

# CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF WISE COUNTY, *Texas*

1853-1953

By

Mary Cates Moore



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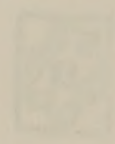
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DEDICATION

*To those students who would know more of our County's history, and to those men who have served in any of our Country's wars, this volume is sincerely and gratefully dedicated.*

## CENTENNIAL

1853-1953

Wise County in 1853, a primeval wilderness spread  
Free from white man's transforming tread.  
Sun dappled prairies, tall waving grass,  
Flower-decked hillsides where buffaloes pass.

Then came the settlers seeking new homes in the  
West,  
Cabins were built, chimney smoke coiled skyward,  
suggesting rest.  
Lowing herds grazed peacefully in luxuriant grass  
lands,  
The fallow earth burgeoned Nature's great mass  
plans.

Came then the red men with flaming torch and  
flying dart,  
Spreading death, destruction and terror in every  
heart.  
Homes lay in smoking ruins, murder and pillage  
everywhere,  
Stark horror stalked the land. The only refuge,  
prayer.

The drums of war have beaten loudly, calling Wise  
County's sons,  
Our country's wars have summoned them to bravely  
man the guns.  
In many foreign countries their blood did freely  
flow,  
Upholding the glorious traditions of the Alamo.



We strive to do them honor, their deeds perpetuate,  
And of the changes time has wrought a record  
dedicate.

"From red men to rail roads," from railroads to  
automobiles,  
From automobiles to air planes, flit by on history's  
reels.

One hundred years, Wise County's span of life, we  
celebrate

Surviving the bad years, the good ones captivate.  
And in the shadowy future hope and confidence  
foresee,

With perfect faith believing that "the best is yet  
to be."

## CONTENTS

### Chapter I (1853-1856)

#### EARLY SETTLEMENT

First Home. Pioneer Store. Land and Preemption Claims. Cactus Hill Ranch.

### Chapter II (1856-1861)

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNTY

The "Father of Wise County". Location of the County Seats. Origin of Rhome. Manners and Customs. Early Markets. Social Life and Amusements.

### Chapter III (1861-1865)

#### CIVIL WAR

### Chapter IV (1859-1876)

#### INDIAN DEPREDATIONS

Comanches and Apaches. Indian Murders. Indian Fights.

### Chapter V (1874-1882)

#### ECONOMIC EXPANSION

Conditions before the Coming of the First Railroad. Sale of School Lands. Mills and Gins. The Coming

of the Ft. Worth and Denver.

### Chapter VI (1856-1882)

#### NOTED TRAVEL ROUTES

The Chisholm Trail. Butterfield Stage Route.

### Chapter VII (1883-1900)

#### PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

The Coming of the Rock Island. The Spanish-American War. Decatur Baptist College Established. Bridgeport Coal Mines. Wise County Court House.

### Chapter VIII (1900-1911)

First Automobiles. Packing Plant Markets. Gas Introduced. Cotton Seed Oil Mill.

### Chapter IX (1911-1917)

#### BEGINNING OF HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT

### Chapter X (1917-1918)

#### WORLD WAR I

Company H, 142nd Regiment. Arrival in France. Battle of Etienne. Death of Lloyd Smith and Monte Dunaway. Armistice Day. Great Parade. Band. Roster.

## Chapter XI (1911-1953)

Beginning of Conservation. Lake Bridgeport.  
County and Home Demonstration Agents.

## Chapter XII (1930-1934)

### DEPRESSION YEARS

Drouth. Unemployment. Highway Work. Bank  
Holiday. Crop Reduction. Commodity Office.  
Stock Slaughtered. Public Works. Sewing Room.  
Civilian Conservation Corps Camp.

## Chapter XIII (1934-1939)

### NORMALCY AFTER DEPRESSION

Rise of Dairying. Grade A Barns. Urschel Kid-  
napping. Increased Food Production.

## Chapter XIV (1940-1945)

### WORLD WAR II

European Theatre. Pacific Theatre. Home Front.  
Casualty List. Roster.

## Chapter XV (1941-1945)

### LOST BATTALION

Java. Liberation. Casualty List. Roster.

## Chapter XVI (1947-1953)

### OIL DEVELOPMENT

Chapter XVII (1945-1953)

ADJUSTMENT TO CHANGING CONDITIONS

Decline of Cotton. Decline of Farm Labor to City  
Industrial Jobs. Mechanization.

Chapter XVIII (1950-1953)

KOREA ROSTER

Chapter XIX

WISE COUNTY NOTABLES

Dr. J. L. Ward. Dr. Joseph Fort Newton. W. T.  
Waggoner. J. J. Perkins. Dr. J. B. Tidwell. Dr.  
Walter Splawn. Cliff Cates.

Chapter XX

HOW MUCH CHANGE?



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Mr. and Mrs. John (Tige) Renshaw for the loan of the "History of the 142nd Regiment of World War I, and to its author, Chaplain Barnes; to Mr. F. M. Kenny for information concerning the Spanish-American War; to Mrs. Charles Allen Cates for the loan of her remarkable scrapbook of clippings regarding the Lost Battalion and to Maj. Charles Allen Cates for his contributed article on the experiences and liberation of that group.

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May 10th, 1953

## PREFACE

This little volume has been prepared as a response to the many requests which the family of the late Cliff D. Cates continue to receive for copies of his "Pioneer History of Wise County" which has been out of print for many years and is unobtainable.

The "Pioneer History" portrayed only the first twenty years of the County's early settlement and was largely a record of the experiences of pioneer persons.

The present volume contains all the essential historical facts of the first one, plus the events of the following eighty years which brings the record up to the present, 1953. It is an account of PERIODS in the County's history, not of persons, and contains no biographical sketches of pioneer characters.

The extremely high cost of publication demands that the material be presented as briefly as possible. For this reason it is just an outline of the events in their chronological order, and makes no attempt at economic nor sociological comment.

It does not strive to imitate either the style or the manner in which the first book was created. That would be both impossible, and impractical to go into so much detail in a condensed treatise such as the present one.

It's main purpose is to record the development of the County from its primitive, unsettled stage, and some of the changes which have brought it to its present commercial status; and also to preserve some

of the military experiences of the different county groups who have participated in our Country's wars. The most important chapters are the ones on World War I, World War II, and the hitherto unpublished epic of the Lost Battalion. The problems of the unfinished chapter on Korea remain to be solved by the passage of time.

It is extremely regrettable that a complete roster of Wise County's men who have served in our wars could not be published, but that would require a large volume alone, and lack of space forbids the listing of any but a few names chosen at random from different sections of the County.

The material has been collected and compiled from many sources, especially from the memories of old inhabitants, old newspaper clippings, and current histories and encyclopedias.

As in any account which covers this much of time there are likely to be many inaccuracies, as the elusive facts recede down the dim corridors of history. And there are many improvements which could be made by a more skilled or resourceful workman, but the attempt has been made to assemble the scattered fragments and weld them into a readable summary of the County's development.

## EARLY SETTLEMENT (1853-1856)

Only a brief seventeen bloody and tempestuous years had elapsed since the battle of the Alamo in 1836, when the territory which afterward was to become Wise County began to be the terminus of the long ox team and wagon journeys of the first early settlers who were slowly wending their way westward with the great migration which was then in progress from the old states to the Golden West. West.

During this era of bloodshed and confusion the great domain of Texas had floundered through eight turbulent years as an independent Republic, and at last in 1845, had been admitted to the Union as a state, for the protection of the United States government, to escape the ever threatening encroachment of Mexico.

The infant state was penniless in funds to establish schools, homes, roads and railroads, but it was incredibly rich in lands and these the state began to bestow with lavish hand as an inducement to attract immigration and to build railroads. But it was many years before there were enough of the latter to be of much value.

Wise County was created from Cooke County. It was a vast virgin territory infested with Indians, and containing a profusion of wild game. There were antelope, bear, deer, panther, wild turkey and prairie chicken, wild horses and herds of buffalo, and the streams abounded with fish. The prairie grass was waist high and a wilderness of flowers waved in the breeze.

Until the coming of the white settlers these examples of nature's abundance had been the undisputed possession of the Indians, and they bitterly resented the encroachment of the white man upon their realm, and opposed every step of his progress with savage and barbarous warfare.

## PEACEFUL DELAWARE INDIANS

At the time of the first settlements, there was a small band of the peaceful Delaware Indians in the County. They were friendly and gave the settlers no trouble, exchanging buffalo robes and moccasins with the settlers for corn, cotton goods, and whiskey, but they soon drifted further West, along with the receding herds of buffalo. It was the murderous Comanches and Apaches who, later swooping down from the western plains and the Indian Territory, brought death and disaster to the settlers.

Ft. Worth was the nearest village in this section. It was inhabited by a few brave settlers who had taken over the old Fort and established stores and homes in the buildings when the United States garrison had moved further west to Ft. Belknap in Jack County.

The State census of 1850, indicates the degree of settlement of nearby counties: Dallas 2008; Cooke 220; Collin 1950; Denton 641; Tarrant 664.

Because of Indian attacks, the Civil War, and the unprotected condition of the new settlements by the Federal Government after the Civil War, Wise County, because of its position on the frontier, suffered the hardships, dangers and privations of frontier life probably longer than any other county.

Under these conditions the great territory that



was to become Wise County lay awaiting the coming of the first settler, and the development and civilization which is achieved only by the faith, toil, vision and fortitude of a tenacious and superior race.

## COMING OF THE FIRST SETTLERS

In 1853 a very few hardy souls blazed a trail through the trackless wilderness that was then Wise County and located claims. Among them was Capt. John W. Hale, who afterward became the county's first sheriff, and his brother-in-law, Archer Fullingim, and a Mr. Tom McCarroll, who will be mentioned later. These men established crude shelters and Capt. Hale moved his flock of sheep here from Hopkins County and remained to care for them, but there were no permanent homes built so that their families could be moved here until the following year.

In the vanguard of the great caravan of settlers who were creeping toward Texas in covered wagons, was a man who had been brought up in the mountains of Tennessee, but who longed for the freedom of a broader and freer land. Mr. Sam Woody was the man whom Fate destined to build the first permanent home in Wise County.

In the Fall of 1853 he followed the tortuous course of the Trinity River where Tarrant County emerged upon the prairies of Wise County, and in the southern part of the county he came upon the location which appealed to him most, a level stretch of soil with a plentiful supply of timber and water. This was the goal which he had sought,

and he decided to make it his permanent location.

He returned to Ft. Worth and spent the remainder of the winter preparing to move his family here, which he did the following spring, only to find to his surprise, that another settler, Tom McCarroll had preempted his claim.

Under Mr. McCarroll's obliging direction, Mr. Woody was guided to another location, equally as desirable a little further to the north on the banks of a stream, which became known as Deep Creek, and here began to build his house, the first permanent home to be established in the County. This house is still standing, a venerable monument to the spirit of pioneer courage.

Other settlers began to arrive in the Fall of that year, and also prospectors and those who trafficked in land. The east, south and north parts of the county were settled first.

An abundance of timber to be used as fuel and being contiguous to streams of running water were considered the two chief requisites in selecting locations. The settlers had not then considered it important to dig wells to supply water for themselves and their stock, but depended upon nature's supply.

By the time that immigration was well established three well defined communities contained the greater part of the population. These were Sand Hill, Deep Creek and Catlett Creek, though other scattered independent settlements existed.

Not very many locations were made in the west part of the County at that time, with the notable exception of Col. W. H. Hunt's famous and picturesque ranch at Cactus Hill, West of Bridgeport.

## PIONEER STORE

The population had now reached the point where it demanded a supply store. Mr. Daniel Howell, of Denton County, desired to establish one which he wished to be as nearly as possible in the center of the County. After making precise calculations he chose a spot near the present site of the Baptist College, but about a block to the north east which, he thought would be near the center and most easily accessible from all sections of the County.

Here he built his store and it became the center of all the business transactions of that time. It also served as the only Post Office in the County, the mail being brought in once a week from Old Alton in Denton County.

The name of the store was changed later to Howell and Allen when Mr. Howell was joined in the firm by his young clerk, Elmore Allen. This store thrived in this location until 1857, when it was removed to Taylorsville, the present location of Decatur.

## LAND AND PREEMPTION CLAIMS

By the time that settlement was under way in Wise County the extravagant gifts of land which the State had bestowed to induce settlement had gradually diminished. Prior to 1836 the State had bestowed a headright of 4,605 acres, but by 1854 this magnanimous gift was reduced to 160 acres with the condition that a house must be built upon it and it should be occupied for three years. Most of settlements in Wise County were made under

this law which was enacted in 1864. Land trades and sales among the settlers were made on a basis of 50c to \$1.00 per acre.

The settlement of Wise County was accompanied by the usual nefarious swindling agents and land sharks who victimized the people until all the free lands were taken up and titles were established.

## CACTUS HILL RANCH

Col. W. H. Hunt

Col. Hunt was among the earliest ones to seek a location in Wise County. He was well fitted by education and experience to assume the leadership in the affairs of the County which he exercised for many years.

He was born in Ithica, New York, in 1815, descended from a long line of English ancestors, many of whom become notable in art, literature and government.

He came to Texas in 1836, fought in the Mexican War, became surveyor to the government, which gave broad experience in colonization and land locations. He was a member of the commission which selected the location of the present State's Capitol Building, and inaugurated the first mail route between Austin and North Texas.

He became an individual promoter and acquired huge land holdings in western Wise County.

His Cactus Hill Ranch headquarters was located on an elevation facing Hunt's Creek, a tributary of the West Fork of the Trinity River. This height was near where the old Jacksboro and Decatur road crossed the stream and from it could be had an



inspiring view of the county for miles around.

Much of the lowlands in this vicinity are now submerged under Lake Bridgeport.

Col. Hunt brought his family to this location in 1855, but sometime prior to that he had brought large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

His wife, Miss Catherine Cordelle, of Bonham, was extremely attractive, hospitable and sympathetic. Their home was an oasis of culture and refinement in the rugged frontier, and they generously shared the contents of their well stocked library and larder with the entire country side.

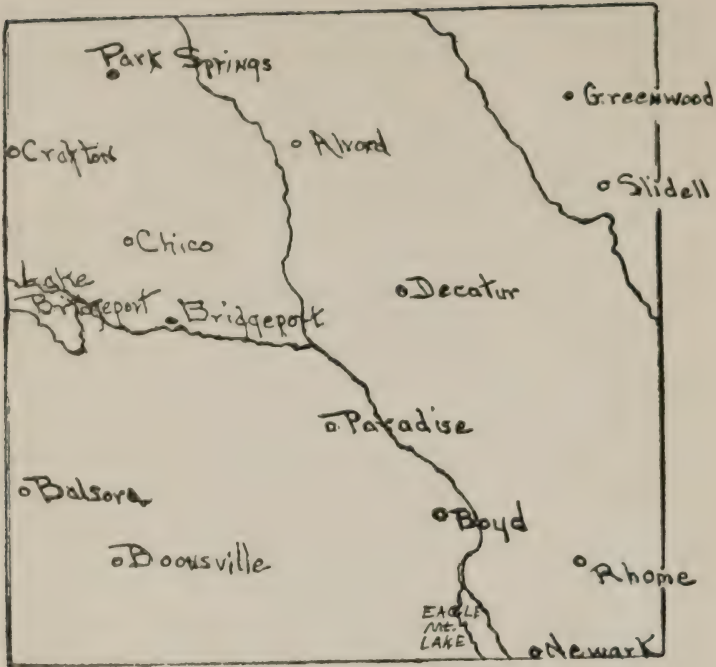
He became known as one of the great cattle barons of North Texas. Besides the many cattle there was always a flock of 3,500 sheep, and the annual wool clip was transported to Jefferson and sold, the caravans returning laden with supplies for the ranch.

He always kept a picturesque band of cowboys employed, and a large amount of horses was always on hand in the huge corrall which was made of ten foot high logs standing on end and tightly fastened together with bois d'arc posts.

Col. Hunt was a commanding figure in the early history of the County and exercised a leadership and influence that few possessed. But reverses began to beset him during the Civil War. Mrs. Hunt died, and during the Indian Depredation period, the children, accompanied by their governess, were refuged to Decatur for protection.

He was killed as the result of a runaway accident between Bridgeport and Decatur, and the princely estate over which he had presided gradually passed into other hands.





Map of Wise County

## 1856-1861 ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNTY

In 1855 the territory of Wise County had been sparsely settled for two years and the need for local government was becoming urgent. This was because of the need of civil protection over person and property and home rule and land matters, including deeds, surveys and filings.

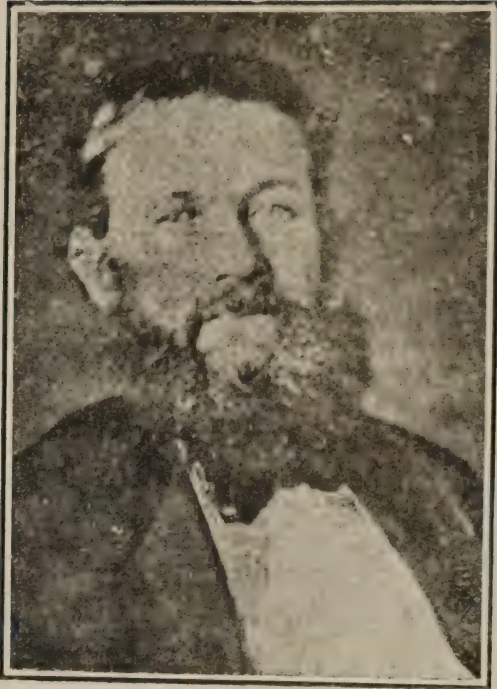
The land affairs had formerly been under the joint sovereignty of Denton and Gainesville, the latter town having jurisdiction over this section of the territory contiguous to it, and Denton over the half adjoining Denton County.

This necessitated long and tiresome trips to these two towns to adjust all land claims and was extremely inconvenient, as there were no established roads and no bridges over the creeks.

### THE "FATHER" OF WISE COUNTY

In all times of crisis, when a leader is required, Providence always produces one to meet the need. This man proved to be Absolam Bishop, who was born in South Carolina in 1804, and who had settled in the Sweetwater community in 1855. He was a man of dynamic personality, possessing all the qualities of leadership and executive ability, experience and the diplomatic attitude to overcome opposition.

He guided all phases of the organization movements, his far-vision planned all the preliminary steps incidental to creating the new County, and



Col. Absolam Bishop

the establishment of the County Seat upon the crest of the hill was the culmination of one of his fondest dreams. To him, if to any, should be given the honor of being "The Father of Wise County."

In accordance with the provision for organizing a new county and at the urgent request of its citizens, it was incumbent upon the Chief Justice (County Judge) of Cooke County to perfect the organization of that part of her territory into Wise County.

The preparations necessary to the organization were of two kinds. First, a Creating Act must be secured from the Legislature which defined the boundaries, and authorized the action; second, the territory must be divided into convenient precincts for the election of Justices of the Peace and Constables; voting places in each precinct where elections should be held must be appointed; elections must be declared one month ahead of the date, and presiding officers appointed.

After all these conditions had been complied with, by authority of an act of the Legislature in January, 1856, this territory which had been a part of Cooke County became officially recognized as an organized county, with a county administrative body of its own.

The name Wise was chosen by Col. Bishop from that of Hon. Henry A. Wise, a statesman of Virginia, who supported President Tyler in his plans for the annexation of Texas to the Union, which was opposed by many at that time.

In accordance with the command of the Creating Act the first election was held in May, 1856, with Howell's Store as the chief voting box. The following were elected as Wise County's first set of county officials:

William S. Oates, Chief Justice.

Absolam Bishop, County Clerk.

Granger Salmon, District Clerk.

John W. Hale, Sheriff.

Robert C. Mount, Assessor and Collector.

John T. Waggoner, Treasurer.

R. B. Haney, George Birdwell, Samuel Terrell and

J. C. Kincannon, County Commissioners.

Justices of the Peace: Precinct No. 1, James Roberts; Precinct No. 2, B. P. Earp; Precinct No. 3, James Davis; Precinct No. 4, F. M. Holden; Precinct No. 5, S. Bean; Precinct No. 6, L. S. King; Precinct No. 7, S. L. Terrell.

And in further accordance with the requirements of the Creating Act these officers immediately entered upon their duties in administering the county government.

## LOCATION OF THE COUNTY SEAT

A part of the conditions of the Creating Act outlined the method to be followed in locating the county seat and designated:

(First) That as soon as the County should be organized that the Chief Justice and two of the county commissioners should select two or more places within five miles of the center of the County to be run for the county seat.

(Second) That the Chief Justice should order an election to be held, giving fifteen days' notice, for the location of the county seat, the name of which shall be called Taylorsville, and

(Third) That the majority of the votes polled shall determine the location

When the question came up for settlement, Col. Bishop had already prepared a plan to select the hill top whereon Decatur is now located for the future county seat. This, at that time, barren spot, is nearer the exact center of the County than any of the other locations offered, being just a short



distance North East of the true geographical center.

But there were several other locations in the County which had zealous supporters. These included the Howell & Allen Store vicinity, Isbell Springs, Deep Creek, the Halsell Valley and others. It was a hotly contested struggle, characterized by the bitterness and animosity which a race of that kind can generate among aspiring rivals for the same honor. But when the final count was made, the decision fell to Col. Bishop's hill top, and he immediately ran up a United State's Flag to flutter its inspiring colors over the silent eminence to celebrate the victory.

This tract of land was a part of the preemption belonging to Mr. and Mrs. James Proctor and they generously donated sixty acres for the townsite.

Col. Bishop then assumed active charge of the details of laying out the town. He was a man of broad culture and wide travel, and the experience which he had gained in this way resulted in his vision of a town laid out in an orderly and systematic manner and not with the haphazard and irregular settlements common to many new towns. The square was staked out precisely on the top of the hill, with streets diverging in each direction from its four corners. Building lots around the square sold for \$100.00.

A court house then became necessary and as there was no lumber with which to build it, a small house near Howell & Allen's store, was purchased and moved to the square, and thus became the first building to adorn the public square and Wise County's first Court House.

A cluster of other small log and frame buildings soon grew about it. These included Howell & Allen's store which was moved to the new location. Col. Bishop's store and that of David Cates and P. P. R. Collum, and a hotel owned by Electious Hallsell. These very materially changed the appearance of the bald hill top.

The village was originally called Taylorsville in honor of Gen. Zachary Taylor, but legend has it that when Gen. Taylor changed his political allegiance from the Democratic to the Whig party Col. Bishop appealed to the Legislature to have the name changed to Decatur in honor of Commodore Stephen Decatur, the American Admiral of conspicuous fame during the early formation of the United States and on January 7, 1858, it became officially known as Decatur.

On October 28, 1859, the birth of the first white child born in the new village of Decatur occurred. This was the late Benjamin Franklin Allen, born to Mr. and Mrs. Elmore Allen, who resided at that time in a small house on East Main Street, which is the present site of the Taylor Butane Plant.

## ORIGIN OF RHOME

Decatur and Prairie Point remained the two principle villages of the County during the period preceding the war, and were the only places where supplies could be bought, except at a small store which was operated for awhile by Samuel Terrell on Catlett Creek.

Prairie Point, like its neighbor, Decatur, on the North, also changed its name, and afterwards be-

came Rhome, in honor of one of its citizens, Mr. B. C. Rhome. A large number of the original settlers in the locality came from Missouri and it carried the sobriquet of the "Missouri Community" for many years.

The beautiful ranches stocked with thoroughbred cattle, and the illimitable acres of rippling wheat which dips and dances with every breeze have always made this part of the County a delight both to the eye of an artist and to the more practical calculations of an investor.

#### ANALYSIS OF CITIZENSHIP — MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

The majority of the population was composed of citizens from the southern states who brought with them the standards and patterns of life which had prevailed in their native states. This accounts for the sentiment which produced so large a per cent of soldiers for the Confederacy, from such a sparsely settled County, when the war finally enveloped it.

There were a few from New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Kansas and other non-slave holding states who lent a sprinkling of opposition to southern sympathies when the crisis arrived. But there were never very many slaves brought into the County so that problem was never sufficient to cause confusion or re-adjustment.

The greatest tribute to the pious, honorable, law abiding quality of the citizenship is attested by the fact that there was no jail provided in the early settlement, nor was one necessary.

