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# "Our Community"

(Organization and Development  
of  
Nolan County)

## "Heritage of the Great Southwest"



LELIA JEANETTE WADE



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# "Our Community"

(Organization and Development  
of  
Nolan County) <sup>Tex.</sup> C

*"Heritage of the Great Southwest"*



LELIA JEANETTE WADE

1960

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS  
OF  
THE ARTS AND CRAFTS

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BY  
LELIA JEANETTE WADE

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*To THE thousands of lads and  
lassies, who were unfortunate  
enough to have been in my  
classes down through the  
years, this little book is dedi-  
cated.*

## Acknowledgements

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IT is with deep appreciation that the author acknowledges the help given by the following, in compiling the materials in this little study, without it the story could not have been written:

The late Judge R. C. Crane, W. B. and Clara Wetsel, A. C. Bishop, J. N. Dulaney, J. L. Haney, Paul Cain, Morris Hinshaw, Kirby Kinsey, Charles Paxton, Thelma Howard Bowen (Mrs. Joe), W. H. Whaley, Roy Duckett, Louie N. Geldert, Jack Geer, Kathleen King (Mrs. L. C.); the following students who worked so diligently on the illustrations: Ruth Pendergrass, Judy Bowen, Nancy Price, Linda Pullig, Sue Scott, Judy York, Janice Logsdon, Johna Davis, Larry Durham, David Densmore, Larry Sullivan, Mike Young, Randy Bishop, C. E. Boyd III, Arthur Bixler, Darrel Turnbow, Sam Jones, Don Hampton, Billy Geer, Glen Walton; and the following sources: Pioneer and Progress Edition of the Sweetwater Reporter, Office of the Superintendent of Sweetwater City Schools, The Universal Reference Library, West Texas Historical Society, Texas Almanac 1959, Our Texas, Revised, Texas—Its Land and People, Cross Roads Stampede and “Reverie Round-Up,” and Handbook of Texas.

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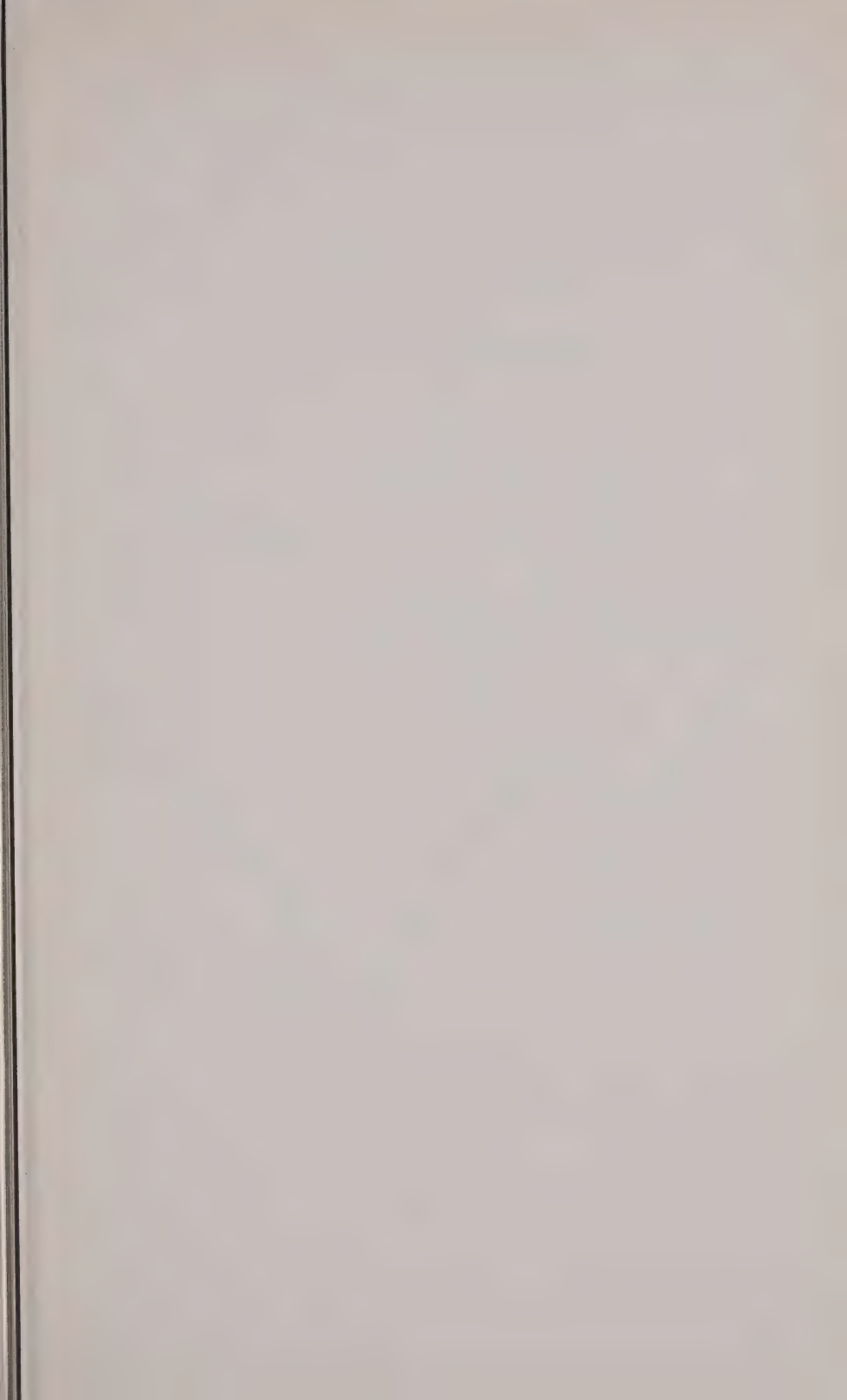
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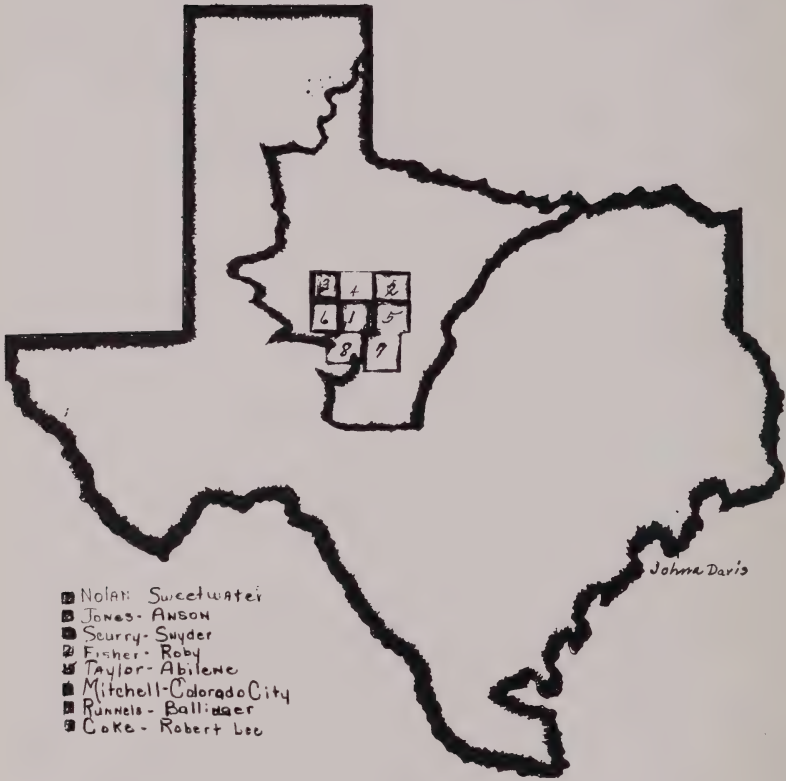
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The Lower Plains Area,  
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## **Foreword**

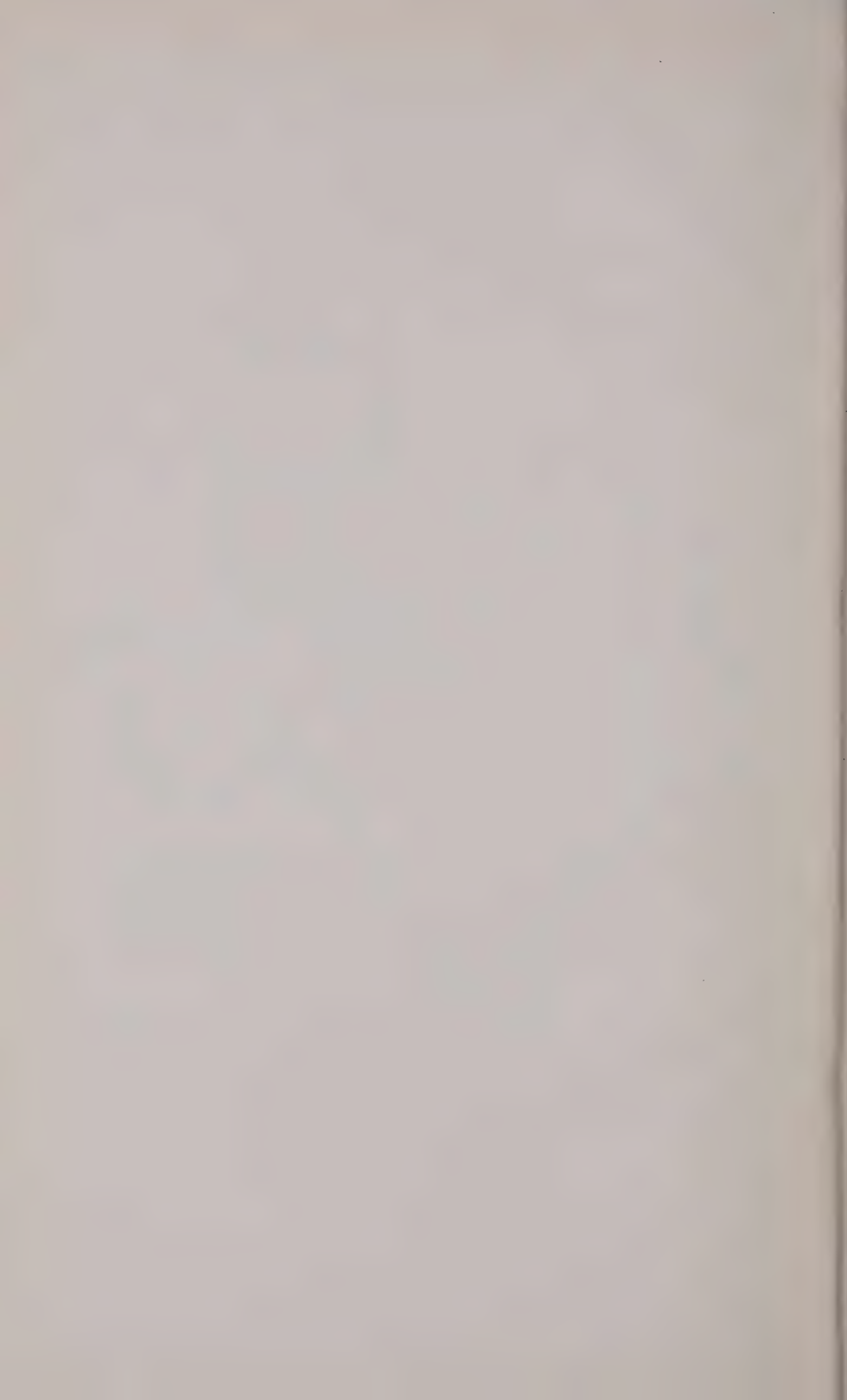
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"OUR COMMUNITY" is the story of the organization and growth of Nolan County and Sweetwater, Texas.

The information included in this study is herein set forth so that a knowledge of the happenings that transpired down through the years to make "Our Community" what it is today may be made available to those who chance to read it, that they may gain a greater appreciation of our great forefathers who came west, endured the hardships, fought the Indians, and carved homes from the raw, unexplored land so they might leave to us the "great heritage" that we enjoy today.

The information was compiled by the students of the seventh and eighth grade social studies classes of the John H. Reagan Junior High School, under the direction of Lelia Jeanette Wade.

The materials used were taken from newspapers, information supplied by the Sweetwater Board of City Development, stories supplied by pioneers and present-day citizens, and from text books and encyclopedias.



