

[Ruby Hammock]

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FOLKWAYS

Mary Agnes Davis, V. A.

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Ruby Hammock, Brandon, Texas.

(A Story told to the grandchildren.)

The story I am going to tell you girls and boys this morning is a sketch of a family, just one of the many families who helped to make Texas History and it happened almost a hundred years ago.

In the year 1833, a number of families came from [Mureborough?], Tennessee to Texas. They had been given large tracts of land. This was to induce more people to come into

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the state. Among these people were my great grandfather, William Seton Menefee and his brother-in-law, John Marlin.

They settled at old Fort Marlin just below the City of Waco today, in fact, these people built the Fort and it took its name after John Marlin. My grandfather was a small boy of three years of age.

These people set to work to protect themselves from the Indians. They cultivated a few acres of corn and laid in a supply of fuel and food to keep them through the coming winter. They remained at the Fort for two years, and they were certainly hard years, with bitter cold winters and a number of Indian attacks. C. - 12. Texas

My great grandmother Amanda Menefee, though a mother of five children, was also a woman doctor and spent most of her time in doctoring and nursing the sick and wounded. She left her children in the care of a negro girl and a negro boy about eighteen years of age whom she had brought out here from Tennessee.

In the latter part of the year 1854 or perhaps the first part of the year 1835, the Indians made a most brutal attack on the old 2 Fort. Rumors had come to the Fort during the day tha numbers of Indians were hiding outside in and among the trees, so it was thought best for all the women and children to come together in my great grandfather's house and John Marlin's. They had built their houses together with just a long hall between.

As night began to fall most all of the people came together in this house. Men were stationed to watch on the outside. It was a very cold night and they were forced to have some fire, someone, forgetting that the smoke from the chimney would tell the Indians where the people had hidden, had built a large fire in the open fireplace and a large pot of old fashioned hominy hung from the [?] over the fire. The rest of the Fort was dark, no smoke could be seen, as the people talked quietly and listened for any sound, there came into the room an arrow from a small opening in the window close to the fireplace. The few men in the room ran for their guns and some of the women did too. The mothers hid their

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children the best they could. My grandfather, a very small boy, remembered the attack, but could not remember where he was hid whether it was under a bed or behind a large trunk.

Most of the men went outside and slipped behind trees for protection. Two of the women in the room were instantly killed, one woman fainted when she saw two Indians come in at the window, and she fell as if she were dead also. The Indians scalped the two dead women, and while they were doing the scalping, the woman who had fainted came to, but she did not move when she saw what they were doing. For some reason they did not bother her, but it was said she had the most beautiful hair. 3 The men finally drove the Indians away. It was not until about three o'clock the next afternoon before the people began to come back to the house. That night they did not have a fire and worked most of the night burying the dead and dressing the wounded. My great-grandfather was shot in the leg.

Some time the next day the negro boy came in. He had hid under the house. The negro girl was never found. People supposed she was carried away with the Indians.

There were so few people left that they decided to abandon the fort and go down to Washington Co. where there were more people, so one night they took what they could and started.

They found a number of people in Washington Co., and they began to hear of trouble with Mexico, how as far back as 1824, Santa Ana had made encroachment upon Texas soil. These had continued and were becoming more frequent and distasteful to Texas people.

So, in November and December of the year 1835 people were meeting and adopting resolutions for independence. A paper was drawn up and was in that year called a "Consultation." Some people did not want independence altogether, but wanted Texas to have State rights under the Mexican Government. But the year of 1835 was a year of terrible tragedies to Texas. On March 1st, 1836, delegates met at Washington to sign the paper of "Consultation", and to declare outright for Texas Independence. My

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great grandfather signed this paper and in a few weeks died from pneumonia due to exposure. The paper was written by a young lawyer whose name was Geo. C. Childress of [Milam], Texas. It was written one year before it was signed and went into effect, and when signed, not one word was changed. 4 When this paper was drawn up it would have been impossible to raise an army of 1000 men, the enemy was already on Texas soil 10,000 strong. The little army would only have had shotguns and deer rifles and would have had to depend on game for food. The enemy was armed with the most improved weapons. That was the kind of men Texas had.

My great grandmother at the death of my great grandfather was left with five children. Three boys and two girls. She had several large tracts of land, but very little money, if any. She sold some of her land and moved to the small town of Houston. Some time after moving to Houston one son wandered away and was not heard of until years after her death. One son William, and the two girls were put in school in Houston. My grandfather, Frank, opened a hardware store, selling mostly tin-ware, going out in all directions from Houston with his ware. My great grandmother practiced medicine.

At the age of 22 my grandfather, H. F. Menefee married a woman doctor. His older brother William, became a Methodist preacher. He married a thirteen year old girl from the girl's College at Houston, whose home was in the distant state of California. Their sisters had married also and my great grandmother had passed away. So these two brothers sold their possessions they had in and around Houston and settled in the year 1856 west of Cleburne, Johnson county, on the Nolan River. My grandfather built a log house at the foot of a hill and his brother built a rock house over the hill at the foot of the same hill. They cultivated land in the valley running along the Nolan river. My grandfather has shown me a lot of times 5 the place Philip Nolan was supposed to have hidden his gold. For a few years these brothers prospered, accumulating a number of stock.

When the civil war came, my grandfather was called to report at Houston. He left his wife and three babies. He carried an old saber with him as a weapon. When they left Houston

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on their march to the Texas and Oklahoma line, they were given guns. These sabers were thrown away. My grandfather picked up one and carried it to his home where he was allowed a few days furlough.

He was away four years of the war, only home once. One night in camp he felt things were not right at home. When morning came he asked for a few days off, as they were not in action he was granted these few days. When he reached home Grandmother had buried their baby girl on the side of the hill. She had called in some of the neighbor women and a few men that were left, like my grandfather's brother, because he was a preacher, and buried her baby.

I know that my grandmother like a number of other Texas women, must have been wonderful. She cared for the stock, made a little garden and planted a few acres of corn from which she ground meal for cornbread, cared for her babies, often time carrying them all on a horse with her, going miles to some sick one.

One evening just before night she came out on her porch and looking up to the top of the hill back of the house she saw one lone Indian man. She went back and put out her fire, thinking he might not come any nearer if he did not see smoke, perhaps he would think no one was at home, he would only steal a cow or calf and leave. This he must have done as he did not bother her.

When my grandfather returned home he was forced to sell 6 all his land except about 200 acres, most all of his cattle, to start again. In a few years he had his land back in good condition, a goodly number of milk cows, a good orchard and large grape vineyard, and a part of that time my grandfather was totally blind for two years. But still he raised a large family, educated them, making one son a doctor, and that son, my father, Dr. A. J. Menefee of Hillsboro. His brother William also raised a family of twelve children. Two of

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them were doctors, Dr. W. E. Menefee, Cleburne, and Dr. E. L. Menefee of Granbury. One son became a missionary to China.