

1870

WILLIS CENTENNIAL



LAKE CONROE

1970

COLLECTOR'S LIMITED EDITION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY LIBRARY
CONROE, TEXAS

Happy 100th Birthday

WILLIS

From the King
of Power

FROM THE KEROSENE LAMP...
TO THE MODERN NEW PLANT,
GULF STATES UTILITIES STANDS
READY TO SERVE WILLIS DURING
THE NEXT 100 YEARS...

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY TO
WILLIS FROM ONE OF THE
REAL "OLD TIMERS"...



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THE CONROE BANK
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FIRST STATE BANK

WILLIS, TEXAS

Happy Birthday Willis

Introducing your
1970
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CHARLES SEGERS

MARY KAOUGH

MALU PARRISH

EDNA SCOTT

STAN CRAWFORD

WAYBURN CASTLESCHOULDT

In just one short year the SPECTATOR has become the most talked about newspaper in Montgomery County

Watch the SPECTATOR in the future for things you want to read. Serving Lake Conroe Country

The Spectator



*The wide-awake bank
makes it all so easy.*



*Banking,
That Is*

And people have been banking with us for many a year. Our growth with the community has given us the experience to understand your banking needs, and to know how to help. We offer latest-model banking services for all financial needs.

CONGRATULATIONS WILLIS ON YOUR 100th YEAR CELEBRATION

FIRST NATIONAL BANK

"Downtown On The Square In Conroe "

publisher's note

Stan Crawford

We the employees of The Spectator and S & W Advertising Agency are proud to have had the opportunity of creating a magazine commemorating the 100th birthday of Willis, Texas.

And we take humble pride in being a part of the town that is Willis and shades of meanings that the name implies. Willis has had a rough, historic, glorious and lively first one hundred years, abundant with an atmosphere of hard work coupled with personal sacrifice, an unalterable faith in the wisdom and beauty of Divine Providence.

All of which, for the mothers, fathers and children who have from one time or another through the last 100 years called Willis "home", totaled in their recollective memories of sweet years of bygone days and years a basic sense and feeling of having lived "the good life".

Willis residents today can look back into the lives and times of their parents and ancestors without remorse and shame. For the pioneers of this area were realists, never fearing hard work or personal sacrifice.

Hundreds of areas through Texas and the Southwest were settled by various peoples during the late 1800's as a restless nation rippled with impatient citizens dreaming of new beginnings and promising futures. And a relative few of the towns that were started in this period are still around. Most of them are dead and forgotten. Willis lives and thrives. For a settlement to exist 100 years and mature into a proper town its residents must have guts, faith, sacrifice, work, a sense of community pride and responsibility, a feeling of oneness with your neighbor and his problems and accomplishments and a lot of common sense concerning the countless little every day problems. These things the families of Willis' first 100 years held dear and necessary.

The people of the Willis area can thus take an inward pride in their families' histories. Although the pioneers of this area lived and died without fame or glory they did not live and struggle in vain, for the children of their children and others to come will hold their memories and continue their dreams.

Thus we dedicate this magazine to those forefathers who saw this area and this community as one in which all residents would work, play and

