

## [Mr. Mancell W. Cabiness]

1

Life History

FOLKLORE— White Pioneer,

Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

McLennan County, Texas,

District 8.

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Page NO. 1.

REFERENCE.

Interview with Mr Mancell W. Cabiness, Reagan, Texas.

“My parents were Frank and Charlotte Cabiness of Morton, Mississippi, where I was born in the year 1850. Father owned a plantation in Mississippi but sold it and moved to Texas in 1868, during the days of Reconstruction. He located in Falls county between the towns of Bremond and Reagan, but at that time these towns were not located and the community was called the Powers Community. Grand-father Powers came with the Sterling Robertson colony from Tennessee while Texas was still under the rule of Mexico. We settled on the Carol Powers place.

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“Some of our neighbors neighbors were Tom Curry (father of Dr Hardy Curry of Marlin. ) Dr Thomas , was another doctor of the community , and our family physician was Dr Clark of the Blue Ridge community. We travelled by stage and the stage stand was called Tucker, so named from John Tacker who owned the stand , and a little store. The Little Brazos river was about a mile west of us and some of the families who lived west of the Little Brazos were those of Gilbert Ward, William Johnson and Dr Zinnard. A couple of miles further on the Blue Ridge the families of Johnson, Robertson, Powers Beal's and Anderson's lived. [?]About the year 1875 Henry Cowan and Jim Owens came from Tennessee and lived in the lower Blue Ridge settlement. Still farther towards what is now the Bremond settlement the Hagens family lived also the famil family of Dr George [?], whose son Eugene married a Miss Eliza Hagens, while Henry Cowan and Jim Owens and Sam Powers married Laura, Fannie, and Lizzie, sisters of Eugene Wyche. After the death of Mr Owens wife, Fannie, he married Miss Betty Robertson , a daughter of the pioneer family of Hazard Robertson who lived at the foot of Blue Ridge. C12 - [????] 2 “Thus the first families of the lower Blue Ridge, intermarried as did those of the upper Ridge. Perhaps the first settler in the Bremond area was B. Combs who came in 1857. He surveyed many acres of land and owned an interest in them land which had previously been merely a hunting ground for the Indians. Other first settlers of this settlement were the Keigwins, the James Campbell, Tom Jackson and Bennett families. These settlers hunted deer; wild turkeys and other wild game over the prairie which was covered with tall sage grass. The Bremond settlement was more of a prairie settlement. It is a legend that at one time Wm. Keigwin bought the town-site for a hack and a pair of horses.

“In 1869 the Houston and Texas Central railroad was built thro' this settlement and the town of Bremond was established and named for Paul Bremond, a railroad official. Thus Bremond for a time became the terminal point awaiting constuction farther north to the towns of Marlin and Waco. Ed Roberts of Bremond has a book in which his father John Roberts wrote in May 1870, “ Railroad has reached a point in front of my home”. (This old Roberts home is one of the oldest landmarks near [?] Bremond ). Mrs Maude Davis

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daughter of B. Combs, Bremonds first settler, states that her father is authority for the information that the first old brick school house, built on the site of the present one was built to be a hotel. But when the railtoad was built the right -of- way did not come as far west as expected, so the building was too far from the town for a hotel and became a school building. Later a frame building was built in 1900, and the present school building was built in 1921. Lumber for the Roberts house was hauled from Galveston cording according to the early recollection of some of the pioneers. 3 “Mac Hearne's father or W. A. Rumpel built the first store in Bremond. The late Mrs Rumpel told of how Mr Rumpel and another man walked to Bremond from Calvert and had two carpenters come and build this store with lumber that had been brought in by wagon train from Galveston , in order to have the store ready for business by the time the railroad got to Bremond. In the boom days when Bremond was the terminal, the two-story frame building 's rented for as high as \$100.00 a month. he The upper floors were divided into offices office's and used for business also, such as printing, etc. In the hotels the rooms were crude and the living quarters for families were often divided by cloth partitions. Few beds, some built into the walls, a few chairs, a stove and table constituted most of the furniture. There was very little space between the houses and one could almost step from one porch to another.

“Old frame buildings that sprang up during the railroad terminal days were hinged at the corners so they could be folded up and moved to the next t n town when the terminus moved on. Many of these buildings did move on when the road built on to Marlin and Waco. As time went on and these buildings were moved or torn down brick buildings took their place and the brick section was where Abraham's gin now stands or nearer Watertown. The first residence section most thickly settled was in Watertown district (deriving its name from a well which became a water center, as water was scarce in those days.) On the east side of town there was a hotel and on the west were two churches and a parsonage. Then there was built the Ste ns Stevens house, the Roland house, the Baker home and on the hill the Keigwins lived, which later became the property of the Gann heirs. 4 “In 1871 Dr Snelling, Dr Pool, Dr Harrington looked after the health of the

