loose in the road", so it became evident at once that he must "sink or swim, live or die"; and too, land in Texas was cheap, so they immediately took advantage and began buying tracts of land throughout the section where they were freed.

Among the early purchasers of farms were, Ralph Long, Button Evans, Jim Reynolds, John Henderson, Jack Murphy, Nace Medlock, Dave Medlock, John Medlock, Lum Cotton, Sawney Henry and Dow Hobbs. Up to 1951 Negroes owned 100,000 acres of land in this county.¹

¹ Deed Records of Limestone County, Texas, Groesbeck, 1951.

It is to be regretted that the children of these Negroes have added very little to their farm lands but on the other hand have disposed of a large portion and moved to the cities, and it is feared that this land will never again be in the hands of Negroes.

Recreational Activities

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." This saying was soon realized by the Negroes who had just been freed, and after their work in the fields, and clearing away the timbered lands they had newly acquired, it became necessary that some means of recreation be devised to break the monotony of continued labor. Such games as "In the well" and "Neighbor, Neighbor, Lend me Your Hatchet" were created, much to the pleasure of the children as well as the dusky belles and swash-buckling young bronze colored men of that day.

There were Saturday night suppers given by enterprising folk to earn a little extra money as well as entertainment. The people would amuse themselves with a kind of dance accompanied with loud clapping of the hands, and generally some leather-lunged man would let roll from his manly chest long and loud:

"Red bird, soon in de morning,
Red bird, soon in de morning;
Gonna ketch dat red bird,
Soon in de morning",

and until far into the night the cavorting would continue. There was also another kind of dance known as the square dance which has been revived by the people in the past two years. This dance was more colorful than what you see today. The caller of the "figgers" was a master of the trade and it was indeed a treat to see the dancers swing

their partners and promenade.

The music consisted generally of an old fiddle supported by a battered banjo, and above all one could hear the patting of a big flat foot blending in with the words of their favorite song:

"Old hen cackled, and de rooster laid de egg,
I want some chicken so bad".

In more "diective" or swanky level of this society, the young people indulged in a more dignified dance called, "The Cake Walk", and its theme song was a soft and harmonious melody, with these words:

"If you love, den I love you;
Way down in Georgia".

When the party was over, the judges of the evening activities would award the most graceful couple a big cake dressed with curled strips of paper and the top covered with a kind of icing and rock candy.

Political Activities

In previous chapters the reader has been given a word picture of Limestone County and its environs from the wild and wooly days, when the Negroes not only battled against nature for an existence, but also the laws of the land which deprived them of the most cherished gift known to many, and that is liberty.

The Negroes of this section came out of the Civil War as elsewhere, emancipated but not free; yet as a race, had a moment of enjoying the rights of real citizenship as accorded to others.

In the days of the "carpet baggers", the radicals from the north rushed down immediately after the Civil War to take advantages of every opportunity that presented itself to further their personal am-

bitions, both politically and financially, as well as to humiliate the vanquished slave-holders. They proceeded to picture the southern white man a rebel and thereby deny him the right to hold office, and in his stead Negroes were elected to the legislative positions in many of the southern states, much to the chagrin of the once ruling class.

The Influence of Other Races on the Pattern of Culture of the Negroes

In this immediate section Dave Medlock, former slave of the Strouds, was sent as a representative to the State Legislature, and from the adjoining Robertson County was sent Giles Cotton, also a former slave of Strouds. It must be remembered that these men who were duly elected as representatives could not read or write, neither did they have the remotest idea of constitutional law, yet thrust instantly into positions of grave importance whereby the rebuilding of a war-torn country and to promote a friendly relationship between the two races that were destined to live side by side and work out a peaceful future.

These measures were considered by the white man in Limestone County as a slap in the face while he was down and at once germinated in his brain the creating of terrorizing organizations to frighten or force the illiterate Negroes from the voting polls as well as a fear to even attempt to hold a public office.

