

BOSQUE

LETTER

March 2013

Valley Mills School

Early schools in the Valley Mills area were held in private homes. County Judge L.H. Scrutchfield hired Isaac Gary to teach local students around 1854. The next year classes were held at Liberty Hill, an early meeting place near present day Valley Mills Cemetery. The Searsville community offered classes in the church in the early days. In 1882, S.V. Pool, S.H. Sears, J.H. Gouldy, Doc Woods and H.B. McNeill (Valley Mills school trustees) bought a tract of land from the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway. A white frame two-story school was built and used until 1905. In that year a grand two-story red brick structure was built that stood until the brick mortar began to crumble in 1936. This was depression times, so to save money, a crew of young boys were paid 15 cents per hour to remove the bricks by hand and clean them. They were then used to construct a new school which was finished in 1939, and still stands in use today, which is remarkable by any standards. As growth from the boundary area of McLennan and Valley Mills skyrocketed in the 1980's, talk began of building a new junior and senior high campus. Any time there is talk of a bond election, tax payers get vocal and emotions run high. But the realization that growth had to be dealt with won out, 450 to 339, and the school was built on land just across the McLennan County line at a cost of \$2.8 million. In 2005 talk of a new bond election had the same effect. Voters were split on whether to pay more taxes or build a much needed new elementary school to replace one almost seventy years old. After two very difficult bond elections, a beautiful new elementary campus was opened in August of 2009.

Smaller area schools that have consolidated with Valley Mills are: Cayote, which included such schools as Dripping Springs, Childress Creek, Cross Roads, Center Hill, Chase, Fairview, and Greenock. When the old school at Cayote was to be torn down, local ladies of the community did what the young laborers did for 15 cents an hour at Valley Mills, only they did it out of love. Valeria Whitney has talked about taking each of the red bricks and lovingly cleaning them, then stacking them, then moving them. These bricks were used to build the Cayote Community Center.

Lane's Chapel built a log cabin school house in 1876, and a few years later the cabin was replaced with a frame structure. In 1915 a two room brick building was built and used until 1930 when the school consolidated with Mosheim. Live Oak was the early school in the Mosheim area, built in 1890, and was later replaced by a larger structure. Fire destroyed this school and students had classes in the

Methodist Church. A red brick school was built in 1914, and in 1930 a stone front was added, locally known as the Alamo. Remains of this school still stand today, and were featured in Bruce Jordan's "Early Texas Schools; A Photographic History" (page 103). Mosheim was the last county school district to consolidate in 1972.

In 1866 one acre was deeded from A.Y. Reeder to the building committee for the purposes of building a church, school, meeting place and Masonic Lodge. This building was a two-story rock structure and was known as the Rock Church on Hog Creek. It was completed in 1866 and the building served that community until 1914, when the school consolidated with Searsville. The building was torn down after WWII. The lodge was known as the John Armstrong Lodge.

Black education was important in Valley Mills. The children living in the Colony on Rock Springs attended school in the church, with Rosie Porter teaching all ages. In 1919 a larger brick structure was built. At about the same time, a black school was built in Valley Mills. This structure served the black community through segregation. It burned in 2006.

Next issue will feature Meridian.

Bosque County History Month

In honor of the founding of Bosque County on February 4th, 1854, County Judge and Commissioners signed a proclamation that the month of February will be known as Bosque County History Month. Citizens are encouraged to learn about the county; its pioneers and its past. One way to learn is to visit a museum or the Bosque Collection.

The Bosque Memorial Museum, located in Clifton, features history through exhibits. The museum was started from materials left to Clifton College by Jacob Olson. The museum is recognized by the Texas Historical Commission. George Larson is the director. You can visit their website at www.bosquemuseum.org or call 254-675-3845.

Located at the old Santa Fe Depot in Valley Mills is a museum sponsored by the Bosque Valley Heritage Society. The museum features artifacts, photographs and documents from the early days to present. The society has regular monthly meetings on the first Monday of every month. George Potter is the current president.

Walnut Springs Historical Association sponsors a museum which features history of the railroads, early pioneers, schools and churches. The museum is located next to city hall. The association meets on the first Monday of every month, and the president is William Offutt.

