

[Mrs. George Fowler]

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FOLKLORE:

Miss Effie Cowan,

McLennan County, Texas,

District 8.

File NO. 240.

Page NO. 1.

No. of Words

REFERENCE:

Interview with Mrs George Fowler, R.F.D. Mart, Texas.

I was born in [Green?] County Mississippi in the year 1848. and came with my father and mother from this state to Texas in the year 1866. Father was a cavalry soldier and fought on the side of the Confederacy. I do not remember the battles he was in but I have heard him tell about being in Tennessee and Georgia and in some battles that were fought in these states.

“We first settled in Limestone County, on the Navasota river, we called it the “Navasot”. Then we lived between the little village of Horn Hill and Old Springfield, which was the first county seat of Limestone County. When we came the Yankee soldiers were still

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[stationed?] at [old?] Springfield, there were some negro troops there who were supposed to keep order, the white people resented them and there was a lot of trouble over their being here.

There was a man by the name of Steward who had some former slaves on his place, the negro soldiers kept coming over to Mr Stewards place and stirring up trouble, until he finally killed one of the soldiers. This caused the negroes to threaten Mr Stewards life and the neighbors hid Mr Steward out in the woods on the river and guarded him for several weeks to keep him from being killed. My father was among the number who helped to guard him. C12 [????] 2 I can remember how the soldiers came to his home and fired into the house and hit Mrs Steward [,?] but the bullet struck the splits in the old split bonnet she had on and it grazed off and did not hurt her. “ Old Springfield was the scene of a lot of trouble in those days whe when we first came, the reconstruction days [following?] the Civil War, were still causing trouble between the whites and the negroes, there was theiving, lynchings and murders, women dared not go out unescorted. And then the courthouse was burned, a negro by the name of Merrick Trammel was accused of this, he was a negro of robust personality and every crime that was committed was thought to be thro' him. For a long time he [had?] a hiding place on the west bank of the [?] Navasota river, south of the Springfield spring, and in the neighborhood of the Grosbeck [pupmp?] station, (but there was no Grosbeck then) but it was so situated that it was almost impossible to come upon it without first being seen, this was a cave in the bank of [the?] river, flanked by a deep body of water / and could be entered with great difficulty.

“The number of murders laid to this negro were so numerous that it was impossible to know the exact number, but the one which stood out most was the murder of Applewhite which took place in the center of the crossing of Navasota and Ellis Streets after the town of Grosbeck was started[,-?] in the early stages of the reconstruction period, [and?] then the county was placed under military law and this was the starting of [all?] the trouble I spoke of from the soldiers. His career began before the railroad was built and ended after the town of Grosbeck was founded. 3 “Then in 1869 rumors reached the settlement that

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the Houston and Texas Central railroad was to be built thro' Springfield! This road was building an inland road to connect with the shipping port of Galveston, At last Springfield was coming into its own!, when the agent arrived the settlers were so enthused over it that they donated the land for the road-bed, but after he had gone the people began to feel that they should be paid for the land, since it had to come thro' the town and they had fought the wilderness for it. [Suddenly?] the land took on so much value that the railroad officials decided to lay its road bed two miles east of Springfield.

“The settlers began to divide, some moved to the new town of Grosbeck and other to the new town of Mexia, and so Old Springfield, the town that was first thought to be the the metropolis of this part of Central [Texas?] became a ghost town, a town of memories[-,?] stories and [legends?] of the days of the early settlers and the Indian's. Being pioneer's the old Springfield of Sterling Robertson's colony, who came from Nashville Tennessee[-,?] and had [posters?] placed at the post-offices and the stores, in the southern states advertising the opportunity of securing land in this new county with Springfield for its county seat became a town of memories and freed negroes. And the railroad towns became the center of population. After the railroad came we moved over on the Davis ranch and lived for a few years, this was still in Limestone county. Then we came over in the next county of [McLennan?] and lived on the Hannah ranch. 4 Here, in the year 1875 my father bought land and built the [?] old Breland home that is still standing just about a half mile from the [present?] town of Mart - across Big Creek. There were only three or four families living nearby then, they were my brother-in-law Evan Easter, [a Mr.?] Brooks and soon Mr. [?] Will [Criswell?] came and built the first house in what was years later the [town?] of Mart, it was called Willow Springs until a post office was granted, then they changed the name, to Mart.