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town. Passengers as well as ight freight came into the old depot in the south end of town , many years before the passenger depot was built on the present spot in the north side of Bremond. As for the twon and community burial place this notice a eared appeared in the newspapre of the day, the "Central Texan". Friday, August 12, 1870, and was the beginning of Bremonds cemetery. "We feel it our sacred duty to call the public attention to the necessity of providing our city with a suitable graveyard. Already the dead are being interred in a spot of ground in the rear of the Union church. By what authority this acre has been appropriated to God, whereupon to build a "silent city" we are unable to learn: but we know that the manner in which the dead are buried \_\_\_\_\_ we leave to your imagination, we call a meeting of ladies and gentlemen to meet at the Union church, Saturday, August 20th. (1870). and hope all who are interested will attend. And who are not?" A later bulletin states that a r Mr Morehead and Whitlow were among the first to be buried in Bremond.

"J. B. Adoue and J. L. Leonard operated a bank, which was not used so much since good sums were indifferently kept in trunks and other places around the premises, sometimes buried under a tree in the yard. Before the brick Baptist Church was built in 1871, travelling ministers did the preaching in down-town buildings. These buildings were also used for social gatherings, such as church suppers, dances and so forth. Mollie Bailey, of travelling show fame and her husband had a dance hall and dancing school. They always played for the dances. The people from far and near, old and young attended these dances one night and the next would attend a prayer service in the same building. Religion embraced recreation then as now. 5 "Referring again to the "Weekly Central Texan" newspaper, R. H. Purdon, editor of August 12, 1870, there was an advertisement of the Bremond High School with George W. Holland as principal. Mrs Holland had the first piano in Bremond and gave music lessons, and advertised her concerts with programs given by the school. This was the only piano at the time in a fifty mile radius.

"In 1871, the town was incorporated for the first time and Mr Whitmore was elected mayor. Sam orehead Morehead was the postmaster. There were a number of saloons, blacksmith

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shops and commission merchants. The mixed train which travelled at a snail's pace brought both passengers and freight. Stage coaches and wagons drawn by six or eight oxen carried commerce overland, the destination being north to Hillsboro, and as far west as Comanche County. The sound of the bells which were kept on the oxen made a musical noise. They attached these bells to the head of the animals in order that they could be found when they were turned loose to graze while on the night camp. The oxen or horses were always turned out on the range near-by at night and did not often wander away from camp. It was not an uncommon thing for them to give warning of the Indians' approach by their becoming frightened and running to the camp.

"In the January 23, 1875 issue of "The Sentinel" published by B. W. Cammer, appeared the advertisement of the school / of Rev. H. M. Glass, " J. N. Fairbanks dentist, " John Borglund,[-?] boot and shoemaker, " and " A. Sheperd, manufacturer of bricks, " some of which had been sold for [paving?] the streets of Bryan, Texas. This was some thirty or forty miles to the south. When the railroad was built farther north of Bremond the 'mushroom" houses were torn down and rebuilt at the next terminus. However a few had dared to leave Main street [?] and build their homes on the rairie prairie . 6 "And so as time went on and the railroad moved north to Marlin, Waco and Dallas, more homes were built in Bremond, and scattered over the community, brick buildings and churches replaced the two story frame structures of those pioneer days and stock-raising and farming became more profitabl profitable to the new towns and community. Sixty or more years ago about a half dozen Polish families came from Poland to live near Bremond. Being well pleased with the community south of town these diligent people sent for relatives and friends , until a large and prosperous community of this nationality was the result. In my next interview I will give you something of their history, the first families, their social life and so forth.

"At the time I became a man on my own responsibility there was very little farming, and so I took up the stock industry for my livelihood. I have engaged on both for over forty years but my main interest has been the selling and trading in fine horses. I made trips to Tennessee and Kentucky to buy the finest thorough-bred horses. I have paid as much

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as a thousand dollars for a horse. I specialized in fine horses for transportation also for saddle horses, and race horses. One of my best horses was called Alice Wilkes, and was one of the finest race horses that ever trod the race tracks. She was a Kentucky thoroughbred and I paid the sum of a thousand dollars for her. I still have the blue ribbons I received for the colts which I entered in the fairs which brought me \$500.00 and \$600.00 dollars. Tom Fountain, Senior, myself and Austin Robertson owned fine race horses and organized the Falls County Fair. 7 “Well do I recall the many times we held these Fairs! The very finest race horses were entered from all over Texas and other Southern states. It would be interesting to compare the races of today with those of the days I mention. Now the races are between the drivers of the modern race auto and the betting is on the ability of the driver. Where in our horse races the race was won or lost through the ability of the race horse. We selected our horse which we put up for the race and we stood by it, whether it won or lost. In memory I can see the old race track as my own Alice Wilkes circled around it and how we shouted and we were overcome with joy as she neared the end of the race and how we went wild when she won! In memory I can see the crowd as they selected their winner and how they shouted, threw their hats in the air and also went wild with joy over their choice coming out a winner. It was a community affair and many were the entries of our own men and boys for their race horses which they had so carefully trained, and many the times these horses won over the best [professional?] race horses.

