

[Sarah Ann Poss Pringle]

1

Life History

FOLKLORE:

MISS EFFIE COWAN,

McLennan County, Texas,

District 8.

NO Of Words 1750

File NO. 240.

Page NO. 1.

REFERENCE.

Interview with Sarah Ann Ross Pringle, (White Pioneer[?]) Marlin, Texas.

“I was born ten miles east of Meridian Mississippi on the 25th, day of September 1845. The first that I remember about my childhood was my mother and my old black mammy. She it was who helped to raise the large family of children on the old plantation[?] near the Tom Bigbee river which was the trading point for all the plantation near, they called the landing “ Tomkins Bluff. “

“Altho ' it is seventy three years since the war between the states ended, I can clearly remember when my brother went with the first volunteers. We all went to the trains to see them off. The first call was for all the single men, the second took the married men and

Library of Congress

the third took the old men and the young boys. The boys carried squirrel rifles and wore home-spun suits. My father went the last year. I had an uncle who also went and was wounded while on picket duty, had to be left on the battlefield but was captured by the Union soldiers and we never heard of him again. I also had a cousin who was captured by the Yankees, spent eighteen months in a Northern prison, but was finally released, and came part of the way home riding a mule. When he reached home his mother did not recognize him at first, as they believed him killed, but when it was known that he had returned, the community held a bration celebration over his return and great was the rejoicing.

“We shared the common lot with, the rest of the south for the want of C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 the necessities of life. The slaves remained faithful, but in the lack of the most common things like salt, coffee, etc, all suffered alike There there was the danger of a rd raid by the Yankees. We had a neighbor a mrs newton Mrs Newton, who had gone over to Colombus Miss. on a visit to her husband who was stationed there, and while she was away, the Yanke Yankee soldiers came thro' and burned her gin, took her cows, hogs and chickens and two of the slaves with all the provisions that she had. There was nothing the slaves could do about it, much as they too would feel the loss, they were forced to stand by and see the feather beds ripped open in the soldiers search for money and the provisions taken.

“The Confederate government furnished provisions for war widows, and other women who had no one to help make their crops. The Yankee soldiers ruined our flour mills when they burned our gins and we had nothing left to grind our corn with, then we had to use stones to crush it like the Indians did. We had no coffee during the blockade of the Southern ports so we learned to parch potato peelings, okra and corn and use them for substitutes. We scraped the salt from the floor of the old smoke houses that were used in the days before the war when all those things were so plentiful. We sifted this salt and ran it thro' home made [ash?] hoppers, and this seperated the salt from the dirt.

Library of Congress

“My husband was at school at Marion Miss (this was before we [married?]), and his professor organized a company of [volunteers?] on the campus, sixty members of the class signed up to go. This was the 13th, Mississippi Regiment Company E. Barksdale Brigade. He was [wounded?] five times during the war. 3 “My husband was wounded and captured at the battle of Nashville, serving eighteen months in a orthern Northern prison, but recovered and was finally sent home.

“We started for Texas in the year 1865 , right after the war was over. I was twenty years old, We came in covered wagons driving oxen. There had [been?] a drouth in some parts of the country we travelled over and when we reached water-holes we were overjoyed. W We did not stop to see if they were sanitary, there they were to quench our thirst and the stock and so we would camp by these waterholes, springs or rivers and [mand?] and [beast?] would drink.

“If you can picture the beautiful wild flowers of Texas in the spring the blue bonnet, the Indian blanket with its coat of red, the yellow-rose of Texas, the golden rod, with its yellow plumes waving in the air, the purple [thistles?], and the wild daisies, the scent of the pine trees of East Texas, and the beautiful magnolia trees which grow so tall in the [piney?] woods of Texas, you can imagine our parties rapture at this new country to which we had come.

“After many weeks of travel we came to Madisonville Texas, where I stayed with my Aunt and Uncle , Mr and mrs Mrs Garland Ross (who were descendants of Betsy Ross, maker of the first American flag). I had [?] two brothers who had already come to Texas and settled at Koose, they were Albert and Drantley Brantley Ross. In 1870 they sent for me and I went over to Kosse to keep house for them. 4 “When we came to Texas following the close of the war, the state was going / thro' the reconstruction period. The state was under military rule and Pease was Governor. Congress passed a law that every white man in the South must take an oath whether he had held any state or Federal office before the war and if later he had aided the cause of the Confederacy. Those who had done

Library of Congress

these things were disqualified as voters in the election's. This naturally barred most of the leading white citizens of the state. This gave the negro the right to vote and hold office. So [as?] you know the effect was [to?] [place?] the government in the hand of what we called the "carpetbaggers" [white?] men from the North and the freed negroes.