The Bosque Collection is located at 101 N. Main Street in Meridian, on the northeast corner of Hwy. 22 and Hwy. 144. The Bosque Collection houses the archives of the Bosque County Historical Commission. The Collection's mission is to gather, document and preserve county history, which it has done since 1982. Over 2000 photographs, documents from the 1850's, newspapers, correspondence, maps, histories on families, schools, churches and communities are included in the holdings. Please visit the Bosque Collection, or call 254-435-6182 or visit the website at www.bosquechc.org.

Bosque County Celebrates Texas Independence Week

This was the fifth year for this event, and every year gets bigger and better. The mission of this event is to bring citizens into focus on the amazing history of Texas, from colonial days to the present. People are encouraged to participate in the events, which began on February 23, when the Walnut Springs Historical Association presented a program on barbed wire and the impact it had on the Texas frontier. Michael Barr was the speaker on this subject, with about 35 people attending.

The Bosque Memorial Museum presented a children's program on early settlers, highlighting the weapons used for defense and hunting, on Saturday, March 2.

March 4th the Brazos Valley Historical Society in Valley Mills sponsored an evening with General, President and Governor Sam Houston, who discussed some of his most notable experiences. Jerry Gribble portrayed Sam. Approximately fifty people were present.

March 5th the Bosque Collection hosted Western historian Bob Alexander, who gave an entertaining account of how the role of Texas Rangers was redefined after the Civil War. His program was entitled "A Big Six-Shooter and a Good Horse." Before 1861, Rangers were best known as Indian fighters. After the Civil War during Reconstruction, they were reformed to chase down "outlaws and cattle rustlers". Mr. Alexander gave a history of how the roles Rangers have played have evolved from Indian fighters and surveyors to lawmen.

After the program the Bosque Collection hosted a reception and book signing, with about 52 attending. The newly formed Bosque River Chapter of the NSDAR served good ole' Texas cooking of pinto beans and cornbread and buttermilk pie.

A memorial service was held March 6th at 1:00 PM at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, in honor of Cleng Peerson. Brain Davis presented a history of Cleng and his many trips between Norway and America. Mr. Peerson was known as the father of Norwegian immigration to America. His first journey to America was in the early 1820's and was sponsored by the Quakers. He traveled by foot from New York to Minnesota and eventually Texas.

The crowd was good, considering the weather was windy and cold.

March 7th at 1:15 PM Jo Meyer and Ronita Miller of the Brazos Valley Historical Society presented a memorial honoring veterans who fought at San Jacinto, Roden Crane and Jonathon McFarland, with 4th and 7th graders at the Valley Mills School Cemetery.

On March 8th at the Morgan School awards were presented to 4th and 7th grade winners from the art and essay contest. Students from all schools were encouraged to enter. Winners in the art category were: First Place from Valley Mills - Frances Rostro; Second Place from Meridian - Allie Berg; Third Place from Iredell - Emily Rose Wellborn; Honorable Mention from Walnut Springs - Erika Davalos. Winners in the essay category were: First Place from Walnut Springs was Tanner Uloth writing about Jose Navarro. Tanner received \$100.00; Second Place from Walnut Springs was Brittney Mitchell who wrote about her hometown; Third Place from Morgan was Isela Garcia who wrote about Cynthia Ann Parker; Honorable Mention from Walnut Springs was Zoey Gilbert.

On March 9th the Bosque County Historical Commission hosted the 25th Annual Preservation Luncheon. Guest speaker was Gene Blakley who presented a program called "Iredell Hangings and

Other Tradgedies.” It was an informative and entertaining look at some cases involving frontier justice, cases of murder for greed and revenge. 52 people were present to enjoy a meal and hear stories about those who took the law into their own hands.

March 10th the Bosque Memorial Museum hosted Dr. James Johnson who shared his research on the impact the Norwegians have made on history. After the program, guests were treated to Norwegian cookies and SOT suppe, a drink of fruit juices and welled dried fruits. 75 people attended, including one young student from Dallas, who was doing research on his Norwegian roots.

Sponsors of the events were: First Security State Bank; Bosque Memorial Museum; Bosque Collection; Bosque River Valley Chapter of the DAR; Walnut Springs Historical Association; Bosque Valley Historical Society.