The County was never characterized by the lawless, criminal element which frequently flocks to new communities. If anyone attempted to live contrary to the high standards of morality which prevailed among the majority of the settlers they promptly found themselves isolated and ostracised from community esteem.

Hospitality was one of their shining virtues. Guests were always welcome in every home and the hosts shared their meager resources with every wayfarer even to the point of privation for themselves.

The difficulty of transportation by slow moving ox teams made the supply of the necessities of life difficult to secure and everything possible was produced at home. Each household was practically self sustaining, producing the most of its own food, with the exception of coffee, sugar and those things which had to be imported. And during the war when the Southern ports were blockaded, they learned to make a fair substitute for coffee with parched grain, and most things were sweetened with molasses.

It was a homespun civilization. Nearly every home contained a weaving room in which the women of the family spent all their spare time spinning and weaving the cloth from which their garments were made. The fleecy cotton was produced in their own fields and the wool was clipped from the flocks of their own sheep.

They attained great skill in weaving and dyeing. Some of the old intricately woven counterpanes and coverlets, both of cotton and wool, are now invaluable.



able antiques and prized as collector's items. They achieved wonderful shades of blue, red, brown, yellow and purple by concocting dyes from the roots and barks of plants. Black was made from the wool of black sheep and needed no dyeing. White wool was obtained from white sheep and grey or tweed was made by mixing the two. Shoes were made from their own home tanned leather.

Their thrift, industry, intelligence and resourcefulness enabled them to overcome their restrictions and limitations, and developed in them an irrepressible sense of humor, faith, philosophy and charitableness which enabled them to live wholesome, happy, economically independent lives in the presence of hardships.

## EARLY MARKETS AND COMMERCE

The remote distance of markets and the lack of transportation precluded the production of any crops more than enough for home consumption. Cattle and sheep raising was the chief industry, and cotton raising was not even considered until after the close of the Civil War. There were no gins and it had to be hauled to Ft. Worth by ox team, a slow and expensive trip, to be ginned.

Beginning about 1857, the ambitions of the early settlers were given a disastrous set-back by one of the prolonged drouths which afflict this part of the state, which lasted seven years, and was accompanied by a pestilence of grasshoppers which plagued the country and laid waste to all growing



vegetation.

The two dire visitations of Nature practically devastated the County and left the inhabitants impoverished and in distress. And the rumbling of distant war clouds as the country was torn by the dissension of the coming civil strife would have discouraged less hardy and determined souls, but the sturdy settlers persisted in the face of difficulty and maintained their holdings with tenacity and superb endurance.

But wild game was plentiful and the best of meats could be procured easily by foraging in the forests and streams. Wild horses, called "mustangs," thronged the prairies and feasted upon the tall grass. Though they were fleet of foot and difficult to capture, a "mount" of horses were kept in every corral.

The range was still unfenced. Barbed wire was not invented until 1873, and did not come into general use for more than ten years, and cattle and hogs roamed at will. The numerous fleet footed ponies were necessary to round them up.

In the years prior to the Civil War the herds of cattle were gradually enlarging and Wise County became the locale of the operations of a large number of cattle barons, notable among whom were W. H. Hunt, and Dan Waggoner, both of whom owned huge ranches in the western part of the County. It is probably due to these vast tracts owned by one or two families that the west part of the County was slower about being filled up with settlers than the other parts, as the great domains belonging to one person have always been a deterrent to the settle-

ment of any locality by large numbers of settlers who needed to establish many homes on smaller tracts. And it was not until after these great land holdings were divided up into smaller farms that the western part of the County became thickly populated.

After the outbreak of the Civil War the cattle business languished, the majority of the able bodied male population was in the Confederate Army and there was no one to round up the cattle, but as the war progressed and the army required more, Wise County, because of its abundant supplies, probably furnished more beef for the Confederacy than any other County.

After the close of the war countless thousands of unbranded cattle roamed the prairies to be claimed and branded by any one who could supply sufficient men and horses to round them up. This practice was called "mavericking," and it was the foundation of many fortunes which had their origin in this way.

As the railroads progressed further west. Abilene and Baxter, Kansas, became the terminus of the long overland cattle drives when the herds were driven to market over the famous old Chisholm trail which traversed the County from south to north, and were sold for from \$36.00 to \$40.00 per head.

## SOCIAL LIFE — AMUSEMENTS

For a quarter of a century there was more of pathos than play for Wise County because of its

position on the frontier, and being buffeted both by Indian attacks and the privations of the Civil War, but the people never lost their interest in normal pleasure and took time from their strenuous physical pursuits to indulge in diversions which relieved the strain and kept them in a cheerful and optimistic mental attitude.

Horses were such an important requirement of their lives, because they depended solely upon them for transportation, and took great pride in the ownership of good steeds, so naturally horse racing was their most popular sport. Every event such as "First Monday" or any other day which was to be celebrated was always accompanied by its program of horse racing. There were a number of good tracks built over the County and the betting on favorite steeds ranged all the way from pocket knives to large sums of money and livestock.

Much social visiting was indulged in and long visits were made on horsback to distant parts of the County. Card playing and square dancing were popular with those who did not have church restrictions against them.

A fiddler of long endurance was prized, and Uncle Ran Veasy, colored, was much beloved and in demand for these occasions.

Candy pullings, singings, quiltings, and house raisings brought the people together in friendly cooperation and intensified the bonds of kindness and human sympathy.

## WE MAY GET SCALPED 'FORE MORNIN'

Swing your pardner and do-se-do,  
Pick up your feet, now don't be slow.  
We'll dance by the light of the bright full moon,  
Even if the Indians do come soon.

Load that gun, keep the trigger cocked,  
Them there red skins will sure' be shocked,  
When they get a blast from head to toe  
From a happy crowd dancing do-se-do.

Watch the windows at your quiltin' bee,  
They'll sneak 'round to see what they can see.  
They won't be invited to the barbecue  
But the arrows may fly toward me and you.

Keep your eye on the ponies at the next horse race,  
The Indians may swoop down at a rapid pace.  
Swing your pardner, they may come without warn-  
in',  
And do-se-do, we may get scalped 'fore mornin'.

## SUMMING UP THE EARLY SETTLEMENT PERIOD

The first six years of settlement were uneventful. The obstacles of drouth and plague of insects had been overcome, and life was beginning to become more abundant but there still were no roads nor bridges.

In 1858 the Overland Mail Route was established by the government. This consisted of a stage line which established communication between the East and the Pacific Coast, and was better known as the Butterfield State Line, which traversed the County East to West. The County was required to build a traversible road to the Jack County line and secure bridges across Sandy Creek and the West Fork of the Trinity.

This mail service was suspended at the beginning of the Civil War, as the Confederate government had no means of sustaining it.

Toward the end of this period a contract was let to build a new court house. This consisted of a frame, two story, five room structure which was erected in the center of the square at the county seat. The lower floor was divided into four rooms separated by halls running in each direction and the upper room served as an assembly hall.

But this foundation period of pioneer tranquility was brought to an abrupt and violent close in 1859, by a series of atrocious murders committed by the Indians in Jack and Parker Counties. This sent a



feeling of terror and apprehension through the inhabitants of Wise County. The maddening era of Indian attacks was encroaching upon the County.

And in 1861 the smoldering embers of the long-dreaded Civil War burst into flame which left the infant County of only six years without protection from the horrors of savage attack, and subject to the privations and agony which only war can inflict.

The courage which the early settlers displayed, their persistence in surmounting their limitations, and difficulties, their respect for law and order, education and spiritual values, laid the foundations of our present civilization, and the present generation is due them a great tribute of respect and veneration.

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1861-1865

## CIVIL WAR PERIOD

The experiences of each segment, or county, are but a few ripples of the flow of the turbulent stream of history in the development of our great State.

At the beginning of the settlement of Wise County the rumbling of political disturbance throughout the United States over the question of the abolition of slavery was rending asunder the North and South, and by the time the County was well organized national feeling was at the fever point.

In 1859 South Carolina seceded from the Union and by 1860, all the Southern States east of the Mississippi had withdrawn from the Federal control. In 1861 Texas also seceded.

The struggling new Wise County was engulfed in this period of gloom, which also marks the beginning of the Indian depredation period and was harassed between the distress and destitution of war and the terror of Indian attack.

The two tragic events were being enacted simultaneously, but for the sake of clarity they will be discussed in separate chapters.

Because of its remoteness from the scene of action, and its thinly settled population, there was little active demonstration of war-like spirit when the news of actual hostilities arrived in the County.

The citizenship was almost entirely Southern in their sympathies as the majority of them were trans-

planted from southern states.

There had never been many slaves brought into the County, so the farming interests were not in danger because of the cessation of that type of labor, but Wise County, like all the rest of the South, resented any encroachment upon that old Democratic principle of State Rights, and when the call to join the military companies was received the number of men who went from the County was quite surprising, in proportion to the sparse population.

When Texas seceded from the Union, the Federal troops were withdrawn from the frontier posts, and the settlements were exposed to Indian attack. This made it necessary for the State to raise a quota of troops for the Confederate Army and for the protection of the frontier.

The State authorized the raising of ten Cavalry companies, under Col. H. E. McCullough, to be distributed at posts twenty-five miles apart along the frontier from Red River to the Rio Grande with a daily routine required of scouting from one post to another.

Indian attacks were becoming more numerous, and the government also authorized the organization of home militia companies as a home protective guard, and most all able-bodied citizens belonged to these companies. These groups rendered excellent service in spreading the alarm, chasing the Indians, and recovering stolen stock.

The savages were accustomed to making their raids most frequently on moonlight nights, and it was on these nights that the home companies, or Minute Men, would patrol the County.

## CONFEDERATE STATE MILITARY

### ORGANIZATION

In December 1861 the Texas Legislature passed an act organizing the State forces on a war footing. Thirty-three brigade districts were organized. Wise County was a part of District No. 1, commanded by Brigadier Gen. Wm. A. Hudson, stationed at Gainesville.

The recruitnig of companies in several counties was placed in charge of Justices of the Peace. All citizens eligible for military service were required to serve either in the Confederate Army or the Home Militia.

There was much undisciplined material at hand and the organizing officers proceeded as best they could.

In Wise County, Capt. John W. Hale, a private citizen and an ex-sheriff, was put in charge of the preliminary organization measures, and ranked as an adjutant with headquarters at Decatur, which became a true military post with an arsenal of supplies.

Following Capt. Hale came Gen. Wm. Quaille, the first regular military officer to be sent to command the post in Decatur. Gen. Quaille's successors were the noted Indian fighter, Buck Berry; Gen. Throckmorton, who was afterward elected governor; and at the close of the war, Col. G. B. Pickett, of Wise County.

A part of the plan of the Confederate organiza-

tion required the services of a war tax collector and assessor, and Charles D. Cates was appointed to this difficult position. His district comprised ten counties over which he was compelled to travel by horseback, carrying large sums of money to Austin. He was always in danger of Indian attacks or the malicious hatred of Union sympathizers who resented paying the tax money to the Confederates.

## RAISING COMPANIES FOR CONFEDERATE SERVICE

The excitement became intense with the call for volunteers. Col. Bishop and Capt. A. H. Shoemaker continued to make inspiring addresses, urging help for the Southern cause, and the latter made his suggestion tangible by organizing a company of young men all eager to get into the service. They had no uniforms and only such arms as could be raked and scraped throughout the community, and presented a rather grotesque appearance in comparison with the usual precise equipment of a soldier.

This prematurely organized company later was disbanded and was incorporated into other companies.

The second company was raised in 1861, by Mr. G. B. Pickett and was received into the ranks which by this time were fully organized.

In 1862 Capt. Ed Blythe raised the third company. The roster of this company has been unob-



tainable, but Thomas Halsell was a Lieutenant and the company took part in some of the most important engagements of the war, and at Pleasant Grove and Mansfield, Louisiana, it assisted in keeping Gen. Bragg's army from invading Texas.

The County was rapidly sending men to the front and besides the regular companies being sent away there were individuals and small groups leaving to join other units in contiguous counties. Most of these companies had been recruited from near the county seat but there was one whole company raised from near Prairie Point (the present-day Rhome).

This fourth company which Wise County had contributed to the Confederacy was organized through the efforts of ex-sheriff Ben Earp. At the first election, the officers named were: Ben Earp, Captain; Jim Earp, 1st Lieutenant; C. C. Thompson, 2nd Lieutenant; C. C. Leonard, Orderly Sergeant; Bob Walker, 2nd Sergeant.

When the company was stationed at Clarksville, Capt. Earp resigned and was succeeded in command by Capt. C. C. Thompson. It was known as Company E, and was combined with the 23rd Texas Cavalry, and though poorly equipped, saw service in some of the hottest encounters in Louisiana and Arkansas.

The death of Sam Oates in one of the river battles was the first fatality, where many were killed and wounded and many died from sickness and lack of care.

After three years of hard service and campaigning which resulted in several promotions, Capt. G. B. Pickett had been advanced to colonel and finally

had been exempted because of his age. He returned to Wise County and organized a fifth and last company, but it has been impossible to secure a roster or any historical data concerning it.

## CHANGES AND CONDITIONS INCIDENT

### TO THE WAR

With almost all the male population drawn into the service, all business and industry in the County practically came to a standstill because of lack of manpower to operate them. This caused many families to desert the frontier because of a means of livelihood.

The imminence of Indian attack also caused the abandonment of many farm homes, and Decatur became a refugee camp where the settlers were huddled together for mutual protection.

The discontinuance of the Federal Overland Southern Mail Route at this time caused a great hardship, and the blockading of the Southern ports and the inability to secure many necessary supplies made the settlers rely more than ever upon their own resourcefulness and home production.

But one of the greatest drawbacks was the lapse of all social customs and their strictly pleasurable phase, and the life on the frontier became one monotonous grind, with the people struggling under their heavy burdens and praying for a cessation of hostilities and a return of normal pursuits.

A few families remained at the county seat during this trying period. They were the families of

Absolam Bishop, E. A. Blythe, Dr. Thomas Stuart, Capt. A. H. Shoemaker, S. M. Gose, Noah Cravens, Dr. J. W. Knight, Chris. Gose, W. H. Hunt G. B. Pickett, J. W. Hale and Jack Moore, all of whom played a heroic part in braving the dangers of savage attack and war's privations.

Col. W. H. Hunt had been compelled to abandon his picturesque and princely domain in the west part of the County and refugeed his family to Decatur for protection. He brought with him his children's governess, Miss Lutitia Wilson, who started a school in a vacant log dwelling and gave the children of the community excellent training in culture and refinement and the rudiments of music.

### METHODIST CHURCH ORGANIZED

Prior to 1862 there had been no church building in Decatur and church services had been irregular, but in that year the first church was organized by the Methodist denomination in a vacant store, Rev. Bellamy, a presiding elder, at that time living on Black Creek, presided at the ceremony, which was attended by the following: Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Gose, Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Foster, Sally and Margaret Foster. Mr. and Mrs. Chris. Gose, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wallace.

This was the only church organization in the county seat until after the war.

### PEACE PARTY CONSPIRACY

In 1862 there was formed an elaborate conspiracy

having for its motive the overthrow of the Confederate government of this section of the state, and then, if successful, progressing to the entire state. This organization was called the Peace Party and was made up of Union sympathizers and those who were loyal to neither side.

The first report of their activities came from a few miles East of Gainesville, in Cooke County, where the organization had obtained a number of supporters who planned to gain sufficient strength to rise suddenly, seize Confederate forces and arsenals, deprive all of arms, burn property and reduce the people to helplessness to resist a Federal force which was to come in from Kansas to occupy the country.

But the movement was brought to a tragic termination when Gen. Hudson, of Gainesville, came into possession of the disclosures which led to the arrest, conviction and hanging of fifty five of the conspirators in Cooke County, who were traitorous to the Confederate government.

He then undertook to stamp out the conspiracy in Wise County. Capt. John Hale, Commandant, was ordered to arrest the conspirators and bring them to Decatur for trial. Fifty of the best qualified men of the County sat as a jury and Sheriff Robert Cates was ordered to carry out the commands of the commission.

The air was tense with excitement and when the investigation closed five men were declared totally guilty and sentenced to be hanged. These were John Conn, Ira Burdick, Jim McKinn, Parson Mables and ——— Ward. At the end of their respec-



tive trials each of these men were taken to a tree in the west edge of town (near where the roadside park on the Alvord Highway now is located) and hanged until dead.

They were hauled away from the arsenal in wagons, sitting on their coffins and it was from the wagons pulled from under them that they fell to their death. This was a gruesome duty for Sheriff Cates, the executioner, who was one of the kindest of men. And the sight of the men being hauled away on their coffins almost created a panic among the children of Miss Wilson's school, which was nearby.

Thus ended in ghastly tragedy the endeavors of those misguided men, and the untimely propaganda of the Peace Party was effectually exterminated.

## PURSUIT AND ARREST OF DESERTERS

A few days before Lee's surrender at Appomatox Courthouse on April 9, 1865, the post of Decatur was startled by orders from Gen. Throckmorton to join in the pursuit of one hundred deserters from the Confederate ranks who were fleeing to the territory of New Mexico.

Toward the end of the war desertions of that kind became frequent, due to the discouragement of the men, their poor equipment, and their despair over the hope of victory.

Col. G. B. Pickett was in command of the Decatur Post, and on Saturday, April 2, 1865, he and a strong company departed toward the New Mexico



border to apprehend the fleeing band. He was joined in the west part of the County by Capt. Earheart and a company from that section.

The trail led to the Wichita River where the deserters were discovered early on the morning of April 4, 1865, while at breakfast, with their horses grazing nearby. The Wise County posse surrounded them by a surprise attack, drove off their horses and left the deserters afoot.

There was nothing left for them to do but surrender, which they did, and were led off by Col. Diamond and Col. Pickett to the Confederate Post at Buffalo Springs. But they did not remain in captivity long, as they were allowed their liberty when Gen. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865.

## CHANGES BROUGHT BY WAR

At the close of the war Texas was under military rule under Gen. Granger who landed at Galveston with a large Federal force which took over the posts at Austin and San Antonio, and the garrisons on the frontier

They suspended all local, civil and military authority and proceeded to reconstruct the government of Texas by suspending all Southern sympathizers in all the county offices and appointing in their places those whose views harmonized with the Federal government.

In Wise County a ten years series of these suspensions in County administrations followed. The annoyance and antagonisms of these changes which

included disfranchisement of all Southern sympathizers, created much bitterness and resentment, but it was a part of the despotic "carpet bag" rule to which all of the South was subjected during these years, and from which Texas in particular suffered during the tyrannical administration of Gov. E. J. Davis.

## THE UNION LEAGUE

When the war was over and Union sympathizers who had hitherto been in the minority in the County began to assert themselves, the ill will between them and the Confederate people reached a dangerous stage of mutual loathing, and each side charged many grievances against the other.

Among these was an organization known as the Union League, an order of Northern sympathizers principally from the west side of the County, who marched upon the County Seat with the intention of retaliation against all the officers who took part in the trial and hangings of the Peace Party members, especially Sheriff Robt. G. Cates, the executioner and other officers whom they hated.

Although they numbered two hundred and there were only thirty-five of the settlers who rallied to defend the County Seat, they were routed and intimidated by the show of resistance and a fiery speech made by Capt. C. C. Thompson, who ordered them to disperse.

This was the last of open threats and harassments of this kind, and these chaotic conditions were grad-

ually cleared up and ameliorated under the beneficent administration of Gov. Coke, who did all in his power to restore liberty and peaceful conditions to the people of the State.

1860-1875

## INDIAN DEPREDATIONS

The contest between the Indians and the white men was waged more bitterly and for a longer period across the frontier that was Wise County than any other county in the state. This was because of its geographical location, being in the pathway of the savages as they made their forays into Denton, Parker and Tarrant Counties from Northwest Texas and from their reservation in the Indian Territory. Also because of the outbreak of the Civil War only five or six years after the County was organized.

The state could not give the infant county the protection it needed as it was sending all available troops to aid the Confederacy. For a number of years after the close of the war, the "Carpet Bag" rule that was in control of the state was indifferent to the fate of the frontier.

There were many different tribes of Indians which inhabited the different areas of the state, but the most savage and brutal ones were the Apaches and Comanches, who occupied the greater part of the Panhandle region. The Apaches gradually were driven into New Mexico but the Comanches were a strong and numerous tribe and slowly drifted in this direction, and everywhere they spread terror at their approach.

They made intermittent raids upon the counties adjoining Wise County, becoming bolder and committing more atrocious crimes as they progressed.

Finally in 1859 they annihilated the Mason and Cameron families in Jack County and the people were panic stricken to know of brutal crimes so near as to place their own safety in jeopardy. This was the prelude to a lurid drama of twenty years duration.

Other hair-raising crimes followed in Jack, Parker and Palo Pinto Counties and it was only a matter of time until they would be invading Wise County.

In this scant space it would be impossible to describe in detail the many murders and bloody encounters which ensued between the settlers and the Red Men, but a few of the most important ones will be discussed briefly.

## INDIAN MURDERS

### Bill Holden

In 1853 the government had established some of the Indians on a reservation in Young County, near Ft. Belknap.

In 1858 Dick Holden, the father of Bill Holden, removed with his family from Wise County to Young County and shortly after that the Indians made a raid and drove off all their horses. Young Bill started out to a neighbor's to borrow a horse but was overtaken, killed and scalped by the Indians, and his mutilated body was found a few days later in a cave.

This so enraged the settlers that they demanded of the government that the reservation be removed



to the Indian Territory.

The government complied with their request, but the result was disastrous to Wise County for from their stronghold in the Indian Territory the Indians launched their murderous attacks upon this County and the neighboring ones.

Holden's death was important because of its being the cause of the removal of the Ft. Belknap Indians to the Indian Territory and of the catastrophic after effects which this had upon Wise County.

Bill Birdwell, George Halsell,

Tip Conelly, Tom Weatherby

Clay County was the location wherein four citizens of Wise County were butchered by the Indians during these turbulent times, and others had narrow escapes.

Young Bill Birdwell was a member of one of the frontier protection companies and was shot and scalped while on Ranger duty in that vicinity.

The same year, 1861, another group of Frontier Rangers which included Clabe Cates, Tip Conelly, Tom Weatherby and others, were patrolling the frontier when they were ambushed by a group of Indians. Weatherby and Conelly were killed, and Cates' head was pierced by an arrow through the flesh just above the ear. He was compelled to ride thirty miles with the spear in his head before he could receive help, and his face was so covered with blood that he was mistaken for a painted In-

dian and narrowly missed being shot by his own men.

George Halsell was another whose life was claimed in Clay County where he was employed on the Waggoner ranch. He was chased by the Indians and as he sought to escape across the Wichita River he was pierced by an arrow as he spurred his horse up the opposite bank.

### Frank Coonis

One day during this troubled period, Frank Coonis, who lived near Greenwood, set out to look for some lost horses, and the next morning when he had not returned the neighbors started out to look for him, being apprehensive about his fate.

They passed the old Keep ranch house which was vacant and decided to look in, and there they saw a ghastly sight. Coonis' mutilated body was huddled on the floor, and the blood spattered walls and his empty pistol indicated that he had made a desperate fight for his life.

### Sallie Bowman

In 1868 Miss Sallie Bowman, a young lady of about eighteen years, resided with her parents near Deep Creek. Her father, a physician, owned a herd of fine horses, and as she was an expert horsewoman, they were entrusted to her care. One day when she was out looking after the herd a band of Indians suddenly began chasing her.

The terrified girl sped madly toward home, leap-

ing chasms, racing over hills and down valleys, but the savages overtook and shot her, taking her horse and the other fine ones her father owned.

## EXTERMINATION OF THE RUSSELL FAMILY

Mrs. Polly Russell was a widow who lived with her four children three miles southwest of Chico. The children consisted of Ben Russell, a young man who worked at a saw mill on West Fork, two small boys, and Martha Russell, a teen-aged girl.

In August 1868 the Indians secreted themselves in a cane patch near the house and when they were assured that there was no man near to protect the family they began their murderous onslaught. First the mother and the two youngest boys were killed, then they wrecked and destroyed all articles of furniture, broke out the window panes, ripped open the feather beds and scattered the feathers.

They carried Martha Russell away into captivity, but her mutilated body was found a few days later when a group of neighbors started out in pursuit.

### John Bailey, Mrs. Vick

In October 1868 in the region of Catlett Creek, the Indians surprised and murdered John Bailey while he was in the field gathering corn.

On this same raid they went by the home of Mrs. Vick and shot her in the back as she bent over a wash tub.