# Part I

**Growth and Development  
of Nolan County and  
Sweetwater, Texas**



*“Digging into the past helps us  
to understand the present.”*



The Buffalo



## **The Buffalo and The Buffalo Hunters**

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**W**HEN the first white men came to “Our Community” in 1873, it was to hunt buffalo—a large, lumbering, shaggy animal that roamed the prairie in large herds.



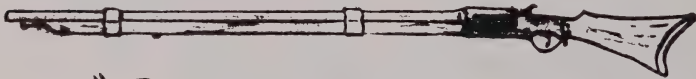
At that time, the Indians killed the buffalo only when they needed it for food, or its hide for their clothing, and to make their homes. In a way the buffalo had come to be the very life of the Indians, since they depended on it for so much. The white men, however, killed the buffalo in great numbers. They worked in

groups: The first group killed the buffalo, the second skinned it, and the third prepared the meat they needed for food.

Later, the hunters killed only for the hides, which brought a good price on the eastern market. Thus, they came to be called Buffalo Hunters. The unnecessary slaughter of the buffalo caused much trouble between the Indians and the Buffalo Hunters, which finally led

to the "War of the Buffalo," for the Indians thought it such a waste of their much needed supply of food, clothing, and shelter. This was true in a sense, but the Buffalo Hunters later came to be called the "Backbone of the West," because of their work. It was through their great efforts that people came and settled in the area, and gave to our stream of history the famous "Pioneers of the West."

M. F. Moore, a citizen of Nolan County for many years, claimed to have a gun, and its powder horn, that had killed ten thousand (10,000) buffaloes. It was a special range gun especially made for buffalo hunting by Samuel Colt's Manufacturing Company.<sup>1</sup>



"This is the gun that killed 10,000 buffaloes!"

Mike  
Young



Powder  
Horn

<sup>1</sup> Information given by the late Judge R. C. Crane

## ***Pioneering in the West***

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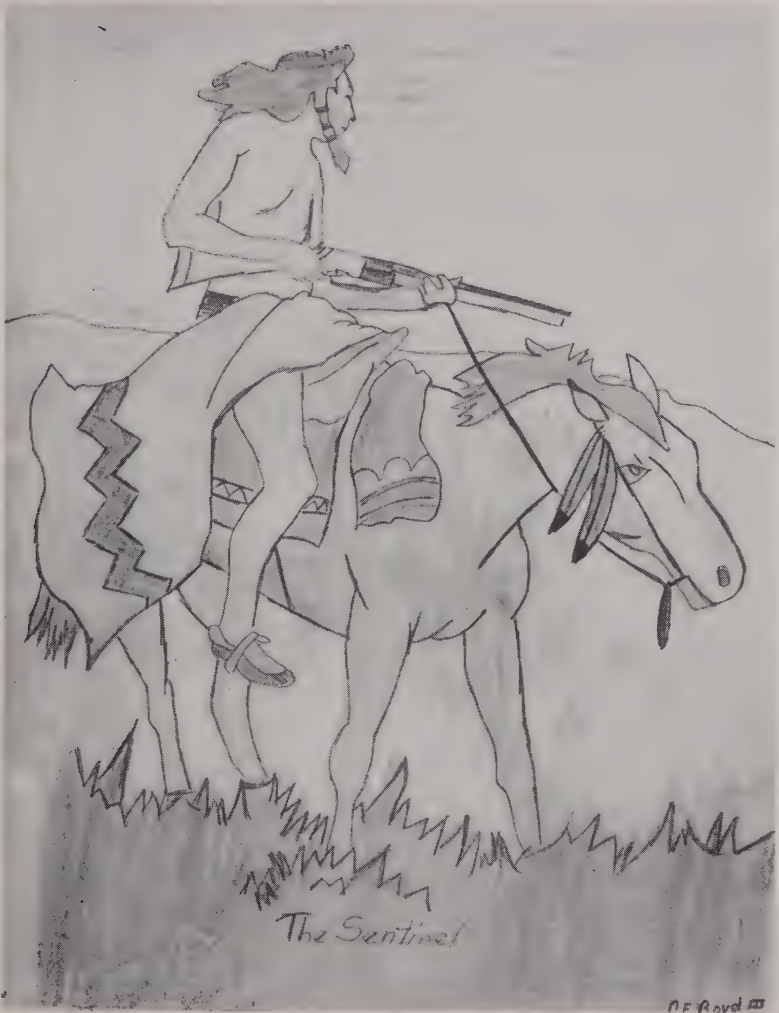
**T**HE buffalo hunters soon realized that the territory, in which they were hunting, would make excellent homes. The prairie was lush with grass, and the soil was very good; consequently, they sent glowing accounts of what they had found to their relatives and friends throughout the Southwest. As a result, people



*Pioneering in the West*

began coming into the area to explore and to settle. Some started farming, others started ranches, and a group of young men came along as drovers for the cattle that were driven through. The people came in covered wagons, in Stage Coaches, on horseback, and later on the railroad, as it was built further west. Life was very rough for them; they lived in dugouts, which were holes dug into the ground with sod roofs, and in tents. Later, sod and log houses were built, and life gradually straightened out for them. It was this group that came to be called the "Pioneers of the West." It was they who laid the foundation for the wonderful heritage that we enjoy today.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This information was given by the late Judge R. C. Crane.



*The Sentinel*

## *Indians and Indian Weapons*

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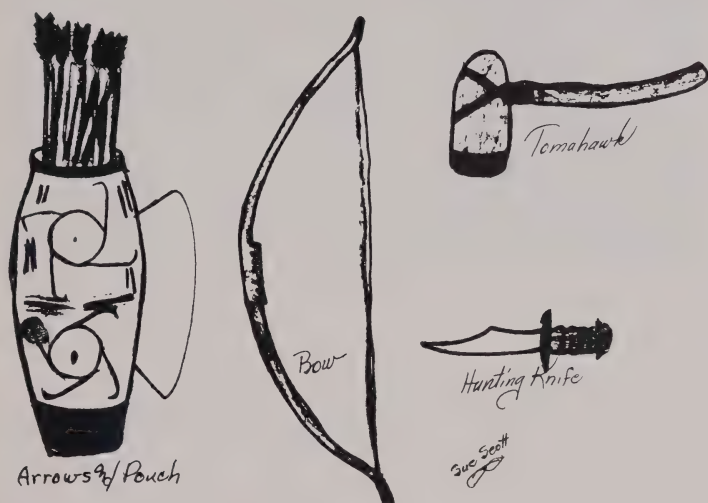
WHEN the white men first came to the Southwest, they found many tribes of Indians roaming over the Great Prairie. These Indians were descendents of the original inhabitants of America, so-called because the first discoverers supposed they had reached the Indies.<sup>1</sup> Some of them were very war-like, they were usually wanderers, who went from place to place, seeking their food where they could find it. They lived principally in tepees, since they were made of buffalo skins and were easily moved. Other tribes were much more settled, and friendly, too. The white man found them tilling the soil—in a crude way of course—and raising some of their food. The Indians were great hunters and warriors; the braves were required to perform many daring feats to prove themselves; they were very strong and a bow and arrow in the hands of a brave was as deadly as the “blumberbus”<sup>2</sup> was in the hands of the early pioneers.

Leading among the Indian tribes the white men found when they came to this area were: the Comanches, Arapahoes, Kiawas, Karankawas, and the Tejas, a friendly, highly civilized tribe, for whom Texas was named.

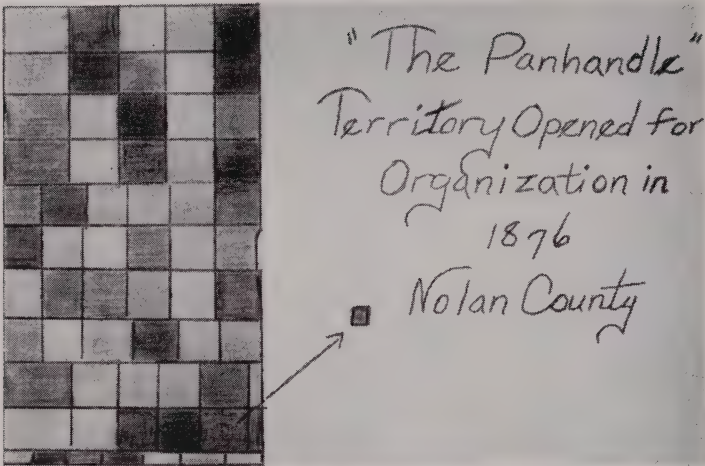
<sup>1</sup> “The Universal Reference Library,” p. 495

<sup>2</sup> Blumberbus: Name given to the gun used by the pioneers.

The weapons of these Indians were very crudely made, but they were quite deadly in the hands of the strong Indians, who were quite proficient in using them. They were made by Indians, as the white men learned,



who were really craftsmen. Much flint, rock, wood, and skin from the buffalo went into the making of these weapons which consisted principally of bows, arrows, tomahawks, and hunting knives. Relics of these weapons have been found from time to time in Indian burial places over this area—Nolan County.



### **The Panhandle of Texas**

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**T**HE territory known as the Panhandle of Texas is that section in the northwest part of the state which was opened for organization in 1876. It was to be divided into counties thirty miles square (30x30). A county would be authorized after a petition, with one hundred and fifty signers, should be presented to the State Department. The territory began to fill up rapidly with settlers, who came west in search of the good fertile land about which they had heard. They found the land excellent for farming and for grazing. And, too, they wanted to make a new life for their families away from the crowded areas in which they had been living.



By 1883 the ranges were crowded with settlers, but the drought that came caused many to become discouraged, give up their land and move elsewhere. Those who stayed really came to be the backbone of the area. As the conditions changed, others came and eventually fifty-four counties were organized out of the territory. Today, it is known as one of the best cattle and farming areas in the Southwest. Nolan County, "Our Community," is in the southeast corner of the territory.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> West Texas Historical Society, Vol. II.



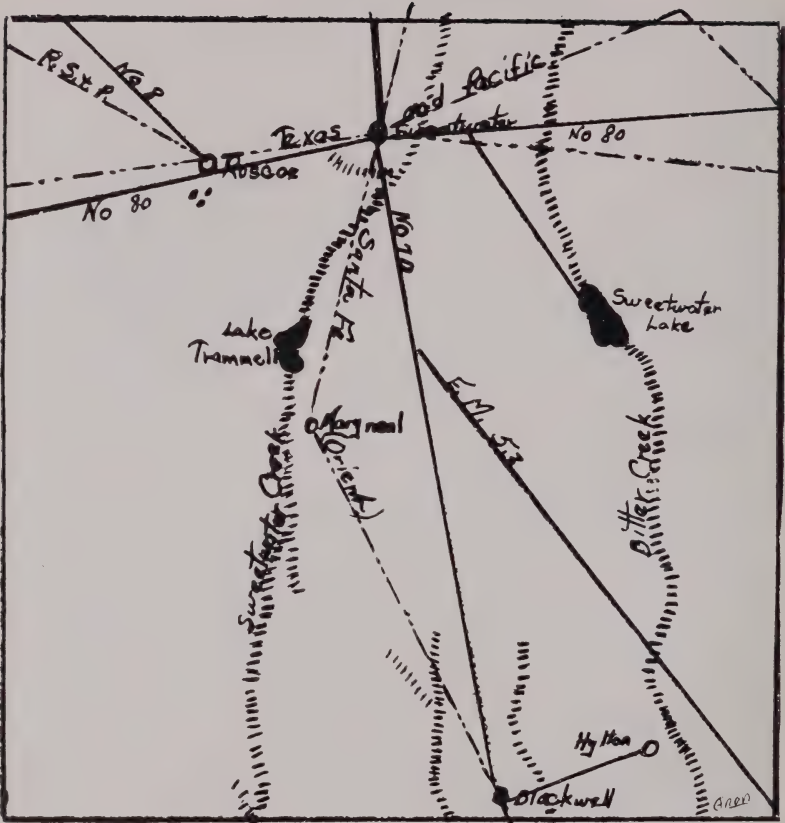
## Sweetwater Creek

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**SWEETWATER CREEK**, which flows through Nolan County from North to South, has played a very important part in the history of "Our Community," Nolan County and Sweetwater.