“Looking again down Memories Lane I can see the vehicles as they slowly wended their way to the Fair here the young boys who were riding their first ponies, riding near their parents and cantering happily along. There, down the road came the slow moving wagons filled with the large families of the day, driving the yoke of oxen. There there were the single young men of the neighborhood in their single seated buggy and the younger girls casting glances of envy at them. (How rich they were in their own estimation!). Still farther down the dusty road came the fine carriages with the old negro ex-slave who used to be “Massa's coachman” driving the beautiful prancing high spirited team of fine horses to the family carriage. 8 “It was not all picnic's and races for the Bremond community,.

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There were the schools and churches. I have mentioned the schools, and will try to tell you something of its first churches. During the days of the stage coaches there was a series of meetings held in the vacant store buildings and the "First Missionary Baptist Church of Christ of / Bremond was organized, and the constitution was adopted in 1876.

"In 1870 Texas Baptists were disturbed over the question of the location of Baylor University at Independence as this was not centrally located, so in August of 1870 a committee of forty-seven Baptists met in Bremond to settle this question. This was the beginning of meetings held for this purpose, the last one was in June of 1875, and as a result of these and other meetings Baylor College for Women was placed at Belton and Baylor University at Waco.

" Bremonds Bremond's present Baptist Church of brick was erected in 1871, the builders descendents are still living. The old church bell has been faithful to ring for services, weddings, funerals and other occasions as of yore. Within its walls have been many spiritual revivals and many souls were born into Gods kingdom , so the records show. The pastors home of brick was built in 1889 and during this time has been remodeled and improved. The minutes show that the church has been served by the following pastors; Harris, Boone Lee, Scruggs, Stevens, Roland, Maxwell, Sanders, Morrow, McClurkin, Whipkey, Skinner, Wharton, West, Boynton, Carlisle, Crowder, Aldredge, Darby, White, Covington, Busby, Springer, and Dollahite. 9 "The records reveal that the Bremond Methodist Church began more than seventy years ago. A deed was issued by " Frederick A. Rice, Baraham Groesbeeck, trustees as by agreement, March 22nd, 1868, in consideration of \$5.00 paid by T. P. Roads, Thomas Curry, Jesse Scruggs, T. A. Crouch and Thomas Saxon, trustees of M. E. Church, South, of Bremond --- certain lots---for the purpose of causing suitable buildings to be erected thereon to be used for devotional and educational purposes. " This lot apparently is the one upon which the parsonage is located. A subsequent deed from "F. A. Rice, T. W. House, trustees of March 22, 1869, for

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\$75.00 paid by W. P. Brown, J. W. Turner, Franklin Ficklin, trustees of M. E. Church South and their successors— cert n certain lots— etc”.

“Apparently this last dead refers to the ground which the rpresent M. E. Church now stands. Some time during the pastorate of Rev. J. W. Wardlaw, (1912-1924) the former frame church building was damaged by wind.[/?] It was torn down and a more attractive frame building was put up. In 1930 or 1931 the building was again remodeled and made smaller, as it stands, appealingly inviting amid green shrubs today. Rev. E. J. Davis is the pastor and also pastor of Kosse.

“From available church records the following pastors served the Methodist chruch at [?] Bremond : Reverned Dimmitt, Allen, Stovall, Wootan, O. T. Hotchkiss, Cochran, Phair, Harmon, Williford, Collins : ( [?] Reagan with Bremond) [-?] Chambers, Treadwell, Wagon, Meyers, Biggs. (Kosse with Bremond). - Lindsey. (Hearne with Bremond). - Carr, & Wardlow : ( remond Bremond and circui circuit) & Garrett Bremond and circuit) & Zimmerman (Bremond and Reagan). Sharp, DeWitt S. Hotchkiss, Ryan, Brient, Hull, and E. J. Davis ( remond Bremond and Kosse). 10 “Bremond now is served with an Independent School District which was created by Special Act of the Legislature in 1919 and comprises what was formerly [?] the original Bremond Independent School District, and all the former Wootan ells Wells Common School District. The area of the district is 35 square miles. There are at present six public school buildings and one St Mary's Parochial School within the boundaries of the Bremond district. Thus the records show what Time has wrought between the past and the present.

“As to my own life, I married Miss Annie Ward, a daughter of Gilbert Ward, our old neighbors in the Powers community, near little Brazos on the 24th, day of December 1872. To us were born five children. They are W II Will , Frank, Mabel, Lottie, and Lillie. In 1897 I moved to the town of eagan Reagan where I reared my family. In 1923 my wife passed away and in August of 1926 I married my wife's half sister, Clara Ward, who lives with me in the home I moved to when I came to Reagan.

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“The towns of Bremond and Reagan are within a short distance of each other and in this sketch I have given you the partial history of the older town(Bremond). Perhaps at a later date I can give more history of the little town of Reagan.