“My father hauled the lumber from Waco to build this house which is still standing, it has two front rooms and an old fashioned hall between and a kitchen in the rear of cedar logs

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that were weatherboarded later and ceiled inside. My father bought this land from Judge Battle of Waco - a distance of twenty miles.

“Yes the country was wild in those days, the country was all ranches and there were plenty of cattle theives to steal them, then there were a few northern men who had come down to buy the cheap land, among [?] them was Mr Heaton, who for years owned the Heaton ranch across the Big Creek just south of us, and directly west of the present town of Mart Mr Heaton was a young man and boarded with my father and mother, he wore a long black beard. He returned to his native state after a few years and married, then came back and built a house over where the ranch house stood for many years. He had a daughter who married [?] Captain Phillips of the U.S. army. After he was killed, (Mr Heaton) the wife and little daughter went back up north where they came from. 5 “There was a widow named Walker who owned a ranch near Mr Heaton, she had a son named Abner, this son had warned Mr Heaton not to buy any of his mothers cattle, but Mr Heaton ignored the warning and bought some anyway, When Abner met him on his mothers ranch rounding [up?] the cattle he shot Mr Heaton and killed him instantly. He then blacked up like a negro and tried to make his escape, but while crossing the old toll bridge at Waco over the Brazos river he passed a white boy who recognized him by his voice, and this was the way the officers trailed him and caught him at Marlin.

“He was tried and sent to the penitentiary for ninety years, I belive but was [?] pardoned out[-?] after serving eighteen years. When he came home he was an old man in appearance, his hair had turned white and he had done hard labor and walked with bent shoulders and head. He was just a young man when he went. The men who were his old friends and acquaintances welcomed him back and did not hold it against him, perhaps this was owing to the prejudice so soon after the war against the Northern men who came to get rich off the south.

“It was not an uncommon [?] thing for cattle theives to be hung when caught the [?] law was slow and this was the greatest crime, to steal. I knew of one man who for some

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time was under suspicion and his guilt finally proved, then he was hung, no one knew or seemed to [?] know who did the hanging, the man was named Milt Brothers. Those days the men were their own law and woe unto the ones found guilty of cattle theft. 6 “I can remember the old stage that passed from Old Springfield to [Wacoj?] just back of our house near Big Creek, a short distance from our house it [stopped?] to change horses. Waco was just a small place and they still crossed the river on the ferry boat when we came, and it was some years before the first bridge was built. I can well remember how proud the whole country was over the new [?] bridge at Waco, but they paid a toll for crossing it for many years.

“I was one of ten children, seven lived to be grown. Time has [dimmed?] the memory of those later years, but those early years shine forth as the sun in my life. I can remember back in [Missippi?] when I, was just [getting?] to be in my teens, how the talk of going to Texas thrilled us, and how we came in [covered?] wagons driving oxen. How during the days of the Civil War we even then were longing to make the change for we had heard stories of the cheap land and how it produced such fine cotton in the bottoms where we first settled. [?] How, when the war was over we came the following year [and?] how it has been such a change from that time to the present. [?] Many things of political and industrial changes have taken place, but it all was such a gradual change that we scarcely realized how [?] times were changing. “ I can remember [how?] in 1871 there was a great period of prosperity, the Bureau of [?] Immigration and the free public school system was created. [How?] the western branch of the Houston and Texas Central [raicroad?] was [?] completed to Austin. the Waco tap road completed / and several others in other parts of Texas were built. Then the day [when?] Gov [Davis?] issued a proclamation, in Jan. 1874 prohibiting the meeting of the [?] legislature . 7 .

Many things come to my mind as I talk, but I think the happiest times was when Richard Coke of Waco was elected Governor over what we called the carpet-bagger governor Davis. Governor Davis tried to [keep?] the legislature from meeting, but both houses met and organized on Jan 13th, 1874, and Governor Davis refused to recognize them and

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fears were held of serious trouble, but when the president refused to have anything to do with the election, Davis gave up and Coke was inaugurated and all began to become normal once more.