In 1853 the early-comers to the little creek, at which they stopped, called it Elbow Creek because of the way it meandered along its course. Then, in the early 1870s, others who came called it South Elbow, but in 1879 it was given the name that has stayed with it down through the years—Sweet Water, because they discovered that its water was fresh. (They had been drinking gypsum water.) The word really came from the Indians, who, after drinking it, said, "Humm, Mobeetie!" which is the Indian word for Sweetwater; and from the Spaniards, who said, "Ah, Agua Dulce!", the Spanish for Sweet Water. (This latter of course is supposed to be the reason why the name was first spelled with two words when the Post Office was established.) It was on the little creek that the first supply store for buffalo hunters and pioneers was located. The store was first called Blue Goose, then, Manning's Store, and when the Post Office was established, Sweet Water. Later it was moved to its present site. Thus, the City of Sweetwater had its beginning, named for a creek that has become a legend in our stream of history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The West Texas Historical Society, Vol. II, and notes taken from the files of the late Judge R. C. Crane.



Cities  $\odot$  County Seat. Town  $\circ$   
 Highways —————  
 Railroads - - - - -  
 Creeks, |||||  
 Lakes  $\bullet$

## **Nolan County—"Our Community"**

---

SOME of the early "Pioneers of the West" came to the southeast corner of the territory that was opened for settlement in 1876. As a result of their work, Nolan County was organized and named for Philip Nolan, an early-day horse trader from the United States, who lost his life while hunting wild horses somewhere in the area. The territory was petitioned a county in 1877, and was officially started shortly thereafter. According to the specifications made for the counties of the area, it was 30x30 miles square and contained about one hundred twenty-two square miles.<sup>1</sup> The story was told by early settlers that, when the petition was circulated to get the required one hundred and fifty signers to make the settlement a county, there were not enough people living there to meet the required number. As a result, the laborers on the railroad, that was building through the territory, were asked to sign; there were still not enough, so some of the cowboys signed their saddle horses' names. Then the petition was taken to San Antonio, the political city for the area, the charter was granted, and Nolan County, "Our Community," came into being.

The first settlers in the county came when they heard glowing reports of the excellent soil and climatic

<sup>1</sup> Texas Almanac, 1959



conditions from the buffalo hunters, who had preceded them. They led a very rugged life, working from early in the morning until late in the evening. They, too, had to depend on the buffalo for their sustenance. They lived in dugouts and tents which were sometimes made from buffalo skins.

The first settlement in the county was located in the southeast corner in 1877 and called Dora. Then a store was established in a dugout on a little fresh-water creek in the northeast corner of the county in 1879 to supply the buffalo hunters, and later the early settlers, with needed provisions. It was owned by Tom Knight, and was called Blue Goose as a result of the story of a "tenderfoot," who had killed a blue crane, telling the cowboys that he had killed a blue goose.<sup>1</sup> The store was later called Manning's Store, and still later it became Sweet Water.<sup>2</sup>

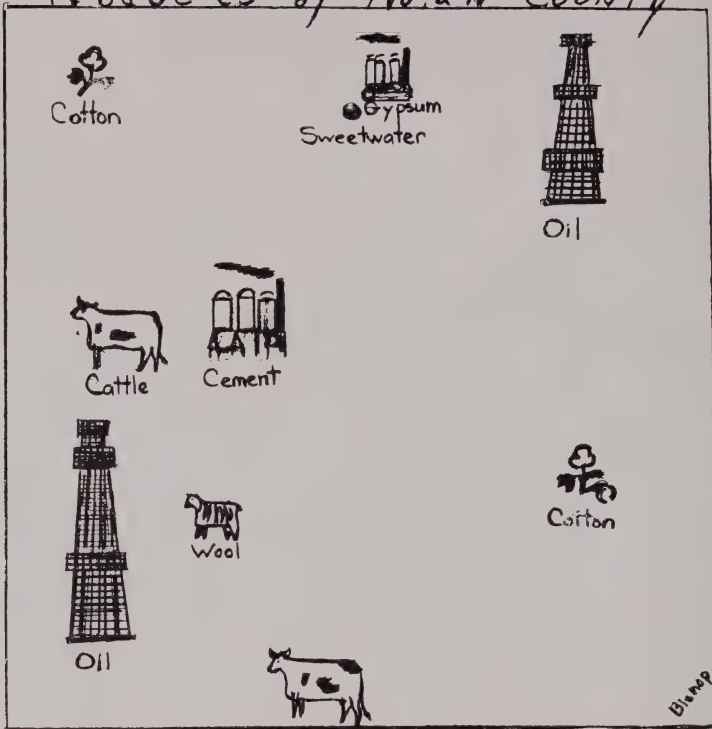
Some of the early settlers drove their cattle into the area. It was they who started ranching in Nolan County. Among the group were J. P. Cowen, whose descendents still live in the county, and for whom a school in Sweetwater was named; the Bunton Brothers, with whom three lads, Lang Aycock, Ben Jones, and Tuck Focht, came as drovers and stayed to become important citizens of the community;<sup>1</sup> R. C. Long; John R. Lewis, for whom a school in Sweetwater was later named, who brought the first Hereford cattle into the county; and John C. Montgomery, who later became the first sheriff of the county. Also H. C. Hord, who later

<sup>1</sup> "Tenderfoot" was the name given to a young man, who was not familiar with the ways of the West, who was exposed to much "hurrahing" by the cowboys.

<sup>2</sup> Story told by the late Judge R. C. Crane.

<sup>1</sup> Information was given by the late Ben Jones.

# Products of Nolan County



became a lawyer in the City of Sweetwater and owned a ranch at the head of Sweetwater Creek. Families of most of the above mentioned still live in "Our Community" today and are carrying on the tradition of their forebearers, "Do something to make Our Community a better place in which to live."

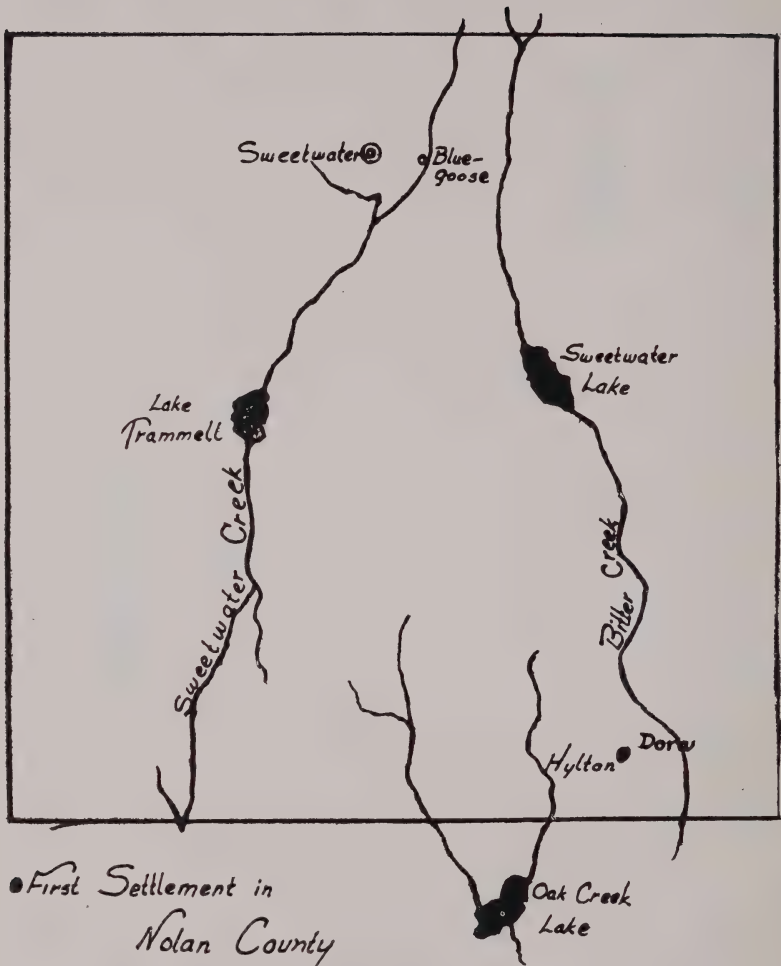
Nolan County lies on the great prairie of Texas. It is a rolling territory, with a gentle slope toward the divide in the central and eastern area. It has a variety of soil, ranging from sandy loam to black waxy, which is



very fertile. It lies across the Callahan Divide, which separates the upper Brazos and the Colorado River basins.<sup>2</sup>

The fertile soil makes it an important farming area, and the brakes add to its worth as a cattle country. Thus, Nolan County is one of the most productive counties in the "Panhandle," and its production of oil in the last few years makes it one of the richest.

<sup>2</sup> "Texas, Its Land and People," Wm. Trout Chambers, Steck Company, Austin, Texas, 1952, p. 195.



L. Sullivan

## ***Dora, the First Settlement in Nolan County***

---

THE first settlement started in Nolan County was located in the southeast corner, and called Dora. People moved into the territory, cleared the land, and built homes. They were a thrifty people who had come west to start a new life. They worked early and late tilling the soil, which they found to be very fertile, and starting small businesses, which were necessary to the survival of the community. A church was built, and the first school in the County was started there in 1877. The school was taught by Tom Roebard in a house 12x14 feet; the seats were made of split logs, turned with the flat side up, and mounted on "saw horses,"<sup>1</sup> cut from trees that were cleared from the land when the homes were built—the trees were rather scarce too. Later, the name of the community was changed to Hylton, in honor of E. Hylton who had done so much to get the people organized. He was said to be a real leader of men.<sup>2</sup>

The Hylton Community is today one of the most productive farming districts in Nolan County.

<sup>1</sup> "Saw horses" were crossed sticks, placed so a split log could be placed to make it a bench.

<sup>2</sup> Information given by the late Judge R. C. Crane.

## Government Comes To Nolan County

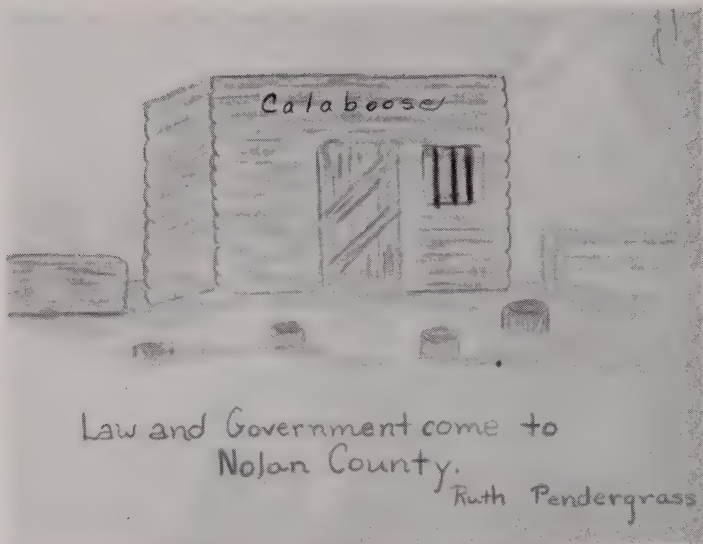
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WHEN people first came to the area now known as Nolan County, there was much lawlessness, for "Old Man Colt" was man's best friend and at times his only means of survival. But, just as the Romans of old, who gave government to our stream of history, found that a means of government was necessary to the well-being of the people, one of the first things found necessary after the organization of Nolan County was a government. As a result, an election was held in 1881 and officers for the County were elected. Thus, by popular vote of the people, law and government was established.

✓ The first officers were: William Barnett, County Judge; W. C. Johnson, County Clerk; W. H. Cowen, County Attorney; Harry C. Hord, Tax Assessor; J. H. Fowler, County Treasurer; John C. Montgomery, Sheriff; James Manning, County Surveyor; and James Medley, Martin Austin, J. W. Posey, E. F. Henry, County Commissioners.

When government was first established, all legal work was done in a very crude shack. There was no Court House or Jail, so prisoners were chained to a tree for safe keeping. Then in August 1881 the railroad





donated two blocks of land to Nolan County for the site of a court house and jail.

In later years, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, John C. Montgomery, the first sheriff, Calvin (Cal) Montgomery served as sheriff of the County. The Montgomery family is still carrying on in enforcement of law; Mack Montgomery, son of Calvin, is serving on the Sweetwater Police Force.

Another family that has served the County outstandingly in law enforcement is the Lamberts. Jess Lambert served as sheriff for years and today his son Raymond (Ted) is serving his second term as sheriff.

Among other outstanding sheriffs down through the years were: Ed Bardwell, Tom Wade, and Jack Yarbrough.



