

SOME LEE COUNTY HISTORY

Mrs. Carrie Lipscomb who is visiting relatives in Giddings, is well versed in history of Lee County. Although having been here a long time, she is not old, her mind is as bright as ever and she walks long distances and otherwise gets about as one many years younger. Much of the following information was obtained from Mrs. Lipscomb while in the home of her cousin, Mrs. C. M. Bishop.

After the Battle of San Jacinto, 1836, when a body of a few Texans defeated a large command of Mexicans at San Jacinto (near Houston and worth a trip to see that beautiful spot and monument), Texans knew that their greatest need then was more people. All original Texans came from "the states" as far back as Austin's colony in 1821. Later in the 1830's an ex-Governor of Texas toured Europe telling of the wonders of Texas and invited European immigration to Texas. After San Jacinto, Texans knew that Mexico would again invade Texas which was done, so Texans knew they would have to defend their newly won victory. They would write to the folks "back home" and urge them to come to Texas.

In 1840 a Murphree family left Murphreesboro, Tennessee and settled at Hallettsville, and descendants of the family are now plentiful there and around Victoria. Mrs. Murphree was a West. She had left six brothers in Tennessee and Mrs. Murphree was not satisfied to stay in Texas away from her brothers. She made such appeals to them and speakers would urge from platforms the great advantages of Texas and Horace Greeley's advice "To go west and grow up with the country," then two West brothers, Dr. Isaac West and George Washington West, left Tennessee by boat with cattle and household slaves (not field slaves) and landed in Galveston in 1840. One brother went to his sister, Mrs. Murphree, at

Hallettsville. He was George Washington West. The other brother, Dr. Isaac West, brought his household to Brenham where he stopped until he could locate. It was there in 1846 that Russel West, Sr., father of Mrs. Lipscomb, was born. That same year, Dr. Isaac West located on what is now San Antonio Prairie and bought a tract of land on the west side of Elm Creek where the iron bridge is located on the Giddings-Lincoln gravel road. The large live oak tree that is yet standing was in front of his home and he there built a double log house, two front and two back rooms with a hall between the connected rooms and a long gallery across the entire front. Dr. West named his home "Evergreen" because the live oaks were such a rarity and seldom found in such quantities as then on San Antonio Prairie.

Dr. West was a man of affairs besides being an energetic physician and not known to fail to answer a call on account of bad weather. A Masonic lodge was then organized in the neighborhood and was named "Evergreen" lodge and continued until it was moved to Giddings at the coming of the railroad to Giddings. A post-office was then established, named "Evergreen" and a school and a Baptist Church of which Dr. West was a charter member.

The Civil War began in 1861 and Russel West volunteered at the age of 15 years. His daughter, now Mrs. Lipscomb, was

born during that struggle and the father did not see his daughter until she was six months old. Dr. West died and Russel West, Sr. acquired the interests of the other heirs and the pasture was known for many years thereafter, even to the '90's as the "Rush pasture" as Mr. Russel West was known as "Rush." The Jim Brown noted stables were located on the same prairie about where the Otto Kissmann property now is. Brown, a later sheriff of Lee County bred the noted "Steel-dust" horses which were known for the long-winded and spirited nature. The editor once owned a "Steel-dust" buggy horse and what an animal it was, as gentle as a cat, a pretty chestnut sorrel with spots of black about its body. When driving next to a railroad track and a train would come along, that horse would tear out unless you tightened the lines. When Brown left the sheriff's office, he had established such a reputation as a turf-man that his last days were spent racing his horses on the Chicago race track where he became involved in an altercation and was shot to death.

Mrs. Lipscomb was first married to Mr. John Cox, son of Mrs. Mary Cox who lived at and in Giddings until her death. Mr. John Cox took charge of the "Rush pasture" but lived only one year after his marriage. Mrs. Lipscomb's second husband was Mr. Ab. Lipscomb of Brenham who died a few years ago when superintendent of terminals at the Fort Worth railroad yards. She now makes her home with a son at San Marcos.

The noted race tracks about Evergreen and later at Giddings were the great sport of the day, especially the tournaments which drew large crowds. An elevated stand would be built alongside a straight race track. Spectators would sit there and before it would be a wooden "arm" holding a small iron ring suspended in the air. A contestant must run his horse at full speed, holding a small wooden pike pole (spear) with an iron tip, and stick the spear (held at arm's length) through the ring. He would get several chances at the ring and the tournament would last the entire afternoon with a big dance at night on the platform. Judges would decide whether the horse was running full speed and if the spear was held at arm's length. At one tournament, Will Earthman of Winchester "rung every ring" and was the champion. He selected Miss Carrie West as the "queen of the tournament."

There was one jockey about Giddings who had the reputation for picking race horses. He would go around and buy the scrubbiest ponies and condition them for the races and oftentimes his horses would win. One time he came on the race track riding an old scrub that looked as if it had never been fed, but the animal was wearing a wreath of flowers about its neck and its ears were built up and otherwise looked like a jackrabbit, and won the race causing much hilarity.

(To be continued)