Lowry Hampton Scrutchfield

Mr. Scrutchfield led a very interesting life, it was a true Texas saga. He was born in Nacogdoches, Republic of Mexico on June 11, 1824 to Fleming and Nancy Pool Scrutchfield. He was raised in Nashville-on-the-Brazos. During this time he was surrounded by men such as his step-brother John C. Pool, George Erath, Neil McLennan and other early Texas Rangers. At a young age he trained with the Rangers in the art of surveying and Indian scouting. He rode with Tonkawa Indians, long known by the Rangers as “Tonks,” and learned their language and customs. “Tonks” had been badly mistreated by Comanche and Apache tribes, and served as loyal guides for the Rangers. He was involved in many skirmishes with troublesome Indian tribes, and soon became known as a valued scout. He loved George Erath like a father, and was treated as a son by the Major.

He was with McLennan and Erath in the early days laying out Waco Village, and scouted for Erath while Bosque Territory was surveyed. He, like many other of those Rangers, fell in love with the Bosque Valley. He was given his own land grant for his service, however he settled on his deceased brother’s claim, which was larger and the Bosque River flowed right through the heart of the grant. He moved his young bride, Nancy, to this land around 1852. Lowry soon became involved with other settlers in a movement to form a county. They were virtually unprotected and isolated, as it was three days ride to Waco Village. If a county were formed, the state would provide some services, and the settlers could form their own protection. Plus it would encourage other settlers to move along the upper Bosque Valley.

On February 4, 1854 the state legislature created Bosque County. The first election was held August 7, 1854. The votes were counted under the famous “Election Oak.” Lowry Scrutchfield was elected as first county judge, and served two terms.

While Scrutchfield devoted long hours to helping develop county government, he was busy with other ventures as well. Since Bosque County was still the frontier, there was no mail delivery. A mail stage delivered as far as Waco Village, and Scrutchfield made regular trips to Waco in his duty as judge, so he picked up the mail. He brought the mail as far as Meridian, and the local post masters picked it up there. Post Offices were located in private homes at that time. Citizens rode to the post master’s home to pick up their mail.

Scrutchfield was an enterprising man. In Scrutchfield’s papers, located at the Bosque Collection, there is a journal kept by him; a record of an early “UPS” man. He rode a circuit through the lower Bosque

Valley, from the Hog Creek area to just east of the Bosque River, taking orders from settlers. Frontier life was never easy. No running to the Home Depot or Wal-Mart; a trip to Waco was three days in a wagon. Scrutchfield made a regular route delivering much needed items, quite a service for his fellow settlers. You may be surprised by some of the most requested items in his journal, such as: quart of whiskey; caps and powder; plug of tobacco; cotton, calico and flax; scissors and kitchen knives; coffee; salt and other seasonings; shirts; paper and pens; nails; candle molds.

Texas Rangers used him frequently as a scout, since he knew the language and customs so well. He had two or three Tonks with him always. He had such trust and respect for them that when he brought his bride to the untamed and uncivilized land of the Bosque Valley, he built his home close to a Tonkawa camp. Nancy had been raised in Missouri, and was not much acquainted with frontier life. Poor Nancy, her nearest neighbor was three miles on either direction, with the exception of the Tonkawas. She attempted to raise turkeys, but the eggs kept disappearing. On a visit to the camp one day, she noticed turkey eggs being cooked. Not wanting to create a problem with her neighbors, she said nothing. She found out later from her husband that her turkey eggs were considered a delicacy with the Tonks!