This was one of the largest and most terrorizing raids in the County and as the savages progressed

through Wise and Denton Counties they escaped to the Indian Territory with eight hundred head of stock.

### Johnson Miller

Johnson Miller was a wood worker who had come here from Michigan to work on the original court house. He also made furniture, wagons, and other articles of that kind, and one day while he was at work in Sandy bottom getting out timber for work of this kind he was murdered and scalped by the Indians, and his clothes hung up in a tree. He was a bachelor of secretive nature and was reputed to have left a quantity of money buried some where in the vicinity.

### Murders in Southwest Wise County

The fertile valleys in the southwest part of the County were among the earliest sections to be settled. The settlers were all thrifty and prosperous and acquired good herds of cattle and fine horses, and these herds soon became the targets of many forays by the Indians bent on murder and pillage.

### The McKinney Family

Mr. and Mrs. Jim McKinney and four children were returning from a visit, traveling in an ox-wagon, and while almost on the line between Parker County and Wise they were attacked and murdered by the Indians.

About this time a Mr. Long was slain and scalped near the present town of Paradise and much stock was stolen.

They also shot and scalped a little boy named Jesse Burrese whom they overtook while he was picking berries.

Sanders, Clark, Perkins, Montgomery

Others in this section who lost their lives in bitter fights with the Indians were Pres Perkins, who lived near Cottondale; Jim Sanders and Alvin Clark, Paradise, and Uncle Johnnie Montgomery, near Opal.

Nick Dawson

Nick Dawson lived near Prairie Point, the present Rhome. His family consisted of his wife, himself, and a Choctaw Indian boy whom he had taken to raise.

One day while he was out alone looking for a horse that had strayed, he was overtaken, murdered and scalped by the Indians.

That night when he did not return, the Indian boy, who was devoted to him, suddenly sat up in bed and screamed out, "Uncle Nick is killed and the Indians have scalped him."

When the neighbors found him next day he bore the marks which the boy had described in his tragic foreboding.

Jake Moffet, Alonzo Dill, Smith and Wright

In 1865 Alonzo Dill lived with his father near



Prairie Point, now Rhome. One day while he was out looking after a herd of horses he was chased by the Indians who sent a shower of arrows after him. When he reached home he had an arrow sticking in his hat and one in the pommel of his saddle.

Failing in their attempt to kill Dill and capture his horse, the Indians intercepted Jake Moffet and murdered him, and on the same raid they killed a man named Wright, and wounded his companion named Smith by shooting him in the face with an arrow, which he was compelled to ride with until he reached Denton, where it could be removed.

### The Murder and Capture of the Babb Family

The murder and capture of the Babb family by the Indians was one of the most sensational of the many atrocities of that kind which ever took place in the county, and has attained historical prominence in most all the books and records which treat of that period.

In September, 1866, John Babb and his family lived on a ranch between Chico and Bridgeport. The family consisted of the parents and four small children, Margie, an infant; Dot, a boy of eight or nine; Cassabianca, (Banks) a young girl, and Court, an older son. A fair young widow, Mrs. Roberts, also made her home with the family.

On the day of the tragedy, Mr. Babb and Court were away from home on business and the Indians had spent the morning terrorizing the neighborhood as they progressed, and when they reached the Babb

home and found no man there to defend it they proceeded to reproduce the scene of murder and pillage which they had wrecked upon the Russell family.

As soon as a posse of men could be formed to chase the Indians out of the county the trail led to the Babb home and there they were confronted with a ghastly scene.

Mrs. Babb lay in a pool of blood with her throat cut, and the infant child crawling about her had dyed itself with the crimson stain. None of the other members of the family could be found so it was presumed that they had been carried away into captivity.

The feather beds had been ripped open, the feathers scattered over the premises, and the furniture had been stacked and burned.

The men were beside themselves with anger and the determination for revenge. They gave the body into the keeping of a neighbor and again set their jaded horses upon the trail of the swifly fleeing fiends.

But away out upon the Wichita River the horses were completely exhausted and they were compelled to return home. The quick-striking barbarians had perpetrated their hellish work and escaped.

The remainder of the story was learned later from Mrs. Roberts, when she escaped from captivity. She stated that she took refuge in the attic when the Indians came and that Mrs. Babb made a heroic attempt to protect her children, but when the Indians struck the blow which killed her, Mrs. Roberts screamed, thereby revealing her whereabouts.

The Indians immediately took possession of her and the two children, taking them with them to be held for ransom. The children were held for about a year but were released through the agency of the celebrated negro Brit upon the payment of a large number of horses.

Mrs. Roberts was kept captive for many months, during which the Indians arranged for her to marry their chief, but after several hair raising attempts she finally made her escape.

### Assassination of the Huff Family

As time progressed after the close of the Civil War the Indians became more and more bold and daring in their attacks upon the settlers. This was largely because the Federal Government, being so remote from the problems of the frontier, took little interest in its protection. But in the Spring of 1871 a particularly dastardly crime was committed in Young County.

### Trial of Satanta, Satank and Big Tree

A wagon train was attacked by a band of one hundred fifty Kiowas led by their chiefs, Satanta, Satank and Big Tree. The teamsters were annihilated and thirty-six fine mules were stolen and driven away to the Indian Territory.

By accident General Sherman passed over the same route a few days later on a tour of inspection of the forts. He became incensed and went over to Ft. Sill and ordered an investigation and the arrest

of those chiefs, and their return to Ft. Richardson, Jacksoro, for trial.

They were convicted and sentenced to be hanged, but this was afterward commuted to life imprisonment, as confinement was considered more effective with the wild tribes than capital punishment. The others were put on parole and required to answer to roll call every day.

This practically put an end to Indian troubles in this part of the state as there was never but one big raid after that and that was the masacre of the Huff family in August, 1874.

### The Huff Family

The Huff family consisted of the parents, Sam, a son and two grown daughters, Molly and Palestine.

The Indians had entered the County the afternoon before, driving before them a large number of stock which they had taken in Denton and Tarrant Counties. News of their presence began to be circulated, and early the next morning a crowd of men from in and near Decatur started in pursuit.

They trailed the savages to Sandy Creek until they came to the new unfinished cabin of the Huff family and were horrified at what they found.

Mr. Huff and his son were away from home and the mother was found partly under the floor where, no doubt, she had attempted to hide. One of the daughters lay near the door outside, and the other lay a few feet away where they had been shot in an attempt at flight.



When the Indians found they were being pursued they abandoned them and fled into the Indian Territory. The owners of the stock from Denton and Tarrant Counties soon came to claim them.

After this encounter the men returned to the Huff home and buried the three unfortunate women in one wagon bed, as this was all that was available at the time. They were afterwards disinterred and buried in separate graves.

After this tragic event the government increased its patrol between the frontier forts, and General McKenzie pursued the Indians on to the Plains and punished them.

## INDIAN FIGHTS

In addition to the foregoing murders there were countless fights and skirmishes between the settlers and the savages, which though not resulting in fatalities, were a constant source of danger and alarm. These were much too frequent to attempt to enumerate, but the loaded gun was always kept ready over the door for instant use, and no one dared to go into the fields or far from home unarmed.

But the Indians were finally settled and subdued upon their reservation in the Indian Territory, and the County which had been so torn and harassed by Civil War and savage devastation at last relaxed and enjoyed repose and freedom to renew its normal growth and development.



## 1874-1882

### Conditions Before the Coming of the First

#### Railroad.

The chaotic conditions existing over Texas at the close of the Civil War were far more trying on the sparsely settled frontier counties than those farther east which had the benefits and protection of more civilized life.

The collapse of all governmental agencies, the cumbersome and slow-moving Federal frontier troops left this section of the state no protection against the marauding bands of Indians from over the line in the Indian Territory who continued to harass the settlers.

But as the Indians were brought under control, and the many vicissitudes of civil and Indian warfare, drouth and insect pests abated, the families in Wise County who had sought protection in the more populous counties gradually returned to their farms and ranches.

At the close of the Civil War many families who had become impoverished and discouraged by conditions in the old Southern states sought new homes and locations in Texas, attracted by its cheap and abundant lands, and the state received a marked increase in population during these years.

## SALE OF SCHOOL LANDS

About this time many of the counties further east such as Matagorda, Van Zandt, Falls, Cooke, Grayson, Hunt and Smith which had been granted large tracts of land by the state for school purposes began selling their holdings to develop their school systems.

Many of these grants were located in Wise County when it was state domain, and the sale of these lands at a nominal price brought many settlers to the County, and all the available lands soon became dotted with the homes of the settlers.

About this time the great Cactus Hill ranch of Col. W. H. Hunt which had occupied so large a part of the western section of the County was dispersed into smaller tracts and sold, thus inducing many settlers in that area which had hitherto been in the possession of one family.

The many difficulties which had confronted the infant County were slowly receding into the past, and the pangs of their suffering and privations were being mercifully alleviated by the tranquil approach of an era of safety and abundance and the settlers felt that, at last, their dreams of peace and security were culminating in reality.

## MILLS AND GINS

Because of the tedious and primitive methods of hand labor in harvesting and milling, barely enough grain had been grown to be sufficient for bread-stuffs for individual families.

There were no mills nearer than Ft. Worth, Dallas and McKinney, and it required ten days by slow-moving ox wagon to take a load of grain to market and return.

Finally three crude mills were established in the neighborhood of Sandhill. These were of grotesque construction, the motive force being ox teams which kept the big wheels operating, and they could grind twenty-five to forty bushels per day, one fourth of which went to the miller.

About fifteen years later Browdins Mill was converted into a cotton gin, the first in the County, and its capacity was four to five bales daily. Preceding this the only method of separating the seed from the lint was by the slow and tedious method of hand picking.

The gins accelerated the planting of cotton, and in a few years this staple became one of the County's foremost products, and after the coming of the railroad, which afforded shipping facilities, it was greatly overdone, to the extent that many families kept their children out of schools to work in the fields and their educations were neglected.

As the cotton market became glutted, prices fluctuated and decreased and many families who depended upon this single crop were reduced to almost Asiatic poverty.

## THE COMING OF THE FT. WORTH AND DENVER RAILROAD

It is difficult to imagine the contrast between this section of the State in its present populated and

thriving commercial condition with the vast savage frontier which it was prior to the coming of the first railroad. In 1873 the immense area northwest of Ft. Worth extending to the New Mexico Territory on the west, and to the Indian Territory on the north was a vast wilderness, inhabited by only a trifle over two thousand white persons.

The Indians were being driven farther and farther west, and finally in the battles of Thule and Palo Duro they were overcome and corralled and forced to retire across the line in their own Indian Territory. But their last war whoop had scarcely subsided when the distant whistle of the locomotive was wafted over the horizon and the building of the Ft. Worth and Denver Railroad, of the Burlington system, opened the County for a new and undreamed of era of economic expansion.

After the Indian troubles were ended, that made this section of the state safe for settlement, and wherever the railroad progressed into the setting sun and wherever it stopped for water towns and communities grew up along its route, until within a few years this area became the home of five hundred thousand people. This great increase in population took place largely because the railroad had opened up this incredibly rich region to settlement and commerce.

That it required courage and foresight by the promoters of this enterprise to build a railroad into an Indian infested wilderness is indisputable. But Major K. M. Van Zandt of Ft. Worth was a person of great faith and a great vision of the future possibilities of this huge, unsettled domain, and he



and a group of his associates petitioned the Texas Legislature to issue a charter to the Ft. Worth and Denver City Railroad (as it was then named) for the building of this road. This was granted by a special act of the Legislature May 26, 1873.

But because of a financial panic which existed at that time actual construction was not begun until 1881. Eight years after the charter was granted the project was sold to Gen. G. M. Dodge, the noted railroad builder, who proposed to build and equip the road to Denver for twenty thousand dollars per mile in stock and the same amount in bonds. The stockholders agreed to this plan and the contract was signed April 29, 1881.

The first grading was begun at Hodge, five miles north of Ft. Worth, November 27, 1881. The first rail was laid February 27, 1882. The railroad slowly crept toward this locality and when that much of the track was completed and the first train was put into service to Decatur on May 1, 1882.

The line was quickly extended to Bowie, thence to Henrietta and Wichita Falls, which remained its terminus for three years, because of financial troubles and disputes within the construction company.

When the line was completed and the first train was run from Decatur to Henrietta, it was made the occasion for a gala celebration and everyone who could took picnic lunches and "rode the train" to Henrietta for this initial trip. The joy, excitement and exhilaration of this first train ride in their childhood remains a treasured memory among many of the older residents.



In the days of ox-cart transportation wheat had not been produced except in meager quantities for individual family requirements, and the railroad had but little freight to haul, but under the encouragement of the Agricultural Agents of the railroad grain became extensively planted, and in a few years became one of the major freight commodities of the road.

Cattle had always been the County's most easily produced asset, but the difficulty of driving them overland to distant markets discouraged the accumulation of any very great herds. But after the advent of the railroad and the consequent ease of shipping, the cattle industry rapidly multiplied until it became the most important occupation and employed an enormous amount of labor and capital.

The same conditions governed cotton production which progressed from small amounts for home consumption to huge proportions after transportation improved, and became the County's second largest article of freight.

About the time the Ft. Worth and Denver was built the State withdrew its offer to give sixteen sections of land for every mile of railroad built in the state. Though this road has contributed to the magic transformation of Northwest Texas from a barren wilderness into a prosperous commercial region, and has been a huge tax payer in every county which it crossed, it failed to receive any of this huge premium.

Wise County owes the Ft. Worth and Denver a great debt of gratitude for the solution of its early, economic problems of transportation, production and

settlement.

## LANDMARKS

### Chisholm Trail — Butterfield Stage Route.

These were two historic travel routes which criss-crossed Wise County in the frontier days, and though there is nothing to mark their tortuous path across the County they deserve to be remembered as a part of the laborious development of transportation, and reminders of the contrast between the creeping pace and hardships and travel in those days with our present luxurious speed.

One of these was the noted old Chisholm Trail, over which countless thousands of longhorn cattle were driven from here and points in the Southern part of the state to the market in Abilene, Kansas, and beyond.

The trail entered Wise County from Tarrant on the south and traversed a northwest course through Montague County to Red River Station on the Oklahoma border. It is said that the deeply rutted old trail still may be traced in spots over the prairies of Oklahoma.

## Butterfield Stage Route

Another famous route of that period was the old Butterfield (or Southern Overland) Stage Coach road which crossed the County enroute from its eastern terminus in St. Louis to its western one in San Francisco. This route was established in 1858 but was discontinued during the Civil War.

The route entered Wise County at the Denton County line and proceeded westward. The foaming teams were swiftly changed at Brandon's on Denton Creek, and sped on toward Decatur where the mail was deposited, the teams changed again and rushed toward Jack County, traversing in the western portion of the County much of the land which is now submerged under Lake Bridgeport.

The picturesque old coaches, drawn by four to six horses have received much attention in romantic stories and moving pictures. They raced over the muddy, rough and rutted road, but they were able to make only five to eight miles per hour. The fare was ten cents per mile and it took two weeks to make the trip and return from Dallas to St. Louis. Sometimes the passengers had to get out and help lift the coaches out of the mud.

One of the County's great economic needs in those days was transportation and this problem was solved only by the coming of the railroad.

## 1883-1900

### PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

#### The Coming of the Rock Island.

With the termination of the depressing disorders and the evils which caused so much unhappiness following in the wake of the Civil War Reconstruction days, with the Indian raids stopped and the railroad built, Wise County was then able to enter upon its first stable era of production and development.

Cattle, sheep, cotton and other farm products which formerly had been of little value because of lack of transportation to get them to markets, were soon rolling in a steadily mounting stream to markets in Kansas City and Chicago.

This ease of transportation and marketing, in contrast to the old slow and expensive overland routes contributed immeasurably to the prosperity of the region which the railroad served.

## 1893.

### THE ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD

Prior to 1893 the western portion of the County had been without railroad facilities and the towns in that section had been dependent upon stage service with Decatur for train connections.

But in 1893 the Rock Island Railroad completed its main line through Bridgeport to Bowie and be-

yond, and in 1898 extended the line from Bridgeport west to Jacksboro.

This opened up a large and extremely fertile and productive area for commercial expansion, and was a means and an incentive for production in the western part of the County, as the coming of the Ft. Worth and Denver had been in the central and eastern part.

With this improvement in transportation and impetus to growth the little inland communities of Newark, Boyd, Paradise, Chico and Bridgeport became thriving and prosperous towns.

With a ready market and the convenient means of shipping, the rich coal deposits at Bridgeport then were capable of being commercialized. The two mines were operated at full capacity for a number of years, supplying coal for local and railroad use.

Bridgeport coal was burned on the Rock Island locomotives North as far as Waurika, Oklahoma, and South into Ft. Worth and Dallas, and it was a great blow to the coal industry, in 1929, when the railroad replaced their coal burning engines with the more convenient oil burners.

During its sixty years of service in the west portion of the County the Rock Island has witnessed and contributed immeasurably to the development of this area from a sparsely settled agricultural and ranching region into a thriving industrial locality, dotted with flourishing and progressive towns.



## BRIDGEPORT COAL MINES.

Wise County has always been especially fortunate in having an abundance of good fuel within its boundaries. The first settlers chose homesteads in or near the timber and were plentifully supplied with firewood cut from their own woodlots.

In the early settlement of the County no one suspected that the fertile fields and pastures in the western part of the County rested over rich deposits of coal, and it was literally undreamed of that gas would ever flow freely from the County's wells.

But in the latter part of the last century, one of the settlers near Bridgeport, while digging a well for water dug into a rich vein of coal about sixty feet below the surface.

This led to further exploration, and a company composed of Dan Waggoner, Glen Halsell, Henry Greathouse, Charles Cates, Capt. Stevens and others, was formed to develop and operate the Wise County Coal Company in the Northeast section of Bridgeport.

In West Bridgeport was Mine No. 2 which was said to have been sunk originally by Governor Hogg, but had been abandoned. In 1900 Col. Ashton, of Virginia, bought the property which was known as the Bridgeport Coal Company and appointed Mr. M. H. John to open it up, but it was two years before it was in full production.

Mr. John also surveyed for Mine No. 3, and had a tunnel run between the two to accommodate a track for the mules and cars of coal.

The usual long rows of miner's cottages grew up adjacent to each of the mines. This colorful Latin-American colony lent interest and picturesqueness to the locality until they were dispersed when the mines were abandoned thirty years later.

As has been stated elsewhere, it was a great blow to the coal industry when gas and oil were introduced and the old coal stoves were superceded by gas ones, and in 1929, when the railroad converted to oil for fuel, the mines were closed.

This let out of employment about seven hundred Mexican miners who suffered great hardship until many of them returned to their own country or were absorbed into other industries in this one.

## FUTURE IN COAL

During the last few years several large industrial plants have returned to coal as a fuel, and others threaten to if the price of gas should advance.

The availability of coal, ease of mining, and nearness to large city enterprises favor its return to use if gas should cease to be practical.

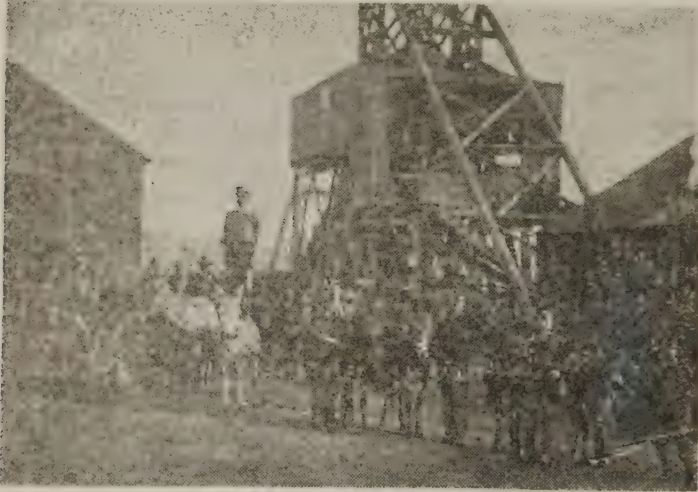
## BY-PRODUCTS

The possibilities of coal for the production of its by-products holds hope of future value and increased yield. Some chemists and engineers think there will be great future development in the use of coal in the manufacture of synthetics.

The lignite coal which is found at Bridgeport is the type which is extremely suitable for the manu-

facture of innumerable synthetics, especially those substances composed of cellulose and lignin, among them perfume, nylon and artificial fibres, carbon and explosives.

It is a misfortune that Wise County's superabun-



A Bridgeport Coal Mine

dant supplies of coal, wood and gas cannot be shared with some of the barren places of the world where fuel of any kind would be a bonanza.

### BRICK PLANT

When the market for coal fell into desuetude and mining was abandoned, some of the stockholders of the mines incorporated their holdings into the organization of a brick plant which converted one of the bulky by-products of coal, the great mass of shale which accumulates about the mines, into a

very beautiful quality of brick.

This early company was superintended for several seasons by C. W. Martin, but later it, too, was discontinued.

After a few years, production was resumed under a different ownership, and the plant is now busily engaged turning out many varieties of fine brick which is in great demand.

This plant has converted that which was once a civic eye-sore, the great mountains of unsightly shale into objects of permanent worth and beauty.

**1896**

## WISE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

In 1895 the County Courthouse which had stood at the northwest corner of the square adjoining the jail was burned to the ground. This necessitated the building of a new one, and precipitated another spirited contest between some of the different towns in the County which desired to have the county seat relocated and placed in their town.

The contention was settled by an election, and the decision of the majority of the voters left it where it now is, which is the location nearest to the geographical center of the County.

The present edifice was erected in 1895 and 1896. Wise County is justly proud of its Courthouse. It is built of a combination of rough and polished red granite which was quarried from Granite Mountain, near Marble Falls, Texas. The huge fantas-

tically shaped stones were cut, shaped and polished by the giant machinery in use at the quarry and arrived here numbered and ready to be set into place.



Wise County Courthouse



The structure is modelled after the old French Chateau type of architecture, with round towers in each of its four corners, and arched, Romanesque windows.

A narrow winding stairway to the summit of the clock tower is always a delight to all children who have threaded its dizzy spirals for the first time.

At the right of the northwest entrance on the abutment, on a level with the top step, is a small inconspicuous bronze plaque placed there in 1933, by the United States Geodetic Survey which states that the elevation at that point is 1124 feet above sea level.

The building presents a very pleasing contrast to the square, strictly utilitarian type of modern structures in vogue at present.

It was designed by the renowned architect, J. Riley Gordon, of New York, and has been pronounced architecturally perfect by noted experts in that line, and has been the inspiration for many photographers and artists who have come here to sketch it. One famous etching of it by Texas' noted artist, Miss Blanche McVeigh, of Ft. Worth, is now hanging in the National Art Gallery in Washington.

## 1898-1899

### SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

In 1898 the rattle of the Spanish war drums was being echoed in the County. A few years prior to this, the Cubans who had been oppressed and exploited by Spain revolted and demanded reforms which the Spanish government refused to concede.

American interests and property in the island were in danger of destruction, and the United States also sympathized with the economic plight of the Cubans. Public opinion was further inflamed by the sinking of the Battleship Maine by the Spanish in Havana Harbor February 15, 1898, and war was declared against Spain in April, 1898.

A company was recruited in Wise County that year. It has been impossible to secure the roster of the company, but Capt. Jim Gilliland was the commanding officer, H. E. Brady was first lieutenant and R. M. Simmons was second lieutenant. There are only three members of the company living at present, (May, 1953) and they are F. M. Kenny and H. M. Foster of Decatur, and R. M. Simmons of Frederick, Okla.

This was before the organization of the National Guard and was a volunteer State Militia company, composed of young men from Wise County and nearby communities.

They trained in Decatur and in May, 1898, were sent to Camp Mabry in Austin where they remained one month, after which they were sent to Ft. Clark for four months of further training.

Leaving Ft. Clark in October, 1898, they were assigned to Ft. Brown at Brownsville, to be near the port of embarkation when they were to sail for Cuba, but they were kept stationed at Ft. Brown for the duration of the war.

After many defeats Spain finally relinquished claims to the West Indies and sued for peace in July 1899.

The Wise County company was returned home without ever having realized its ambition of seeing actual service on the beautiful tropical island across the Gulf but these young men always felt that they had experienced many of the torments of war during the months they were in training upon the hot and barren fields of Brownsville and patrolling the turbulent Mexican border.

