

[Mrs. William Price]

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FOLKLORE:

Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

McLennan County, Texas,

District No, 8. See attached interview

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Interview with Mrs. William Price, Marlin, Texas, (White Pioneer)

"I was born in the year 1847 at Bowling Green Kentucky, my father was named David Busby, he owned a plantation in the vicinity of Bowling Green. In the year 1849, he brought his family and slaves to Texas and settled in Freestone County at a little community called Cotton Gin, where he lived until his death.

"First, I will tell you about the stories that were told to us in our childhood of the life and things that were of interest to my people in Kentucky. I can remember as a child the first song that we were taught. It was "My old Kentucky Home". This song was written, as you probably know by Stephen Foster who was visiting in Kentucky at the home of a kinsman at Federal Hill in Bardstown, Kentucky. This relative's name was John Brown, a [Judge?]. This was in the fall of 1852, but in these days when we came to Texas everything that happened in our home state was as interesting to us as the news in Texas.

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“This song, having the beautiful words of love of the old home, was always our favorite. The story of how it was written in the old spring house on the Hill and how Stephen Foster having the inspiration of it, then went to the old mahogany desk in the hall to write the words down, little dreaming that some day it would be the cause of the place becoming a memorial shrine to be kept as a tribute to the writer of this song. I understand that this house was opened to the public in 1924 as a state and national shrine.

“Another thing which found echo in the hearts of the people from this state, in Texas was the horse races. The poet, James Mulligan wrote “The song birds are the sweetest In Kentucky;

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The thoroughbreds are fleetest In Kentucky;

“And this is no idle boast, the/ blue grass region has long held the supremacy in the production of thoroughbred stock. Today it is claimed that the country centering around Lexington raises about sixty percent of all the thoroughbred horses in America.

“The story of how the races first started in Kentucky is that when the first settlers came from Virginia, they brought with them the old tradition of their English ancestors, the chief of which was their love for horses and horse racing. There are records of racing at Lexington from its first settlement. Main Street was the best place to try their speed, and it is told that down this street the men raced their horses, not for a money stake, but to prove their claims to the speed of the horses.

“The sport was then confined by city ordinance to the “Commons”, where a course over the hills and the river bottoms tested the speed and endurance of their horses. The story goes on to tell us how that in August of 1769 the races would be conducted along professional rules, and that purses would be offered. The main obstacle to be expected was from the Indians, however we heard no reports that they interfered.

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“The first real race track with its purses offered and the first jockey club was built near Lexington in 1798; and still they had to be on the lookout for the Indians. The one now in use is the oldest in America in point of service, it having been constructed in 1826. There is a long story in itself of the race courses of Kentucky, but I only want to show you how, as far back as I can remember, the love of 3 horses and the races was of interest to a Kentuckian, although they be in far - away Texas.

“Then I consider worthy of mention the returns from the tobacco crop of this state, the main variety grown in Kentucky is the Dark and the White Burley; the dark tobacco grown in the western part and the white in the central part of the state. There is a long process by which the ground is prepared, and then the next step is “burning the bed”, brush and heavy wood are piled high on the beds and burned so that the soil is heated to a depth far enough to kill all seeds of weeds or disease.

“In the early days the setting out of the tobacco plants were of such importance that the rural schools had to give vacations in order that the children could help in setting these plants out. But in later years machinery was invented which saved this loss of time from the school's, and was much saving of labor. After the stalk has matured and the leaves begin to turn brown then they are stripped from the stalk and tied in bunches convenient for handling. It is then dried and finished.

“Included in our stories was the towns of Paducah and Hopkinsville, Paducah is now known as the birthplace of Irvin S. Cobb. In the early days these towns were villages to the traveller.

“Hopkinsville is now one of the leading tobacco markets of the south. In that day these towns were known only as being on the road (after the Civil War was over) leading to the birthplace of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy. This was at the little village of Fairview, In memorial park is the Davis monument, second only in height to the

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Washington monument. Further east the little village of Elkton became another highway in later years to these visiting the 4 Blue and Gray State Park.

“In our stories of the war between the states, we were told about the birthplace of Lincoln. While speaking of memorials, there is a monument to him at Hodgenville. Inside of granite walls is enclosed the log cabin in which Lincoln was born in 1809. While Lincoln lived on the Knob Creek farm it was at one time the “Main Street of the Kentucky Wilderness,” the road from Louisville to Nashville. And from the top of “Bigg Hill” Lincoln could look out towards the Blue Grass land. It was while here that he had his first schooling, and during his childhood in Kentucky, that he formed his opinion on the slavery question.