Realizing the fact that Abraham Lincoln was a republican and being the President of the United States during the Civil War, as well as being the individual who with a stroke of his pen set free four million Negro slaves, it would be quite natural that the Negroes would cast their lot with the Republican Party. In the ranks of this party

a few Negroes in Limestone County became quite outstanding. Ralph Long was the recognized political boss during the period of reconstruction. In this period he acquired several hundred acres of land, contributed to the upbuilding of his community in more ways than one. It was rumored that his lands and money were compensation for "selling out the Negroes" politically, but this accusation was never proved.

In later days the Republican Party, whose strength lies in the north and east had a just feeling that the Negroes should always support their platform, and of course by way of rewarding the Negro race for its continued support, would select a few choice and influential Negroes for a cut of the political "pie", as was evidenced by the appointment of William T. Vernon at one time the Register of the Treasury of the United States.

It was soon realized by the Negroes of Limestone County and the whole country at large, that to elect a Republican President did not help the cause of Negroes, especially when they lived in a state controlled by a one party system. Then too, they were in personal contact with a democrat constable, sheriff, district attorney, commissioner, representative to the state legislature, superintendent of public schools and governor. Then it dawned on the Negroes to make friends with those in power, so we find at present the balance of power in the Democrat Party.

ANN FREDERICK, daughter of the writer, died July 10, 1937, at the age of 110 years. She was used as a slave by Henry Stroud in Jackson County and afterwards by Logan Stroud of Limestone County. She remembered the massacre at Fort Parker.

LIVED LONGEST



Walter F. Cotton
Pitt

AUNT FRANCES MEDLOCK, grandmother of the writer, died July 10, 1937, at the age of 110 years. She was owned as a slave by Memory Stroud in Leon County and afterwards by Logan Stroud of Limestone County. She remembered the massacre at Fort Parker.

Chapter V

THE REORGANIZATION AND PROGRESS

Home Life

As we turn back the dust covered pages of Texas History and read of the activities of the people who changed the vast wildernesses from the haunts of the cougar, the timber wolf, the wild deer and the happy hunting grounds of the fierce Comanche, Tehuacana and Cherokee Indians, into a peaceful and highly industrious section, lying and being situated in the central part of Texas which we now call Limestone County; it is indeed interesting to know and to see the contributions made by the Negroes who were brought here in a vain attempt to perpetuate slavery.

In the place of the log houses, surrounded by zig-zag rail fences and razor-backed hogs wallowing in the front yard, one can see as one speeds in an automobile upon the ribbons of concrete, the homes of Negroes in Limestone County, dotted here and there along these thoroughfares, or some distance down a quiet and picturesque lane in a grove of trees, there is the home of today's Negro. It is a well built house consisting of six or more rooms according to the size of the family. There is a garage for the family car, a barn for the stock feed and shelter for the farm machinery. There are milk cows and off-times cattle raised for beef; hogs and chickens. Horses and mules are still raised although fifty per cent of Negro farmers use tractors.

The home of the average Negro family consists of two or more bed rooms, living room, dining room and kitchen. About seventy-five per cent of the homes are painted and well constructed, while twenty-five

per cent are unpainted and in a great need of repair.

When not working in the fields the farm people usually visit with the near by families, fish in streams and hunt. They listen to their radios mostly for night entertainment.

Strange as it may seem, but gone are the days of the big camp meetings, baptizings, Saturday picnics where the rural Negroes gathered by the hundreds, but now they converge on the little city of Mexia, the largest in the county, and there mill up and down Belknap Street, known far and wide as the "Find 'em All".

The Negroes of Limestone County who live in the towns are very much on the same level with their rural cousins as to the standard of living. As the average person knows, those who live in towns have more modern conveniences such as electricity, sewage, etc.

The home family life in the towns is practically the same as in the rurals, only the ever present places which would not measure up to the standards of wholesome society, always stand as a temptation to the Negro boys and girls.

Community Life

The average community in Limestone County gravitates around the church, the school and the cemetery. There was a time when the Negro preacher and pastor of the community church, and the school teacher were the acknowledged leaders, but in this age of mergers this is by no means the pattern of the present day society in the rural community. The pastor, as a usual thing, lives in a town perhaps within a radius of fifty miles and serves three or four churches of his

denomination and giving each Sunday in a month, hence the church ceases to be the place for weekly meetings and therefore the people of that community drift to the towns on week-ends and the preacher has become a monthly visitor.