I have seen the county of McLennan changed from a wild ranch country where the men were a law unto themselves and the wild coyotes cry could be heard at night as he hunted for his prey, to the present law abiding place it is now. As [?] I look back over the years of my life I am prone to wonder at these changes and what they will be for the next generation. I can say that I am proud to be one of Texas pioneers. 1 FOLKLORE—White Pioneers Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

McLennan County, Texas

District No. 8 [Duplicate Life History?]

NO. words, 600

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“I was born in Green County, Mississippi in 1848. I came to Texas with my parents in 1866. Father was a cavalry soldier in the Confederate Army. I do not remember the battles he was in, but I have heard him tell about being in Tennessee and Georgia and in some battles that were fought in these states.

We first settled in Limestone County, on the Navasota river, we called it the “Navasot”. Then, we lived between the little village of Horn Hill and Old Springfield, which was the first county seat of Limestone County. When we came to Texas, the Yankee soldiers were still stationed at old Springfield, there were some negro troops there who were some negro

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troops there who were supposed to keep order, the white people resented them and there was a lot of trouble over their being here.

There was a man by the name of Steward who had some former slaves on his place, the negro soldiers kept coming over to Mr. Steward's place, stirring up trouble, until he finally killed one of the soldiers. This caused the negroes to threaten Mr. Steward's life and the neighbors hid Mr. Steward out in the woods on the river and guarded him for several weeks to keep him from being killed. My father was among the number who helped to guard him. I can remember how the soldiers came to his home and fired into the house and hit Mrs. Steward, but the bullet struck the splits in her old split bonnet, she had on and it grazed off, and so did not hurt her.

Old [Springfield?] was the scene of a lot of trouble in those days when we first came to Texas. That was during the Reconstruction days following the Civil War. There was still trouble between the whites and the negroes and thieving, lynchings and murders. Women dared not go out unescorted. The court house was burned. A negro by the name of Merrick was accused of this. Merrick Trammel was his full name. He was a big, 2 hulking brute and every crime that was committed was thought to be traceable to him. For a long time, he had a hiding place on the west bank of the Navasota River, south of the Springfield spring, and in the neighborhood of the [?] Grosbeck pump station, (but there was not any town of Grosbeck then), but it was so situated that it was almost impossible to come upon it without first being seen. This was a cave in the bank of the river, flanked by a deep body of water and could be entered only with great difficulty.

“The number of murders laid to this negro were so numerous that it was impossible to know the exact number, but the one which stood out most was the murder of Applewhite, which occurred in the center of the crossing of Navasota and Ellis Streets after the town of Grosbeck was started, in the early stages of the Reconstruction period. The country was then under military law and this was the starting of all the trouble I spoke of from the

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soldiers. Merrick Trammel's crime career began before the railroad was built, and ended after the town of Grosbeck was founded.

“In 1869, rumors reached the settlement that the Houston and Texas Central Railroad was to be built through Springfield. This road was building an inland road to connect with the shipping port of Galveston. At last we thought Springfield was coming into its own! When the agent arrived, the settlers were so enthused over it, that they donated the land for the road bed, but after he left the people began to feel that they should be paid for this land, since it had to come through the town, and they had fought the wilderness for the land. Suddenly, the land rose so in value that the railroad officials decided to lay its road bed two miles east of Springfield.

“The settlers began to divide. Some moved to the new town of 3 “Grosbeck and other to the new town of Mexia. Old Springfield, the town that was first thought to become the metropolis of this part of Central Texas became a ghost town, a town of memories, stories and legends of the days of the early settlers and the Indians. The settlers of old Springfield were pioneers and most of them were members of Sterling Robertson's colony. Robertson came from Nashville, Tennessee and had posters placed at the post offices and in the stores, throughout the southern states, advertising the opportunity of securing land in this new county, with Springfield as its county seat. But this town, because of the railroad, became a town of memories and freed negroes. The railroad town became the center of population. After the railroad came through, we moved over on the Davis ranch and lived for a few years. This ranch was still in Limestone county. Then, we moved over into the next county of McLennan and lived on the Hannah ranch.