## ***The Stagecoach Played Its Part***

---

WHEN white men came to the great Southwest, there were very few ways of travel. It was rather hard for people to get from one section to another, when they had no means of conveyance of their own. One of the most important ways provided was the stagecoach, which was not too comfortable. It was a very sturdy "boxlike contraption," with two seats facing in the back and a seat on top for the driver and shotgun guard, and a place where the luggage was stored. It was pulled by four to six horses, which had to be changed along the way at substations, as the speed that had to be made to keep the schedule was very hard on them. The stagecoach went to the scattered towns over the area to take passengers and the mail. It often stopped at wayside inns or taverns for the passengers to eat and sleep. In early-day Nolan County, the coach had its part. At one time the mail was carried to Nolan County from Buffalo Gap. H. C. Hord, one of the first officers of the county, was a mail carrier.<sup>1</sup>

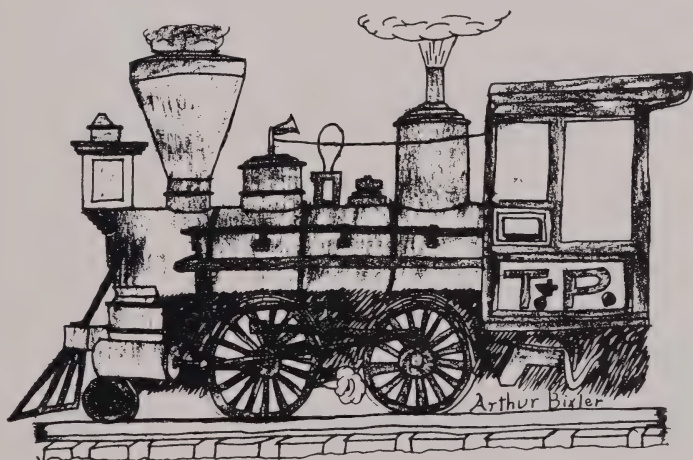
<sup>1</sup> Information from the files of the late Judge R. C. Crane, for many years President of the West Texas Historical Society.



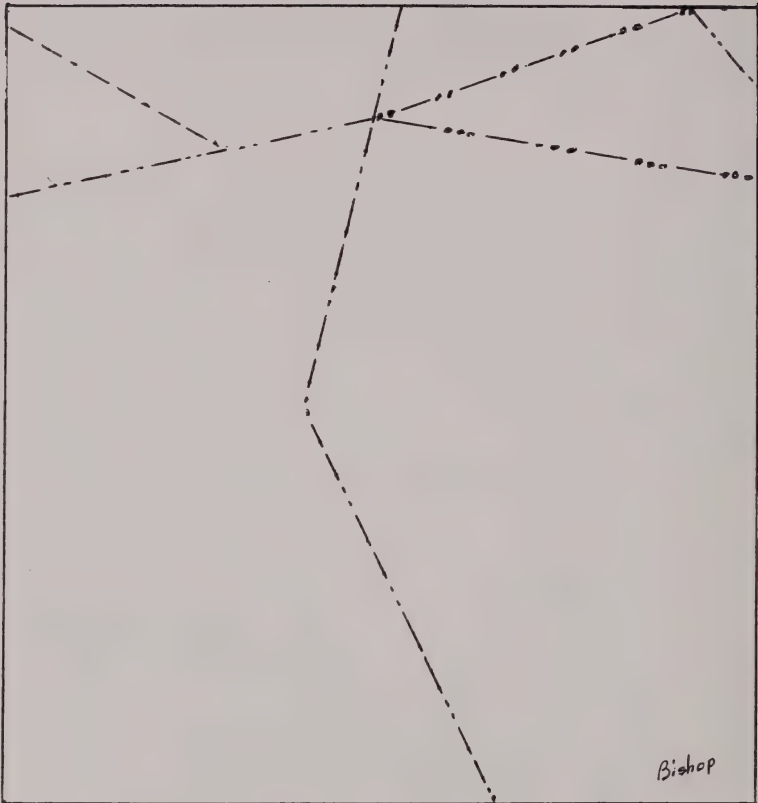
## Railroads Come to Nolan County

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THE first railroad through Nolan County was built in 1880-1881 by the Texas and Pacific Railroad Company, and ran about two and one-half miles west of the Manning's Store on Sweetwater Creek. It furnished supplies for the little store until the town of Sweetwater was started and all the business moved there. The first train for service was run through Sweetwater April 20, 1881. The story is told that the first train caused quite a sensation, as people from all around came to



*One of the first Texas and Pacific  
Engines to Pass Through Nolan County*



Railroads Come to Nolan County

Santa Fe-Orient .....  
 Texas and Pacific .....  
 Roscoe-Snyder-Pacific .....  
 Santa Fe .....  
 .....

town to see it. It was also said that a cowboy rode up to the train, just as it was pulling away from the station, on his favorite cutting horse, slung out his lariat, roped the smokestack, and had to take his meals standing up for sometime thereafter. It was further said that, after the train started running regularly, it became a daily event for the people of the little West Texas town to meet at the depot to see the train arrive.<sup>1</sup> (Just as we meet down town today for a coffee break.)

The early trains had difficulty getting through the country because of the herds of buffalo wandering over the track, and because of the Indians. The train crew had to carry guns to protect themselves and the people who were riding on the train.

The Santa Fe Railroad was surveyed and built through the county in 1890; and the Orient, which was later bought by the Santa Fe, was built through the county between 1900 and 1908.<sup>2</sup> The Roscoe-Snyder Pacific was added to Nolan County's Railroads, giving it transportation facilities running North, East, South, and West, and made of Sweetwater a real "distributing center."

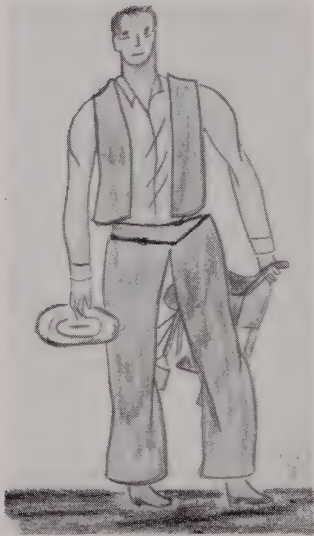
<sup>1</sup> Information given by the late Judge R. C. Crane.

<sup>2</sup> West Texas Historical Society, Vol. II Handbook of Texas, p. 937.

## **Ranching in Nolan County** **—Then and Now**

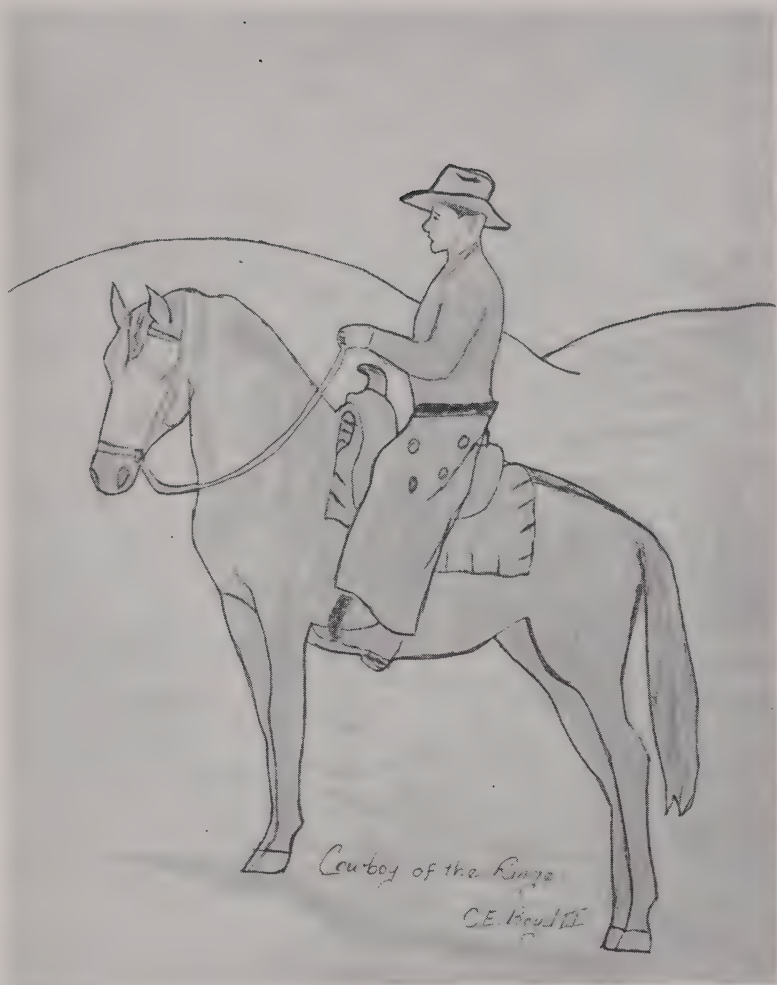
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**T**HE pioneers who first came to Nolan County were principally of two types: Farmers who came with their families to build the early homesteads and start agriculture, that has become one of the outstanding industries of the County; and cattlemen who drove their herds through to settle on the good grassland of the area.

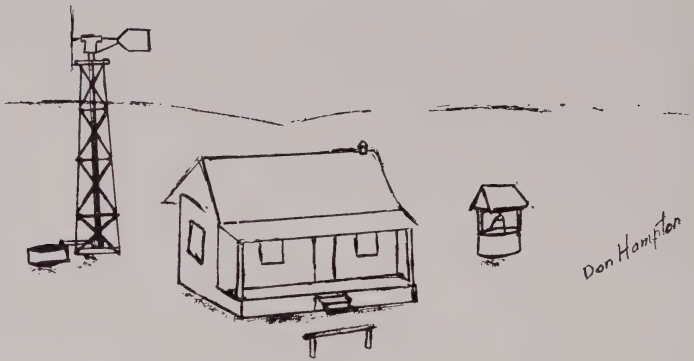


As early as 1866, these people came to Texas, from all over the United States, to start homes, to bring their cattle, and to start life anew. By 1879 they had moved as far as the Lower Plains, of which Nolan County is a part. At first they had trouble with the Indians, but they were able to gradually stop it by band-

ing together, and with the help of the Texas Rangers, who played such an important part in early-day Texas. The first to start ranches in this immediate area, were A. J. Long, and William Bell who came in 1879. Others who came about the same time were the Bunton Broth-

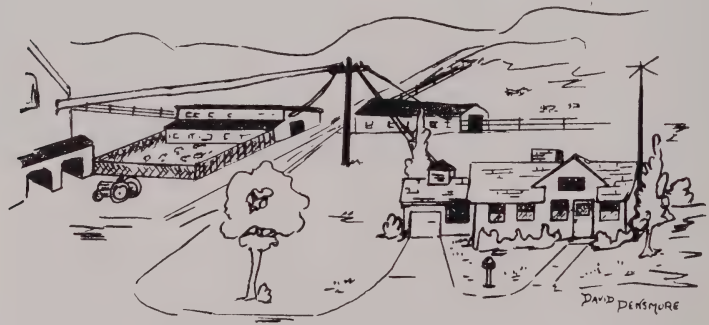


ers, who drove their herds through, with the help of such young cowboys as Lang Aycock, Ben Jones, and Tuck Focht, who later became ranchers and leading citizens of the community. Members of their families still live in Nolan County and Sweetwater.



*An Early-Day Ranch*

Most of the cattle of that period were Longhorns, but, during the same year, John R. Lewis, father of Charles W. Lewis, a former County Judge of Nolan County, who still lives in Sweetwater, drove his herd into the area. It was he who was responsible for starting the first Hereford ranch in the County. Mr. Lewis also became an important leader of the community; one of the ward schools in Sweetwater today was named



*A Modern-Day Ranch*

1714724



for him. Other ranchers of the time were the Newmans, for whom Newman High School in Sweetwater was named, the Dulaneys, and the Trammells, all of whom contributed greatly to the growth of "Our Community."

Ranches during this early period were quite different to those of today. There were no wire fences; the cattle roamed over the prairie to be gathered twice a year; to be branded, and shaped for the long cattle drives to market. This was the day of the "cattle rustlers," about whom so many stories have been written.<sup>1</sup>

Most all the ranches today are large, all fenced of course, and they have modern conveniences that make ranch homes much more livable than they were in the yester-years. The cattle have been "bred up" until they are much larger, not "all hide, horns, and bone," as the Longhorn was said to be. They have a much higher grade of meat; therefore, are much more profitable when sold. The cattle of Nolan County have brought the highest prices over the United States, when sold for breeding purposes. "The day of the Longhorn which started 'Our Community' has passed."

Nolan County is today one of the most outstanding livestock areas in the nation. In fact, some of the highest honors that have been given for the best breeding of livestock have been won by Nolan County citizens.