Scrutchfield was attached to the Texas Militia of the Northern District during the Civil War. The war at that time was being fought in far off places like Virginia, Arkansas and Louisiana; however there was a raging war on the frontier. Comanches and other tribes were being armed by the Jayhawkers, and raiding the unprotected frontier with a vengeance. Those men who had already served in the Confederacy or were too young or too old to serve joined the State Militia. They rode regular patrols and were on constant guard. In November of 1864 Scrutchfield went on a scouting party, which lasted a month. In December of 1864 confederate and state militia troops gathered in Callahan and began a march to the southwest after a large group of Indians. Scrutchfield kept a journal of the expedition, with short but to the point entries, such as this: "Dec 30 March all day; Camp on the Clear Fork; no grass; very cold." They tracked the Indians all the way to Dove Creek, in present day Irion County, in the knee deep snow and freezing temperatures, and with little food. A fierce battle ensued with a force of about five hundred Indians which lasted several hours. The Indians were armed with new Enfield rifles and were encamped with their backs to a dry creek bed, with plenty of cover on either side. When the smoke cleared, it was not a good sight for the troops. Some reports list one hundred Indians killed and some list twenty. State Militia loses were eighteen good and brave men such as; Sam Barnes, James Mabray and A.E. Everett. Four Confederate men were killed. They gathered up the wounded as best they could and headed home. The Indians headed for Mexico. Some of the wounded didn't make it far, but because of the deep snow and frozen earth, their bodies had to be abandoned (a marker was later placed near the battlesite in their memory). They were so hungry they ate some of the horses. Here is what Scrutchfield entered in his journal the day of the Battle of Dove Creek: "Jan 8 March on until day; dismount; lode guns; mount; march on cross Spring Creek; join Fossett with 200 men in time; made the attack; got whipped; 20 men killed; 25 wounded."

Scrutchfield was instrumental in the formation of the John Armstrong Lodge #291, which began in the Rock Church on Hog Creek. He also served as County Surveyor during the 1870's. After truly living the Texas story, he died November 21, 1900 and is buried in the Scrutchfield Cemetery, a Designated Historical Cemetery.

Memoriam

These Bosque County residents all share a common thread – they lived in Texas during the Republic days, some came before the Republic, anytime prior to December 31, 1845. If you find an omission, please contact the Bosque Collection.

Thomas W Hunt/Santa Fe Expedition 1841/buried in Kopperl Cemetery

Robert Samuel Barnes/fought with Ben Milam at Battle of Bexar/rode with George Erath/fought in the Mexican-American War/Guide for Fort Graham Dragoons/one of the founders of Bosque County/wounded in Arkansas during Civil War/killed at the Battle of Dove Creek, left at battle site

Daniel Robinson/Ranger and surveyor with George Erath/ lived on land granted for his service, about four miles north of Morgan

Jesse Walling/joined the earliest Ranger unit/buried in Walling Bend Cemetery, which was moved to Whitney when Lake Whitney was impounded

Ann Wheelock Walling/sister-in-law of E. Wheelock, important member of the Robertson Colony/received 24 labors in Bosque County as a colonist of the Robertson Colony/ buried in Walling Bend Cemetery

Telitha Womack/ her father fought in the Army of the Republic/buried in Womack-White Cemetery

Phillip Howard/fought with the Republic Army/Texas Ranger/County Judge for Lavaca County/Justice of the Peace Bosque County/District Clerk Bosque County/Freedman's Chairman/built the oldest standing home in Meridian/buried in Meridian

Sarah Howard/came to DeWitt's Colony in 1826/lost two husbands, a brother and a child at the hand of Indians/she and another son were kidnapped by Indians, later rescued by Texas Rangers/lost another husband who was killed by run-away slaves/married Phillip Howard/died in Bosque County 1875

Thursey Dansby / moved to East Texas around 1836/buried in Post Oak Cemetery

Sarah Dansby

Jacob De Cordova and Rebecca De Cordova, originally buried in Kimball Cemetery, later recognized for their contributions to the Republic and the State of Texas and moved to the State Cemetery in Austin

Matthew S Greer/ born at Washington-on-the-Brazos 1845/fought in the Texas State Militia/buried in Kopperl Cemetery

Lowry H Scrutchfield born in Nagadoches 1824/ Rangered with George Erath/first Bosque County Judge/Indian scout for Texas State Troops/fought at the Battle of Dove Creek/buried in the Scrutchfield Cemetery

Jasper Mabray /Jasper and his family came to Rusk Co in 1842/fought Indians with Capt. Jack Hays/was with the Rangers that found Bosque John McLennan/moved with David, Cynthia, James and his sister and brother-in-law , Joseph Knowles Helton, and his wife Martha Ann to Bosque County in 1850/his daughter was first white child born in Bosque County/first county clerk/ wrote several historical articles in 1904/died in Sonora in 1904