“As you have no doubt read in history about how his father, Thomas Lincoln and family were on the Abolitionist side and how the Little Mountain Church had split from the Nolin Church against slavery. But did you know that there were prosperous members of the Lincoln family who owned slaves and were masters of large plantations in the states of Tennessee and Kentucky?

“Other homes where my father had visited was the home of Henry Clay, which they called Ashland. This home was noted for its Southern hospitality. No Kentuckian who had ever known and seen the home of this man could pass over his story to his children, while I will not attempt to give you his history, it is too well known to historians, but I must tell you something of the great estate of Ashland.

“It was in 1805 that Henry Clay purchased the first part of this estate, at the price of ten dollars an acre. In a few more years it had grown to a great estate. It was here that he rested from his duties at Washington. After the custom of the times, he was known as “Henry Clay of Ashland.” He was a great lover of improving farm products of all kinds. It was said that he imported stock from Spain, and Portugal. His Merino and Saxon sheep and English horses and cattle were famous. Many of the most noted race horses of the day were raised at Ashland.

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“It was from the Ashland District that he was sent to Congress in 1811. An interesting relic in this home was the old high hat that he wore in Washington. Politicians too, were among his cherished friends. Here important people came to seek advice and discuss affairs of the nation. Distinguished men of all professions sought the wisdom of the owner of Ashland. One can imagine the diplomats of other countries visiting here or perhaps the Marquis de Lafayette among them. In all probability President Monroe or Daniel Webster.

“Today the visitor may view the household furnishing from the wine-glasses and silver, to the parlor and bed room furniture. The old-fashioned washstand and pitcher in the bed room of Henry Clay to the old fashioned miniature of himself presented by the ex-Emperor Iturbide. There were also the forest trees and the beautiful blue grass meadows where his race horses and fine stock grazed.

“It was in the year that my father came to Texas that Henry Clay made his last great speech when the Missouri Compromise again was the subject of debate, in this speech he won the name of “The Pacificator.” It was thought to be the cause of his death, the effort he put forth in his failing health. It is enough to tell you that the followers of this man honored and admired him for his attempt in the troublesome days before the Civil War to help to hold his state in the Union. He also earned the name of Great Commoner.

“If I were not to tell you of the stories handed down to us by our 6 father of Daniel Boone, the most adventurous of our states heroes, you would justly feel that we had not been taught the true folklore of the Kentucky forest and the stories of the huntsman. It was John Finley, a fur trader of Pennsylvania that led Daniel Boone and his brother-in-law, John Stuart, into Kentucky by way of Cumberland Gap, that famous trail which was afterward known as the Wilderness Road, which was travelled by the pioneers, and made famous in the battle of the Wilderness, during the Civil War.

“When the Transylvania Company was organized North Carolina for the purpose of establishing a colony in Kentucky, it was on the report of which Daniel Boone had carried

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back with him to his old home on the Yadkin River that Colonel Henderson decided to send a colony to Kentucky under the delegation of Daniel Boone to treat with the Cherokees Indians for a tract of land lying between the Cumberland and the Kentucky river's.

After a hard trip the party of thirty enlisted men reached their journeys end and on the Kentucky River and set about building the town of Boonesboro, the second settlement in Kentucky. "There were four settlements soon in the Transylvania grant and when Colonel Henderson came he set about arranging for a convention of delegates from these four settlements. This was the first legislative convention ever held in Kentucky, was at Boonesborough in May of 1775. It was held out of doors under an elm tree and there were eighteen delegates from the four settlements and Daniel Boone and Squire Boone were among these delegates, history tells that at this convention Daniel Boone introduced a bill for the preservation of game and the improvement of the breed of horses. 7 "Another interesting bit of history is that during the Revolunary War that all these settlements in Kentucky were abandoned excepting those at Harrodsburg and Boonesboro, these places stood the siege of Indians time and again and it is a matter of history that the women fought by the side of their husbands, or took their turns at melting the pewter plates into bullets and caring for the wounded.

"There is the story of how the last attack by the Indians was made with a band of four hundred Indians and forty frenchmen under the command of Captain Duquesne who was in the British employ. He demanded the surrender of the fort and for ten days under Daniel Boone held out against them, even tho' they made an attempt to mine the fort and tunnel beneath it, they held out untill the French and Indians withdrew.

"There is a story of an ancient ferry that still carries freight and passengers across the river to the rocky road on the other side. The old town has long since disappeared and nothing remains of this pioneer settlement but the camps of the summer vacationist. It is said to be a popular bathing beach for the present generation.

