

[Mrs. J. D. Rylee]

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FOLKWAYS

William V. Ervin, P. W.

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Consultant - Mrs. J. D. Rylee, Granbury, Texas.

My father and mother lived in Alabama when they were married, and their fathers each gave them 25 slaves, and they came to Texas in the early fifties. They settled on Paluxy Creek, not far from Glen Rose, which was then known as Barnard's Mill, but there was no town there at that time. That was then Johnson County, then Hood county, then Somervell county. We lived in three counties without moving. I was born there 78 years ago. My father's name was William McDonald.

The Indians were bad then. My father required us all to be in the house before dark, and we didn't have a window so that a light could show through it. My father raised fine horses,

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the steeldust mostly, and the Indians sure liked to get hold of them. They stole a good many horses from my father. They usually came on moonlight nights. My father was a member of the ranger force organized to fight the Indians. He was wounded three times by them. Once an arrow struck him just above his forehead and went back over his head, but his hat saved him from a bad hurt. Another time an arrow clipped through the skin of his throat. Another wound was when an arrow took off the thumb of his hand in which he was holding his pistol firing at the Indians.

The Caddo Indians were friendly, and would help the white people with their work. They would take their pay in farm produce, but they wanted mostly milk, butter and eggs. They would come to our place and sit in a row with their cups to get sweet milk. My father would have one of the negroes take a large bucket of milk and pour each Indian a cupful of milk. They would say, "Me good Indian. [?] Me no hurty you." I was very much C.-12 - Tex. 2 afraidd afraid of them anyway.

They would steal, though. I don't think I ever saw an Indian that wouldn't steal whatever he could. A band of them camped for sometime on the creek now known as Squaw Creek, and it got its name from them. My father and other men of the community had been trying to decide on a suitable name for the creek when two men came there from the Indian reservation in Oklahoma to see these Indians about going there. They went to the camp of the Indians on the creek, but each time they went they found only two or three old men and a bunch of squaws and children. The men of the Caddos who were able were gone on a stealing expedition, and they would be gone sometimes several weeks, and when they would come back they would bring plenty of stuff. The men who wanted to see the Indian men told my father they would like to suggest a name for the creek. They said to name it Squaw Creek on account of the squaws camped on it, and the settlers agreed to call it that.

The Comanches made a raid and carried off the wife and three little children of a doctor named Box who lived in our part of the country. Two of the children were girls, three and

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five years old, and the other was a baby. The Indians tied the mother on a wild horse which tried to throw her off, and they made her carry the baby, which cried and she couldn't get it to stop. The Indians didn't like that so one of them [?] grabbed the baby and smashed its head against a tree. They took the mother and two girls to their camp near San Angelo.

The white people got together and followed them. Charles Barnard was with them, and they decided that he would try to ransom the woman and children. He had been in this country for several years and had trapped for furs over it and was well known to the Indians, and they were friendly with him. He would trade them goods for their furs. The men of the rescue party stayed 3 away from the Indians' camp while Barnard went to talk with the Indians. They would not hear of giving up the woman and her children at first. Before the posses got there they had tortured the children by burning their feet until their feet were drawn up in a knot; and stayed that way. The little girls grew up and were grown young ladies with club feet.

Barnard talked to the Indians a long time, and at last got them to agree to give up the captives, but he had to give them a great deal to get them to do it. Nobody else but him could have got them to do it.

Barnard was a smart business man, and he knew how to get along with the Indians and make them like him. His wife was a Spanish girl named Juana Cavassoo. She and a cousin of hers were captured by the Indians when they were eight, or nine years old, and Mrs. Barnard was kept by them until she was old enough to be married, and was ransomed by Charlie Barnard and his brother. It took the Barnards several months to get the Indians to agree to let them have her.

Mrs. Barnard said the Indian girls abused her and her cousin. Mrs. Barnard said she fought the Indian girl who started mistreating her and her cousin, and knocked the Indian girl down and choked and beat her and tried to kill her. Her cousin, Mrs. Barnard said, was

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timid and would not fight the Indian girls. The Indians were proud of Mrs. Barnard's spirit, and the chief took her under his care and saw that she was treated right. But they tied her cousin to a tree and burned her to death, Mrs. Barnard tried to get the Indians to spare her cousin.

My brother, Jack McDonald, was in the fight about 1872 when a band of seven Indians were cornered in Robinson Creek and all of them killed. It was the rule among the settlers that when the Indians made a raid for each person whose home was on the route the white men were taking to follow the Indians to have 4 horses ready to re-mount the men. My brother got to that Indian fight that way. The Indians while on their raid had been to one place where there was a washing on the line, and when the Indians were found they were dressed in the clothes and wrapped in the bedsheets. They got down in the creek under the bank and behind a log or fallen tree and brush in such a way that the white men couldn't get in position to shoot at the Indians without exposing themselves. One man was killed and another one badly wounded trying to get shots at the Indians, who were armed with bows and arrows. A rain came up and got the Indians' bowstrings so wet they wouldn't shoot, and so the settlers killed all the Indians. The bowstrings were made of rawhide. There were six Indian men and one squaw, but she was dressed in such a way that the white men couldn't tell but what she was a man until they had killed the Indians. They don't know which one of the men killed her. One of the older men told my brother that he could have the woman's scalp if he wanted it. My brother got it, and brought it home, though the hair was so full of "nits" it looked speckled.

There was not only danger from Indians, but from wild longhorn cattle and hogs which ran wild, too. I've seen wild hogs with tushes(tusks) four or five inches long, and they would certainly hurt you bad if they got the chance, and they would fight you. I have seen them fight dogs and just slash [?] the dogs down with their tushes. But the dogs learned how to fight the hogs and jump out of reach of their tushes. It was dangerous for persons to

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go around much on foot. We all went armed with pistols, guns and bowie knives and rode good horses.

The people took a great interest in raising good horses, and every Saturday they would meet and have horse races. My father often had horses in the races, and he was a great lover of good racehorses. 5 I remember when I was fourteen six couples of us, six boys and six girls, rode up on Comanche Peak to have a picnic. We were all armed with pistols, rifles and knives to fight Indians in case they bothered us, but I don't think there was much danger as they had been about all driven out of the country by then. I guess our folks wouldn't have let us gone if they had thought there was much danger. We did a lot of shooting and had a big time.

I was just a little girl at the time, but I remember when John St. Helen, the man who claimed he was John Wilkes Booth, the murderer of President Lincoln; came to our ranch in Somervell county. It was the first place he stopped when he got to that part of the country. He made a deal with my father for board and room, and stayed with us about two years. He always went by the name of St. Helen, and did not claim to be Booth until one time when he was sick and thought he was going to die. He confessed then to a lawyer; Finis Bates, that he was Booth. That was after he left our place.

He was well educated and had fine manners, and he always wore the finest kind of clothes, broadcloth and linen and silk. We would get mail only about every two or three weeks, and he would get lots of mail each time, and some of it would be fine clothing, and we were sure, though we didn't know, that he got money through the mail.

When we and other people of the community would have parties and entertainments we would get St. Helen to read for us, which he did wonderfully. He was always poised, and he seemed to know Shakespear by heart.

I really believe he was Booth. My father would go to Dallas every two or three months with a big load of produce, and St. Helen went with him one time. St. Helen said later, after he

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had confessed to being Booth, that he was very much afraid while in Dallas that he would be recognized. Unless he were hiding out, it would seem strange for a man like him to be in a rough frontier country.