Brother **James Mabray** died at Battle of Dove Creek

Brother-in-law J K Helton/elected as first Justice of the Peace/fourth county judge, served during Civil War and Reconstruction

Israel Standifer lived in Robertson Colony 1841

County Judge **Rufus Green Childress** moved to Texas 1844/ joined Texas Rangers, Captain Bogess/served with LS Ross in the 3rd Texas Calvary/Bosque County Judge 1880-1886/Meridian's first mayor

Martin Ellison/fought with George Erath in the Indian campaign/Mexican-American War

John Odle/moved to Texas in 1843/fought in the Battle of Dove Creek/buried in Poston-Odle Cemetery

Wyatt McFadden/ came to Texas 1836/ served with Militia Guard/buried in Valley Mills Cemetery

Jonathon McFadden

James Buckner "Buck" Barry/Texas Ranger in 1841, rode with Jack Hays/fought in several Indian campaigns/fought in Mexican-American War/in command of the Confederate forces Northern District/buried in Barry Family Cemetery

William Berry Smith/fought at San Jacinto/one of two survivors of the Surveyors Fight on Battle Creek/buried in Smith-Pitts Cemetery

John J Jacobs

Ahira Butler/buried in Smith Bend Cemetery

Jack Hunter/rode with Sul Ross

John McKissick/fought with Col Felix Houston in the Army of the Republic/early settler in Bosque County-1848/built a hotel in Waco/buried in McKissick Family Cemetery

Archibald, F M, Matthew Kell moved to Texas with parents in 1838/early settlers/Arch was first county treasurer, shot and killed by Presley Bryant, first sheriff

William C McCurry/came to Texas in 1841/early pioneer of Bosque County/one of the locating commissioners in 1854/built the first courthouse for \$125.00, a 16 x 20 log structure/buried in Meridian Cemetery

Nathan Screws/moved to Texas in 1841/helped his father in law build first courthouse

Daniel Morgan/moved to Texas in 1838/settled in Bosque County/fought with Texas State Troops in Civil War/developer of the Rural Grove community/buried in Fulton Cemetery

Those present at the first election in Bosque County and listed on the plaque at Pool Park:

LH Scrutchfield

John Thomas

JK Helton

JN Mabray

FM Kell

Capt Underhill

Archie Kell

Wm McCurry

James Mabray

Jack McCurry

Lum McCurry

William Gary

Gafey Gary

Samuel Locker

Isaac Gary

Nathaniel Morgan

Matt Gary

John Robertson

RS Barnes

JP Locker

Donations:

Mary Jacque Northup donated several items from her mother, Charlene Conley Slotter. Included are photos of Iredell, one black mourning dress with black bonnet and bead handbag and black mourning frock coat, and family history. Charlene's father was postmaster for Iredell and also served as president for the Iredell School Trustees, 1937-1940. Mr. Conley was largely responsible for the building of the new school. (MSS200)

Joy Taylor donated her mother's 1911 Meridian College Yearbook, a bulletin for Meridian College, a graduation announcement from 1907 and 1914, and a maroon felt banner from Meridian College. Her mother was Lura Gardner from Coryell County, who attended the college in 1911.

Wanda Knudson of Cranfills Gap brought in a journal dated 1930, found by Joey Montgomery in a house he was painting. The journal is inscribed to Jeanette Reid from Willie Weaver Will. Jeanette writes this in one of the entries: This book was a gift to me by my new friend. How much I appreciate this precious gift. This book will inspire me to give vent to my thoughts and inspire me to a deeper understanding of those in my daily life. I will become a better person for such association and may I scatter sunshine and happiness.

Judge Edward Butler donated a CD entitled Travels With the Judge, and The Descendants of Thomas P Butler.

Charles Ellis donated "Alan Lomax, the Man Who Recorded the World"

Jack Pool family donated correspondence, photographs, and memorabilia (MSS201)

Thank you to Collection Members

The Bosque Collection and the Bosque County Historical Commission wish to thank all our faithful members for their continued support. In these difficult economic times we appreciate that support more than ever, and know your kind donations will be used in the best possible way. Our mission will remain the same: to gather, preserve and document history.