1900-1911.

PACKING PLANTS. AUTOMOBILES.

GAS INTRODUCED.

The early years at the beginning of the Twentieth Century brought many changes and innovations into existence which perhaps very few, if any, of the inhabitants of the County at that time could foresee their importance, their far reaching influence, nor how they would guide and govern their future customs, industry and commerce.

Three of these events were the introduction of automobiles, the building of the two great packing plants at Ft. Worth, and the spectacular discovery of oil at Spindletop, near Beaumont.

The latter, though distant, was a link in the chain, but was not destined to influence Wise County's development until nearly half a century later, and will not be discussed until that period in this chronology is reached.

Swift and Armour. 1901.

The events of nearer and greater importance to the County was the building in 1901 of the two great packing plants, Swift and Armour, in Ft. Worth, thereby affording a ready market just at our door for the County's most abundant and most easily produced commodity, which was beef.

Prior to this time the cattle had been shipped to

Kansas City, Chicago, and the corn growing states of Iowa, Wisconsin and others. The distance of these markets greatly increased the labor, the freight charges and the cost of production, but when the packing houses were opened up so near home the pastures became dotted with pens of beef cattle being fattened for beef processing.

The expansion of these great plants was of major importance in advancing the growth and industrial development of this section of the state, and was of especial benefit to Wise County, because of its proximity to them.

### Cottonseed Oil Mill

The increase in the demand for stock feed brought an increased interest in cottonseed products: cake, meal and hulls . Cottonseed formerly had been considered a waste product and was dumped into gullies near gins.

But when it was found to be an excellent food for cattle it gave the impetus for building cottonseed crushing mills in many cotton-producing localities.

One of these was erected in Decatur and continued to be a most valuable asset to the County with its production of these by-products of cotton, and its generous payroll of wage earners.

It was a familiar sight in those days to see the golden yellow dust of the cottonseed meal covering a large circle of the ground around the many feeding troughs in the pastures, and the drivers of the wagons delivering the meal from the mill always



could be identified by the yellow dust coating their clothing and features.

That was in the days when "Cotton was King" of farm products, but in later years when the acreage of cotton planting declined so much as to become negligible, the mill became unprofitable and its operation was abandoned.

Many of these mills over the state are now being used to crush peanuts.

### Automobiles.

Up to this time the faithful horse had been the only means of transportation over the County's rocky streets and incredibly rutted roads. Most families possessed a good horse and a nice buggy or surrey to convey themselves to town and church, and the quality of those equipages frequently indicated their social and financial standing in the community.

Rumors had floated in occasionally from distant places that some kind of a "new fangled, horseless carriage" was being tried out in the cities of the North and East, but its general use was discredited as a fantastic dream.

Finally, the former Miss Electra Waggoner, daughter of Mr. W. T. Waggoner, returned to Decatur from a journey around the world and brought with her an automobile which she had purchased in some Eastern city. It is difficult to imagine the curiosity and consternation which it created.

One memorable day shortly after the automobile arrived, a circus had just completed its parade through Decatur streets and had withdrawn to its

tents, when the car was driven by the uniformed chauffeur through the streets. It created as much surprise and excitement as the parade.

The streets were crowded with people who had come in to see the circus, and lined with their horses which were tied to every available fence and hitching post. The horses stampeded, dogs barked and children screamed with fright.

Perhaps the horses would have reared and plunged in greater rebellion if they could have known that their position of supremacy as the beast of burden was, in a comparatively few years, to be usurped by this chugging competitor.

The use of motor vehicles was slow in the beginning, hindered as it was by lack of filling stations and experienced repair men. There was no place to buy gasoline for them, and when anything about them broke, there was no one who knew how to repair it.

It is difficult for the present generation to realize that there was ever a time in the history of the County when there was not a convenient filling station every few blocks nor a skilled garage man to be found at nearly every cross roads, but these familiar establishments were conspicuous by their absence in 1900. There were no highways and the rough and unimproved dirt roads were not suitable for their use.

For a few years they were considered a nuisance by drivers of horses upon the roads, as the horses were frightened by them and they caused many runaways. But as their use increased the horses finally became accustomed to them.

Fewer and fewer horses were bred upon the farms and ranches and the faithful animals, at last, were displaced by their hated rivals.

### “OLD DOBBIN”

Old Dobbin pulled the family shay,  
And worked with strength and might,  
He carried mankind to work or play,  
To worship or to fight.

Now gone is old Dobbin, gone the old shay,  
The “Tin Lizzie” has taken his place,  
The auto carries the family today,  
The horse lost out in the race.

Old Dobbin has been turned out to graze,  
His labors on earth are ended,  
But he deserves the highest praise,  
From mankind whom he has befriended.

### Gas Introduced — 1910

The series of oil and gas discoveries over Texas in the early part of 1900 probably influenced the lives, habits and commercial customs of the people more than any other one development in the annals of the states.

The discovery of oil at Spindletop near Beaumont was the initial opening which was quickly followed by similar ones, though probably not as spectacular, in widely scattered areas, as new fields have been brought in each year.

The Petrolia Field in Clay County was producing in 1905, and as gas is always an accompaniment of the oil field, it soon became a problem how to dispose of this surplus. In some fields it was wasted by being burned or "flared" on the field. It was considered a purely local commodity and no thought was given to piping it to other communities.

But in 1910 the first long pipe line was built to transport gas from Petrolia to the cities of Ft. Worth and Dallas. This line traversed Wise County and happily gave the County access to this cheap and convenient fuel in the early stages of the industry's development.

In the summer of that year the crew which built this first long pipeline moved into the County and set up a camp at the Reunion grounds two and one half miles south of Decatur.

It was a picturesque group composed of engineers, laborers of various types from ditch diggers to cooks and maintenance men, and great quantities of implements and equipment which consisted of horsedrawn ditching machines, huge scoops, picks and shovels and blasting materials.

The most of this equipment is now obsolete and seem quaint and primitive, the old methods of hand labor having been replaced with modern motor-propelled machines, but many of the great number of men who were required to wield these tools in building this line were foreigners, and a babble of German, Italian and other languages could be heard about the camp at all times when they were all assembled there.

Many of these men were natural musicians, and



it was a very pleasant evening's entertainment for the young people of the town to drive out to the camp and listen to them sing exquisite melodies and snatches from the operas which all Europeans unconsciously absorb from their proximity to the great centers of music.

It was before the days of radio and many Wise County youths had their introduction there to the famous melodies of Verdi, Strauss and Wagner, as those bedrabbled laborers strummed on their guitars and sang "Ah, I Have Sighed to Rest Me."

Finally the pipe line was literally blasted through the rock of Wise County, the pipe was laid and gas was soon flowing through the mains and being piped into homes and establishments. The people could dispense forever with their old dirty and back-breaking wood and coal stoves, thereby eliminating from their lives the old grime and constant labor required to maintain them. Life became easier in every way and the people had more leisure for other pursuits.

## HIGHWAYS

Between 1900 and 1910 the increased use of automobiles over the state awakened the population to the realization that the age of motor transportation had arrived. It was about that time that many "Good Roads Clubs" and meetings were organized, and frequent County bond elections for the improvement of roads and bridges were held.

Nearly all the pre-existing road building had been considered a local enterprise. But the vast distances



that must be traversed to get Texas citizens from one part of our great state to the other; from the cattle and grain sections of the west to the timber and oil areas of East Texas; from the citrus regions of the Rio Grande Valley to the ports of Houston and Galveston; from Ft. Bliss, El Paso, to Texarkana soon necessitated a system of connecting highways which were beyond the capacity of any county to maintain. Too many unpaved gaps existed and connecting links were needed to unite the roads already built.

One of the earliest of these extended thoroughfares was the Meridian Highway, so-called because it approximately paralleled the 98th Meridian from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and gave quick connection to all points between. This is now known as Highway 81 and was built through Wise County about 1916. It was at first graveled and was not paved until a later date.

It has been of as much value to the county from an economic standpoint as another railroad would have been. Businesses of all kinds grew up as it progressed through the towns, and little communities of filling stations, garages, cafes, tourist courts and road side stands sprang up along its route.

In 1917 the Texas Highway Commission was established to supervise the State's rapidly increasing highway system and after they were placed under state control they were speedily expanded.

In 1946 Wise County was given the advantage of another good thoroughfare in State Highway No. 24, bisecting the County from east to west and giv-

ing quicker access and connections to places in both directions. These roads make Wise County one of the most accessible places in the state as it can be reached quickly from all directions.

Since the two highways were built, several good Farm-to-Market roads have been constructed, including the recently completed link from Decatur southwest to Weatherford, and Northeast to Gainesville. Another link from Azle to Boyd was opened with proper ceremonies in December 1952. This link will soon be extended to Decatur. Another section from Alvord north through the Pella Community to the Montague County line recently has been completed.

This splendid system of highways is a vast improvement over the old, incredibly rutted, dirt roads, and the citizens of the county should be grateful for their rapid means of transportation.

But the constantly increasing heavy traffic caused partly by the vast amount of marketing by truck, and partly by military needs has necessitated another overhauling in highway methods and construction.

The old slogan, "Take Texas out of the Mud," has now changed to "Take Texas out of the Middle of Traffic," as the present narrow two-lane highways, are antiquated and inadequate to care for the mass of cars in heavily traveled areas, at the approach to towns and cities, near large industrial plants, or in the region of big ball games or celebrations, where wide four-lane highways are needed to avoid accidents and traffic congestion.

Because of the extremely heavy traffic through

Wise County, leading as it does to Wichita Falls, Oklahoma and Colorado on the North, and Ft. Worth and Dallas on the South, the State Highway Department has announced plans to extend the super highway through Wise County by converting No. 81 into a modern, four-lane thoroughfare to eliminate accidents and save lives.

### Decatur Baptist College.

Decatur Baptist College, which has the distinction of being the oldest Junior College in the world, in record of continuous operation, stands upon an imposing hilltop in south Decatur, and commands a magnificent view of the surrounding country.

Its superior location, combined with its excellent teaching staff and personnel seems to have communicated an exceptional measure of merit to its students, many of whom have obtained eminence in their various professions.

This school which belongs to the Southern Baptist Association, was established in 1892 and at first was called North West Texas Baptist College.

It was housed at that time in temporary quarters in the old Opera House on East Main Street, with Dr. A. J. Emerson as first president. Two years later Dr. Emerson resigned and was succeeded by Dr. B. F. Giles.

The present main administration building and two frame dormitories were built about that time. The boys' dormitory burned later, and the girls' dormitory was dismantled to make way for the two present brick and stone structures.

Dr. Giles was followed in 1900 by Dr. J. L. Ward, under whose administration the school expanded tremendously. In 1907 Dr. Ward resigned to take up his duties in the Baptist Educational Commission of Texas, and was succeeded by Rev. J. B. Tidwell, who had been instructor in Latin and Greek in the College.

In 1909 Mr. Tidwell resigned and Dr. Ward re-



Decatur Baptist College

turned to resume his duties as president, and under his long and efficient administration the College triumphed over many difficulties and established an enviable record for scholarship among other schools.

During these years many Junior Colleges all over the country were closing and fading into oblivion,



being absorbed by the large State schools. But due to the devotion, wisdom, and fine executive ability of the beloved Dr. Ward, the College was enabled to maintain its standing, and became recognized as one of the foremost institutions of its kind.

The following clipping which, very kindly, was contributed by Mrs. W. C. Milligan, explains the claim of the College:

“The claim of this institution to the title of ‘Oldest Genuine Junior College in the World,’ is based upon the findings of Dr. Frederick C. Eby of the University of Texas. Dr. Eby made a study of the junior college movement, and found that it started in the United States and that, of a few junior colleges founded about the same time in this country, Decatur Baptist College is the only one still in existence. Thus, it is the ‘Oldest Genuine Junior College in the world.’”

In 1949 the revered Dr. Ward, because of failing health, became President Emeritus and was associated with Rev. Otis Strickland, the present president.

A part of the school's equipment is an excellent stadium and athletic field and a huge modern gymnasium that was built largely by contributions from loyal ex-students. Recently a new and beautiful President's Home has been added to the group of campus buildings.

The school has been an immense moral and religious force in the County, and the success which many of the students have attained attests to the thorough training which has been given by this institution.



# WORLD WAR I.

**1917-1918**

## Introduction.

In 1917 the storm clouds which had been thundering over Europe for three years burst over North America. During these years Europe had been staggering under the impact of Germany's savage blows, but the United States, secure in its geographical position of splendid isolation from European troubles, had never been a military minded nation and was wholly unprepared for war.

However, Germany's insolent aggression upon the high seas, the sinking of our ships in foreign waters, her submarine depredations which came almost to our own shores, and finally the sinking of the luxury liner, Lusitania, with great loss of life, so aroused public opinion that President Woodrow Wilson at last issued a declaration of war on April 6, 1917.

Few European powers, accustomed as they were to generations of military training, believed that the United States could place an army in the field in time to be of much service to the Allies who were steadily being defeated. And the fact that our government was able to recruit, train, equip and send overseas a continually increasing stream of soldiers, until by the latter part of 1918 they reached a maximum of 4,500,000 men in the service, was a marvel

of modern military organization and executive ability.

Only the unlimited resources which the United States had at its command of finances, men and material, and the willingness of the people to shoulder the burden made this majestic achievement possible.

Wise County's part in this magnificent accomplishment was no small contribution. Space forbids anything but a very condensed outline, and their participation in the campaign in France will be briefly traced.

#### Company H.

For many years prior to the Spring of 1917 there had been an infantry company of the National Guard in existence at Decatur. This was Company H. of the 36th Division. It was composed of some of the very best young men of the County, but it was not a complete unit up to regular strength for military purposes, nor was it sufficiently well trained, nor well equipped for combat.

This company had been receiving the greater part of its training in field drills and at the yearly summer encampments at Camp Hulen, at Palacious. But in 1917 when the National Guard was called into Federal Service and recruiting began, it was speedily built up to full strength and placed under the command of Captain Steve Lillard, Jr.

All summer in 1917 Decatur's streets resounded to the tramp, tramp, tramp of marching feet, to the authoritative voices of officers shouting com-

mands to their troops, and to the bugle's sharp call summoning the men to assemble, and many times these sounds extended far into the night.

During the latter part of the summer, a few weeks before their departure for Camp Bowie, which was located then in Ft. Worth, the company went into camp at the old Fair Grounds southeast of the railroad station. Here they were required to conform to all the conditions of a military camp to prepare them for their next step in training at the huge army camp of Camp Bowie.

The people of the community were unaccustomed to seeing an army camp in their midst, and it was one of the chief interests of the day to drive out to the camp at sunset and watch the beautiful and impressive ceremony of the lowering of the flag.

About the middle of September 1917, they received orders to move to Camp Bowie, Ft. Worth, and there their intensive training began in earnest.

### Company L.

### 7th Texas Infantry.

### The 142nd Infantry Regiment.

Among the early regiments recruited for World War I, was the 7th Texas Infantry composed of North Texas and Panhandle young men. After periods of training in their home towns they were mobilized at Camp Bowie the latter part of September 1917.

In order to provide for larger units than had been

maintained before and to bring each unit up to regular strength a reorganization plan was put into effect consolidating regiments from different states.

This caused a good deal of dissatisfaction among the men, as some officers were torn away from the companies which they had trained for years, and some of the men were separated from their friends and placed in strange companies but these differences were finally settled amicably.

On October 15, 1917, the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the Thirty-Sixth Division was formed in this way by consolidating the 1st Oklahoma Infantry and the 7th Texas Infantry, both National Guard units at that time.

Because of this consolidation Wise County's Company H was united with Company L from Cleburne and was thence known as Company L. but retained its own beloved Captain Lillard.

### Camp Bowie.

Camp Bowie was located at that time on the Arlington Heights hills two and one half miles west of Ft. Worth. It was an excellent location with good drainage and climate, and the citizens of Ft. Worth were hospitable and did all they could to show their appreciation of the soldiers. But the winter was an unusually severe one and many of the boys unaccustomed as they were to living in tents, suffered with cold and insufficient blankets which the government had been unable to procure because of the short time they had been preparing for war.



To add to their discomfort the winter of 1917-18 was characterized by the most widespread and most fatal epidemic of influenza that the world has ever known. Because of the severity of the epidemic in some parts of the United States there was even a shortage of grave diggers to bury the numerous dead.

Yet in that government camp the 142nd Infantry spent nine strenuous months learning the rudiments of war, and developing a sturdy physical endurance which was invaluable to the men when they were sent to the front.

All were eager to get into action and help speed the war to its close, and it was a happy event when in the latter part of June, 1918, orders were finally received for the Thirty-sixth to move. The men were overjoyed and greeted the news with riotous cheers.

On July 9th, 10th and 11th, they entrained for Hoboken, New Jersey. Upon arrival there they were quartered at Camp Mills, Long Island, for a short time and then embarked on the Transport *Rijndam*, July 18, surrounded by a huge convoy of other camouflaged ships and submarine chasers.

After a safe and uneventful voyage, on the afternoon of July 30, the men rejoiced to see the dim outline of land in the distance, and late in the afternoon the ship reached the port of St. Nazaire, at the mouth of the Loire River on the southwest coast of France, and were happy to have the solid earth under their feet once more, and to receive the tumultuous shouts and greetings of the French people.



After a stay of five days at St. Nazaire they departed upon the tiny French trains for Bar-sur-Aube, which was the Thirteenth Training area east of Paris. Upon arrival there the different companies were billeted in surrounding towns, and Company L was established at Montmartin.

While in this area special courses in all kinds of gruelling training to prepare the men for their service on the front line were undertaken.

On September 23 the orders for the Thirty-Sixth Division to move to the Western sector were received. They were sent to relieve the French in the defense of the Aisne Valley and were under the French command.

On the evening of October 7th, they were ordered to the front and instructions were given for an attack to be made at 5:15 A. M., October 8th. The attack was launched and on that cold October morning the soil of France was freely stained with the blood of Wise County boys.

It was there in the early stages of that bitter battle of St. Etienne on October 8th that Loyd W. Smith and Monte Dunaway gave up their lives for the cause of freedom.

The American Legion group in Decatur is named the Dunaway-Smith Post in honor of these two brave men.

### Battle of Etienne.

No words coined by the alphabet can ever describe the horror of that scene as the men crept from their trenches, dugouts, foxholes, and shell

holes and began their perilous entry into "No Man's Land."

The enemy was delivering a terrific bombardment of artillery and machine gun fire. Huge cannon shells were booming and screaming through the air which was filled with deadly gas. The click, click, click of machine guns from hidden positions menaced the men as they proceeded with undaunted steps into the enemy's barbed wire entanglements.

Death stalked on all sides and the men rushed over their dead comrades on the field. No water was obtainable and canned tomato juice was all that could be used to quench thirst. Only a small ration of food could be brought in and that under cover of darkness.

At that stage of the war, the Germans had lost their triumphant offensive and were being violently assaulted by the Allies on all fronts. Their situation was desperate, and they fought savagely as they retreated mile by mile struggling in vain to retrieve their losses.

At this time the 142nd Regiment was sent to relieve the French in the battle which raged in and about the village of Etienne where the Germans had dug in with an elaborate trench system.

This engagement could not be described as a single battle, but as one continuous one during the closing weeks of the war, in which the Germans with all their brutal and brilliant military skills resisted every foot of Allied progress.

The Germans were being forced to retire and it was said to be the longest retreat of the war when

the 142nd Infantry helped to force the Germans back out of the Valley of the Aisne.

On October 11th, the 142nd was relieved by the 144th, which took the advance, but the 142nd was in action near the River Aisne and was at all times under murderous artillery and machine gun fire until October 27th.

### Indians on the Phones.

It was difficult for different sections of the fighting line to keep in communication with each other, as the Germans were cutting in on the wires and getting information on the movement of the Allied troops. At that time, Col. Bloor, who commanded the regiments, made use of a surprising innovation to outwit the enemy.

There was a company composed of Oklahoma Indians in the regiment and he selected some of the Choctaw tribe and placed them in charge of the phones. They transmitted all messages in their tribal language. This was more than the Germans could decipher, and it was learned later from captured prisoners that they were very much puzzled by the strange language and sought in vain to identify it.

This strange feat won great praise and favorable publicity among the newspapers in the United States and much gratifying approval among the home people.

On the afternoon of October 27, an assault was ordered to be made and after our troops had laid down a terrific artillery bombardment the Infantry

moved steadily forward. The Germans hotly resisted the advance. The French had been unable to capture this position after two attempts, but the dogged determination of the 142nd won the victory.

This was their final attack before being sent to the rear for rest after twenty-five days of continuous fighting.

The night of October 28, the first night after they had been withdrawn from the battlefield, was a memorable one for its peace and quiet after more than three weeks on the firing line. On November 3, the regiment ended its march to the rear near Loupe-le-petite, and it was there they expected to rest a few days before returning to the front. While there the Thirty-Sixth Division was transferred from the French command to the first American Army, commanded by General Pershing.

### Armistice.

While the soldiers were resting the report began to be circulated that an armistice was being considered. When this rumor became verified and the glad tidings of the signing of the armistice on November 11th, was announced, the news was received with shouts of rejoicing.

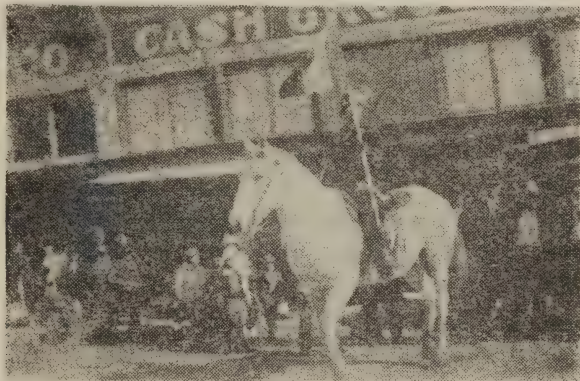
The quiet little town of Loupe-le-petite, where they were quartered, was brilliantly lighted, the band played gay and inspiring melodies, and the French inhabitants were transported with joy at the fruition of their longing for peace, and mingled with the overjoyed Americans in their expressions



of happiness.

After a few days of rest, it had been the plan of the command to return the 142nd to the firing line, but after the armistice was signed the regiment was happy to receive orders to resume their march to the rear until they reached the Sixteenth Training Area.

This was a long and extremely tiresome march which required eighteen days of steady tramping over weary miles, much of the time in a downpour of rain. They reached their destination on Novem-



Mrs. Will Terrell representing Joan of Arc in Armistice Day Parade, Nov. 11, 1918

ber 28th, and were billeted in surrounding towns. Company L was billeted in Ligniens.

Now that the hostilities had ceased, the boys eagerly looked forward to their return home, but in the area around Flogny the regiments spent five monotonous months awaiting orders for their departure. But this time was not idle as it was filled with many schedules and inspections before they



were sent to the Port of Embarkation.

On May 18, 1919, they arrived at Brest, and on the following day they were marched aboard ship. All were overwhelmed with joy as they bade France farewell and the vessel silently steamed out to sea on the homeward journey.

But all were saddened and sobered by the memory of the tragic experiences which they had undergone and the thoughts of their comrades who were sleeping on the front lines where they had given their lives for humanity.

The sea was rough for almost the entire voyage home, and much of the time no one was allowed on deck. But on May 31st, the faint sight of land appeared to their anxious eyes, and hearts beat fast when the welcoming Statue of Liberty appeared in view.

When the ship docked the regiment quickly disembarked and was marched to Camp Merritt where they were "decootieized" (or fumigated for the vermin which they had acquired in the stench of the trenches) before they were permitted to enter the barracks.

They remained at Camp Merritt a few days and then entrained for Camp Bowie, Ft. Worth. As the long troop trains roared through the towns the boys were welcomed with shouts and cheers by the inhabitants who were thrilled and overjoyed to have them home again.

Upon arrival at Ft. Worth a great parade was staged and many thousands from all over the state flocked to that city to welcome the boys home.

The people of their native County were over-

whelmingly proud of their achievements which prompted their Division Commander, while they were still in France, to cable to the homeland, "No braver men ever fought for liberty and right than those who so gloriously upheld the traditions of their home states."

The task of mustering out of the service was begun at once and was completed by June 17, 1919.

And in this manner came to a close one of the bravest, most dramatic and spectacular events, and also the one most filled with poignant suffering of any occurrence in the County's history.