<sup>1</sup> Information given to the social studies classes of John H. Reagan Junior High School by the late Judge R. C. Crane.





OFFICERS OF THE OLD SETTLERS OF NOLAN COUNTY—  
Reading from left to right, Rondo Whorton, Secretary; W. A.  
(Billy) George, Vice President; and Mrs. Val Forester, President.

## Old Settlers of Nolan County

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IN order to commemorate the work of our great forefathers, and to keep alive in the hearts of the citizens of Nolan County the happenings of yester-years, the idea that had originated with Mrs. Val Forester, social and civic leader of Roscoe, and mother of Wade Forester of Sweetwater, resulted in the organization of the "Old Settlers of Nolan County," July 7, 1933.<sup>1</sup>

When the organization was first started, it was decided that for one to be eligible for membership, he must have come to Nolan County before 1900. Later, it was changed to one who had come before 1910, and still later, in 1943, it was decided that after one had been a resident of the County for twenty-five years, he was eligible for membership.

Mrs. Forester was elected first President of the organization and served in that capacity until World War II, when it was discontinued because of difficulty in travel conditions and scarcity of food, and later when it was revived, W. A. (Billy) George was chosen Vice President. The two, aided by the other members, worked tirelessly in fostering the organization.

The Old Settlers held a reunion once each year, usually at the City Park in Sweetwater, where excellent programs were given. Such groups as Olive Broughton

<sup>1</sup> "The Roscoe Times," July 7, 1933, "Nolan County News," July 15, 1943.



Olive Broughton, Accordionist, and T. E. "Uncle Tom" Michael, with his famous fiddle, furnished music for the Old Settlers meetings.

(Mrs. Pop) and her accordian group, led by her father, T. E. (Uncle Tom) Michael with his famous fiddle, furnished music for the meeting. Food was prepared by the members, or served by Billy George from the lid of his famous chuck wagon, on which was carved brands of the ranches round about; and the familiar call, "Come and get it," was answered by members and interested guests each year.

As years passed, and rules for membership were changed, new members were added.

The members were always ready to help in affairs of interest in Nolan County. They took part in parades, where their full regalia won them high acclaim.

## **First Things First in Sweetwater**

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*First Post Office*, The Sweet Water Post Office was established March 27, 1879.

*First Railroad*, The first railroad was built through Sweetwater by the Texas and Pacific Railroad Company in March 1881.

*First Train*, The first train for any kind of service ran through Sweetwater April 20, 1881.

*First Town Lot Sold*, The first town lot was sold to J. S. Johnson, and the deed was recorded May 30, 1881. The lot was 50x140 feet, and was located where the Levy Department Store stands today.

*Masonic Lodge*, The Masonic Lodge held its first meeting in Sweetwater, September 9, 1882, and has been in continuous service since.

*First Newspaper*, The first newspaper, the Sweetwater Advance, was published in March 1882. C. E. Gilbert was the owner and A. L. Wilson was the editor. (Note: One of the leading articles in the paper was one exploiting gypsum as a leading product of Sweetwater.)

*First Public School*, The first public school was started in the fall of 1882; J. H. Beauchamp was the first principal.

*First Temperance Meeting*, The first temperance

meeting in Sweetwater was conducted by Thomas E. Douthit in January 1881.

*First Business*, The first business establishment in Sweetwater was a store in a tent opened by N. I. Dulaney, uncle of J. N. Dulaney, who lives in Sweetwater today. The store was located just south of the Texas and Pacific Depot today.

*First House Built of Lumber*, The first house built of lumber in Sweetwater was for a saloon. It was located on the third lot sold in town to R. West Starr. The deed for the lot was dated June 1, 1881.

*First Bank*, The first bank in Sweetwater was opened by Thomas Trammell and an associate in 1883. The capital stock was \$15,000.<sup>1</sup>

*First Hotel*, The first hotel in Sweetwater was opened, in tents in 1881, by Mrs. Sara Matilda Bula, grandmother of W. B. Wetsel Sr., a ranchman who lives in Sweetwater today. It was located where the Lang Aycock building stands today.

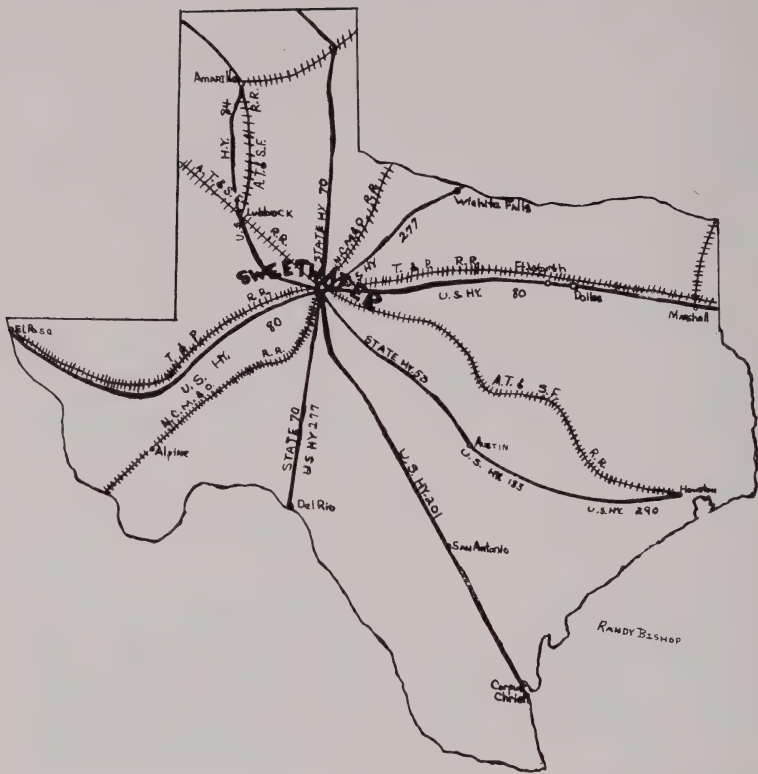
<sup>1</sup> The Cross Roads Stampede and "Reverie Round-up."

## **Sweetwater**

### **—Distributing Center of West Texas**

SWEETWATER, TEXAS had its beginning on the banks of a little creek, about two and one-half miles east of its present location, in 1879. The place was first called Blue Goose and later Manning's Store, and the only thing there was a store and a dugout. That same year O. M. Roberts, Governor of Texas, established a Post Office there and the name was changed to Sweet Water, for the little creek on which it was located. Then Tom Knight, the owner of the store at that time, put up a shack to house the post office. On April 20, 1880, however, the post office was moved to its present site to be on the railroad—The Texas and Pacific was building through the territory. The little shack on Sweet Water Creek was jacked up on a couple of wagons and hauled into the new town to be used for general county purposes for more than a year.

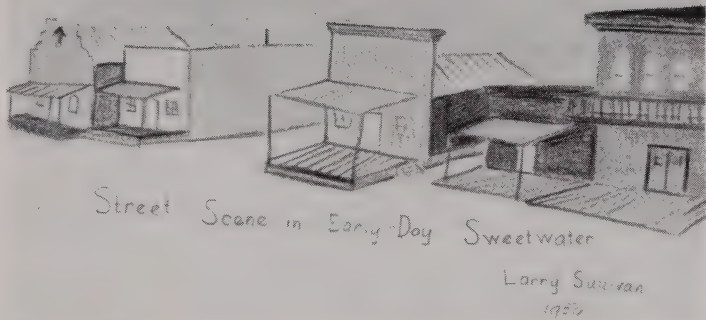
When the post office was settled, and more people moved in, an election was held to elect law-enforcement officers, and Sweet Water was declared County Seat of Nolan County. At this time, there was not a building in town constructed of wood, rock, or brick. Tents were used for living quarters, and for the stores, the first of which was opened by N. I. Dulaney, whose descendents still live in the City and County. In 1882



the name of the town was changed from Sweet Water to Sweetwater as it is spelled today. It was known locally as Sweetwater, but until 1918 the Post Office was still called Sweet Water by the Post Office Department. In that year the Department was made to conform to the local usage. By 1883 the population was 350 to 400 people from all parts of the country.

In 1882 the railroad company donated land for a court house and jail, which were built the following year.





Sweetwater was just a little western town the first few years where “Old Man Colt” was man’s best friend. The story was told that at one time, on one block, from Levy Brothers’ corner to the Texas and Pacific Depot, there were five saloons. Cowboys from the nearby ranches would come into town when they had pay-day, and much excitement was seen. Fighting and shootings were not uncommon.<sup>1</sup> But the establishment of law and government, churches, and schools helped to make it a stable town, and it has remained such down through the years.

Sweetwater is located in the heart of a very fertile area, and has become an important trade center for the large ranches and farms that surround it. Its airways, highways, and railways have made it so accessible that it is referred to as the “Distributing Center of West Texas,”<sup>2</sup> and the “Crossroads City of Texas.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Story told by the late Judge R. C. Crane.

<sup>2</sup> “Sweetwater Bulletin,” Sweetwater Board of City Development.

<sup>3</sup> Cross Roads Stampede and “Reverie Round-up” manual.

Because of its location and the opportunity it affords, many major concerns have been located in the City. Leading among these are: farm produce firms; wholesale groceries; feeds; automobile equipment; farm machinery; and building materials, which are distributed throughout a wide area. It has two gypsum plants which make plaster, cement, and wallboard, and several other products; a cement plant; railroad shops, which make and repair equipment; a cottonseed oil mill and compress; a broom factory; hatcheries; meat packing companies; bottling works; a tombstone factory, and numerous oil well supply concerns. It also has a health unit, which was the first to be established in this vast area; a municipal hospital; a medical center; two medical clinics; and four dental clinics.



## Sweetwater Post Offices

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THE Sweet Water Post Office was established March 27, 1879 by Governor O. M. Roberts, and located in Manning's Store on Sweet Water Creek, about two and one-half miles east of the present City of Sweetwater. L. B. Perry was the first Postmaster. The Post Office was moved to its present site April 20, 1880 to be on the railroad, and James Manning succeeded Perry as Postmaster August 30, 1880.

In the years that followed, the Post Office was moved to various locations in town, for there was no government building to house it. The last of such locations was on the south side of Third Street, between Locust and Elm, where it remained until property was purchased, just across the street, by the government for a permanent Post Office building. The construction was started in mid-year of 1931 and completed the following year at a cost of \$130,000. Dan G. Shields was Postmaster when the new building was occupied.

Many postmasters served the City of Sweetwater, among them was the late Judge R. C. Crane, to whom we are indebted for so much of the information in this little booklet. But, there was one family that stands out among all others, because so many of its members served in the Post Office. The old adage, "As the father, so is the son," was repeated in this family. Wil-



The Post Office in early Sweetwater  
and the present Post Office

William B. Howard was appointed Postmaster September 11, 1897, and was reappointed January 16, 1902. His son, Morris B. Howard was appointed Postmaster January 23, 1906, reappointed February 8, 1910, and again May 10, 1921. Then, on May 1, 1935, Thelma Howard Bowen (Mrs. Joe), granddaughter of William B. Howard, and daughter of Morris B. Howard, became Postmaster and served for four years. The Howard family served "Our Community," and its country still further in the Sweetwater Post Office. Lizzie Howard Allen, "Aunt Lizzie" to many who know her, became associated with the Post Office as clerk in 1906, and served faithfully and well until her retirement in 1952. Mrs. Bowen was

succeeded as Postmaster by A. G. Lee, who was followed by M. J. Sweeden, who in turn was succeeded by Charles E. Paxton, the present Postmaster.<sup>1</sup>

Today, the Sweetwater Post Office has a personnel of thirty-five. Mr. Paxton is assisted by an Assistant Postmaster, Superintendent of Mails, a Foreman, twelve clerks, eight carriers, two transfer employees, three star route employees and two custodians. The Post Office workroom is opened for work from 2:30 A. M. to 11:30 P. M. daily. Around 30,000 pieces of mail is handled daily, and the yearly receipts are around \$200,000.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pioneer and Progress Edition of the "Sweetwater Daily Reporter," 1881-1941.

<sup>2</sup> Information given by Charles E. Paxton, Postmaster of Sweetwater.

## **Governments of Sweetwater**

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**E**VEN though Sweetwater is given credit for starting the movement that resulted in the organization of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, the largest regional organization of its kind in the world, the organization was never established in the City. Instead, in 1913, when the government was changed from the Alderman form to the Commission or Home Rule, the Board of City Development was organized, and has been the greatest factor in promoting the civic and cultural affairs of the City. It is a tax supported organization, maintained and operated to promote the welfare of Sweetwater and its citizenry.