Church Life

It is claimed that the Negro as a race is naturally emotional, and in view of the fact that he was in bondage in the United States for 244 years, there developed a kind of complex to look on all other races as his enemies. After he had been taught that God existed who in the course of time administered justice to all creatures, therefore he then looked to Him for his deliverance. He also noticed that the people who championed the cause of freedom were identified with churches.

The Methodist Episcopal Church took the lead in the movement for freedom of the slaves, as well as financed the activities of the white teachers who served the Negroes during the period of reconstruction.

Immediately after the close of the Civil War, Methodist churches were organized in Limestone County, viz: Mount Zion at Comanche Crossing, Sandy, Rocky Crossing, and Springfield. Some years later as the Negroes spread over the entire county there were other churches of this denomination founded.

The Primitive Baptist Church was also among the first religious organizations to put its appearance in this section, and in fact the first church known was a Primitive Baptist, Mount Zion founded on the west bank of the Navasota River as stated previously in this study. Churches of this denomination were built at Doyle (Old Shady

Grove), Mount Gilead, Sardis and Bethlehem. Other Primitive Baptist churches were built in later years at Sandy Grove, Groesbeck, Mexia, Coolidge, Webb Chapel, Tehuacana and Callina.

The African Methodist Church, largest of all Negro institutions, was organized in this county in the latter days of the reconstruction period. Places of organization were, Saint John at Mexia, Smith Chapel, East Mexia, Shady Grove and Coolidge.

The African Methodists do not have a strong hold in this county as would be expected.

Missionary Baptist churches are very numerous and out number the rest of the protestant churches throughout this county. This denomination appeared in the early days of the period of national development. The Antioch Baptist Church in Mexia is the largest of this denomination in the county. There are four others in Mexia also. Heads Branch at Groesbeck may be classed as second in size. Other churches are located at Coolidge, Tehuacana, Bethsadia and New Home.

In the twenty-five years the Church of God in Christ has attracted the Negroes in great numbers and at present enjoys a large membership. Its membership in this section, especially the older ones have been recruited from the ranks of other churches, but in later years we find children born and reared under the influence of this organization therefore it has become permanent.

This denomination maintains churches at Mexia, Coolidge, Sandy and Shady Grove.

Other denominations such as Church of Christ, Colored Methodist

Episcopal, Presbyterians and the like have not been successful in gaining a foothold in this section.

The following shows the progress of the Negro churches in Limestone County for the past fifty years:

SURVEY OF NEGRO CHURCHES

Year	Baptists	No. 2		African Methodists	Church of God in Christ
		Primitive Baptist	Methodists		
1901	7	6	7	10	0
1951	14	11	10	7	5

MEMBERSHIP

1901	320	370	530	190	0
1951	1153	450	510	500	365

MINISTERS

1901	7	6	4	4	0
1951	12	11	6	6	5

School Life

Out of the dim past and murky shadows of the reconstruction period there have been long strides made from the old log one-room school building that could be found at Cedar, Comanche Crossing, Springfield and Shady Grove, where the white Coreys and others labored with an illiterate race to give to the coming generation its first step in modern cit-

izenship.

From these log cabin schools there can be found three accredited high schools in the county and sixteen accredited elementary schools.

The Dunbar High School at Mexia, recently constructed of asbestos material on modern plans and is equipped with Home Making department, Manual Training, Music and Science Laboratory and other features that go to make a full high school program.

The Woodland High School, four miles west of Mexia is a consolidated Independent District of Negroes. J. R. Farris, Superintendent has developed it into an outstanding institution in past few years.

The Blackshear High School at Groesbeck has one brick building with several wood frame buildings on the campus. It carries the required features for a high school program.

Elementary schools are located at Mexia, Springfield, Coolidge, Sandy, Mustang, Frosa-Kirk, Lavendar, Ben Hur, Sims Colony, Webb Chapel, Thornton, Kosse, Billington and Delia.