### Band.

An organization which contrigated greatly to the morale, entertainment and inspiration of our military company was the talented group of musicians who constituted the Headquarter's Band.

This group was originally composed of Wise County boys trained and directed by Grady Ward, cornetist, and lead by John (Tige) Renshaw, drum major.

They were augmented by new members after the 142nd was mobilized at Camp Bowie and merged with Company L.

The band spent many hours practicing and marching, and were always faithful accompaniments of combat troops wherever they went.

The musicians worked with the Medical Corps and performed valiant service as stretcher bearers when their services were required, often going upon the battlefields under fire to remove their wound-

ed comrades.

### Roster of the Band.

Henry Grady Ward, E. C. Vander Stratten, John (Tige) Renshaw, George C. Shankle, Phillip R. Baits, Lawrence C. Boyd, Bazil C. Coleman, Robt. L. Farrington, O. J. Emery, William L. Goodger, Robert H. Hassell, Joseph H. Millikin, Wm. T. Hill, Ward H. Payne, Joel B. Wallace, R. C. Walters, Noval L. Buchanan, South C. Bussey, Douglas T. Hamilton, Sam A. Man, Charles Morgan, John T. Payne, B. B. Smith, Samuel A. Thomas, Frank T. Ward, David H. West, James E. Wren.

### Armistice Day in Decatur.

November 11, 1918.

The day of the Armistice was distinguished by the greatest outburst of tumultuous joy that Wise County has ever witnessed. No other war which our country has engaged in has ever been attended with the enthusiasm which prevailed at that time.

The news of the signing of the Armistice was flashed all over the country and was received in Decatur in the early darkness of pre-dawn hours.

It was the custom in those days to announce any important event of public interest with the ringing of the fire bell. (That was before the advent of the present siren.) It was also customary for the citizens, if they wished, to call the telephone office and inquire where the fire was.

When some one called Central and asked, "Where is the fire?" the operator, H. F. Boyd, wittily replied, "It's in Berlin!"

This was the signal for riotous celebrations. Bells were rung, whistles blew, guns and fireworks were shot, and not one, but many impromptu parades were staged which raced up and down the streets all day in every conceivable kind of vehicle or on horseback, and dressed in the most fantastic of improvised costumes.

By afternoon they had shot up the available powder in town by firing anvils on the square, and hastily dispatched an automobile to Dallas to buy more.

The joyous celebrations commemorating the closing of the war continued until far into the night, and the pride and exultation was inexpressible which the County felt in its own boys at the front who were members of Texas' great 36th Division which had distinguished itself so nobly .

#### Company "H," Decatur, Texas.

The roster of Company "H":

Clyde W. Almonroad, Roy F. Almonroad, Kirby Anderson, Lewis M. Arwinn, Dick Austed, Raymond J. Alexander, Lester M. Alexander, Marion W. Askey, John F. Bailey, Philip R. Baits, Harlen W. Bassett, Rufus H. Berry, Walter E. Berry, Wm. T. Blocker, Doamy M. Bond, Tom Boner, Lawrence C. Boyd, Earney E. Bramlet, Jno. C. Bridges, Wm. C. Browning, Noval L. Buchanan, South C. Bussey, Uriel E. Byars, Jim Caraway, Moses T. Carrell, Joseph W. Casey, Aloys L. Christilles, Basil C. Cole-



man, Dallas Coleman, Barrack Cunningham, G. P. Day, Samuel L. Dodd, Albert S. Drain, Monte E. Dunaway, Thomas M. Eaton, Oscar J. Emery, Milton H. Fairbetter, Robt. L. Farrington, Walter W. Field, Wm. D. Fields, Lee S. Finley, Floyd G. Fowler, John C. Freeman, James V. Gilbert, Wm. L. Goodger, Jim W. Green, Allen F. Hale, Douglas T. Hamilton, Wm. T. Harden, Robt. H. Hassell, Wm. T. Hill, John K. Holmes, James H. Howard, Jarrett Hudnall, Guy R. Hughes, Wm. H. Jones, Arch H. Judge, James J. Kincaid, James Kirkwood, Tom Laird, Henry O. Madden, Judge J. Malone, Noeal Malone, Sam A. Man, Frank A. Mann, Richard C. Mann, Robert J. Mann, Clyde W. Melton, Laurence R. Melton, Joseph H. Millikin, Jessie T. Mills, Eugene W. Minor, James C. Minor, Robt. W. Moreland, Charles Morgan, James A. Morrow, Robert D. Morrow, Edward C. Muse, Leora T. Myers, Roe McBroom, Cecil B. McFaul, Horace H. McGlosson, Rube H. McGoodwin, Sidney W. McGoodwin, Arthur R. Nobles, Victor Nobles, Brawley L. Oates, Curtis Patterson, Edward D. Patterson, Ward H. Payne, Edward V. Pence, Sam A. Perrick, Wm. E. Pigg, Walter C. Pitts, Roland Plynell, John Noah Reeder, Percy E. Reid, John J. Renshaw, John Robinson, Robt. L. Robison, Edgar A. Rodgers, Conley W. Rush, Ford W. Renshaw, Geo. C. Shankle, Jack A. Shaw, Bongie B. Smith, Clarence W. Smith, Ed P. Smith, Lloyd W. Smith, Robert Smith, James W. Spencer, Ed L. Sullivan, Lite D. Swanson, Ruel W. Stephens, Robt. C. Stroud, Wm. F. Stroud, Joseph A. Taylor, Tully V. Terrell, John H. Tolleson, James H. Thompson, John H. Tollson, Edward C. Vander Stratten,



John Y. Waddill, James B. Walker, Joel B. Wallace, Raphael C. Walters, Bryce H. Ward, Franq T. Ward, Henry G. Ward, David H. West, T. W. Wheelis, James R. A. Wilkins, Robt. A. Wilson, Arthur A. Warren, James E. Wren, Wm. O. Wright, Fred Young, Newton W. Young, Sidney L. Young.

The following is a list of a few of the men from Wise County who served in World War I, but did not belong to Company H. Space forbids giving a complete list:

Newt Taylor, Bill Alexander, George Elder, Wallace Brady, C. L. Hull, Lee Burke, J. M. Easter, Bill Perrin, Sage Nobles, Archie Cates, S. A. Phillips, Irby Simmons, Ed Hornback, Charles Devereaux, Ray Christian, Basco Layfield, Loyd Douglas, Sid McGoodwin, Rube McGoodwin, W. L. Grissom, Ben J. Fox, Henry Collins, Alvie D. Collins, Tom Raley, Bill Praytor, Luther Nivens, Cleve Grissom, Walter Thompson, Arg Lancaster, Terry Green, Ed Cage, W. J. Jernigan, Archie Hoyle, Frank Mann, Paul Spann, Oscar Gardner, Irwin Arthur.

1911-1953

## CONSERVATION

### County and Home Demonstration Agents

In its early settlement the County's extremely varied and fertile soil resources seemed illimitable, and the early settlers were concerned only with producing and consuming its profusion, ignoring the idea that Nature's abundance would not be permanent.

Near the beginning of this period, 1911, those who had the County's best interests in mind began advocating a system of soil and water conservation to reclaim the depletion of these two priceless assets. The endeavors of this crusade cannot be confined to any one era as they are still in progress and overlap all the other periods which follow.

The one-crop system of cotton planting and the hilly and rolling character of the County's topography had made its soil peculiarly susceptible to erosion, and by 1920 the depletion and decline of its fertility had begun to register by the large scale departure of many excellent agricultural families to counties further West in search of fresher soils.

A comparative table of the population of the County from 1860 to 1950 follows: (By courtesy of the Texas Almanac.)

1860, 3160; 1870, 1450; 1880, 16,601; 1890, 24,134; 1900, 27,116; 1910, 26,450; 1920, 23,363; 1930,

19,178; 1940, 19,074, and 1950, 16,000.

(It will be noted that the 1870 period showed the County to be almost deserted, but that was during the Indian depredation period when many families fled to other more settled locations for safety.)

A peculiar paradox existed in the population of the County. The inhabitants of the towns had increased but the inhabitants of the County as a whole had decreased because of the removal of so many of the rural families to western counties.

In a County so largely dependent upon agriculture it was imperative that steps be taken to correct this depreciation. A few of the more progressive farmers had been terracing their fields, and it was not until the establishment of the office of the County Agent in 1911 that any appreciable progress was made.

#### County and Home Demonstration Agent's Office

The early agents served several counties but full time work in the County was begun by men in 1911, and by women in 1912. Under the capable direction of these two agents an educational program has been pursued which encourages better farming and home making practices, and the agricultural methods of the County have improved immeasurably and have progressed from a primitive stage to a high level of efficiency.

In the beginning Wise County had the privilege of being served by Mr. Tom Marks, who was noted for forming the 4-H Clubs which have become such a huge and important organization.

In February 1908 Mr. Marks was appointed to administer the district composed of Jack, Young, Archer and Wise Counties, with headquarters at Jacksboro. At first his work received much opposition and ridicule but the value of his teaching gradually was recognized until the movement spread all over the United States and its territories.

The work is supported by funds from the State, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the County.

From 1942 until 1945 Wise County was unfortunate in having the County Agent's Office discontinued because the County was out of funds during those years and could not furnish its financial quota.

The Agents who have served the County are:

T. M. Marks, William Ganzar, T. S. Atcheson, David Gilliland, Edgar Kemp, Walter Love, G. R. Warren, E. C. Jameson, Guy Powell, D. F. Eaton, Cliff Bates, Al Petty, Tom Roof, Dudley Everett, Jr., and Paul Tapp; and by Assistant County Agents Guy Powell, T. H. Rowder and C. E. Nelson.

By: Home Demonstration Agents:

Mrs. Dollie Baker, Clara B. Cooper, Jewel Taylor, Carolyn Chambers Alma Simms, Gladys Stanford, Ora Sloan, Ruth Farquhar, Jewel Patrson, Murle Scales, Fern Hodge, Mrs. Billy Freeland and Miss Helen McMahan, and by Assistant Home Agents Thelma Welborn, Jessie Watson, Alice Barrett, Louise Bair, and Anna Mae Duke.

### Soil and Water Conservation

When Gov. Pat Neff was in office he instituted

many of the conservation and reclamation projects which since then have been put into operation by a competent group of engineers. He ordered a topographical survey of the state to be made and about that time a skillful group of young men worked in the County mapping its physical features, elevation, position of its streams, projections, and configurations of its surface.

This State survey was a prelude to the later reclamation project of the Federal government when it launched its plan to reclaim the badly eroded lands in the Northern part of the County near Alvord.

Alvord has always been considered one of the prettiest towns in the County. Its beautiful red soil which will grow all plant life in profusion, its many attractive homes surrounded by colorful flowers, and green lawns shaded by stately trees make it a refreshing retreat when one emerges into its green shade from some of the treeless and prairie sections of the County.

It is one of Nature's tragedies that so much of the fertile soil of this rich trade area has drifted away by erosion, or its fruitful bottom lands have been overlaid by sand and siltation from its creeks.

During the years 1934 to 1941 the government, in an effort to reclaim some of this badly washed section, bought 20,074 acres of this abandoned land, removed the buildings and began its program of restoration, but the advent of World War II slowed down the process.

At the close of the war the work was prosecuted more effectively. The program encourages replant-



ing of gullies, building dams and stock tanks and soil rebuilding. Much of the land is leased to private individuals and one fourth of the income from it goes to the County.

There are three stations in the County for the advancement of this type of work. One is the Black Creek Station nine miles North of Decatur which, at present, is the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Everett Clark; one is the Rock House Station between Alvord and Audobon, occupied by Mr. and Mrs. John Vandiver; and the other is the Bridgeport Work Unit directed by Mr. Keith Newton, all of which are under the supervision of the Field Headquarters Office in Decatur administered by Mr. C. G. Powell.

The eastern section of the County line lies within the Denton-Wise Conservation District, western portion is in the Upper West Fork District.

### Fish and Game Conservation

In the early settlement days the reckless destruction of fowl and animal life led, in a few years, to the extinction of many forms of animals and birds which were of value because of their furs, their meat, and the destruction of insects by the birds.

In order to restore and preserve this wild life in this government-controlled area a fish and game conservation program has been inaugurated which at present is supervised by C. E. Holt.

### Lake Bridgeport

The question of an adequate water supply has always been a problem in this section of the state. Some wise person has said, "Texas needs water far more than it needs oil"—There are sufficient resources of surface and underground water for its needs, but the conservation of these resources has been neglected.

The pioneers settled principally near streams, and springs where water was available as the plan of well digging had not been mastered, but the growth of towns and cities made it increasingly essential for a greater supply of water to be obtained.

This urgent need for an expanding water supply for the city of Ft. Worth led to the establishment of Lake Bridgeport on the Trinity River five miles west of Bridgeport.

Far-seeing citizens of the County, chief among them being the late Mr. Foster Lillard, formerly of Bridgeport, had long realized the practicability of the suitable topography of this area and its physical features as being adaptable for the building of the great dam across the Trinity which impounds the run off waters which formerly were wasted as they flowed into the Gulf.

The building of this dam created a very beautiful and beneficial lake which is a great source of local pride and recreation, and which is one of the municipal sources of water supply for the city of Ft. Worth.

When the idea first was proposed it was regarded as a foolish dream, and its advocates both in Ft. Worth and Bridgeport had to overcome many obstacles before the project could be undertaken.

But the dream culminated in tangible form when the dam was completed in 1931, and it is a splendid testimonial to the vision, industry and tenacity of its planners and builders who refused to be discouraged.

At its maximum surface area the lake covers 17,000 acres of land and contains 290,000 acre feet of water with an approximate depth of thirteen feet. The dam is one hundred seventy-three feet high and six hundred fifty feet wide at the base, and was



Bridgeport Dam

under construction two years. It is located upon land which formerly belonged to the Buckner family. It required much time and patient negotiation on the part of the Water Board to secure the consent of the owners of the surrounding lands which are now submerged under water.

Among these tracts was the private cemetery of the noted old W. H. Hunt ranch or early day fame. The bodies from this plot were removed and reburied in the Bridgeport Cemetery.

The dam is eighteen hundred feet long and is crowned with a beautiful highway over its crest which affords a matchless view of the lake, the majestic trees which border it, and the sprightly little fishing boats scurrying about on its placid surface. It is reminiscent of the great Mississippi.

The shore is dotted with many picturesque private camps and cabins, and public camp grounds, and a wonderful beach which attracts many thousands of swimmers during the hot months.

In 1949 the Methodist Churches of the district built permanent camp buildings and recreational facilities upon its banks, which make a prized and ideal assembly location for its young people's fellowship meetings.

The Methodist young people and their sponsors eagerly anticipate their outings there for fun and instruction each summer .

The lake is a veritable "fisherman's paradise," and is stocked with cat, bass and crappie. Many sportsmen possess their own boats, or they may be rented. Minnows for bait may be purchased cheaply.

It is an enchanting spot, whether one goes just for a picnic dinner or to spend an entire vacation and Wise County is fortunate to have such a place of interest within its own borders.

### Eagle Mountain Lake

The upper part of Eagle Mountain Lake, which is also a part of the Ft. Worth Water system, extends into the southern part of Wise County for a

few miles between Newark and Boyd.

These two bodies of water in a county that was formerly practically arid, give easy access to hunters and fishermen where they may follow their favorite sport.



## 1929-1934

### WISE COUNTY DURING THE DEPRESSION

In 1928 when Herbert Hoover was elected to the Presidency, the gravity of the unemployment situation was already beginning to cast its dark shadows over the United States. He did all that he could to stop the economic decline but it continued to descend, dragging with it farms, homes and businesses into the blackest depression our country has ever known.

After the collapse of the security markets in October, 1929, the catastrophe spread over the entire world, but Texas, due to its great diversification of products was never as seriously affected as many other parts of the country, and though there was much want and destitution, the people of Wise County were able to rely upon their great variety of products and avoid the wholesale suffering which befell many localities.

#### Drouth

In addition to the immense economic afflictions of the country there came also the great natural one of the desolating drouth which spread over much of the United States. The South West was especially hard hit and from 1930 to 1934 most of the states had far less than normal rainfall.

There was no water for stock, and in a county

such as ours where cattle were so large a part of its industry, this was one of the greatest calamities. In a purely agricultural section such as Wise County was at that time, when crops failed there was little to fall back upon, and the situation became disastrous.

When the people of the rural districts had no money to buy necessary supplies it was immediately registered by a failure of sales among the merchants who, in turn, could not pay their employees, their wholesalers nor their banks, so the vicious circle of adversity and misfortune spread among all classes, and but few escaped its effects.

### Unemployment

Many plans for the relief of the unemployed, and the drouth-stricken farmers were undertaken by the government. All these were hotly debated in Congress before they were finally put into effect.

The President appropriated a large sum to use in construction work which would give work to as many men as possible. A large part of this was assigned for highway construction and other public enterprises.

Everyone was urged to make home repairs or find work of any kind possible to give some unemployed person a job.

The farmers were plagued by over production in all crops. Millions of bushels of surplus wheat were crowding store houses over the country and the market was so low that the producers could not obtain the cost of production. It was called a

“depression of plenty.” There was an abundance of supplies but there was but little money with which to buy them.

### President Roosevelt's Policies

In 1933 when President Roosevelt took office he inherited the almost super-human task of leading the people out of the quicksands of depression. But he was qualified both by training and experience to perform this herculean endeavor. He undertook to do so by making many sweeping changes in the customary method of dealing with governmental and business procedure.

### Bank Holiday

The next day after his inauguration he declared a “bank holiday,” by closing the banks all over the country for a period of three days, which was later extended to ten days.

Many depositors everywhere, in their fear and panic were withdrawing their funds and the banking business was almost at a standstill and in danger of liquidation.

The banks of Wise County were in sound condition and this caused but little hardship in Wise County, but in many places people were withdrawing their money so fast that many banks over the country failed or were in danger of doing so.

The fact that there were no bank failures in Wise County during this crisis attests to the sound and capable management of those in charge of these

institutions.

## Crop Reduction

President Roosevelt gave to Congress his solution of the farm situation to, (1) increase the farmer's purchasing power, by (2) reduction in acreage and production of wheat, cotton, corn, hogs, cattle, sheep, and other crops. The farmer was to be compensated by a bonus or some type of payment for the land taken out of production.

This was an effort of the government to attempt to raise the price of the farmer's products to balance with the constantly rising cost of the supplies which he had to buy.

This legislation has probably evoked more bitter argument, criticism and recrimination than any law ever passed in behalf of agriculture, but regardless of approval or disapproval, it was a noble experiment to help balance the law of supply and demand of the world's needs, and it helped to stabilize the farmer's markets which were so low that they did not justify the cost of further production.

The farmers were urged to plough under a portion of their crops to reduce the supply, and millions of hogs were slaughtered by the government in order to raise their price. The meat was given to relief agencies.

During these years, nature, by its disastrous drouth aided the crop reduction program by reducing all crops to far less than the normal consumption, but the large surplus of wheat, cotton and other crops from former years counter balanced the

deficiecny.

### Commodity Office in Court House Basement

In 1933 offices for the distribution of food, clothing and necessary supplies to the destitute were opened in the basement of the County Court house. Floyd W. Helm was made Administrator of Relief. He and his corps of assistants discharged the duties of the office with efficiency and sympathetic understanding of the plight of those in need, and his tactful consideration of many cases helped to lighten the burden of distress in many homes.

It was a time of gloom and poignant suffering when many proud persons who had always been independent and self-sustaining were forced to ask for relief. This condition had been brought about by unemployment, and crop failures because of drouth, and it included more than one half of the inhabitants of the County. Yet Wise County as a whole, was more fortunate than many others.

### Stock Slaughtered

In the summer of 1934 the drouth increased in intensity. The sun scorched from skies which appeared brassy with the heat, crops parched and shrivelled, forest trees died, and streams and ponds dried up.

It was in the searing heat of this never-to-be-forgotten summer that the people felt the magnitude of the disaster most when the cattle and all stock suffered bitterly for water, and the order finally



came to slaughter them to keep them from dying of thirst. The grief was pitiful in many homes when their faithful animals were led away to be shot.

As a part of the stock reducing program whenever a sheep was slaughtered its owner was required to bring the skin to the Relief Office for evidence that the animal really had been killed. The uncured skins were usually discarded in the Court House basement and the place soon began to smell as malodorously as a slaughter pen.

### Public Works

Congress made a big appropriation to be allotted to the states for highway building and maintenance, and construction work to give jobs to as many as possible.

The Decatur High School building and the retaining wall built to retain the soil around the Decatur Grammar school is an example of Works Progress Administration endeavors. This and many other similar projects gave employment to many who were in need of work.

A sewing room was opened in which women who needed employment spent their time making garments from materials furnished by the government, to be distributed to the needy.

A well equipped canning plant was established in which any one could go and can their home products, or have it done for a small fee.

A commodity room was operated in the court house basement where all kinds of food and clothing were dispensed to families on the rolls.

A C. C. C. camp (Civilian Conservation Corps) was established near Boyd where underprivileged youths were cared for and trained in construction work, road maintenance, prevention of soil erosion and similar duties and given the systematic training of an army camp.

Thus the government by its many relief efforts, its Agricultural Adjustments Act, Farm Credit Administration, Rural Rehabilitation, and many other programs was able to tide its citizens through those dismal years of despondency until conditions returned to normal.

Regardless of the criticism that was heaped upon the administration, it cannot be denied that these methods kept many from feeling the pinch of hunger in those dark and tragic years, and President Roosevelt's memory will always be enshrined within grateful hearts and minds of those whom he rescued from suffering by his revolutionary methods of dealing with the distressing problems of the great depression.

1934-1939

## NORMALCY AFTER DEPRESSION

### Preparation for World War II

During the brief period between the end of the depression in 1934 and the outbreak of World War II, the chief efforts of the people were devoted to an attempt to restore economic prosperity and to eradicate some of the causes which were responsible for the privation and destitution during the depression.

The many Federal agencies with their alphabetical names were assisting the people to return to normal, self sustaining living conditions, by financing home and farm loans and encouraging those who could to return to the farm.

Many urban dwellers who were stranded in the cities took over old abandoned homes in the country, repaired and renovated them and made them attractive, and by following the government's program of producing food through dairying, gardening, poultry and swine, they acquired economic independence.

The passage of the Old Age pension bill during Governor Allred's administration also made it possible for many elderly people who had been living with their children to enjoy the unrestricted pleasure of being able to maintain their own homes once more. This led to a demand for more houses and the pinch of the housing shortage began to be felt.

Due to the increase in population this shortage became acute in the next few years.

### Rise of Dairying

With the decline of cotton acreage more attention was given to dairying and the nearby cities of Ft. Worth, Dallas and Wichita Falls afforded a ready market for all milk products.

The establishment of the Tennesse Dairies receiving stations for whole milk at Decatur and Bridgeport was one of the most stabilizing influences toward the development of the County as a dairy center, affording as it did, a market for this commodity.

Wise County, with all this section of the state, had always been a beef producing area, and it was slow in making progress toward developing dairy herds, but cattle of this type, Jerseys, Holsteins, and Guernseys are now becoming quite numerous, and in many places, superseding the former beef producing breeds.

Wise County now enjoys the enviable title "Largest Dairy Center South of Kansas City."

### Grade A Barns

As the sale of milk became more regulated and standardized, the requirements of sanitation became more exacting and the law did not permit any milk to be sold except that which was produced in Grade A barns in which rigid cleanliness prevailed.

These barns gradually became a familiar part of

the landscape and have revolutionized milk production in the County.

### Increased Food Production

Toward the end of this period the thunder of war clouds again began to be heard in Europe and the ominous sound was beginning to echo again in America.

From crop reduction the government then began to encourage a program of increased production in order to be able to acquire sufficient food both for home consumption and the expanding needs of the army when farm labor became practically unobtainable.

This project the farmers were able to execute only with the increasing aid of tractors and other mechanization. And government relief jobs were soon superseded by munitions plants and defense employment.

### Urschel Kidnapping

A dark blot upon the County's fair escutcheon was the undesirable notoriety which it received in being found to harbor the hideout near Paradise of the notorious outlaws known as the Kelly gang.

Mr. W. L. Urschel, a financier of Oklahoma City, was kidnapped from his home by Kelly and his accomplices and held prisoner for several days while chained in an outbuilding on the Shannon farm. He was in complete ignorance of the locality where his captors had taken him, but he cleverly observed that



each afternoon at a certain time an airplane flew over.