The first chairman of the Board that drew up the charter for the new government was H. C. Hord; he was assisted by Judge R. C. Crane and F. G. Robertson.<sup>1</sup> The present Secretary of the Board of City Development is A. C. Bishop.

Officers for the Commission or Home Rule form of government were elected by popular vote of the people for the specific offices of Mayor, Street Commissioner, Water Commissioner, City Secretary, and City Marshall (Chief of Police under our present government.) Among officers who served under this form of government were: John J. Ford, Mayor; Walter Trammell, son

<sup>1</sup> Pioneer and Progress Edition of the "Sweetwater Daily Reporter," 1881-1941.

of Thomas Trammell, Street Commissioner; Lynn Musgrove, who is today County Tax Assessor-Collector, Water Commissioner; Mattie Trammell (Mrs. Jim), daughter-in-law of Thomas Trammell, City Secretary; and L. G. Headrick, Sr., who lives north of Sweetwater today, Chief of Police.<sup>2</sup>

The Commission or Home Rule form of government was replaced in 1928, when the charter for the City Manager-Commission government went into effect. This is the government under which Sweetwater serves today. Under this government, five Commissioners are elected by a popular vote of the people, four set places and one at large, to have the oversight of the affairs of the City. After an organization meeting, at which a Mayor from the group is chosen, the Commissioners work together collectively.<sup>3</sup> They employ a City Manager, who works with them on affairs of the City. He is subject to the will of the Commission at all times, and there is no set contract for his employment.

Sam H. Bothwell was the first City Manager; there have been many others down through the years. Garland Franks is City Manager today.

Louis Polk became the first City Secretary January, 1928 and served until his fatal illness in 1930. In July 1930, Roy Duckett, who is now Superintendent of the Water Department, was appointed Acting City Secretary and served until April 1931, at which time W. H. Whaley was appointed to the place, and has served in it since.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Information by Louie N. Geldert, Chief Operator of the Filter Plant of the City for many years.

<sup>3</sup> The Code of the City of Sweetwater, Texas.

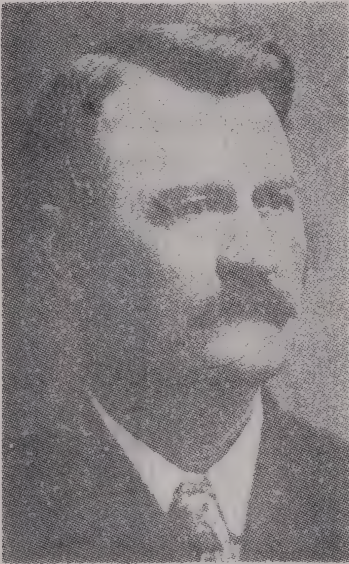
<sup>5</sup> Statistics from the office of the City Secretary.



## Banking in Sweetwater

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IN the early days of the little West Texas town of Sweetwater, the business men as well as the other citizens were very much in need of a place to keep their surplus money. At first they kept it with the saloon



Thomas Trammell, "Uncle Tom" to his friends, was a Real Pioneer; he did much for early-day Sweetwater, and was instrumental in starting the Lake Trammell project, which was named for him when it was completed in 1914.<sup>1</sup>

keepers, who were considered a good risk, but, as the town grew, the time came when another place was needed. The need was discussed at a meeting of citizens, and, as a result, the first bank was opened in

<sup>1</sup> Pioneer and Progress Edition of the "Sweetwater Daily Reporter," 1881-1941.

Sweetwater in 1883 by Thomas Trammell, with a capital stock of \$15,000. Mr. Trammell (Uncle Tom to many), who did so much for the town down through the years, came to be known as the "Father of Sweetwater." He was said to have done more to foster the growth and development of early-day Sweetwater than any other individual. As a result of his work, the bank became one of the most important businesses in town, and it was through "Uncle Tom's" help that many early settlers and ranchers were able to start life anew. Members of the Trammell family still live in Sweetwater today.<sup>1</sup>

As Sweetwater grew, other banks were established. At one time there were three: The City National, the First National, and the Texas Bank and Trust Company. But, during the depression, the City National sold to the First National, which later closed; and for a number of years the Texas Bank and Trust Company was the only bank in town. One of the oldest businesses in the City, the Texas Bank and Trust Company was established as the Great Western Loan and Trust Company in 1912, and chartered as the Texas Bank and Trust Company August 6, 1917. Ellis Douthit, Sr. was the first President. Today, J. L. Haney is President and Paul Cain is Cashier of the bank that has a capital stock of \$300,000. J. N. Dulaney, former President and active member of the Board, is the nephew of N. I. Dulaney, who opened the first store in Sweetwater.<sup>2</sup>

The National Bank of Sweetwater was established January 2, 1948, with H. H. Simmons as the first Presi-

<sup>1</sup> Information from the files of the late Judge R. C. Crane.

<sup>2</sup> Information given by J. N. Dulaney, J. L. Haney, and Paul Cain, from records in the bank.

dent. Mr. Simmons was followed by C. B. Bryant, Jr., who served well until he passed away late in 1959. For a time, Morris Hinshaw, Vice President and member of the Board of Directors served as Acting President. Today, J. C. Powell, Jr., is President and Catherine Allison is Cashier.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Information given by Morris Hinshaw from records of the bank.

## Sweetwater Hospitals

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THE first hospital opened in Sweetwater was housed in the large Thomas Trammell home in the southwest part of the City. According to Dr. Fortner, a physician in Sweetwater today, who was on the building committee of the first hospital, the Trammell home was converted into a hospital at a cost of \$700. The first patient was operated on March 17, 1923.

The hospital remained in the Trammell home until the new hospital building, which is in use today, was completed in 1936. This hospital has grown in importance to the City of Sweetwater and the surrounding area as time has passed. It has had annexes added from time to time as the need arose, until today it has a seventy-eight bed capacity.<sup>2</sup> It is municipally owned and is operated by a Board of Directors, assisted by an Administrator, a Business Manager, and a Superintendent of Nurses. For a number of years, it was known as the Sweetwater Municipal Hospital, but the name has been changed to Simmons Memorial Hospital in honor of the late R. M. Simmons, a long-time member of the Board and a civic leader of Sweetwater until his fatal illness caused his retirement.

A project is underway today for a much needed enlargement to the hospital so that it may adequately care for the patients of the large area it serves.

<sup>2</sup> Information supplied by O. M. (Bill) Scott, present Business Manager.

## **Entertainment in Early-Day Nolan County and Sweetwater**

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**L**IFE in this little western county and city in the early days was very rugged and hard for the people, who came from the settled and cultural areas of our nation; but they were a determined people, who had come west with a purpose. They wanted to carve a home for their posterity in the County that offered such great opportunities. Both men and women worked hard, and fought to establish their new homes. They were real pioneers, and hardship and danger could not stop them.

Neither did they let life grow dreary for them, for they believed, as did the famous writer, that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Therefore, enough entertainment was provided to get neighbors, even those living at great distances, together ever so often. These "get-togethers" served two purposes; during the day they had house raisings, crop gatherings, or round-ups for the men, while the women sewed, quilted, and served meals that were a luxury in the unsettled area. Then, in the evening the real entertainment was enjoyed. Such things as "Chase the buffalo, chase the squirrel, chase the little girl around the world," or "Do-see-do, a little more do," were favorite games and dances. The "buck-n-wing," and the "hoe-down," done to

Entertainment in Early-Days  
Nolan County + Sweetwater

"Do-See-do, a little more!"  
"Chase the buffalo, chase the squirrel"  
"Chase the little girl around the corner"



the accompaniment of the faithful old fiddle, guitar, and banjo, were as important, and as much enjoyed, as the most modern dance today. Cowboys came from ranches miles around on their faithful cow ponies. They were a carefree group and thought nothing of riding many miles to attend one of the evening's entertainment. Later, when the community around Sweetwater was larger, families went in wagons and buggies, and the famous pallets<sup>1</sup> were stretched all over the kitchen floor for the sleeping children, while the parents joined in the fun. Many pranks were played by the cowboys; one of which was long remembered. Two roguish cowboys swapped the children of the different families, after they had been "loaded" into the back of the wagons, and some of the parents rode many miles before the deception was discovered, while others did not discover it until they reached home. Then, of course, they had to "hitchup" the team and take the children they had to their home, and try to locate theirs. While the two cowboys, who had committed the crime, as it was called, rode merrily back to the ranch they called home.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Pallets." The term used for a quilt or other flat piece of bedding placed on the floor for the children to sleep on while the parents enjoyed the dance.

<sup>2</sup> Information given by the late Judge R. C. Crane.

## ***Entertainment in Nolan County and Sweetwater Today***

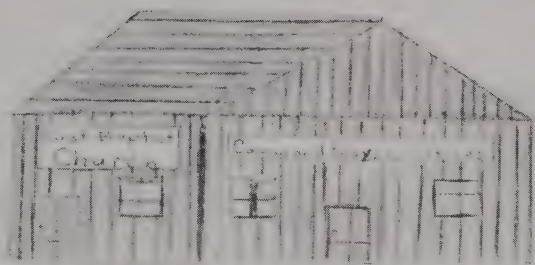
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**T**HE people of Nolan County and Sweetwater today are afforded many different kinds of entertainment. Four lakes give them the privilege of boating, and picnicking. There are two golf courses, a swimming pool, bowling alley, four lighted baseball parks, two theatres, two good drive-in theaters, and a country club.<sup>1</sup>

With the above mentioned kinds of entertainment, the people of "Our Community" still harken back to olden days, and often entertain themselves with the old square dances, when "do-see-do," buck-n-wing," "new shoes," and "put your little foot" are danced to the music played by the leading orchestras of the country.

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin by the Sweetwater Board of City Development.





First Church in Sweetwater



THE FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
WAS BUILT IN 1888

## ***Early-Day and Modern Churches***

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CHURCHES in early-day Sweetwater were quite different to those we have today. The first church services were held in the Texas and Pacific Depot, closed saloons, and in vacant buildings until church buildings were erected. The first sermon was preached in Sweetwater shortly after it became County Seat of Nolan County, by E. S. Elliott, a Circuit Rider. The first Church and Sunday School was established by the Baptist in 1881, and was held in the rear room of the Cowen and Posey law office, which was located on the site where the Texas Bank and Trust Company stands today. The Methodist built their first church building in 1888, the first real church building in town.

The early-day churches had a very hard time getting started, as many of the early settlers were not the religious type. But the early Christians in this area were determined in their efforts to bring Christianity to this western area, and, as a result, different denominations came into "our town and county." Just as great changes came to Sweetwater in business and growth in general, the churches too made great progress. New groups were established, until today Sweetwater is known as a "City of Churches," with all leading denominations being represented. Some denominations have different congregations over the City;

## FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Past

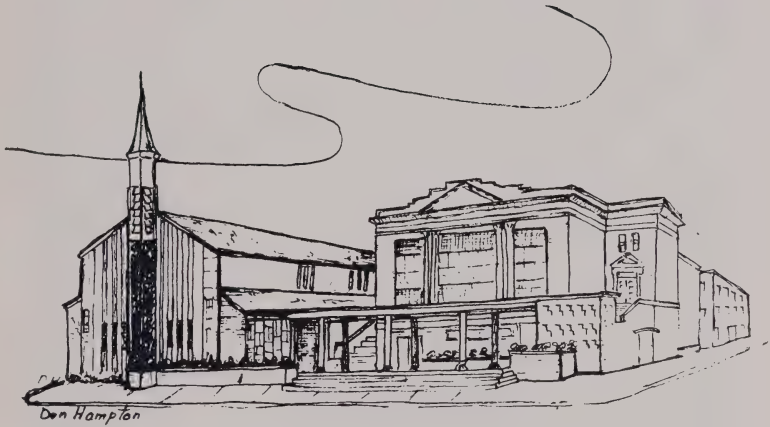


Present

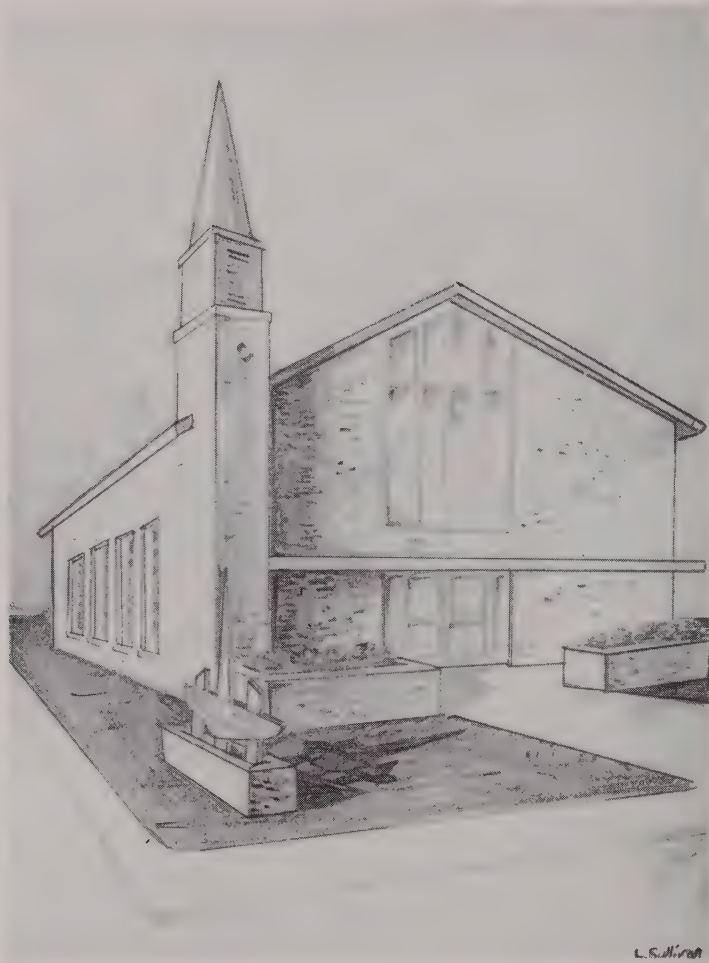
most of which are represented in the "Ministerial Alliance," an organization made up of the ministers of the different congregations. There are many beautiful church buildings, in which a great enrollment of members worship. All of which is evidence of the great work that has been done down through the years, by those to whom we are so greatly indebted for the great heritage that we enjoy today. This, we like to call, "Our Great Heritage of the Southwest."



First Presbyterian Church



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



Trinity Baptist Church

## **Sweetwater Schools, Then and Now**

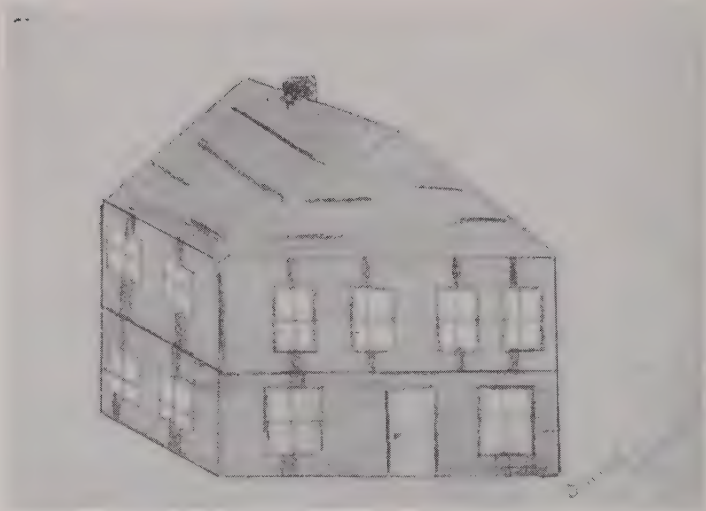
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THE first school in Sweetwater was taught in 1882-1883, in a two story building, located where the First Baptist Church stands today. It was located on lot 6, block 3 of the original townsite. J. H. Beauchamp was the first Principal, and was assisted by his brother, S. A. Beauchamp, and his brother-in-law, B. A. Cox. The first School Board was made up of N. J. Fritz, T. E. Douthit, and J. H. Fowler. Conditions were very bad in the school, in that some of the students were larger than the teachers and often caused trouble. Some of them carried pistols, which was the custom of the day, and tried to cause the teachers to resign and leave their positions. As a result, one teacher kept a six-shooter lying on his desk to maintain order. Typhoid Fever also caused much trouble during the early days. It was thought to have been started from the impure water that the people used from cisterns and surface tanks.

In later years a student, who often visits his mother today, hung the Principal of High School out of an upstairs window, and threatened to drop him if he did not promise that the punishment he was to get would not be administered. The Principal was not dropped.<sup>1</sup>

As other changes came to Sweetwater, great chang-

<sup>1</sup> Information given by the late Judge R. C. Crane.



#### SWEETWATER'S FIRST SCHOOL

The first school building was made of planks, and the furniture was very crude, but the Citizens of Sweetwater were very proud of it for they were happy for their children to be in school.



#### SWEETWATER'S FIRST STONE SCHOOL

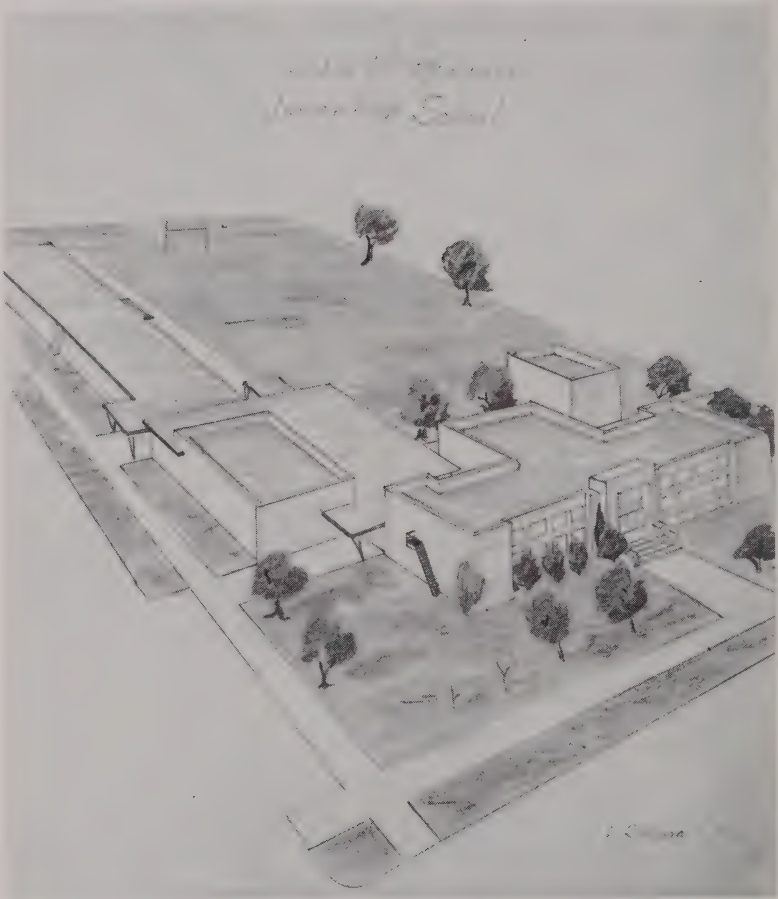


es also came in the schools. From time to time the enrollment increased, the faculty was enlarged, and new buildings were added. Today there are nine schools in the City that house around 3,400 students. Olaf G. South is Superintendent, John W. White is Principal and Ben Brock is Assistant Principal of Newman High School; Thomas W. Whittenburg is Principal and S. V. Box is Assistant Principal of John H. Reagan Junior High School; Jerry Bob Smith is Principal of Southeast Elementary; Ken Newton is Principal of East Ridge Elementary; J. D. McKeown is Principal of J. P. Cowen Elementary; Joe Douglas is Principal of Philip Nolan Elementary; Hugh Clift is Principal of the John R. Lewis Elementary; Mrs. C. L. Monk is Principal of Amelio Carranzo; and T. P. Fowler, Principal of Booker T. Washington.

The administrative group is assisted in conducting the schools by 126 classroom teachers, two supervisors, five special service teachers (two librarians, one nurse, one band director, and one music director), five vocational, and two special education teachers. There are also three secretaries, twenty cafeteria workers, fifteen custodians, and one bus mechanic.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Information from the office of the City School Superintendent.

*Johnston University  
Learning Center*



## **Sweetwater School Boards Through the Years**

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A great writer once said, "The child is the beginning, the center, and the end of our educational system." It is assumed that this is true; therefore, each community should strive to give the child the best chance possible to prepare itself for life. So, the directors of our schools should always be the best. It is a known fact that those who guide the work in our school system are a group of public-minded citizens who give much of their time and efforts so that the students of our City may have the best chance to gain the knowledge that will fit them to meet, in an intelligent manner, the real situations that may arise in our complex world of today. This group, the Sweetwater School Board, is one to whom we are deeply indebted.

"Our Community" has had a long and fruitful life and many have served as School Board Members.

The first School Board of Sweetwater was made up of N. J. Fritz, T. E. Douthit, and J. H. Fowler. Later, M. B. Howard, Postmaster for many years, probably served more years as President of the Sweetwater School Board than any other person. Others who have served as President of the Board were: Ed Bradford, Dr. A. A. Chapman, Lee Langley, A. G. Lee, C. R. Sim-

mons, John W. Pepper Sr., Charles Paxton, and Carl M. Anderson.

Among others who have served on the Board during the years were: E. E. Roy, Dr. A. H. Fortner, Dan Shields, Dalton Moore, C. S. Perkins, Marshall Pior, Walter Baucum, M. C. Alston, Milton Pate, Leo Nunn, O. H. Berry, John R. Cox Jr., Irving Loeb, Edwin Aikin, and C. B. Whorton.<sup>1</sup>

The present Sweetwater School Board is composed of W. E. Forester, Chevrolet dealer, President; Hudson Lincoln, furniture dealer; J. M. Lawrence, operator of Piggly Wiggly Stores; Kirby Kinsey, Kinsey Printing Company; C. E. (Jack) Lambert, Executive Director Housing Authority, City of Sweetwater; Dr. A. N. Densmore, Densmore Dental Clinic; and Dr. June Young, Young Dental Clinic in the Young Medical Center. These men have served Sweetwater long and well.

<sup>1</sup> Information from Newman High School Annuals.

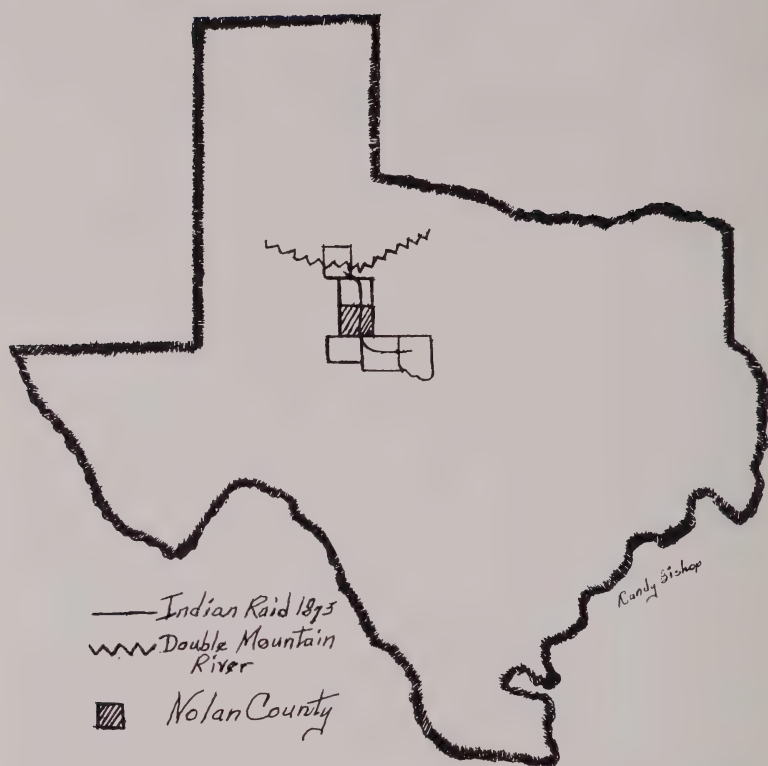
## **An Indian Raid Through Nolan County**