In the city of Mexia, the Primitive Baptist Church founded the Saint Paul Industrial and Normal College in 1925. It had some struggles during the depression period of 1929-1939, and for several seasons it was forced to close its doors but with the untiring efforts of the leaders of the Primitive Baptist church and the assistance of Claude Nussbaum, a white banker and business of Mexia, the doors were opened and the outlook for the school was quite promising.

With the outbreak of the World War II, Saint Paul was again forced to close and too, it was not able to meet the requirements of the then State Department of Education, so at the present time the school has

changed over to a Veterans Vocational school.

The following shows the progress of Negro schools in Limestone County in the past fifty years:

SURVEY OF NEGRO SCHOOLS

Year	Elementary Schools	No. 3 High Schools	Accredited Elem. Schools	Accredited High Schools
1901	20	0	0	0
1951	0	0	16	3

TEACHERS WITHOUT DEGREES

1901	24	0	0	0
1951	0	0	0	0

TEACHERS WITH BACHELOR DEGREES

1901	0	0	0	0
1951	0	0	65	15

TEACHERS WITH MASTER DEGREES

1901	0	0	0	0
1951	0	0	3	4

PUPILS

1901	972	0	0	0
1951	0	0	1919	350

Other Activities

In 1927, the Commissioners Court of Limestone County agreed to supplement the state funds and approved of a Negro County Agricultural Agent and immediately S. M. Merriwether was sent to the county to serve the Negro farmers. At once he became actively engaged in working with them as well as white farmers in the immediate section.

His work was centered around demonstration activities which were set up by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, the founder of the Extension work.

Merriwether helped the farmers find their problems and aided them in solving the same. Demonstrations were conducted with groups in the improved practices of agriculture as well as home and community life.

Demonstrations in soil conservation, livestock sanitation, poultry production, orchard work and in fact everything that goes to make for improved farm life were given for the benefit of the farmers.

Working under the direction of C. H. Waller, then State Leader at Prairie View A. & M. College, Prairie View, Texas and H. S. Estelle, District Agent for the Northern District, Merriwether was quite successful.

In 1927, the Commissioners Court of Limestone County soon realized the good being accomplished by the Negro County Agricultural Agent, it was also agreed by this honorable body to supplement the state funds and approved of a Negro County Home Demonstration Agent, and at once Miss Maggie Brown was sent to the county. She remained in that capacity for more than a year when she was transferred elsewhere, and Mrs. M. J. Campbell succeeded her. Mrs. Campbell did a great work among Negro women in the rural districts.

While returning from her former home in Conroe, Texas in the com-

pany with some friends, their automobile was involved in a wreck at Buffalo, Texas which resulted in her death. This happened in the latter part of October, 1933. A Mrs. Booth came in November of the same year and remained until June, 1934, when Miss Janice B. Morgan took over the work.

Military

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, we have no records where any Negroes of this county served. This war did not reach gigantic proportions, and consequently there was no need for the government to resort to the drafting of men. The war lasted only four months.

When World War I broke out in August, 1914, it was soon apparent that the United States would sooner or later be drawn into the conflict, and at once preparations began to be made for the impending storm. In April, 1917 the United States declared war against Germany and her allies. At once orders for the drafting of every able bodied man between the ages of 21 and 31 regardless of race were issued. Through the issuance of these orders thousands of Negroes were called as well. This county, like all others contributed its share of men. The first contingent of Negroes left Groesbeck, the County Seat, for Camp Travis, Texas in November, 1917 and was at once placed in the 307 and 309 Army Engineers, U. S. A. After about two months "boot training", they were sent to France with the A. E. F. The second contingent of Negroes left on April 1, 1918, also for Camp Travis, Texas, and incidentally, the writer was included in this number. These men were placed in several units. Some went to the 331 Engineers, 337 Engineers, 412 Quartermaster Corps, and some went to Camp Funston, Kansas, and were identified with the famous 92nd all

Negro division under the command of Major General Bullard.

After the April 1, 1918 movement of men, each month thereafter until September, 1918 men were called to the colors.

Fortunately there were no Negro soldiers from Limestone County killed in action during this war. Joe Lee Green from Mexia was shell-shocked and gassed ^{1x} which contributed to his death some years later.