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“There is a settlement near Paris, Kentucky called the Cane Ridge meeting place, this was the organizing of the Christian Church by a Presbyterian preacher who had left his own denomination and formed this church. This was the first one of any church of this organization, five years after in Washington, Pa. Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander organized a Christian Assembly of like faith. This section known as Cane Ridge was also a favorite ground of Daniel Boones[.?] 8 “It also has a historical legend about the Log Cabin Seminary, which was the first wilderness school in the state and many of the prominent men in Kentucky received their education here. This school was finally destroyed by lightning, but the spirit of its founder still lives in the hearts of the pioneers who can remember the good this dauntless spirit did. It was here too that one of the revivals that swept the country in 1801 were held. It is a fact that in the history of America there has never been such a religious revival that swept through Kentucky and Tennessee.

“I have given you the folklore of the most interesting historical facts that were handed down to the children as we grew up in far-away Texas but I have not told you of the wonderful Cumberland and Kentucky Rivers and the huntsman and fishermans paradise of those early days, this, to our father was the greatest cause of homesick longing for his loved state, The Cumberland River as it flows through Whitely and McCreary Counties is one of the most beautiful rivers in America or was at that time. There are the Cumberland Falls which leap over a precipice seventy-five feet high, and with rush and rear of wildy churning water it dashes high and makes whirling rapids and whirlpools, and the roar of it can be heard for miles away.

“Through the central part of the state is the Kentucky, another one of those most beautiful rivers, it flows through the rich blue-grass country, then among the hills where it has its beginning, is the Kentucky Natural Bridge State Park; the state has set aside where the Natural Bridge is situated. It is said to be one of the most wonderful of natures farmations, besides the Mamoth Cave. To tell you about it would take up too much time and everybody is supposed 9 to know of the wonders of this cave.

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“In the years of my childhood many a winters evening was spent listening to the wonders of our “Old Kentucky Home”, one would wonder why our people left it. Why does the spirit of adventure lead men to fields afar? Texas was a new country, a land of promise, and so many ,many of our people from all the states felt its beckening hand, promise of free land and greater wealth and the old spirit of adventure that called our forefathers from across the ocean was stirring in the hearts of our fathers of the early days of that time. My father felt the call and altho' he brought us to what was then a wilderness he loved his adopted state of Texas, while as a child I have often heard him sing the song of his old Kentucky home.

“The way we lived when we came to Texas and the conditions that existed in the country at the time we came in 1849 I will tell you in our next interview. It is a story in itself and so I will save it for another time, so different from the story of Kentucky as handed down to us. I have lived the Texas part and I will tell you some of the things that I remember as a child from the time I heard General Sam Houston make a campaign speech when he was running for governor just before the Civil War broke out.

“As I tell you of Kentucky, the song that every Kentuckian loves lingers in my mind as it was sung at all our reunions of Kentuckians, and the song that the slaves loved the best, for to them it also meant home,. “The sun shines bright in my old Kentucky home, Tis summer, the darkies are gay; The corn-tops ripe and the meadow's in the bloom,

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While the birds make music all the day; “Weep no more my lady, O weep no more today, We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home, For the old Kentucky home, far a—way.

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Folklore,

Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

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REFERENCE.

Interview Continued with Mrs William Price, Marlin Texas.

"Altho' I was only t year two year's old when my family came to Texas from Kentucky, the folklore handed down t to us children in the days of our childhood makes the history and the legends of what happened and how they lived as real as if I had lived there just as I remember the things that happened in Texas.

"I failed before t to tell you of [?] tw two places more that were made familiar in our fireside stories of other days in Kentucky. ne One of these was about the way the people from all over the states of [?] Kentucky and Tennessee would [???] Lake up in the vecinity of the Mississippi River in their annual fishing and hunting trips.

"This has always been one of the [??] most famous fresh-water fishing places anywhere, the birds and waterfowls [?] would make this a relay point on their migrations orth north and [?] south during the migrating season. It was formed by an earthquake in 1812 so the story goes, before this it was a forest on the bank of the [?] Mississippi river. For years the poor squatters families made their living by their sale of fish and from their hunting.

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They [?] the furs from the wild animals they trapped. These furs were very profitable [?] the markets [??] from Memphis to St [?] Louis .

“In after years this land was sold to a syndicate and they had [quite a lot of trouble in removing these squatters and their families.?] [????] -Texas 2 “Another ace place that should not be left out was the town of Columbus, on the Mississippi river. It was the most historically interesting place that was described to us in our legends or stries stories . The bluffs on which the town was situated were called the “Iron Banks” by the early French explorers. The Confederates called it the “ Gibraltar of the West “ .