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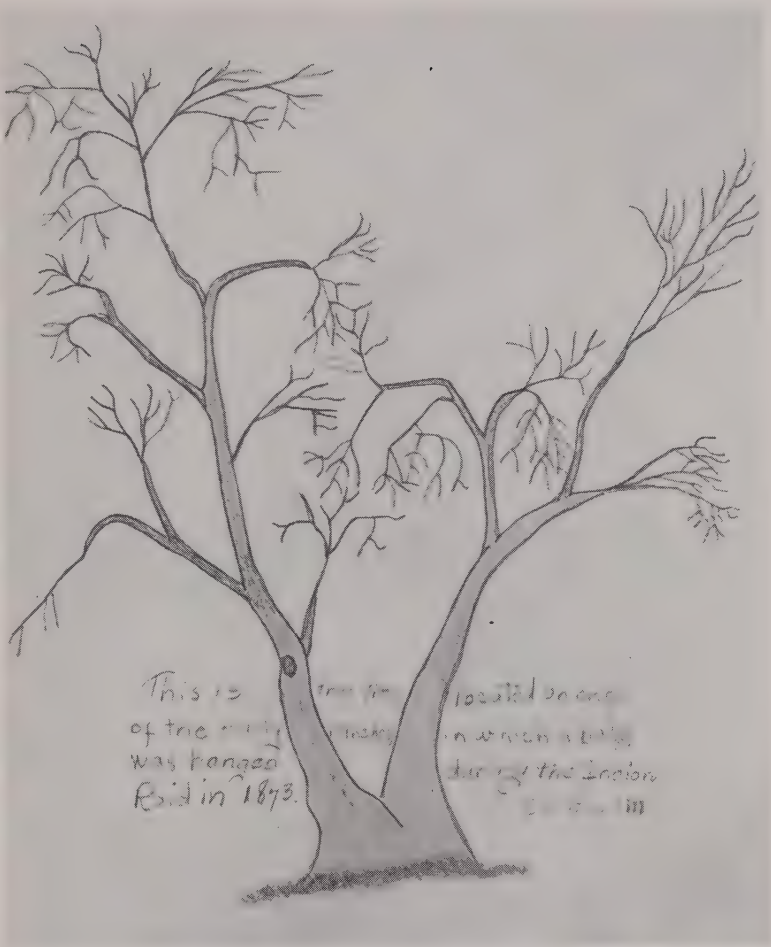
THE last real Indian trouble that occurred in this immediate area was in 1873, when a group of Indians from a reservation in Oklahoma came into Texas hunting. They came upon a group of people in a wagon train, who refused to give them horses. The Indians went on a rampage, killed the people of the wagon train, and raided some lonely settlers in Coleman County, where they stole a baby. As they went north, the Texas Rangers got on their trail and chased them through what is now Runnels, Coke, Nolan, Fisher and into Kent County, where the Indians crossed the Double Mountain River, just ahead of a great "headrise," which kept the Rangers from crossing, and escaped to their reservation.

The Indians were crowded so closely in this immediate area that they wrapped the baby in a blanket and hung it to the limb of a tree, which was located about eight miles south of the present City of Sweetwater, just east of Highway 70. When the Rangers rescued the baby it was dead. They did not know whether it had died from exposure or had smothered to death after being wrapped in the blanket.

Both the Indians and the Rangers were traveling so fast they did not have time to hunt food. Finally, the



Indians stopped in a little canyon, killed and ate a colt. For years the canyon was known as Colt Canyon. Today it is part of Mulberry Canyon. The Rangers killed, barbecued, and ate a coyote. One of the Rangers, Norman Rogers, said his saddle "pardner," Kin Elkins, ate one whole half-quarter of the coyote. Years later, people moving through the country, and of course not knowing its historic value, cut down the tree where the baby had been hanged, to get the honey—it was a bee tree—but stump of the tree still stands today, a grim reminder



of the horrors of yester-years.<sup>1</sup> All of which should make us more grateful for the price that was paid to give the heritage that is ours today.

<sup>1</sup> Story as told by the late Judge R. C. Crane to the eighth grade social studies class of John H. Reagan Junior High School.





# Part II

**Tall Tales  
of the  
Old West**



*“A little nonsense now and then  
is relished by the wisest men.”*



This drawing was done by Glen Herndon in an eighth grade Art Class in John H. Reagan Junior High School in the Spring Semester, 1959.



Jeanette Wade

Wanted

Dead or Alive

For

Brainwashing

School Kids

## ***A Would-Be Sheep Raiser***

Dear Mr. Sheep Company:

I have your literature concerning your sheep company and I am quite interested, as I am thinking of getting some sheep and going into the sheep business this summer.

I wonder if you have any sample sheep to give away? Even a small one would do as I have to keep it in my office until I can get some pasture for it where I can put it out and have it pasturized.

I would like a nice medium-weight, all-wool sheep in stripes if you have them. One that I can skin later and make a Pendleton jacket out of it.

When you skin a sheep once, is that the end of it, or can it be skinned regularly like a human being?

I have an old sheepskin in my office that I have been living off of for twenty-seven years and I thought if I had a whole sheep that I might do better.

I see in the paper that there is a lot of trouble about the tariff on wool. If you can pick out a sheep that hasn't any tariff on the wool, it might save me some cleaning when it gets here.

And one more thing: don't send me a U sheep because they have signs in the street here that says that you do not and cannot make a U turn and I couldn't get one to the office very well if I could not make her turn.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Cattleman," magazine published in Fort Worth, Texas, 1931.

## ***The Cowboy, Two Ladies and a Horse***

A cowboy, with his slicker fastened up tightly around his neck, was jogging down the rain-swept road on his favorite cow pony, when he saw an open-topped, one horse buggy come over the hill. At a closer look, he discovered that two ladies were riding in the buggy. One was driving and the other was holding an umbrella out over the horse. They were both soaking wet. The



“Don’t let the rein get under the horse’s tail or he will kick the dashboard off.”

cowboy stopped beside the buggy, doffed his rain-soaked hat, and asked if he might be of any assistance; he was told that he could not help. He then asked why in the world they were holding the umbrella over the horse while they were getting so wet? One replied in a very precise tone, “Sir, we rented this rig from the livery stable and the man said, ‘Whatever you do, do not let the rein get under the horse’s tail or he will kick off the dashboard’.”

## ***The Cowboy and the School Teacher***

A young Bostonian socialite, who had just completed her work in a select finishing school, heard such glowing reports of life in the "Wild and Wooley West" from a former roommate, who had married and gone West with her husband to seek their fortune, that she decided to accept a teaching position on the ranch where her friend lived. But her mother was horrified and said, "My dear, I can't let you go out there among those wild cowboys and Indians!" The young ladies' mind was made up; so, she went by train to the town nearest the ranch, where she was met by a tall, lean, lanky young man in a buckboard,<sup>1</sup> and driven some thirty miles to the ranch.

When they arrived at the ranch, she was met by her friend, and all the young cowboys, all "slicked up," who were anxiously waiting. All the boys thought she was pretty, but John, a long, lean, lank, hungry looking lad, thought she was "just wonderful." Right then and there he decided he needed more education. It was agreed that, in the evening after the day's work was done, she would teach him English.

The lessons had gone well for about three months and John seemed to be learning fast. But, one evening after the lesson was over and they were sitting before the fire, everything got very quiet. Then John said, "Ah, let's tell tales." Horrified that she had not done better, the young lady said, "Oh, Dear Me, John, don't say, let's tell tales, say let's tell anecdotes." So they told anecdotes. Finally, the lamp exploded and she

<sup>1</sup> Buckboard, early-day vehicle used in the West.

said, "Extinguish it! Extinguish it! Extinguish it!" But John just sat there. In exasperation, she stamped her foot and said, "Put it out, you goof!" He put it out. After a while they heard a commotion in the kitchen and John went to investigate. Then the racket got worse and finally he came back, brushing himself off from top to toe. She asked, "Oh, John, what in world was it?" He replied, "Ah, just a pig." Again she asked, "Oh, Dear John, what did you do?" He raised up, looked at her and said, "Lady, I caught it by the anecdote and extinguished it." Needless to say, they married and lived happily ever after.

### ***Prairie Dog Towns in the Olden Days***

In an early day the prairie dogs were so thick over this western area that they had real towns. Riding across the range one would come to a completely bald piece of ground where there was not any vegetation at all. If he would look closer, he would see holes dug into the ground upon which small brownish-looking animals would be sitting on their hind legs chattering away. What were they saying? He could not tell, he was a mere man, but they evidently understood each other, for, as if at a given signal, they would all stop chattering and dart into their homes in the ground.

Early settlers said they were quite ingenious. When the early-day sand storms were so bad—oh, we have them today but nothing to compare with the olden days—it was said that the prairie dogs were not out done by

them, as were the people. If they could not see to dig into the ground, they just turned around and dug up into the sand.

The Prairie Dog Towns might be found all over the area, but one that is well remembered was on the ranch of the late Palmer Hodges in Fisher County, adjoining Nolan County on the north. Mr. Hodges was the father of Clara Wetsel of Sweetwater.

### ***Rabbits and the Depression***

In the early days, there were rabbit drives just as we have them today. But, during the lean years of the drought, the rabbits were of great value to the settlers. They were not just hunted for the sport of hunting, or to rid the vicinity of the destructive pests. They were killed for food to sustain the lives of the people.

It was learned that by reaching into the hole, one could twist out the rabbit. But the rabbit was a quite ingenious animal, as we all know, so he learned the ways of the people, who least expected it. He dug his hole two different ways. If the one who was trying to catch him were right handed, he ran into the left hole, and if he were left handed, he ran into the right hole. Thus, catching the rabbit for food became quite a task with the settlers. But the early pioneers were a determined group, and were not to be outdone by a mere rabbit. In cases where they could not twist them out, they ran water into the hole and floated them out.



## **Excerpts from a Governor's Speech**

Strangely enough, Texans have been accused of bragging about the fair state, but some of the tales that have been told really accomplished the purpose for which they were told. One such occasion was in 1908 when former Governor of Texas, Pat Neff, spoke before the Head Camp Meeting of the Modern Woodmen of America in Peoria, Illinois, to ask the body to hold its next meeting in Dallas. Mr. Neff spoke of the greatness of the state, told of its many advantages, and some of the outstanding things that it produced. The speech was of great historical value for, even though some of the tales were a bit exaggerated, the worth of the state was pointed out. It really brought the meeting to Dallas. The following excerpts were humbly taken from that speech, as two of its best:

### **RAZOR-BACK HOGS**

There was a time when the Texas hog could outrun a motorcycle and outroot the steam shovel of a dredge boat. The hogs were outstanding to behold. If all the razor-back hogs of olden days could have been moulded into one hog, it could have rooted up the Panama Canal at one root and never twisted its tail.

### **A CARLOAD OF CHICKENS**

The chickens of Texas are the greatest of those anywhere; they are the most productive of any. One year a carload of chicken, that a farmer in Texas shipped to the Chicago market, laid enough eggs on the road to pay the transportation.

## ***Skipping Down the Stairs***

One sun-shiny Sunday morning, when the world looked bright and rosy, a dashing young maiden of forty-odd summers was skipping gaily down the stairs of the small hotel in which she lived, in a little West Texas town, when she stumped her toe on one of those lovely rubber rugs, usually used in wet and muddy weather, that was serving to cover a hole in the carpet in front of the elevator on the second floor, and fell headlong. One could not say she leaped up with all possible speed, as one usually does upon falling, for the young maiden could not move for thirty seconds. Then, as no young gallant or old one either came along to assist her, she managed, with her enraged dignity flaring at its height and calling down all kinds of judgment on the one who had put the rug there in the first place, to drag herself up, ruined stockings and all, and get up stairs to the small room she had always deplored because of its size, that now looked like a real haven of rest.

By the time all this had taken place (probably only a few minutes), the left limb had begun to swell. It finally got about the size of one that should grace a dame or damsel with the average weight of two hundred pounds. It proved to be superficial, however, for by Monday morning, strange as it may seem, the young maiden could walk. The doctor—lovely fellow—upon being consulted, said, “Why you clumsy thing, can’t you stand up?” The colored porter, usually quite clever, said, “Miss\_\_\_\_\_ is you drunk?” All of which did not set well with the already enraged young maid-

en, and she promptly let them have it with both barrels.

Strange as it may seem, the swelling went down, no bones were broken, everything cleared up except the black spots and the ruined stockings, and by Friday night no more hot packs, epsom salts, or heating pads were needed. The young maiden of forty-odd summers slept naturally and peacefully; again all was quiet in the small hotel in the little western town. Even though the rug still lay in front of the elevator on the second floor, what the difference, for the young maiden just rang for the elevator when she wanted to descend.