A large number of Limestone County Negro men saw active service in this war, being in front line trenches and experienced actual hand to hand combat with the enemy.

Limestone County Negro men were identified in the following units: Infantry, Field Artillery, Signal Corps, Medical Corps, Engineers, Stevedores, and one man, Josh Echols was in the Navy.

World War II broke out September 1, 1939 in Europe when the Germans invaded France. Again it was seen that the United States would have to fight another war on foreign soil. Strained relations had existed for some time between the United States and Japan. There also existed a political and military alliance with Germany, Italy and Japan which was often referred to as the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis.

Out of an early morning misty sky, December 7, 1941, Japanese bomber planes roared unopposed over a fleet of U. S. warships lying at anchor at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and in a space of an hour, practically the entire fleet was destroyed and thousands were killed. America, again was at war!

The government had realized that war would come and had been drafting men and making preparations a year before the attack.

1?

As in World War I, the Negroes of Limestone County were affected in the same way as the Negroes and all other races throughout the nation. There was a better approach to the national problems during World War II than in World War I. The President of the United States issued his famous order 8802 called Fair Employment Practices Commission during the mobilization period prior to the out-break of hostilities. This order utilized all of the nation's man-power regardless of race. Negro men and women who were not drafted or volunteered into the armed services at once rushed to the industrial centers of the nation in this great war effort to work for these unheard-of-before high salaries.

There were more opportunities for Negro men and women in the armed forces than ever before. Instead of being limited to the Infantry, Artillery and labor battallions, they were integrated into all branches.

When the end of the war came in 1945, the Negro men and women of Limestone County were represented in every branch of the armed forces. There were two commissioned officers from the county and any number of non-commissioned.

At this writing there are more than one hundred Negro boys from Limestone County serving in the armed forces while the United Nations are in an undeclared war in Korea with the North Koreans and Communist China.

Athletics

The Negroes of Limestone County became actively engaged in athletics about the turn of the 20th century. Baseball was their leading sport. Teams were organized in the following communities: Sandy, Elm, Jacks Creek (Now Woodland), Springfield, Doyle, Rocky Crossing, Cotton Gin

and Mexia. Jim Sutton, pitcher on the Sandy team was the first known Negro in this entire section to throw a curve ball, and for many years as a pitcher, he kept all batters at his mercy. Johnny Henderson, Jr. was one of the oldest promoters of the game and was called in his day one of the best second basemen. Wade Morgan of the Sandy community, who later attended Samuel Huston College at Austin, was the first Negro baseball player in the county to enter into the professional game. He joined several of the eastern and middle western teams. The writer was the next player to be reared in this county to join up with the professionals in the old Texas Colored League, playing with Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth and Austin teams. Other outstanding Negro baseball players were, Warner McDonald, George Pigford, George Henderson, Steve Callion, Tom Iglehart and "Sugar" Jackson. These players never failed to draw tremendous crowds on the days of the games.

In later days Homer "Blue Goose" Curry, reared in old Springfield, became a sensational baseball player and soon went north to join the professionals. He is at present Manager of the Birmingham Black Barons. Woodrow Wilson, another product of Springfield, made quite a reputation and pitched for several seasons for the Kansas City Monarchs.

Football became exceedingly popular in the section as Negro boys had now begun to attend college in great numbers where they learned the game and of course introduced it in their local community schools. This county produced the following players who were outstanding on their respective teams during their college days: Lawrence Davies, Sanford Echols, J. R. Farris, Dr. J. A. Chatman of Prairie View A. & M. College; Farley Lewis, S. O. Kelley and W. H. White of Wiley

College and the writer, a graduate of Samuel Huston College.

Coach G. R. Miller, Wiley College who is now Head Coach at Wheatley High School, San Antonio, must be given credit in giving Dunbar High School, Mexia, its first winning football team. Coach W. W. Sewell, Wiley College, and a protege of Miller must be given credit for building the greatest football machine at Dunbar High School, that this section has had the chance to witness. Coach Sewell volunteered as a private in the U. S. Army in 1940 and was discharged in 1946 with the rank of Captain. He is at present practicing law in Kansas City, Mo.

