

[Judge Frank H. Lea]

Redfield, Georgia B.

2-26-37. 432 words.

Judge Frank H. Lea

Interview by Daughter

Gertrude Lea Dills.

My father, Judge Frank H. Lea and mother Sue Whetstone Lea were married in Louisiana November 14, 1866 at "Auburn" the plantation home of my mother, near Bastrop, Louisiana.

After their marriage they lived at Auburn until after my brother Joe, and sister Minnie, were born.

They then moved to the plantation home of my father's family at Lea's Summit, Missouri.

My grandfather had been shot and the palatial Lea home burned by Yankee soldiers during the war.

My parents lived at Lea's Summit ten years until 1879 when my father sold his land and with my mother and five children Joe, Minnie, Carrie, Jennie, and I, came to New Mexico by train to Las Vegas where we were met by mother's brother, Asbury Whetstone who lived in Roswell.

He brought a covered prairie schooner (wagon) drawn by oxen and a hack, both we used to move all of us and our things to Roswell.

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The journey across the plains was hard and tiresome - nothing but miles and miles of barren prairie with no houses only tho'se of Fort Sumner between Las Vegas and Roswell to break the monotony. [C18 N. Mex. ?]

When we drew near Roswell and crossed North Spring River we tho'ught it a beautiful stream and that we had reached the 2 "Promised Land." This was long before artesian wells drained the waters out. Both North and South Spring Rivers ran bank full in tho'se days.

Roswell, at that time, was just one store and a hotel or residence of adobe, both owned by my uncle Captain Joseph C. Lea. These buildings were located in the block west of the Court House. Our entire family occupied one room in the store, while a house and a store was being built for us in White Oaks.

I will never forget our trip from Roswell to White Oaks. We arrived after dark and camped all night at White Oaks Spring, several miles from White Oaks.

We slept peacefully and were not molested by Indians. The next night, at the same spot, Indians killed two drummers scalped them, and left the bodies, taking the wagon and horses and all the drummer's clothes and things.

White Oaks was not quiet and peaceful. It was just like all noisy roistering mining towns during the 70's.

On one occasion our home was shot up by a local crowd of drunks who returned later after drinking more, to do more shooting. They were met by a posse of miners, gathered to protect us, who fired on the drunks and killed and wounded several.

Our mother was prostrated, from this shock, for several months. Her baby - my sister, Pearl - was born shortly after this experience.

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My father was Justice of Peace of White Oaks for many 3 years - until we moved to Roswell - where he was also Justice of the Peace - serving about thirty-five years in service of peace and order in the State of New Mexico.

Our pioneer mothers were the ones who suffered most in the early lawless days. They bore bravely all hardships and dangers - were truly the "torch bearers" for the men who blasted the way and built homes in a new country.

It is well in this time of depression with small privations, to keep tho'se days in remembrance and to think of tho'se women who faltered not in the face of tragedies and hardships, that are hard to believe were ever endured in this now peaceful country and modern city of Roswell.

Given In Interview 4-9-37.

By - Mrs. Gertrude Lea Dills,

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