Upon his release, by checking with a number of air fields, he located one which reported a plane which would be about over Paradise at that hour each day. In this manner his location was traced to the Shannon farm.

The officers made a surprise raid upon the place and captured the infamous Kelly and his accomplice who were resting there. Kelly was the husband of Mrs. Shannon's daughter by a former marriage.

The Shannons had always been considered respectable people, but they were tried as accomplices in keeping Urschel a prisoner and sentenced to Federal penitentiaries. Kelly was sent to Alcatraz, that cold and formidable fortress in San Francisco bay; Shannon was sent to Leavenworth, and Mrs. Shannon and Mrs. Kelley were sent to the Women's Prison in Virginia.

## WORLD WAR II

1941-1945

### Foreword

In beginning this chapter it is necessary, but regrettable, to state that this is only a very brief outline of Wise County's contribution to the effort of winning World War II.

The global character of the many farflung battle fronts and theatres of war, and the myriad of activities of the many different branches of the service would require a large volume just to enumerate. But space forbids anything except a brief mention of the groups of noble young men to whom our county owes a debt of such magnitude.

There is no complete roster of the names in the county, and it is beyond the scope of the present volume to publish the entire list, even if it were available. There are hundreds of names which should be included but the demands of brevity compel the selection of only a few from different sections of the county. It is impossible to give a detailed account of the personal experiences of the men. That would make marvelously interesting reading but would require an entire volume of its own. This chronicle attempts only to collect and record some of the scattered facts so that the memory of our soldiers' bravery may be perpetuated upon the lengthening scroll of our county's history.

All of these men had splendid records, many of them sacrificed health, life or limb in the performance of duty, and some were awarded the highest Presidential citations, medals and honors that our government could bestow.

Wise County is grateful and proud to honor each soldier who rendered noble and self-sacrificing service, though he may have been placed in the most obscure station, but who shared in this great military achievement.

### Causes of the Conflict

In 1941 both the citizens and the government of the United States were viewing with alarm the German victories in Europe. The peace and security of all free countries was threatened by Germany's determined and expanding scheme of world domination. Their atrocities and cruelty toward captured peoples were only a forerunner of their tactics in trying to enslave the entire world.

The freedom loving governments of the world were seething with resentment against this cruelty and tyranny, and the sympathy of all nations who believed in human justice was deeply aroused for those who were oppressed.

There was still a large per cent of isolationist die-hards in this country who imagined that the United States could remain aloof from world affairs, but their opposition finally was overcome by the treacherous bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941.

## Declaration of War

The declaration of war by the United States on December 10, 1941, suddenly stopped the civilian career of many of our young men who hastened to join different branches of the service or were inducted therein by the draft, until within a short time there was no front from the British Isles to North Africa, nor throughout the sprawling islands of the Pacific which did not contain representatives from Wise County.

Wise County sent nineteen hundred of her finest young men and fourteen patriotic young women as her contribution to the conflict. Of this great group eighty-one of the men did not return.

In the very beginning of the war, at the brutal bombing of Pearl Harbor, Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Woods, who resided then at Greenwood, had the misfortune to lose two fine sons, Lawrence E. and Winnifred O. Woods, who were aboard one of the ships that were sunk. As the war progressed the wires frequently flashed back the tragic fatalities to the stricken families.

## The War in Europe

England became a great base for supplies and a training ground where men from this country were given further instruction to prepare them for the front. From England they were transferred to other combat zones in Europe and North Africa.

## North Africa and Italy

The divisions from Texas which included many Wise County men swept across North Africa, chasing the Germans under Gen. Rommell over the sands of Oran, Algiers and Tunisia and were the first of the Allied Army to set foot upon European soil by storming the bloody beaches of Salerno, Italy, September 9, 1943. Many Wise County boys received a baptism of fire as they swarmed ashore.

Lt. H. M. Helm commanded four of the small landing craft which carried the men in through the shallow water under the murderous fire of the enemy. And he performed this same hazardous duty on V E day on the landing on the Normandy beaches.

It was during the Salerno landing that Woody Stokes made the supreme sacrifice of his brave, young life for the cause.

With dogged and oftentimes tragic persistence the Texas divisions fought their way up the Italian peninsula and into France, driving the Germans before them as they proceeded. Casino and Anzio fell to the Allies early in 1944, and Rome capitulated in June of the same year. These were slow, bitter and costly victories for our men. Some of those who participated in the Italian invasion were:

L. C. Slimp, Jr., Marvin Richter, Hale Cates, Bill T. Lehmberg, William Tackle, Wm. Pike, Edward Matar, Wm. Rhea Bowlin, Harold Auvenshine, Floyd Fuqua, Howard Royal Finley, Paul Singleton, Rex Bird, Ancel Simpson, Harold Rummage, Charles Frederick Wilson, Leon Blocker, Coy B. Hartsell, Neal Burress, Stanley Bridges, Martin Leo Dethloff, Eugene C. Sanderson, Dallas Lane and Martin J.



O'Brian.

The last two named were of unusual interest because both were beyond military age, but both performed valiant service. Mr. Lane was a veteran of World War I, but became a Chief Storekeeper in the Navy in War II, and had the extremely dangerous duty of delivering ammunition to the troops under fire.

The discharge papers of Martin J. O'Brian, a nurse, show that he volunteered at the age of sixty-one, and performed excellent nursing service to the wounded in some of the most dangerous positions throughout the war.

## France

The American Army with its contingent of Wise County men slowly pushed northward and arrived in Southern France August 15, 1944, and after a terrible struggle gradually cleared France of the Germans. Some of those who served in these campaigns were:

Brady Boring, Rayford P. Carlton, Edgar V. Earley, Archie Clint Haney, Boyce M. Pierce, Herschel Dethloff, Capt. James Frank House, S. T. Franks, Arthur D. Laird, Capt. H. M. Mote, Clayton Leon Brandon, Robert Cartwright, Darrell Jones.

## Battle of the Bulge

In December, 1944, the Germans, in a desperate attempt to improve their declining fortunes, made an unexpected and savage attack in the famous and

disastrous Battle of the Bulge. This was their last attempt at launching an offensive and was executed with fanatic and barbarous fury. Many noble young lives were sacrificed in this ruthless encounter which amounted almost to a massacre.

A few of those who served in this engagement were:

John Henry Adams, George T. Beeson, William Leon Bost, Edgar V. Early, Floyd Phillip Frederick, Howard Golladay, William Perry Houchins, Joyce H. Hall, A. Z. Kennedy, Johnnie Edd King, Joseph P. Knox, Lloyd A. McEntire, Urban Wayne Morrow, Carl Read, Jr., Carl Ramsey, Olen Albert Royston, J. B. Stokes, Marcos Vidal, Edward Jones, John C. Wallace, W. E. Smith, G. W. Green, Chester Lewis.

### Women in Military Service

Of the fourteen young women who entered the service as WACs, WAVEs or nurses it has been possible to secure only the names of the following:

Fern Bond, Capt. Marcelle Briscoe of Alvord who passed away in April, 1953, Ann Bearden, Frances Clay and Warren Acker Tilghman. Lt. Tilghman acquitted herself heroically nursing the wounded in the Northern European campaign, which included the Battle of the Bulge. She received many honors, and five battle stars, which indicate that she was in hearing distance of the battle zones while they were in progress.

### Air Force

A new chapter was being written in the history

of military aviation. The important accomplishment of the Allied Air Force in flying 42,000 missions over enemy positions had gradually reduced the German planes to helplessness. By bombing their oil plants and destroying their fuel and installations their ground troops were left without air protection.

Among those who participated in many of those extremely hazardous missions over German cities in this appalling contest for air supremacy were:

Burns Buttrill, J. B. Stokes (paratrooper), Kyle Riddle, Major Justin Bingham, Zack Sensibaugh, William Woody Phillips, O. L. Boulware, Martin Crabtree, Fred Maples, Lawrence Bulgarel, J. P. Porter, Watson Clifton and Harold Auvenshine.

### Central Germany

Early in 1945, with the German offensive broken, the tide of victory began to flow with increasing force in favor of the Allies. The enemy began to withdraw their forces, and the Allies, by sheer hard fighting, began extinguishing the immense mining, steel and manufacturing industries of the Ruhr Valley, both by air bombing and the advancing ground troops.

Many devastating forays were flown over German cities, wrecking their buildings and industries and reducing their morale to the vanishing point.

The doom of Germany was assured. There was a record of continuous success by the Allies as they pressed toward Central Germany. Some of the troops already mentioned had advanced in the cam-

paign from Italy and Southern France, others had helped storm the tempestuous Normandy beaches and had progressed from bases in England, Ireland and Wales through Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.

Some of those in the North European route into Germany were:

O. L. Boulware, Arthur Caram, R. W. Culpepper, John Earl Campbell, Edgar W. Cowling, Verrell Dethloff, Glenn Haley, James S. Grisham, Albert Sidney Jenkins, Roland Hartsell, Wm. Allen Hutcheson, Edgar Weger, Jr., Tom J. Kendrick, Walter Francis King, D. S. Knox, Seal Mann, John Curtis Monett, Clyde Jack Morris, James N. Parsons, Maurice Leroy Paschall, John Blanton Sparks, Hervey Tanner, Truett Edward Thomas, Curtis Oliver Thompson, Verlon Roy Thompson, George E. Whitten, Herschel D. Stoneking, Vernie Lee Jordan, Capt. H. M. Mote, Tom McMurray, Billy Bridges, Donald Brown, S. F. (Jim) Fowler, John Vandiver, Wynman Hachtel, T. H. Young, Roy Young, Johnny Musgrove, Ronald Maiden, Neal Burress, Stanley Bridges, George King, Arthur B. Mecaskey, Walter Ray Kerr, Wilson Finley, J. D. Stutt.

On their way to Berlin, one act in the culminating drama of the war was the historic crossing of the Rhine at Remagen in March, 1945. The Germans had destroyed the bridge to prevent its being used, but the Allies began to roll across on metal tracks laid over pontoons over the river.

The American troops under Gen. Eisenhower were halted fifty-five miles west of Berlin to allow the Russians to march in and capture the city May 2,



1945. And this brought the European part of the war to an end.

### The Pacific Theatre of Operations

The "bugles had sung truce" in Europe but from Hawaii across the dreary wastes of the Pacific to the shores of Asia, and from the rocky and wind-swept coasts of far northern Alaska to the tropical, palm-strewn islands as far south as New Zealand the United States' bases were manned by service men who still were grimly fighting the tenacious Japanese.

Among those stationed in Hawaii were:

Raymond Mecasky, Marco Renshaw, Miller Ferguson, Clint Foreman, Marvin Badger, Jr., Will H. Greathouse, Y. T. Sloan, Sam Pearson, Frank Dixon Hardwick, Jack Gossett.

In Alaska helping to guard that locality from Japanese invasion were: Victor Rosenberg, Cody Caraway, Ray Foreman, Travis Wilhite, Bill Leonard, Clarence Ford and Crawford Buttrill.

Aircraft carriers and ships were still plying the Pacific carrying planes, tanks and ammunition which was undermining Japanese power. Gene Brummell made eighteen trips across the Pacific aboard the "Hammondsport," which delivered tanks and planes to the South Pacific Island bases. A few others who served in various branches in the Pacific were:

John Bob Young, Dave Brandon, Jr., J. T. Dunn, A. J. Canova, Francis Evans, Willam Lester Lowrence, Frank Paschall, James W. Thompson, Paul



Grayson Rohus, Arthur D. Laird, Robert Clay, Elton McCurdy, Cecil Hoyle, John Will Finlayson, Carl J. Recer (paratrooper), James Keith and Gordon Roberts.

Among the Seabees encamped on the insect and malaria infested Solomons and other islands of the South Pacific were: H. R. Fullingim, Gary Lester, Herman Ray Gober, Bedford A. Kennedy, Jerome Kirby, Robert Smith, Jr., Ted Teague, Roy T. Wright, J. C. Grimsley, Cody Caraway.

Others who served on Bougainville, New Georgia, Guadalcanal, and other islands of the Solomons group were: Sammy Renshaw, W. A. Hughes, Eugene Haynes, J. E. Haynes, Ted Schroeder.

Stationed in Australia were: John Ford, Charles Wilhite, Dr. Renshaw Innis, John Innis.

And those who saw service in India, China, Persia and Japan were: Horace Bennett, Basil Hoyle, Dan Shults, Hugh Blocker, Bill Neighbors, Carl Greer, Marion Guilds, W. C. Loveless, Earnest White, Paul C. Stoneking, W. B. Woodruff, Harvey L. Thompson, Loyd Edward Rohus, Ozra Davis, J. L. Summers.

In the Caribbean area from Cuba to the Canal Zone were: Hoyt Tally, Raymond Morris, Carroll C. McCurdy, W. Stephen Curley, Joe Foreman and Rex Gage. It was the duty of Lt. Gage's squadron to locate enemy submarines.

The Japanese, in their frantic efforts to gain bases in the Coral Sea which included Port Moresby in New Guinea, and Talagi in the Solomons, spread their conquests and forces too thin. The first eighteen months of the war the United States Navy

was short of equipment and personnel. This lack of preparation resulted in great loss of life and bitter fighting against outnumbering foes, but the Midway victory in November, 1942, cleared the way for Admiral Nimitz for the Central Pacific campaign.

New Guinea fell to the Americans and Australians in January, 1943, after months of violent attacks. Serving in this area were: James M. Sharp, Pollard Jeter, Burlon J. Denton, James Garrett Dillehay, Guin Easley and Marvin Roach, M. P.

In November, 1943, in the fiendish seventy-six hour battle of Tarawa, in the Gilbert Islands, which resulted in nine hundred killed and more than twice that many wounded, James E. Evans was one of the only seventy survivors.

In the battle of Saipan in the Mariannas, in June, 1944, were: Rupert M. Green, Troy Porter and Clayton Reynolds. Capt. Benny Paul Bearden flew over Saipan, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and many other hotly contested battle areas with the Photographic Reconnaissance Service taking photographs which were of great value in mapping future operations.

And in the naval struggle for Leyte in the Philippines the following men had a share in helping to wreck the Japanese fleet: Billy Edwin Mercer, T. Fred Sharp, John Henry Brown, Cecil McNeil, Orville L. Green, Curtis F. Marlett, Frank Turner Power, Herman Hatchell, Paul Clemons and W. A. Hughes, who was in command of landing craft.

The fall of Rabaul to the Allies in February, 1944, released Gen. MacArthur to fight back to the Philippines and in January, 1945, these islands had

been regained, and Jas. M. Sharp, James W. Hill, Aubrey L. Maddux, Cecil Dodd, Loyd A. Whitten, Clint Foreman, helped to clear Luzon of the Japanese who gradually were being driven out of their strongholds in the Pacific.

The Marines had captured Iwo Jima in March, 1945, and participating in that engagement were Joe Roach, Pollad Jeter, Jr., Brian Goodger, Charles Edward Tackle, John Henry Brown and Odom Royce Terrell. Two fine young men, Ogle Shipley and Pressly Land of Alvord were killed in that terrible battle.

Okinawa was captured by the United Nations in June, 1945, and in that engagement Wise County was represented by Connie Mack Lester, Fred S. Kasner, Jack Lewis, Joe Foreman, Joe Roach, Odom R. Terrell, M. D. Head and James Renshaw.

The bombing of Tokio was begun and on August 6, 1945, the world-shaking initial use of the atom bomb descended upon Hiroshima, and on August 9 another one fell upon Nagasaki, which blasted these cities into oblivion and brought the war in the Pacific to a close August 14, 1945.

The signing of the Peace Treaty by Gen. MacArthur September 2 on board the USS Missouri in Tokio Bay, brought inexpressible joy both to those whose sons were scattered all over the globe, and to those families who had sons or relatives in the ill-fated Lost Battalion. An account of that expedition will be found in the following chapter.

A short list of others who served appears at the end of this chapter.

When the end of the hostilities came everyone

was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude that the long cruel conflict was over but there was no spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm in the county such as marked the close of World War I, when the population erupted into a constant series of impromptu parades, firing anvils and noisy celebrations of all kinds. The people were equally as joyous but did not indulge in tumultuous demonstrations and went about their duties quietly, thrilled by the thought that the boys would soon return.

The following are sketches of two Wise County men who sacrificed their lives in outstanding acts of bravery and received the highest Presidential citations. They are representative of the many acts of heroism and self-sacrifice of our men, and could be multiplied many, many times in the experiences of those who did not return and those who sacrificed life and health in the services of our country.

#### Capt. James Frank House

After the battle of Metz in France, at Hamm, near the German lines, elements of two battalions had been isolated in a bunker by enemy action. They were without water and supplies. When volunteers were called for, rather than send his men over heavily mined roads, Capt. House went with a jeep driver, Joseph Orfario of Chicago, on the mission of reconnaissance to bring relief to the beleaguered garrison. The most urgent need was for water. Capt. House and his driver took the jeep through the German lines twice returning with five gallon cans of water. This dangerous mission was success-



ful but Capt. House was slightly wounded.

Two days later Capt. House and his driver volunteered for a similar daring mission: reconnaissance for a route of march to be taken in relieving another regiment. This they accomplished, gathering the information of great value in future operations against the enemy.

On the return trip, December 4, 1944, both were killed. Joseph Orfario instantly, but Capt. House was able to get out of the jeep and continue to fire for several moments before he fell. For these acts of bravery he was awarded posthumously the Silver Star and the Purple Heart with Presidential citation.

His heroic devotion to duty in the face of imminent danger was in keeping with the highest traditions of a soldier.

#### Staff Sergeant Lawrence T. Bulgarel

Sgt. Lawrence T. Bulgarel was born and reared in Decatur, a stalwart example of young manhood, and beloved by all who knew him. He received his training at various military aviation fields in the United States and was sent overseas in 1943.

He was a waist gunner on a bombing plane which was shot down over Blangermont, France, on February 28, 1944.

His ship was scheduled for a mission over the coast of France. When they took off the whole crew was in high spirits, thinking it would be a routine flight with no enemy flak nor fighters, but when they made their run on the target there was terrific and accurate flak.



Sgt. Bulgarel's plane made its run but the lead bombardier ahead could not get their bombs away so Sgt. Bulgarel's plane was compelled to make another run.

The ship made a terrible lurch and they knew that they had been hit. The radio operator was struck and his clothes were on fire all over. They could not see anything in the ship for the smoke, but Sgt. Bulgarel helped to put out the fire the best he could. The plane was still flying but there came an explosion and it began to go down. Another explosion followed and the plane blew up and seven of the crew were lost.

Sgt. Bulgarel was temporarily buried near Blangermont where the plane crashed, but the body was afterward disinterred and reburied in the United States' Military Cemetery at St. Andre, forty-eight miles west of Paris.

Sgt. Bulgarel died as he would have preferred in the discharge of his duty in the service of his country. He was awarded the Purple Heart, the Silver Star and many honors.

The knowledge of their devotion and the great contribution that they and others like them made to the service of their country places upon all a debt eternal of gratitude, and helps to sustain their loved ones in their loss.

### The Home Front

On the home front all factories, steel mills, industries and food growers which, during times of peace, had been producing supplies for civilian needs,

geared their production entirely for the war effort by turning out airplanes, tanks, ammunition and military supplies.

Men, women and boys migrated to the great production centers seeking employment in the shipyards, airplane and munitions plants. This shift of population from rural areas to city employment is still in progress and will make great changes in our future habits and customs.

Civilian supplies were strictly rationed. Most people cooperated patriotically, and cheerfully accepted the restrictions willing to suffer any inconvenience that would facilitate the war endeavor, but a few complained of the lack of shoes, sugar, meat, coffee, alcohol, gasoline and cotton goods.

Bond drives were made frequently, and the people were urged to buy them both as an incentive for saving and a patriotic attempt to aid the government. And many have found that the money invested then in war bonds has been a comforting security in emergencies, and bond investment has become a national custom.

## Names of Wise County Men Killed in Action

### World War II

Howrd L. Hall, Pvt. Elton Luna, Ardell Redwine, Robt. F. Rich, Lucian D. Shults, Sgt. Edwin E. Shaw, Sgt. Max Upperamn, Cpl. Nelson H. Waters, Babe R. Williamson, Jimmy Vess, Orban K. Flowers, Curtis O. C. Western, Lawrence Woods, Winnifred Woods, Gail Mote, Joe Arnold, Cleo Cooper, Ivey

Hale Harvey, Capt. Ballard Durham, Ray Myers, Allen Durham, Russell Barker, Herschel Dethloff, Winford M. Gray, Johnnie Duane Haney, Foch Hartsell, Jas. W. Hill, Capt. Jas. Frank House, Aubrey Lee Maddux, Troy Mitchum, Jr., Frank Turner Power, Jess B. Sanderson, Sgt. Robert Lee Shipley, James A. Teague, Loyd Earl Whitten, L. C. Goode, S/Sgt. Lawrence T. Bulgarel, Lt. Wilson Finley, Douglas Ferguson, Elmo Brufiend, Pressley B. Land, Andrew Greenwood, Frank Morgan, Ogle D. Shipley, Ray Wood, Walter Smith, Willard Robert Burton, Woody Stokes, Richard Heard, Jim Hill, Robt. McDowell Lee, Melburn Eugene Wilson, Frank Teurman, Wm. Thomas Brown, Orville W. Harolson, Harold Hill, Dan Nathan Corley, Henry Barnett, Capt. Walter Clemens, Everitt Thompson, George W. Doughty, R. C. Hoffman, Billie North, Jim Debs Davis, Capt. Walter N. Clemens, Jr., Roy Peel, Lewis King, Lt. Irland Dutton, A. J. Scott, Virgil Steele, Elvis Huff, Benny Joe Morton, Roy Wood, Joe Lewis, Charles Frederick Wilson, D. C. Byrons, Orville Byrons, James Logan.

#### Others Who Served:

Eastern Wise County: Marvin Kincaid, Billy Gene Boyd, Wendell Wilhite, Jack Cummings, Ralph Ferguson, Bill Bastian, James Harrison, "Hawk" Burnett, R. H. Dillehay, Gene Kincaid, Charles Simmons Greathouse, Paul Tucker, Ray Hugh Foreman, George Prescott, Lee Ray Lawson, Henry Clay, Milvern Cude, D. A. Crowder, Mayfield Workman, Ras Fortenberry, Joe Durbin, Owen T. Shaw,

J. D. Ried, Dave Ried, Jr., Jack Helms, Tom Gettys, Nob Moore, Jr., Ted Hachtell R. T. Rieger, B. J. Culpepper, Bud Pinkerton, Marshal Step, Lute Renshaw, Charles Rosenberg, Pete Covington, James Parr, Bill T. Grubbs, Bud Turner, Ray Rhine, Tom Patterson, Lory D. White, Buddy Gage, Virgil Shaw, Chester Lewis, Leslie Lewis, Guy Horner, Jr., Robert Smith, Cameron Mitchell, Loyd, Rayford and Raymond Dodson, Jno. Lamar Rhoades, Clint, Weldon and Troyce Wiley, Billy Ray and Kenneth Wiley, Lyn Jordan.

Edwin Sherman, M .E. Pruett, Jack Stark, Jr., Elton McCurdy, Marvin Potter, B. S. Carter, Eugene North, Grady O'Neal, J. L. Hudson Dick Carlisle, John E. O'Nela, Roy Leslie O'Neal.

Maj. Guy M. Crews, Leon F. Crews, Robert H. Adcock, Robert H. McCanne, C. T. Clower, Willard Howell, Durwood Fox, W. A. Nipper, Clyde Smith, Robert H. Smith, Lloyd Sands, E. T. Cox.

Stewart Whittington, John Will Finlayson, Elmo Wise, Jimmy Vess, D. C. Byrons, Orville Byrons, James Logan, Evart T. Singleton, Jackie and Nathaniel Ross, Bill Randall, Ben Brooks.

Western Wise County: Cecil Bailey, Haskell P. Bearden, Fred T. Boaz, James F. Caraway, James D. Coursey, Bennie B. Crenshaw, Burlton J. Denton, James Evans, Cletus E. Green, Clinton D. Green, Drew Thomas House, Fred S. Kasner, Robert Love, Connie Mack Lester, Elias C. Lopez, Billy Eugene Paschall, Carl M. Porter, Cecil Storey, Maurice M. Waters, Lawrence Whatley, Eddie Roland Culpepper, Gewan Dethloff, Dennie E. Paschall, Larry C. Starnes, Floyd and Loyd Cokendolpher, Edgar V.