“It was the point of conflict between the warring tribes of Indians and the Revolutionary forces and the Americans, and finally between the Union and the Confederate forces. Here the old fortifications and [?] with the huge chain and twenty foot anchor which the Confederates swung across the river to stop the Yankee gun-boats may still be seen.

“Another one of the stories that interested us was the one about how “Uncle Toms Cabin” was written. As you know the figure and name of Simon Legree became to the Northern people the typical [?] [Southern?] slave owner, just as Uncle Tom became the symbol to them of all slaves. So the question in that day was “ what plantation did Harriet Beecher Stowe represent “ ? The plantation was described as being in Louisiana, the distance fr from the town of [?] Alexandria fitted with her descriptions, and a man by the name of Mc Alpin, a bachelor [?] a reputation of being cruel to the slaves, his busy servant was called Uncle Tom, so the public mind centered on this plantation as being the one which fitted with her story.

“Then came the War and Reconstruction days, and the story was partly forgotten. But let me tell you this other story that bobbed up in 1892. 3 After Mc Alpin had died , (not knowing that the entiment sentiment was to be centered on him as being Simon Legree) , forty years after his passing out of this world , a Judge Corley of Abiline Texas visited

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the [?] Mc-Alpin plantation, secured the cabin which had been the one the old slave they called Uncle Tom lived in and carried it [to?] the World's air Fair at Chicago.

“In order [?] prove this cabin [?] was the real cabin, he took affidavits from some of the people who lived in this community, and published the affidavits and results of his investigations in a [?] book called “A Visit to Uncle Toms Tom's Cabin”, it was supposed that he sold this with the exhibit of the cabin at the [??] Worlds Fair in Chicago. The New Orleans Democrat [??] article in the December 4, 1892 issue in which they state that there were some slave owners who allowed their overseers [?] to be cruel t to the slaves, [?] and this abusive treatment was [one of?] the greatest evils of slavery.

“When the Louisiana Historical Society appealed to a Mr Breazeale of [?] Natchitaches to settle the matter of this story of the Mc Alpin [?] plantation being the original scene, he removes the scene of the story to a Parish of [?] Point Coupee'. As this was one of the stories that was the greatest weapon which the North held in their fight on the slavery question, it is but natural that the question of where this [?] story was written was at that [?] time of importance and the [?] story which every child [?] old enough to understand the questions of the day [was?] familiar.

“I [??] guilty it was said that the man whose name this story was used never knew that his name and Simon Legree's had been linked together. He died as he lived alone [??] and was buried among his slaves. 4 “I have told you of Kentucky, and adjoining southern states, in order that you may contrast it with the country of Texas which my father came to in 1849. At that time he was not refugeeing from the coming of the War between the States as so many did in the days of fifty-nine and sixty. No! he came because it was a new country and the spirit of adventure perhaps that the Pilgrim fathers had, no doubt still lingered in his heart from some of his ancestors.

“Texas was just an unsettled country, most of the settlements still had the forts as a place for the settlers to go to for protection in the event there should be any [??] hostile

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Indians or Mexicans. However, I do not remember any attacks on my people by either one. The little [?] community where my father settled, Cotton Gin, was not far from the old Springfield, the county seat of Limestone County. As we had the slaves that were brought from Kentucky they had to be clothed the same as / our wn own family, so my brother went to Houston in a wagon [?] driving oxen, to buy material for the clothes.

“He bought bolts of kersey, a coarse wollen cloth, for the man's suit's, hickory stipes for the mens shirts, checked cotton goods, called linsey, linen and cotton mixed, and flannel for the womens dresses. White cotton flannel was used for the womens underclothes. The white women had to do the sewing and were assisted by the slave women that could sew. There had to make up this material into garments for the slaves. The average slave was give two suits of clothing a year. We [?? had no sewing machines in those days and to make the clothes for fifty slave's was a big item. 5 At this time the cotton gin was run by horse power, and with good steady work they ginned about four bales a day. The gin house was built square and had two stories, the top was cut up into stalls. The gin stand set in the top story and the bottom part of the house was where the machinery was placed, there was a big wheel to which the horses were hitched to the levers, there were usually four of these levers, there were [?] condensers, the cotton thrown into the lint room. They carried the cotton upstairs and put it into the press box. They started the oxen or mules around and when they were going around in a circle, the [follow-block?] came down and pressed the bale, then they tied it with ropes.