Limestone County Negro Fair Association

In 1928 during the Negro Teachers Institute held in the Woodland High School, S. M. Merriwether, Negro County Agricultural Agent, interested the leaders in having a county fair annually. The Limestone County Negro Fair Association was duly organized. The first fair was held on the campus of Dunbar High School in Mexia. Mr Merriwether was named General Manager, and through his efforts the white citizens of the city gave the Association five acres of choice land on the west side of the city to be used as a fair ground.

Each year there were four days of exhibitions, save one year, 1930 when the depression struck the nation. These exhibitions have been featured with farm products, livestock, etc. There have been more than \$500. worth of prizes given to farmers for their exhibits.

For amusements, the Association employed each year carnival shows which attracted crowds of more than 10,000 persons.

The Fair Association prospered for about ten years when Mr. S. M. Merriwether's health failed and with his death, so was the end of the Association.

Music and Art

Limestone County and its immediate vicinity cannot boast of nationally known musicians and artists, but it is altogether fitting and proper that the Negro's contribution in this field within the confines of this study should at least be mentioned. As far back as the 1880's one Porter Robinson of Cotton Gin, did organize a brass band and was known far and near for their music played at Negro gatherings. In the gay nineties, Warren Hawkins organized a brass band in the Rock Crossing community. There was also organized in the late nineties at Comanche Crossing by the younger boys a band composed of drums, fifes and flutes.

Prof. Lawrence Carlyle Tatum of Mexia organized a band at the Dunbar High School, but it was soon disbanded on account of the majority of members graduated, and too, Prof. Tatum accepted employment at a camp of the U. S. Civilian Conservation Corps at Springfield. While there he organized another band which rendered many musical programs much to the enjoyment of the general public. This band was invited to Dallas in 1936 to play at the Texas Centennial Exposition.

While mentioning Prof. Lawrence Carlyle Tatum, it is well to offer him as a leading poet of this section. His writing features the southern Negro dialect to a perfection. Unfortunately, his book has not been widely circulated, hence few people know about him.

Other individual contributors to music could be named as follows: Mrs. Ruby Eloise Pollock, Pianist who headed the Music Department at Dunbar High School, Mexia for a number years, Mrs. J. W. Heard of Rocky Public School organized what was known as the Cotton Club which had the pleasure

of appearing before the Texas Legislature in Austin, in concert. Mrs. Nee Onita Pigford, Pianist and head of the Music Department at the Woodland High School, Mexia, has made a definite contribution to the cause of music in this section. Miss Nina L. Grey, Pianist and Soprano soloist, once a member of the famous Samuel Huston College Treble Clef, also has made contributions to the music world creditably and with much honor.

The earliest known painter of pictures in this section was Laura Medlock who lived to be 90 years of age. She had only native ability but with that she attracted much attention with her paintings depicting religious scenes. The writer is at present recognized as the most outstanding painter who was reared in Limestone County. He has had training in the Art Department at Prairie View A. & M. College.

Adventures in Medicine

The earliest known Negro Medical doctor in Limestone County was a Dr. Moore who practiced medicine in and around Mexia 45 years ago. It is known where he received his medical training, but it is positive that he practiced without a State license.

A few years after slavery there were any number of Negro "quack" doctors and were commonly called "conjurers" who concocted their different kinds of herbs and roots, and among them were, bitter root, high and low John-the-conqueror. This they chewed, brewed tea, and made little bags that were worn around the waists or legs of the patients. In some way they lived through these ordeals and believed they were cured.

Uncle Alex Dancer, who was a slave belonging at one time to Logan Stroud, was the most famous of all the "conjurer" doctors, and it was claimed that cold sweat secreted in profusion from the palms of his hands at all times

and he would rub the "tummys" of the little boys and thereby drive out all symptoms of malaria which they had acquired by eating green peaches and wild mustang grapes. He enjoyed a wide practice in his lifetime.

In 1906 Dr. W. H. White, a graduate of Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn., opened an office in Mexia and practiced medicine very successfully until his death in 1935.

Dr. Joseph A. Chatman, a graduate of Meharry Medical College, began practicing medicine in Mexia in 1926, and in 1935 opened the Chatman Hospital for Negroes. In 1940 Dr. Chatman moved his practice to Lubbock, Texas where he is at present.