In 1875, my father bought land and built the old Breland home, which is still standing just about a half-a-mile from the present town of Mart, across Big Creek. There were only three or four families living near them; these were my brother-in-law Evan Easter; Mr. Brooks and soon Mr. Will Criswell built the first house in what later became the town of Mart. It

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was called Willow Springs until a post office was granted, then the name was changed to Mart.

“My father hauled the lumber from Waco to build this house which is still standing. It has two front rooms, and an old fashioned hall between them and a kitchen in the rear. It is built of cedar logs and was later weatherboarded and ceiled inside. My father bought this land from Judge Battle of Waco. Waco is about twenty miles from Mart.

The country was wild when we came to Mart. The country was all ranches and there were plenty of cattle thieves to steal them. There 4 a few northern men who had come to Texas to buy the cheap land. Among them was Mr. Heaton, who for years, owned the Heaton ranch across the Big Creek just south of us, and directly west of the present town of Mart. Mr. Heaton was a young man and boarded with my father and mother. He wore a long black beard. After a few years, he returned to his native state and married, then he came back to the ranch and built a house where the ranch house had stood for many years. His daughter married Captain Phillips of the United States army. Mr. Heaton was killed; his wife and little daughter returned to their northern home and the daughter married there.

A widow named Walker owned a ranch near Mr. Heaton; she had a son named Abner. This son had warned Mr. Heaton not to buy any of his mothers cattle, but Mr. Heaton ignored the warning and bought some of Mrs. Walker's cattle. Abner met Heaton when he came on Mrs. Walker's ranch to round up cattle he had bought. Abner shot and killed Heaton instantly. Then Abner Walker blacked up like a negro and tried to make his escape. While crossing the old toll bridge at Waco, over the Brazos river, he passed a white boy who recognized Abner Walker's voice and reported to the officers. The gave chase, trailed Abner to Marlin and caught him. He was tried and sent to the penitentiary for ninety years, but after serving eighteen years, was pardoned. When he came home, his hair had turned white and hard labor caused him to walk with bent shoulders and bowed head like an old, old man. Owing to prejudice against northerners, Walker was received by friends and neighbors as though nothing had happened.

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“It was not an uncommon thing for cattle thieves to be hung when caught. The law was slow and cattle stealing was the greatest crime. One man was suspicioned of cattle stealing for a long 5 time. Finally, guilt was proven and he was hung. No one knew or seemed to know who did the hanging. This man was named Milt Brothers. In those days, the men were their own law and woe unto the ones found guilty of cattle theft.

“I can remember well the old stage that passed from Old Springfield to Waco. The roads was just back of our house, near Big Creek. It stopped to change horses a short distance from our house. Waco was just a small place in those days and they still crossed the Brazos River on a ferry boat when we came to mart; it was some years before the first bridge was built. I can well remember how proud the whole country was over the new suspension bridge at Waco, but they had to pay toll to cross it and pay it for several years.

I was one of ten children, seven lived to be grown. Time has dimmed the memory of later years, but those early years shine forth as the sun in my life. I can remember when we lived back in Mississippi, when I was just entering my teens; talk of going to Texas thrilled us; we came in covered wagons, drawn by oxen. During the Civil War, we longed to make the change for we had heard stories of the cheap land, and how the bottom lands produced such fine cotton. That is where we did settle when we moved to Texas. The year after the War closed, we moved to Texas. Many changes have taken place since those early days. But it such a gradual change that we scarcely realized how times were changing.

There was a great period of prosperity in 1871. The Bureau of Immigration was created and the free public school system started. The western branch of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad was completed to Austin; the Waco Tap Road was completed and several others railroads were built in other parts of Texas. In January, 1874, Governor Davis 6 issued a proclamation prohibiting the meeting of the legislature.

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I think the happiest time I can remember was when Richard Coke, of Waco was elected Governor over what we called the “carpet bagger governor Davis.” Governor Davis tried to keep the legislature from meeting, but both houses met and organized on January 13th, 1874. Governor Davis refused to recognize them and fears were held of serious trouble. When the President of the United States refused to have anything to do with the election, Davis gave up his office and Richard Coke was inaugurated. Things gradually become normal again.

I have seen McLennan County change from a wild ranch country, where men were a law unto themselves and the wild coyotes could be heard at night as they hunted for prey, to the present law-abiding place it is now. I am proud to be one of pioneers of Texas.”