“During the war they had no bagging or ropes so they used boards for bagging and hickory switches for ropes, after the war the cotton had to be rebaled for shipping. It sold for fifty and sixty cents a pound right after the war. The first cook stove I ever saw was at Fairfield Female College where I attended school during the war between the States.

“This college was located in Fairifeld, the county seat of [?] County. The girls building was about five miles east of town. We had fifty boarders. The boys building was in town. The president of the college [? (where I attended three years) , was named Henry Graves.

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At the close of the school, the parents were invited and the examinations were given orally before them. The young ladies dipped snuff instead of smoking as they do now and the [?] old ladies [?] smoked clay pipes. The college had a large dining room and as there were no screens then, the negro waiters stood at the tables and waved large palm leaf fans or long bough from the trees to keep the flies away. 6 "I was twelve years old when General Sam Houston ran for Governor of Texas in 1859. I can remember my uncle, Colonel Busby going with the whole family to old Springfield to a big picnic, they took me along with them, and we heard Sam Houston make a speech in his campaign for governor. They all went up and spoke to him and took me along with them. I wore my hair braided from the middle of my head, the plaits clinging to the side of my head and caught together in the back with a large ribbon bow. My shirt waist was tightly fitted and belted, the sleeves long and the collar high. The skirt was full, and my pantlets showing several inches below the skirt. I wore high top, low heel shoes, my hat was broad brimmed. I was very proud and happy at seeing and having the governor speak to me.

"He was elected as you know and then came the war soon after, I well remember how the men were dissatisfied in him that he did not vote for secession but resigned the governor's chair [?] rather than vote to secede from the Union, but in later years when one remembers how he worked for [?] Texas to be admitted to the Union he should think of those things in a calmer way, but at that time the country was all for secession down here. I am sure it must have been a sad day for Sam Houston when he had to be set aside from his loved state.

"When the [?] war between the States was declared I was in Fairfield College. The ladies of the community made canteen covers, knitted socks and did everything they could [to?] get the men ready for the first call. The citizens of Fairfield [and?] the surrounding community gave a big barbecue to the company of soldiers formed there. 7 "Miss [?] Graves of our school presented the company with a Confederate flag. My brothers John and Milton Busby left with this company, I can remember even now how thrilled we were and so proud of them. But alas for the fond hopes of mothers, sisters and wives of these

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boys who [?] went away in this company, so many never returned, their glory is in making the supreme sacrifice for their country. [?] ilton Brother Milton was killed in action in Georgia and brother John died in prison at Fort Donaldson.

“During the war the women had the burden of providing the necessities of life, with the assistance of the slaves they produced food and clothing. They spun and wove the clothing for their husbands and sons off at the front. Calico was a dollar a yard then, and it took ten yards to make a womens dress. Everbody who could possibly do so sent their cotton in wagon trains to Brownsville to be shipped to Europe at this time. It sold for a dollar a pound in gold, was called “ hard money “, and was more valuable than paper money. We shipped to Brownsville , on account of the blockade in Galveston on the second day of July 1861, and as you no doubt know, that all Texas ports was also blockaded soon after.

“I married Captain William Price, a member of Greens regiment, Walters battalion. Mr Price was on the flat-boat that captured the Harriet Lane at Galveston / in 1863. After the war he rode home on horseback clad in a suit that he made by hand out of bed-ticking. In 1871 [?] settled in a log house on the arah Sarah [??], which was a gift to me from my father. 8 “The first train that I ever saw was the Houston and Texas Central passing thro' Gresbeck to Houston Texas. The railroad missed the town of Springfield and Fairfield by [?] a few miles and the [?] towns of Grosbeck and Mexia took their place. It was said because the land owners were too high and so the railroad took the land offered them and located the new towns. All that remains of the old towns is the negro families.

“The year the railroad came was the same year that Congress passed the bill to approve the Constitution of Texas and Tex Texas Senators and Representatives took their seats in 1870. Then in 1871 the Bureau of Immigration was created and the free public school system. The western branch of the Houston and Texas Central R.R. reached Austin, and the Waco Tap road was completed, the Houston and Great Northern commenced, and the

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Tex, Pacific opened to [?], and the International and Great [?] Northern built from Hearne to Jewitt. We felt that civilization [?] had finally come our way.

“I lived on the land that was given me as a bridal gift until the death of my husband and my children were grown and have [home's of?] their own whom I now make my home with. They are Mrs C. O. Robertson, Kosse, Mrs Dave McKinney, Marlin; Will Price, Stranger; and Miss Margeret Price, Marlin Texas.