Dr. R. D. Miller, a graduate of Meharry Medical College, came to Mexia in 1935 and took over the practice of Dr. W. H. White. After practicing two years he moved to Memphis, Tenn.

Dr. S. M. Pollock, graduate of the school of dentistry, Howard University, Washington, D. C. opened an office in Mexia and has enjoyed a lucrative practice until this day.

Business Ventures

The grocery business among Negroes can be traced back for more than 40 years, and in Mexia and vicinity, Jasper McDonald, Reed Pierson and Santa Anna Echols could be called pioneers. At present one can look with pride at the self-serving grocery store out at Echolsboro, run by Jack Echols.

Negroes did not enter into the field of Pharmacy in Limestone County until 1923, when James N. Reynolds, Jr. opened the first drug store on West Main Street in Mexia, and it was known as the Square Deal. It lasted several years and was bought in by W. C. David, a Pharmacist, who finished

the course in Howard University, Washington, D. C. Later on L. H. McBay and W. C. McBay opened a drug store which prospered but soon sold out to Dr. J. A. Chatman who in turn sold to L. H. Kirven, who at present enjoys a good trade from the Negroes at large.

Undertaking business was begun in Limestone County by the McBay-Carlton firm in 1918 and is still in operation in the city of Mexia. In 1927 Zephyr & Slaughter opened a funeral home in Mexia also, which prospered until the death of Mr. Sam Zephyr, senior partner of the concern, after which it was sold to the Dorsey Funeral Homes. At present this concern has grown to be one of the finest Negro undertaking establishments in the entire state.

The printing business was started in the county and Mexia by Negroes in 1906 by Rev. L. W. Thomas and A. R. Foreman. They published a weekly newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Zion Rest Primitive Baptist Association, and it was known as the National Banner. It was disbanded after a few years. In 1923 another printing business was set up and known as the Banner Printing Company, which was owned and operated by the writer. It ceased to exist in 1942. There have been three Negro newspapers established in the county but at present all are discontinued.