"I am telling you just what I remember, when we had to go to town during this time we [never?] went without some of our men with us, the negroes were [stationed?] at all the cross roads and bridges when there was any thing of importance taking place. If they spoke or [?] said insulting things to us we went our way and ignored them, but dared [not?] let our men whip them. Finally it got so bad when E.J. Davis was governor that the Ku-Klux-Klan was organized. It was told by the carpet baggers that it was to intimidate the negroes and take away their voting privilege.

"But I can tell you this that it certainly did help to make it safer for the white women. When a negro had been insulting they soon learned that he was to give an account to the Klan. It is also true that they had their meetings in secret mostly in secluded places, and they discussed the things that were unjust and that the Klan only , could right by their 5 acts of righting these wrongs. I never knew of the Klan doing unjust things until long after the reconstruction times, when unprincipled people hid behind the name of the Klan. I do know that the way was made much better for us after the Klan began to operate. It is a well known matter of historical record that the rule of Governor E.J. Davis was unjust and he became very unpopular.

"In the campaign of 1873 when Richard Coke of Waco ran against Davis we had some real exciting times. I remember when my brothers went to Marlin to vote. The white men from all over the voting box were instructed to come armed and to vote, if necessary, at the point of the gun's. The Judge of the election was a white man he calls the "carpet-bagger Judge", he had been ' lectioneering to the negroes all up and down the Brazos bottom and they came in droves on election day.

Library of Congress

“The white men also came in droves and if any of them came unarmed they were furnished something to shoot with and were told if they were refuse the privilege of voting, to commence shooting. Some man decided to try shooting to scare the negroes off and so he started shooting, I think, on the Court House lawn. When the negroes heard this they piled into their wagons and buggies and left town. Then the white men went ahead and had their vote. I remember that we were so uneasy about my brothers when they did not return that night, we were afraid there had been some trouble, but when day break came they returned and said they had to stay to celebrate the victory at the polls.

“I can remember well how the suspense was over Davis giving Coke [th?] 6 trouble of contesting the result of the election and refusing to give up the governors chair. Now he brought soldiers to the capitol and telegraphed Grant for aid, how Grant refused to have anything to do with it, and how Coke also had his friends to go armed or rather from every county and community in Texas it was said that there were committees of his friends who went prepared to fight for Coke to take the office. For two days we were held in suspense for fear of some serious trouble when with Davis, when he saw the determination back of these friends of Cokes and gave up hope of aid from the president reluctantly gave up the fight.

“I remember an amusing anecdote about Gov. Cokes campaign. Once when he was making a speech I heard him tell this story. He compared the days of reconstruction and the war between the states to a fight between two goats, [one?] was a big goat and the other a little one. “The big goat kept eating the little one up until there was nothing left but the little goats tail, but the little goats tail just kept right on wagging. So it was with the South, it kept right on fighting as long as there was anything to fight with and now in the days of reconstruction, [please?] God, they would still fight on for their rights?”

“From the time Governor Richard Coke took the office of Governor, and the rangers were doing their part under Captain Ross, things began to change and gradually times became normal. The negro soldiers and guards were done away with, and once more

Library of Congress

when the white men who had fought for their state rights, as they [s?] it, were given back their citizenship peace decended upon us. 7 “When we came to Texas there were large ranches as well as plantations The timbered country around Madisonville was fine for the protection of stock in the winter and there were many big ranches. To me the ranch life was more fascinating then the plantation life.

“When the spring [?] [?] rodeo's were on, the men would often be [away?] from home helping to round-up the cattle. When we had our fourth of July celebrations the best riders would give exhibitions of their skillin in riding the wild horses and bucking broncho's. There were cattle thieves later on, but in those early days people [were?] more honest before so many came from other states, following the ending of the war between the state.

“As I look back over the past and see the big ranches all turned into [f?] farms, I long for the days gone by when.

“I could see the cattle grazing, O'er the hills at early dawn,

I could see the campfires smoking, at the breaking of the morn, I can hear the bronchoes neighing, I can hear the cowboys sing, I'd like to be in Texas, When they round-up in the spring.

“I was married in 1873 at [osse?] Texas to Isaac Pringle, an old friend from the same state of missippi. He came to Texas in 1865. We moved to Marlin in 1880 where we reared our family. Mr [Pringle?] was postmaster under Cleveland's administration. He was also a school teacher and in business at various times. I have the following living children, Jeffie who married Judge [ardlow?] of fort Worth. Fannie who teaches in the Dallas Public schools, Parker of Oklahom City, Kate who married a minister by the name of Mathison and lives in Denver, and Mrs [at?] Lewellyn with whom I make my home.