Early, Paul and Johnny Huevzdas, Walter F. King, Edward Matar, Santos Avilla, T. D. Pike, Carl Ramsey, Bennett B. Abercrombie, John H. Hudson, Jas. D. Arwine, Rural Bridges, Rayford P. Thompson, Phillip Matar, Jas. M. Van Hoose, Pollard Jeter, Jr., Billy E. Mercer, Jas. R. Mullins, Billy Ray Nabors, Paul C. Stoneking, Elton Leroy Stoneking, Jack Gregg, Charles Flannery.

Tommie N. Boner, William C. Boner, Robt. Edward Byrnes, Willie S. Caraway, Alonzo Denton, Glen Haley, Neal Mann, Vernon W. Mason, R. S. Goode, James R. Dethloff.

Rayford P. Thompson, Lt. Col. Womack, Edgar M. Davis, Lonnie C. Davis, Johnny C. Deaton, William L. Deaton, Jessie James Deaton.

Durward A. Thompson, Helmar Jackson, Lonnie Davis, Clarence W. Billington, Autie Allen, Lester Jackson, Claude Morgan.

James Edward Jones, John C. Wallace, William E. Smith, Ozro Davis, J. L. Summers, Mark Summers, Orbon K. Flowers, Grady Unus Blocker.



1941-1945

## LOST BATTALION

Most accounts of Wise County's participation in fighting the second World War begin with the heroism of the famous "Lost Battalion" which departed from Texas for the Philippines in November, 1941, but later were taken prisoners by the Japanese in the defense of the Island of Java.

This group was composed of young men from West Texas towns: Abilene, Amarillo, Lubbock, Plainview, Wichita Falls, Jacksboro, all the towns in Wise County, and a few from Ft. Worth, El Paso, and elsewhere.

They were mobilized in Decatur in November, 1940, and were moved to Camp Bowie, which had been moved from Ft. Worth to Brownwood. After one year's training there they left that place November 11, 1941, for the West coast. That was Armistice Day, signifying peace, and an anniversary of the ending of the war that was "to end all wars."

The Second Battalion of the 131st Field Artillery was a select group which was detached from the 36th Division and was originally intended to be sent to the Philippines to form other regiments. This was before the beginning of hostilities with Japan, and little did these men dream when they embarked from San Francisco on November 21, 1941, during a time of peace that our country would be embroiled in war while they were still upon the high seas.

While five days west of Hawaii they received warning by radio of the impending warlike intentions of the Japanese, and two days later, that unforgettable December 7, the attack on Pearl Harbor was made.

This caused the Texas group to be diverted south to Australia where they arrived at Brisbane December 23, and remained there six days. It was a strange feeling of loneliness for the men to be spending Christmas so far from home, but the Australians were hospitable to them.

After remaining there a week they were then assigned to the defense of the Dutch-owned island of Java, that incredibly rich prize of the Pacific which the Japanese coveted because of its abundant supplies of rubber, oil, tin, gold, quinine and other supplies which were necessary to them in waging war.

They landed in the port of Soerabaja, Java, January 1, 1942. The island was vulnerable to attack because of the Japanese superiority in air power. The Dutch had already sent their few planes to assist in the defense of Australia, and during those helpless weeks our men lay in the ditches cursing the Japanese Zeros and dive bombers who dropped death and destruction all about them and prayed for even just one American plane to challenge the merciless marauders but none could be sent to their relief. A few American bombers had been flown out of the Phillipines, but these, when sent out on missions without fighter escort, were soon lost.

The regiment had but little equipment, but they fought bravely against great odds with antiquated

French-type guns trying to stem the advancing tide of the Japanese invasion. But the yellow-skinned horde landed February 28, 1942, and swarmed over the long, slender island.

On March 5, with their stock of supplies and ammunition exhausted, the Texas Battalion was forced to surrender. The last report of them which reached the outside world was from a war correspondent who saw them marching through the streets of Bandoeng singing "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You."

After the Japanese overran the island all communication with the regiment and the homeland ceased, and then began the long, heartbreaking vigil of suspense and uncertainty for their families and loved ones in Texas. After the curtain of silence was drawn about them, a flood of rumors were circulated about their fate.

Some of these stated that the boys had fled to the hills, were being secretly supported by the Dutch and were opposing the Japanese by guerilla warfare. Another said that they had all been transported to prison camps in Japan and were being forced to toil at heavy labor building the famous Burma railroad and were being beaten and starved.

All these maddening accounts served to intensify the grief and suspense of their people at home, until the wives and relatives of the men finally formed the "Lost Battalion Clubs" over the district, whose main purpose it was to examine these reports and either verify or disprove them.

An occasional prisoner-of-war card was received from some of the boys, and though these were printed, form cards and could give but little infor-

mation, they created inexpressible joy at home just to know that the boys were still alive.

The majority of the Wise County boys were interned between Bangkok and the Moulmein Prison Camp in Burma, but some were sent to Fujouka, Japan, and some to Thailand (formerly Siam).

Although the war department was besieged with telegrams and pleas from the families of these men they had no information whatever to disclose until June 4, 1942, when they reported that these men were "presumably missing in action." The stricken families took what scant comfort they could that the report at least did not say "killed in action."

From that time until February, 1944, there was little but rumors to assuage the anxious hearts at home. But through these dismal days they never gave up hope and clung steadfastly to their belief that the boys would one day return.

An occasional meagerly worded prisoner-of-war card arrived to allay the suspense and strengthen the hopes of the home people, and these were welcomed with great joy by all the population. At last in November, 1944, the government revealed the names of one hundred twenty-two members who were known to be prisoners.

The dawn of 1945 began to appear a little brighter, and as the year progressed the hopes that their liberation was near became stronger. The closing engagements of the war in the Pacific, which already have been mentioned, battled slowly to the climactic announcement of August 14, that the long cruel war was over.



The following article on the experiences and the Liberation of the Lost Battalion was contributed by Major Charles Allen Cates, one of the survivors of the Expedition. In it he guilds with humorous touch the tragic back ground of their suffering, and the heart-break of seeing their comrades die from jungle diseases, lack of care, food and medicines, but it is humor saturated with pathos. It was partly this ability to make light of their hardships which enabled these men to endure their distress.

\* \* \*

## THE SAGA OF THE LOST BATTALION

By

Major Charles A. Cates

When you go overseas, it helps to have a few rabbit's feet, or St. Christopher's medals, or other charms. But if you want to insure a safe return, have three things, for certain: have a sense of humor—have faith in the Almighty—and have the certainty that there is something at home that you want to get back to.

We travelled and got back; but we got lost. The Lost Battalion—that's us! We knew we were going into the Pacific, but we didn't know we were going so far into it.

Before we left, Dad said "watch what you eat when you get out there". That was prophetic. One day we would reach a stage when we'd not only



watch it—we'd also fondle it, pet it, drool over it, and dream about it.

Our departure wasn't so difficult for most of us. We'd been mobilizing and maneuvering for so many months that this departure was like many others. It was still peacetime. We were still young and healthy. Travel was good for us. We'd be back soon. Yeah!

We had December 2nd, 1941, in Honolulu . . . just in front of Pearl Harbor . . . just five days in front of it! We took short shore-leaves in shifts, and returned to ship somewhat disappointed at Hawaii. We'd expected something grass-skirtish, but in the short time we had, we didn't find anything different from Fort Worth or Dallas. Most of what we saw was very "Chamber of Commerce."

December 5th, going West, we met a convoy headed East. Guess who they were? We signalled them, but they didn't speak our language. December the 7th we learned why. December the 8th we weren't between them and their home base—we had got out of there! Somebody said "did you hear a door slam?" The answer was "yes, behind us."

We zig-zagged to Australia by way of Suva, in the Fiji Islands, stopping there long enough to fuel and water the ships and swap trinkets with the fuzzy-wuzzy natives.

Our next stop was Brisbane, Australia. Somebody must have figured we could get to the Philippines from there, but we didn't. The next people from Wise County who got to the Philippines had to go by way of New Guinea and a few other places.

We went to Java instead.

Before we went, however, Christmas passed in Brisbane. We eventually became expert at being passed. We had mutton for Christmas dinner, and were very homesick. Next day we learned we could have had turkey if we had only let them know we wanted it. We were more homesick than ever.

We had gone out to Australia on the Republic—an army transport. In Brisbane, we loaded onto the Dutch ship, Bloomfontein, and headed for Java. We learned we were going up there at the invitation of the Allied Far-East Command. Later, when questioned, an Adjutant General official said, “yes, we heard there was an American Artillery unit there.” Here we go—passed again.

We went up the coast of Australia as close inshore as we could—over the Great Barrier Reef. It was pretty. We later learned that the Captain of the ship wasn't looking for pretty; there were submarines out there, and they weren't Australian! The Captain wanted to stay in shallow water so the subs would have less chance to slip up on him. Going through Torres Strait, between New Guinea and Australia, the ship's log, on January 8, recorded “torpedo wake crossed bow at 6:31.” Again we were homesick!

Landing at Soerabaja, Java's best Eastern port, we went by train 90 kilometers South to Malang.

Prewar Java must have been a picnic. Java was what the ads said Hawaii would be. Java was as native as twenty miles out Route 9.

We had a wonderful time buying trinkets. Most of us fell hard for the wood-carving — beautiful

birds, animals, heads, and boxes. The natives lived by a system of bartering. They ask about fifteen dollars, and after much wrangling, finally wind up selling for about a dollar and a half, which price they're overjoyed at getting. Not knowing the system, we crossed them up. When they asked fifteen, we'd say "O. K., and here's a tip." In no time at all, we were branded as immensely wealthy and completely nuts. In no time at all, we had fouled up the entire native economic system.

Near Malang, at a Dutch airfield called Singosar, we were to keep B-17's flying for the next couple of months. These bombers were flown out of March Field when the Philippines were attacked, and their ground crews had to be left behind.

We didn't know a landing gear from a gin whistle, but with the help of the few technicians who came out with the planes, we managed to keep the planes serviced and loaded with bombs. They flew missions over Malaya, Singapore, Sumatra, Borneo, and any other places where the Jap invasion was in progress. It was a losing tide, however, because, without fighter escort, these bombers, one by one, failed to come back. They had a few replacements flown out by way of South America, Africa and India, but these went the same way.

Eventually the day came when Japs were based so close to Java that it was impossible to keep anything Allied in the air. Then the Air Corps personnel caught the last ship out for Australia. That's when someone said, "we might as well stay here—there's no bus back to Decatur."

While this was going on, we had gone through

a number of bombing attacks by Jap planes. In fact, it happened every day. In fact, some days it happened several times. We surely were homesick then. We didn't have any casualties, however. A minimum number of our men manned machine guns, and we even tried our 75's on them. But we might as well have been using flyswatters. Personnel not involved in manning these guns were dispersed during air raids. Our cooks complained that some of us dispersed so far that they didn't get back for supper until breakfast.

Toward the end of February, E Battery was left in East Java, while the rest of the battalion went to the West end of the Island. On the way, we passed columns of Australian vehicles going back East. We couldn't figure it out. Some wag remarked that we were waging a "be-visible" campaign. Jap aerial observers, seeing so many vehicles down there, would report that Java was teeming. Their obvious decision, then, would be to attack Java, instead of Australia. If they had hit Australia with the force that hit Java, they could probably have taken Australia, too.

The landing occurred the night of February 28th. We fought them for a while after they landed. Our unit put in some good licks in defense of the Leuwiliang bridge, a key position on the route to Batavia. Java capitulated, however, on March 5th, and our world was no longer safe for democracy.

A Jap questioned some of our officers later, and asked if we thought that a single American battalion could stop twenty Jap divisions. The answer was, "yes; we're from Texas."



Anyway, there we were—POW's.

From March 5th, 1942, until the fall of that year, we were shuffled around various camps in Java, most of us winding up in Batavia, at the Tenth Battalion Bicycle Camp of the ex-Dutch Army.

During this period, the Japs had us out all over the place doing odd jobs. Most of these jobs had to do with stripping Java of anything metallic. We loaded nuts and bolts, refrigerators, oil drums, bicycles, jalopies, and anything else that could be used for salvage.

In the fall of 1942, we began leaving Java. The first contingent was bound for Japan. These were hand-picked men, qualified as engineers and mechanics. In Japan, their engineering ability was put to use in coal-mines, etc!

Others went into Burma, by way of Singapore and Malaya, and in Burma built a railroad. We shipped to Singapore, went by rail to a point near Penang, and by ship again to Moulmein. On this last leg of the trip, we were welcomed by Allied Liberators, who sank one ship of our convoy, but could do no better than a near-miss on us. That was near enough.

From Moulmein we were sent up country to begin the month of work on a railroad to Bangkok, in Siam, which latter country we learned to call Thailand. This railroad followed the route surveyed earlier by British interests. They had not begun construction, however, having ruled the road impractical in view of the availability of sea transportation.

Through tropical, fever-ridden jungle, the route



of the road was run. Having no medical attention, we all became victims of the various jungle diseases. Our worst time came during the rainy season of 1943, from June to September. In Burma, they don't even record a rain of less than three inches. We were never dry during this time, day or night. At work, we'd slosh up and dump baskets of mud where the blueprints said we had to make a fill. The mud didn't like it there. It promptly sloshed back down again. It was very disconcerting. It made the Japs unhappy, no end. The only solution they could see was to work more people more hours. We worked 8-hour shifts for a while. We moved some of that mud so often that when we picked up a basket, the mud would crouch. We got pretty tired.

Our bombers were thinned out during this period. Even the ones who survived were thinned. In fact, we got very skinny, on account of not eating regularly. A little dirty rice was about all we could count on for food. Some of the fellows didn't care for rice. They got over this distaste by starving. Every day we'd see new bones we didn't know we had. We not only saw them—we became intimate with them.

During this period, we lost something—everybody lost all squeamishness where food was concerned. If it wasn't poisonous—it was edible! Most of us laughed later, when the horse-meat scandal swept the States.

Ours wasn't all work and misery, however. Except for that one rainy season, we were rotated at work. We'd have days off, and leisure even on

work days. We made softballs and bats, volley balls, chessmen, checkers, etc., and spent many very pleasant hours at these games. We had international competition in all of them, and through this, we formed many close friendships with other nationalities. There were plenty of books to read. Theater groups were organized at each camp, and regular performances presented. Every night saw groups sitting all over the place in discussions, or listening to some individual recite his experiences or theories. The British called these sessions "lectures." It was a "lecture" even if you were telling about playing hookey or going possum-hunting.

Almost without exception, our camps, which, incidentally, we built out of thatch-roofed bamboo, were located near a river or stream. Our captors, for whom cleanliness is next to Shinto-ness, practically insisted that we all go bathing every day. This furnished us with additional recreation, and kept us clean, if not pure.

Unfortunately, river activity and rail activity were choice targets for Allied air attacks. Stray bombs in our camps cost the prisoners eighty-seven lives at one raid alone, and other scattered casualties. They had to be scattered after the first one, because that's the way we were. We learned to scatter and get under cover quick. We got to the holes, then watched the antics of the Jap personnel trying to find cover. After one raid, a notice appeared on our bulletin board to the effect that "prisoners will not laugh at the guards during an air-raid."

We kept abreast of the headlines from the news most of the time. In at least one camp British personnel kept a radio for weekly news reception. This radio was portable, and was kept concealed in guitars, bamboo poles, false-bottom buckets, and other places. In moving from one camp to another, the radio was disassembled and the parts distributed among the prisoners of the camp so that if anyone were caught, the individual would not be carrying enough to excite suspicion. At the new camp, the parts of the radio were put back together again.

Thus we were aware of the approach of the end in 1945. Our chief worry, however, was what disposition the Japs would make of us. We didn't begin to believe the Japs were too concerned about our safety. As a matter of fact, we felt reasonably sure that they didn't intend for us ever to get back home. We felt there would be a purge, and that we'd be it!

When the end came, however, there we were! The Japs, on being told the news, broke down and cried like babies. It was like old home week for a while. Our feeling, however, was nothing but numbness. Living day-by-day as we had been, we didn't feel any undue jubilation. We were still hungry—still ragged—still broke—and still ten thousand miles from home!

OSS men were already in our area before the surrender. They contacted us and reported to American headquarters in India. It was two weeks, however, before machinery was set up to fly us out to India. By the first week in September, we were all evacuated to the American field hospital

in Calcutta. There we were given a thorough check-up, followed by emergency treatment of anything critical, after which we flew across Africa, the Azores, the Atlantic and Newfoundland, and back to the good old U. S. A.!

In retrospect, our experience wasn't so bad. The things we remember are the funny things and the pleasant experiences. Maybe it's just as well that way.

We saw a lot of the world we wouldn't otherwise have seen. It bears out the thought that the best way to study geography is to go there. But we missed seeing a lot of the world that we might have seen. The trouble with us was, it was case of "plenty go—no see!" We passed the Boeroeboe-doer in Java while we were fighting the Japs—no see. We were in spitting distance of Angkor Vat—no see. We flew over the Taj Mahal at night—no see. We flew over Jerusalem, also at night—We flew over the pyramids, again at night—no see. Abadan—Tripoli—Casa Blanca—thirty minutes for lunch—no see! Coming across the Atlantic, we flew above one layer of clouds and beneath another, just like a weevil tunneling lengthwise through a ham sandwich—we didn't even see the ocean!

We remember the work and the rain and the sickness and the hunger and the living day-by-day—yes; but we usually find some not too unpleasant memory even in these thoughts.

There were three things that kept us going—lose those and you give up. Those things were a sense of humor, faith in the Almighty, and the certainty that there was something at home that we



wanted to get back to!

\* \* \*

## FLOWN OUT BY W. C. LOVELESS

One of the dramatic incidents of the Liberation occurred when the boys were being flown out of Burma to Calcutta. It became the duty of Col. W. C. Loveless, son of Mrs. W. C. Loveless of Decatur, to be placed in charge of the operations to fly the boys, many of whom were his former townsmen, out of the jungle.

Col. Loveless had been in the India-China Air Transport Command for some time "Flying the Hump", as it was called, or flying over the high, and impenetrable peaks of the Himalayas carrying supplies to the regions which the Japanese had cut off from contact with the rest of the world by any other than air route.

It was one of the strange dispensations of Providence that a Decatur boy was assigned to fly the Wise County group back to western civilization.

The roster of the Wise County members of the Lost Battalion appears at the end of this chapter.

## THOSE WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST

When the Liberation came the boys were almost too numb from their four years of privation and suffering to be able to make a happy response to the joy of being released, and on the homeward journey they were saddened by the memory of their many comrades who could not return.



Wise County mourns the loss of the following young men of this ill-fated expedition who succumbed to the deadly jungle diseases, hunger and hardships:

Jack Shaw  
Nelson Waters  
Lucian Shults  
Wade Hampton  
Max Upperman  
Ardell Redwnie  
Robert Rich  
Howard Hall  
Elton Luna  
Babe Ruth Williamson

When the survivors reached home in September, 1945, at last was brought to a close one of the most tragic, unique and unparalleled experiences in the annals of war which ever befell a group of brave men.

The following is the roster of Wise County young men who were members of the "Lost Battalion":

Charles Allen Cates, Jack Shaw, Marlin B. Lewis, Geo. C. Hall, Earl Baldock, Wayne M. Rhine, Babe Williamson, Kelley B. Bramlett, Geo. W. Burns, Lucian D. Shults, Marvin Badger, Jr.; R. L. Rich, Wildon Western, Warren T. Atkinson, Max Upperman, Egbert T. Hudson, Thomas B. Lumsden, Ozro O. Davis, Leonard M. Summers, Merrill Gibbons, Robert Wade Hampton, Lawrence Brown, Howard Hall, Alf Brown, Franklin E. Curtis, Thurman C.

Rhine, Lester C. Rasbury, Johnnie W. Buck, Nelson H. Waters, Walter O. Smith, R. N. Gregg, Jack Key, Woodrow Starnes, Ray C. Singleton, Bert F. Jones, Roy L. Morrow, J. L. Summers, Roy F. Robinson, A. W. Lassiter, Ardell Redwine, J. C. Cobb, H. E. Chumley, R. V. Jones, J. B. Pitts, R. A. Richey, Elton Luna.

1943-1952

## OIL DISCOVERY

The discovery of oil in Nacogdoches County in 1867 was the prelude to a long series of explorations and discoveries which gradually spread westward into nearly every county in Texas. In those days there was no motor industry in existence to demand an ever increasing stream of oil and gasoline to propel it, and the discovery of oil was not accompanied by the same excitement and enthusiasm with which it was heralded a little after the turn of the new century, which ushered in motor vehicles and the universal demand for petroleum products.

The beginning of the automobile industry and the spectacular discovery of the Spindletop field at Beaumont in 1901 spotlighted attention upon Texas oil, and in a few years exploratory crews were making new locations in the western counties. In 1905 the Petrolia Field in Clay County was producing, in 1911 the Waggoner Field at Electra was brought in, and soon after that oil was discovered in Jack County.

That was the nearest production to Wise County, and though there was much interest and speculation as to the discovery of oil in our County, nothing tangible was done about it until about 1920 when a wave of oil prospecting converged upon the County. A leasing campaign began and several wells were

drilled.

These included the Burk-Waggoner in the Northeast part of the County, the Keystone, a few miles Northeast of Rhome, the Carey, between Bridgeport and Paradise, the Hoyl, near Chico, and several others. Some indications of oil were found in some of them but no real discovery was made and they were finally abandoned as dry holes.

Unfortunately the early-type cable rigs in use at that time did not permit the drilling to the depth that is required to find oil in the County. But the modern rotary drills go quickly to the requisite stratum.

Wise County sadly relinquished its hope of ever becoming an oil center and settled back into its agricultural and ranching pursuits for another quarter of a century.

Seismograph crews from the major companies continued to do exploratory work, at intervals, throughout the County during this period, but as the result of their findings is always a closely guarded secret, the citizens of the County were none the wiser for what their investigations might disclose. The depression of the 1930's and the Second World War also retarded all progress in oil development.

Finally, after the close of World War II, in 1945, the many rumors which were continually afloat began to materialize into facts. Across the County line in Jack County there had been oil production for many years, and the fields and operation gradually extended toward Wise County.

In the years just after the close of the war leasing activities were carried on, and in 1947 Cities



Service Oil Co. completed the leasing of a large tract West of Chico, and began drilling on the E. O. Manning estate, and after a few weeks the County was startled out of its usual lethargy by the thrilling announcement that a well had been brought in.

The exciting news impelled every one who could to rush to Chico to see the new producer, and leasing agents flocked to the area and leased every available acre of land until within a short while practically the whole County was under some kind of a leasing contract.

Attention became focused upon Wise County as a tentative oil field. Locations were staked and oil drilling rigs and crews were moved in. It soon became an acute problem to find homes for the families who accompanied the crews, as the County's housing situation was already strained and not equipped to care for the comfort of so many new, though temporary residents.

The drilling increased rapidly and spread from near Chico to other communities, though most of the locations have been confined to the western section of the County. They include points near and between the towns of Chico, Alvord, Bridgeport, Park Springs, Paradise, Cottondale, Boyd, Balsora, Boonsville, Springtown and others.

There has been some prospecting and one or two wildcats sunk in the northeast section of the County between Sycamore and Slidell and though they have drilled deeper there, 7,500 feet, than any other part of the County, no discovery has been made in that direction to date. (May, 1953.)

The average depth at which oil is found as approximately between 5,500 and 6,000 feet. The majority are in the Bend Conglomerate stratum, and produce a very fine quality of high gravity oil.

Some of the wells, notably the ones on the W. R. Bridges estate near Cottondale, have been classed as high gravity distillate and are large gas producers.

Pipe lines have been built from the wells to the new refinery near Chico, and Wise County oil is thus finding its way toward markets and distribution.

The western section of the County, which was formerly devoted to peaceful ranching and agriculture pursuits, has become dotted with tank farms, as well as derricks and pumps.

There has been no spectacular discovery in the County, but a steadily increasing number of profitable wells, until the production of oil has risen from 441 in 1947 to approximately 1,000,000 barrels in 1952.

The effect upon the County, has been salutary. There has been nothing sensational and no tales of sudden great riches, and for that reason but little swindling campaigns by promotion sharks, and no influx of undesirable citizens.