Recommendations

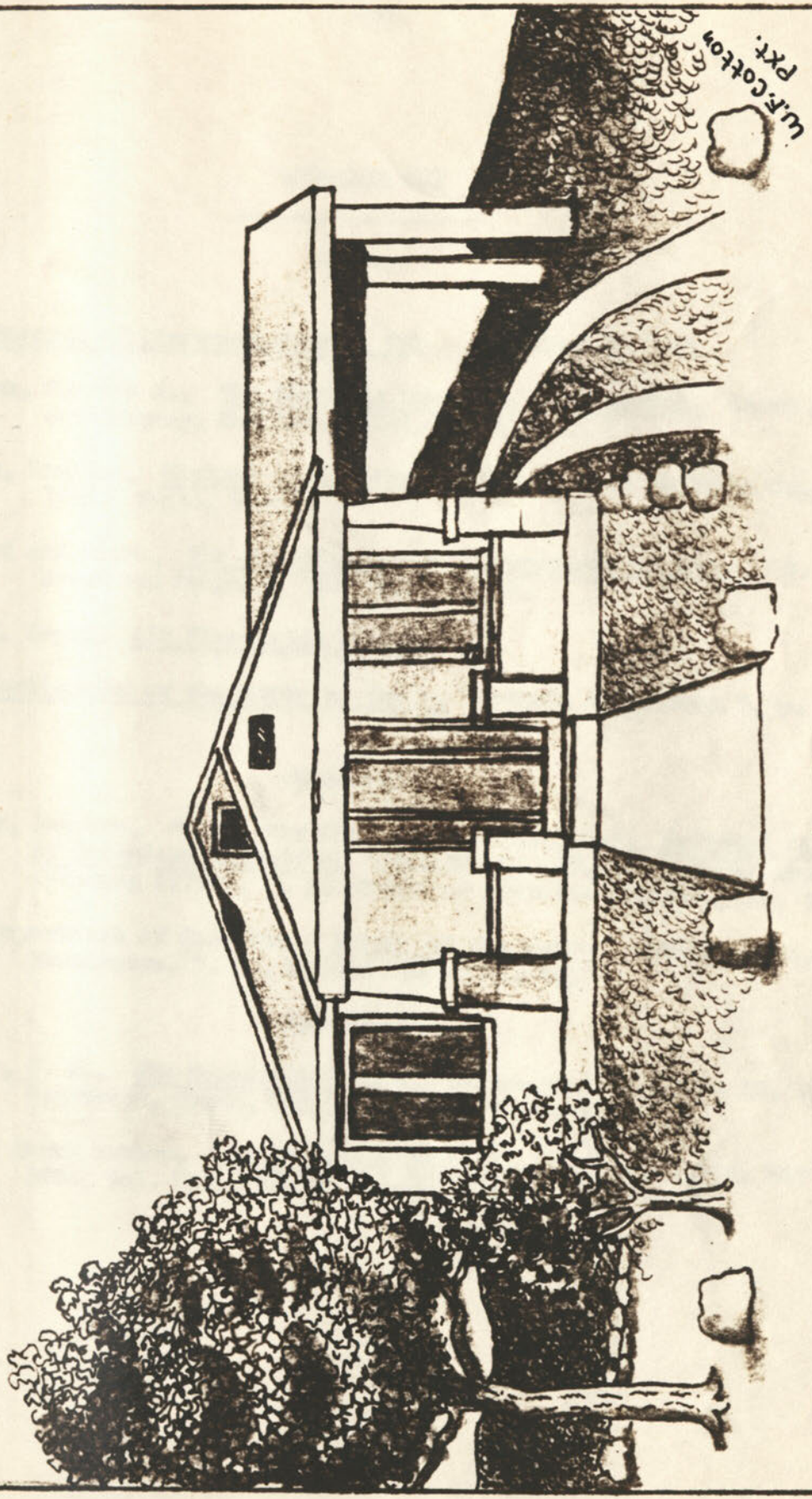
Never before in the annals of history have we experienced a time like this. We are living in a world seething with unrest on account of different idealologies that are prevalent in different sections of our own country as well as different regions of the civilized world.

As a distinct group integrated into American society, not of our own volition and emancipated into free men, marching down through the corridor of time, we should have one special objective; FULL CITIZENSHIP.

In Limestone County as well as the nation where Negroes form a part of the existing society, it should be remembered that everyone possesses his or her own individual beauty. In every school, church, community or home, one is gifted with the riches of nature, and when he or she hears the various tones, all musical, sees in each fellowman original manners which reflect a proper and peculiar charm, and reads a new expression in each smiling face; one perceives that nature in itself has laid down for each one of us a firm foundation for a divine building, if our souls will build thereon.

It is the duty of every American Negro, born or naturalized under the dazzling folds of the "Stars and Stripes" to make a definite contribution to society and put forth every effort to help materialize the great American dream: **DEMOCRACY FOR ALL!**

- AND TODAY -



HOME OF L. G. KIRVEN, MEXIA

FIGURE No. 6

BIBLIOGRAPHY

-Books-

- Deed Records of Limestone County, Texas, Groesbeck, 1951.
- Johnson, Charles S., The Negro in American Civilization, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1930, pp. 273-4.
- Steele, Hampton, History of Limestone County, News Printing Company, 1911, Mexia, Texas.
- Stewart and Clark, The Constitution and Government of Texas, D. C. Heath and Company, New York, p. 17.
- Stroud, Logan, Old Plantation Record.
- The Constitution of the State of Texas, Article 7, Section 7, p. 54.

-Magazines-

- Caliver, Ambrose, "Secondary Education for Negroes", National Survey of Secondary Education, Bulletin No. 17, 1932, Government Printing Office, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C.
- U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, September 22, 1950, Washington, D. C., Series H.C-1, No. 43.

-Newspapers-

- Bradley, C. S., The Groesbeck Journal, Pioneer Edition, May 15, 1936, Groesbeck, Texas, Vol. XLII, No. 13, Section 3.
- Gralle, Denny Parker, The Groesbeck Journal, Pioneer Edition, May 15, 1936, Vol. XLII, No. 13, Section 1.