The discovery of oil within the County has influenced the lives and incomes of the people, from rentals and royalties, has improved the standard of living for many and affected the distribution of population. The outlook for the future will continue to be beneficial.

## WISE COUNTY REUNION

No chronicle of Wise County would be complete without a mention of the Wise County Old Settlers Reunion which is held each year at Joe Wheeler Park, two miles south of Decatur.

Many counties have their annual reunions of this kind, but not many have steadily increased in interest and momentum throughout the fifty-six years of its existence as this one has.

It was begun in 1896 and at first was called the Old Settlers and Ex-Confederate Reunion, and was under the sponsorship and many of the programs were planned about the ex-Confederates. These included maneuvers, sham battles, and interminable speeches. But as this fine old group was slowly gathered to its heavenly reward and none were left to carry the ancient banner, it gradually became a time of homecoming and an assembly of old friends, and many who returned from all points of the compass to spend a few days relaxing in the care-free life of the camp and visiting with old neighbors and acquaintances.

Many families look forward to their annual brief vacations there as the most pleasureable event of the year, and children and grown-ups alike are thrilled by the first rhythmical notes of the merry-go-round, and revel in the dust, and noise and the crowds about the concessions, and are pried away from them with difficulty.

The natural beauty of the place is appealing. It

is located around a smooth, open space of prairie surrounded on all sides by magnificent towering trees.

Clustered under these trees are countless, picturesque permanent camps, each complete with furnishings and all electric conveniences to add to one's comfort, and screened all around to exclude mosquitos.

Some of the camps are built of lumber and some are of stone, and many are too perfect to be called camps, as many people would prize their comfort and convenience for a permanent home.

At one edge of the central, open assembly ground stands a huge concrete pavillion which is complete with a stage, auditorium and dressing-rooms. In this place all kinds of interesting programs are planned which include band-concerts, choruses, costume dances and variety shows by local talent and the Recreation Department of Ft. Worth, and the usual speech making, and climaxed on the closing night by a spectacular square dance.

This place has become the focal point for assemblies of all kinds from over the County where plenty of space is required. These community associations have included fairs, Home Demonstration and stock shows, rodeos, conventions and church encampments.

It is a center replete with memories of happy occasions of strictly pleasurable nature where persons of all ages renew friendships, seek relaxation and acquire new outlooks of understanding, tolerance and sympathy.



## 1945-1952

### ADJUSTMENT TO CHANGING CONDITIONS

Decline of Cotton· Shift of Farm Labor to City  
Employment. Mechanization.

After the close of World War II, agricultural trends which began in 1930's during the crop control period continued to influence the county's progress.

Cotton had always been the county's main plant crop, and its production in the state reached its peak in 1926, but due to the fluctuation in price and the many trials which beset this crop, the production in Wise County has steadily declined until it has become almost negligible.

The conditions which affect the growing of cotton include the weather, the ravages of boll worms, grasshoppers and other insects, root rot, the fungus disease which attacks the roots of many plants in limestone soil and is difficult to eradicate. Also the labor problems which accompany production in any line.

These perplexing complications have diverted many farmers away from the one-crop cotton system to more profitable diversification in grains, livestock, dairying, poultry and food products, until Wise County is no longer listed among the commercial cotton-producing counties of the state.

The following table gives the number of bales



ginned in the County over a period of years and shows the decrease:

1906—32,238; 1916—16,329; 1926—10,662;  
1936—5,004; 1939—2,911; 1944—357.

This re-vamping of the County's agricultural practices, though slow and imperceptible at first, has made revolutionary changes in the customs of the people. The fields that once were white with fleecy staple are now producng grains or food, or improved pasture grasses.

The grip of "King Cotton" was difficult to break, but its omission has been salutary, resulting in much improvement in living standards, greater abundance and increased comforts and happiness for the people. It has also had a beneficial effect upon the scholastic opportunities for rural children, many of whom, in former years, were kept out of school to help with the crop, which resulted in neglected educations.

## SHIFT OF FARM LABOR TO CITY EMPLOYMENT

In the 1920's the departure of many rural families to the newly-discovered cotton producing possibilities of the Plains Counties accounted for the decline in the number of acres in cultivation in Wise County, and this trend has been continuous. But since the beginning of preparations for World War II, and the resumption of the Rearmament programs, after the beginning of the Korean out break in 1950, the shift of rural workers to defense plant work in Ft. Worth has resulted in a decrease of farm labor.

The number of people living in Wise County but working in Ft. Worth is indicated by the demand for homes in all of the southern part of the county, including Rhome, Boyd, Newark, and all the rural homes contiguous to Tarrant County.

Innumerable cars of these commuters from all sections of Wise County now make the trip to Ft. Worth daily to their work.

### MECHANIZATION

But this decrease in rural labor does not indicate a decline in production, as mechanization, and the installation of electricity, and butane has given farm homes the equipment and convenience which speed all forms of production, so that greater volume is achieved with less labor.

The change from former methods of hand-labor and horse-drawn ploughs to much improved and more efficient methods of electrical equipment, tractors, combines, and other mechanization has achieved a steady increase in the total value of farm products, and has given the people more leisure to indulge in recreation.

## FIVE WARS

### Civil and Spanish-American

Allow your thoughts to wander back to '61 and '5,  
To Civil strife and heart aches you will turn.  
Then picture to yourself sad days of '98 and '9,  
When Cuba's pleas for freedom Spain did spurn.

### World War I and World War II

Think o'er the days of World War I, in 1917,  
To world dominion the German hordes laid claim.  
Then passed brief years, in '41, long hopes of peace  
were vain,  
When World War II then set the globe in flame.

### Korea.

And then on distant shores upon the far Korean isle  
~~isle~~

Our boys fought back the Communistic foe,  
That peace may rule the world again, weak nations  
feel no fear,  
And the light of liberty may always glow.

Our men have won the bravest goal, high purpose,  
faith and joy,  
True courage and sacrifice for world-wide good.  
On them bestow our gratitude, intense, without  
alloy,  
Who bought our freedom with their young life's  
blood.

## 1950-1953

### KOREA

For a brief period after the signing of the Peace Treaty with Japan in 1945, the world was lulled into dreams of peace and forgetfulness of the horrors of war. The people resumed their peace-time occupations and tried to take up their lives and careers where they had laid them down, and increased their activities to a fast tempo to make up for the lost time. But these dreams were destined to be of short duration.

At the World Peace Conference in San Francisco in 1944, President Roosevelt had stressed the condition that the United Nations would not tolerate the oppression of any small, weak government by any large and strong one. Russia, at the time, had already embarked upon her program of World Dominion by annexing the small satellite states of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany.

After the close of the war it soon became apparent that Stalin had no intention of remaining faithful to his friendly Allies in World War II, but had set out to enforce his plan by expansion of the communistic doctrines to conquer and enslave, and was threatening to seize Korea under the guise of the Red Communists.

The free governments of the world protested this

seizure, and threatened to take up arms against the Communists if they persisted in this program. But in June, 1950, the communists north of Parallel 38 laid claim to all of Korea and began to invade the free South Korean Republic. The United Nations immediately sent troops to the defense of this unprotected country.

The Communist drive in Korea started with two aims, the first to capture and enslave twenty million people of South Korea, thereby gaining a stepping-stone for their future attack on nearby Japan. Their second aim was to test the United Nations security system, not believing that this body would resist.

But they did resist, and communist prestige and influence was tremendously checked, and fresh hope, faith and determination flamed throughout the non-communist world, and was of immense importance to all of Asia.

For three years the fluctuating fortunes of war have see-sawed up and down this unfortunate, overpopulated peninsula which is attached to the south eastern shore of Asia. Ten million people who are innocent victims of the tragedy are homeless and destitute, their fields laid waste, many of their cities bombed and burned, their streets masses of wreckage. This is especially true of ruined Seoul, the former capitol and cultural city of South Korea, which is now a vast refugee camp, where the people live in incredible filth and privation.

The government of the country is now carried on in Pusan, the bustling seaport on the southeast tip of the peninsula, through which chugs a ceaseless



procession of tanks, trucks and supplies where they are unloaded on the wharves and started on their hazardous journey to the armed forces in the north. Polyangyang, on the north-eastern coast is the capitol of North Korea.

In November, 1950, the Chinese Communists joined those in Korea and this vast access of man power from the illimitable hordes of China has greatly outnumbered the United Nation's troops in Korea, probably in a ratio of five or six to one, and when the United Nations forces were driven out of North Korea in January 1951, the United States suffered the greatest defeat in its history.

It is now the primary aim of the United Nations Command to destroy by air power as much as possible of the enemy's capacity for making war by bombing their electrical power plants, warehouses, supplies and war production on the south side of the Yalu River, that great stream which divides Korea from Manchuria.

The progress of the campaigns of the ground forces has been carried on with the utmost difficulty and hazard, in fighting a fanatical and vastly outnumbering foe, over impenetrable mountains, on frozen fronts where the temperature is near zero, and with insufficient supplies.

But the constantly increasing power of the air force of the United States and its destruction of the enemy's expensive equipment which has been a drain on Russia to supply, and the pressure of the change in the foreign policy of our government under the Eisenhower administration may cause a change in the Communist's attitude of suicidal

fighting and their peculiar disregard of individual rights and life.

On March 5, 1953, Stalin died and his successor, Malenkov, immediately announced conciliatory changes. On April 11, 1953, the Allies and the Red Communists signed a momentous agreement on the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners which was put into operation on April 21st, 1953.

This created a hope that the long dead-locked truce negotiations at Panmunjam might be resumed. The Allies are skeptical concerning the Red's policies and refuse to accept them lest they may prove false, but there are grounds for new hopes that the conflicting demands may find some basis of agreement and an armistice may be negotiated.

Korea has been a testing ground in many things. Primarily it is a test to show the relative strength of Communist theories of enslavement, and whether they would be resisted by the freedom-loving peoples of the world. But the fact that they have been resisted has been an immense set-back to Communist doctrines throughout the world. It also has been a trial ground for proving the efficiency of many new weapons which the government has been trying to perfect.

Our men have been making immeasurable sacrifices in enduring all these hardships that the right of freedom may not be crushed to earth. This has been condemned as a "useless war", but if the heroic service of our soldiers helps to stem and destroy the rising tide of Communism, in the future it may come to be considered one of the most de-

cisive wars in history.

### CLARENCE SWINNEY

Clarence Swinney was born near Anneville. He graduated from the Boyd High School and entered military service in June, 1948. He was sent to Korea in 1950 and took part in the bitter battle of Polyangyang and was killed in action Sept. 3, 1950.

### CHARLES GRIFFETH

Charles Griffeth was born near Sycamore in 1931. He attended school in Slidell and Rhome and entered the service in Feb. 1950. He arrived in Korea in November, 1950, and by one of the strange mediations of Providence, he was killed by an exploding shell on the first day on the very first round of his duty within twenty minutes after he had been assigned to his position at the front.

These young men were both posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, The Purple Heart, and other medals. They paid the supreme contribution by giving up their lives in loyalty and devotion to their country. Such patriotism and self-sacrifice should inspire each citizen to a renewed struggle for the survival of freedom.

### KOREAN ROSTER

Lt. W. B. Woodruff, Capt. Burns Buttrill, Lt. Col. W. C. Loveless, Lt. Col. Hale Cates. (The first four are also veterans of World War II.) Lloyd

Clark, James Sermons, Burton Cates, J. M. Lee, Bobbie Brandon, Eugene O'Neal, Kenneth Davis, Fred Womack, James Womack, Alvis P. Stevens, Marvin D. Mercer, Carroll R. Lang, Billy Joe Skinner, Edwin Lester, James Shaw, Jerry Workman, Carl Greer, Lt. Henry Sampson, Jimmy and Jerry Matney, Duane Thornton, Babe Russell, Hubert Sims, Cecil Brown, James M. Green, Dan B. McEntire, L. M. Lee, Eugene B. Reynolds, Robert Watkins, Dennis Kerr, Jas. E. Shaw, Fred Fortenberry, Edward Baldrige, Joseph E. Stutt, J. W. Dunn, Lt. Paul E. Pierot, Carlos E. Mann, Donald Tow, Robert Clay, Clinton C. Dean, Conrad V. Beauchamp, H. M. Morris, James D. King, Roy W. Savage, C. R. Chancellor, Carl H. Bowman, Ted D. Talbot, Wallis F. Champion, Johnnie Grill, Doyce Reynolds, Chas. Griffeth and Clarence C. Swinney.

*Chapter XIX*  
WISE COUNTY NOTABLES

Wise County has had an enviable list of distinguished citizens, those who have attained distinction in their chosen vocation. But if eminence may be defined as a quality reached by superior talent, industry and merit which has brought renown beyond the confines of their local communities, the County can claim its quota of those who have achieved illustrious recognition in the realm of literature, finance, education and theology.

DR. LAWRENCE WARD

It is doubtful if any other individual in the County has ever endeared himself to as many persons, both as a spiritual guide, a sympathetic friend, and a prac-



tical advisor in the time of need, as the late beloved Dr. Ward.

Born and reared in the County, he knew and understood its people, its problems and possibilities as few others did and his counsel always brought ultimate compensations.

He was born near Deep Creek in 1867, and began his career as a clerk in stores in Aurora, Rhome and Decatur. He afterwards became a merchant at Springtown, and it was probably the practical training in business administration which he received during those years which enabled him to develop the executive ability to weather many of the financial storms which beset the infant Junior College, Decatur Baptist College, when he became its president years later.

Always of a deeply spiritual nature, it was while he was in business at Springtown that he began to fill in at various pulpits in that vicinity, until he at last felt impelled to give up his business vocation and give his entire time to the ministry.

He entered Baylor University to complete his education, and in 1896 he accepted the call to become pastor of the First Baptist Church in Decatur, where he continued until 1900 when he was elected president of Decatur Baptist College.

In 1907 he resigned in order to take up duties in a broader field, that of the Baptist Educational Commission of Texas. In 1909 upon the resignation of Pres. J. B. Tidwell, Dr. Ward again resumed the presidency of the College, which he retained for the



remainder of his life, becoming President Emeritus in 1949, because of failing health.

Under his efficient guidance the school conquered many obstacles and expanded from two buildings and eight acres to its present one hundred six acres and modern buildings, and an enviable record among schools of its class, and he achieved recognition as one of the foremost educators of the South.

In his later years Dr. Ward was called upon to conduct the funerals of the members of nearly all the old-time families, irrespective of creed, and this service he performed in a manner which was always a comfort and a consolation to those in sorrow.

He passed away at his home July 2, 1952, and his death was mourned as a personal loss by the thousands who had come within the sphere of his influence.

#### Dr. Joseph Fort Newton

The most internationally celebrated native son of Wise County, the late Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, noted author and theologian, is perhaps, one of the most unknown in the County of his birth.

He was born in 1878 in the house in North Decatur which now known as the Methodist Superannuate Parsonage. His mother and father both were teachers and conducted schools in this area, including Denton, Decatur, Chico and Slidell. His father studied law and afterward became County Attorney and Master of the Masonic Lodge.

Dr. Newton was educated at State University,

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky, and at Harvard. His first pastorate was in Illinois, and afterwards in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he became widely known as a preacher and an author, and a noted lecturer on Masonry.

Among his books which appeared about that time were "Abraham Lincoln," "An Ambassador," "The Sword of the Spirit," "The Eternal Christ," and others.

In 1916 he was asked to go to London to fill the pulpit of the famous City Temple, where he remained four years, and his fame in this church extended around the world. He made many trips as good will ambassador over England, Scotland, Wales and European cities during the worst years of World War I.

In 1921 he returned to New York and became minister of the Church of the Divine Paternity, and resumed his literary work. He wrote many books on Masonry among them "The Builders," one of the most widely read books of our times, which has been translated into six languages. He also conducted several very popular and appealing newspaper columns on "Every Day Religion."

He did not believe in the line which divides churches and did not confine his pastorates to any one denomination.

This brought him unlimited criticism from many orthodox adherents who resented his departure from their sect. But, at last, he entered the ministry of the Episcopal Church as rector of St. Paul's, Philadelphia, and in the depth and serenity of this faith his restless soul found peace. He was in charge

of that church when he passed away in 1951.

In his last book, "Down the River of Years," which is his autobiography and rated as a best seller in the 1940's, he describes his boyhood days in Wise County.

### W. T. Waggoner Estate

In the financial field the W. T. Waggoner ranch ranks second to only one other in the country. The foundations of this vast cattle and financial principality were laid in Wise County in an early day when his illustrious father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Waggoner, moved their small herd of horses and cattle from Hopkins County to Wise County and located upon a farm a few miles east of Decatur.

The herd soon outgrew this limited acreage and Mr. Waggoner purchased large land holdings in Western Wise. More and more land and cattle were acquired until a large part of that section of the County lay within his domain.

Mr. Waggoner was associated in business by his son W. T. or Tom, who gradually assumed direction of his father's vast land, cattle and banking business, in the latter's declining years and after his death.

The family removed from the farm east of town to Decatur, and built the palatial old home now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Phil Luker, and the latter's mother, Mrs. Spear. This exquisite old house has long been pointed out as a familiar land mark of Wise County, and was the home where the Wag-

goner children, Electra, Guy and Paul, grew to maturity.

By a combination of his business acumen and industry, the herd of cattle expanded so much that a greater range must be sought, and thousands of acres of land were purchased in the Panhandle area, much of it in Wilbarger and Wichita Counties.

Then to verify the Biblical adage, "to whom that hath shall be given," Lady Luck began to smile upon them. One day when they were drilling a much-desired water well to relieve the thirst of the cattle upon the already fabulous acres, they brought in not water, but an oil well.

Mr. Waggoner was reputed to have been much disappointed and remarked that "It was just too bad, cattle couldn't drink it."

That was merely the prelude of many other wells to follow, and the management of this vast financial empire and its many businesses now requires a small army of skilled employees.

The Waggoner family removed to Ft. Worth many years ago. Mrs. Waggoner still resides there, and Paul, the younger son, and his family reside upon one of the ranches near Vernon. All the other immediate members of the family have passed away.

This family's philanthropies to the best causes in whatever community they have interests have been extremely generous. They have smoothed the hardships of many schools, churches, orphanages, the Cemetery Association and private charities, and their interest in public welfare has prompted the bestowal of many benevolences.



## J. J. Perkins

Mr. J. J. Perkins, a former resident of Wise County, is another giant in the financial world. His career, though begun in modest circumstances, is a recurrent example of the great American privilege of attaining the intangible quality of superlative success by hard work and determination.

He was born in Mississippi and came at an early age with his parents to Decatur, where he grew to maturity.

His first business employment was as a clerk in the dry goods store of his brother-in-law, C. L. Mistrot, about the turn of the century. Later, he became proprietor of the store, which under his efficient management, became the foundation of a chain of dry goods stores which spread over Northwest Texas and Oklahoma.

In the early days of the oil exploration in the Northwestern part of the State, he became interested in oil promotion and removed to Wichita Falls to be more convenient to the scene of operations. That was in the hectic, boom days of the industry when newcomers were flocking into the area and promotion plans had not been stabilized. His activities in the sphere of oil development led to conspicuous achievement.

But his humanitarian interests have kept pace with his expanding fortunes, and the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, and dormitories at the Methodist Orphan's Home at Waco, are but a few of his many beneficent gifts.



He is always a generous contributor toward any cause that is for the best interests of his home town.

### Walter Splawn

The subject of this sketch, Walter Splawn, was born in 1883, and spent his early boyhood at Greenwood. After completing the Academy there he attended the Decatur Baptist College from which he graduated with honor in 1903, and continued his education at Baylor University, receiving his degree from there and later ones from Yale and Chicago University. He was admitted to the bar in 1909.

He became a member of the Texas University faculty in 1919, as professor of Economics, and his proficiency in that position led to his appointment as President of the institution in 1924. After competently discharging the difficult duties of this office for three years he became interested in a wider field of endeavor and resigned the University presidency in 1928 to move to Washington where he served as referee in the War Claims Commission. He became United States Secretary of the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1934.

He has won international recognition as an expert in this exacting sphere, and though he is handicapped with failing sight, this misfortune has seemed only to intensify his efficiency. He has influenced much legislation regulating interstate and foreign commerce and is the author of several books on economics and transportation.

He resigned his position on the Interstate Com-

merce Commission in June, 1954, to retire to his farm.

His brother, Mr. and Mrs. Homer Splawn, reside at Greenwood; his sister, Miss Jennie, is professor of English at Kingsville Teacher's College; two other sisters, Mrs. James Boyd and Mrs. Spaulding, reside in Ft. Worth.

### Rev. J. B. Tidwell

Rev. J. B. Tidwell, a former president of Decatur Baptist College, was an example of a man, who by superior talent, industry and prayer triumphed over early poverty and limitations and became noted as an educator, author and theologian.

He was born and reared on a farm near Birmingham, Alabama, and after he was married and the father of several children he felt the call to enter the ministry. His education was insufficient to prepare him for this calling, and he set out to acquire one. The difficulty of providing for a large and growing family and securing an education simultaneously can be imagined.

After graduating from Blooming Grove Academy, he attended Howard College, Birmingham, and graduated from there with honor in 1898. He afterward received a Master of Arts degree from Baylor University, and did post graduate work at Chicago University.

He became instructor in Greek and Latin at Decatur Baptist College and in 1907 succeeded Dr. Ward as president of the institution when the latter resigned. In 1909 Mr. Tidwell resigned the pres-

idency to accept the Chair of Bible at Baylor University.

While in that position at Baylor he became noted as a lecturer, traveler in the Holy Land, and the author of several widely used text books and treatises on religious subjects. His "Outlines of Bible Study" is extensively used as a text book in schools, and in Bible Study courses.

A handsome new building called the Dr. J. B. Tidwell Bible Building is now under construction upon Baylor University campus. It is named in his honor because of his long association there as Bible teacher.

His example has been an inspiration to many struggling students and a synonym of success to those who would solve their problems by Divine guidance.

He passed away at his home in Waco in 1949.

### Cliff D. Cates

Cliff Donoho Cates was born October 19, 1876, in the old family homestead on East Main Street in Decatur. This was one of the early homes and was afterward burned. It stood where the Taylor Butane Gas Station now is located and it was before the time when commercial enterprises had crept down Main street. All the blocks from immediately east of the square were filled with homes.

He was for many years manager of the Chamber of Commerce and was an indefatigable worker in any good cause which had for its object the improvement of the town and county.

When forced by ill health to live an outdoor life, he lived for several years on the farm north of town. Though he was the subject of much good-natured jesting as "a book farmer" he became intensely interested in every movement which tends to affect agriculture, and was one of the first exponents of diversification, soil conservation and highway improvement.

He was a fluent writer and contributed many articles of interest both to the local press and city newspapers. In 1907 he was the author of "A Pioneer History of Wise County," which in recent years has become a much sought-after collector's item by those interested in acquiring material on Texas. This old volume has long been out of print but commands a fantastic price when one can be found for sale.

He passed away in August, 1950.

1953

## HOW MUCH CHANGE?

In 1953, at the close of its first century of existence, Wise County enters a new treasury of years with new methods, new ambitions, and new hopes for the solution of old problems. It has survived the bad years and enjoyed the good and moves forward with new opportunities to improve upon past mistakes and assure to posterity the fullest development and conservation of its resources.

In a rapidly changing world, the importance and the effect of these changes frequently is not realized. A brief one hundred years ago the County was a primeval wilderness, inhabited only by Indians and wild animals. There were no homes, no roads, no transportation, no security, and but few comforts. The details of all these have become hazy with the passage of years.

But the present century has brought electricity, the motor age, airplanes, moving pictures, radio and television. The use of many of these was not even dreamed of in 1900.

And only the future can reveal what tremendous changes may be effected when atomic energy is mastered and its mechanical power is used for mechanization to supply human needs.

It has been an era of great material advancement. And as a new century is begun there is a challenge for spiritual progress to adapt to the



changing outlook for the solution of many perplexing world questions. This may be achieved by proceeding without fear, but bravely and with confidence to meet the tasks which lie ahead.

“Blow clean winds, into every heart the faith we lack,

Blow courage and new hopes and loving grace.

Blow pioneer endurance, bring us back

To God, with his fresh winds upon our face.”

(A. Campbell.)

May 10th, 1953

(Editor's Note: Since this material was sent to the publisher, Pres. Eisenhower, with superb diplomacy, has negotiated a truce which ended the hostilities in Korea, and it is fervently hoped that this may become a permanent peace.)