Continued on next page

MEMO

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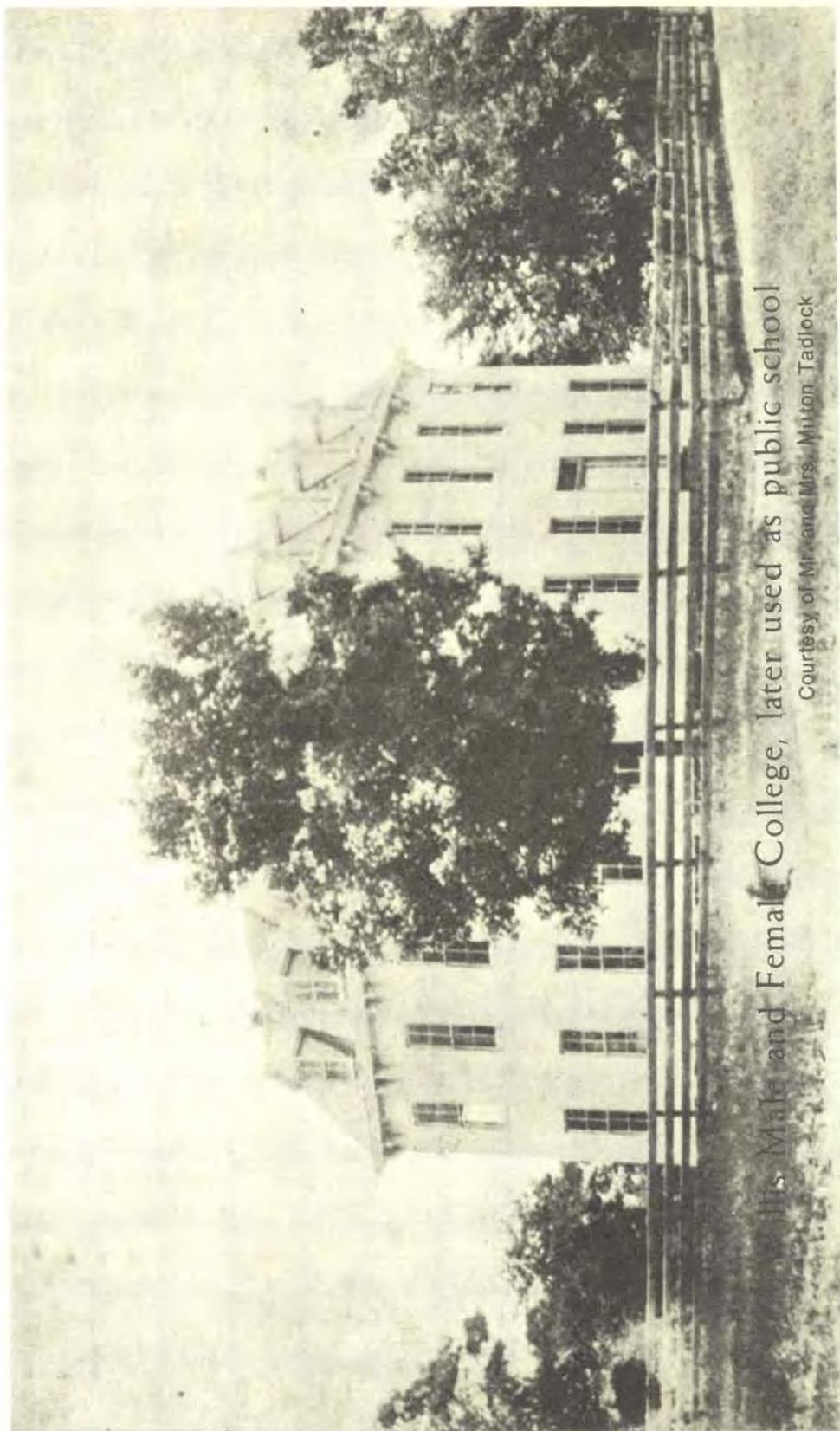
WILLIS

PUBLISHERS' NOTE, Cont.
prosper together. These pioneer spirits willingly gave up many human comforts and drained their bodies of life's energies in pure physical and mental toil so that their children and grandchildren could have the pleasure of a fine community of houses, churches, schools and businesses.

The pioneers of Willis dedicated their entire lives to the making of a home and community worthy of the love and respect they held for their families. Their descendants are here today and the future of the community, founded with the blood, sweat, tears, visions and faith of their ancestors, is in their hands and in the hands of those of us who have recently come to the area to make our homes.

Now that we enter the second century in the history of Willis, Texas a dramatic new frontier has evolved before us. Willis and the entire area is now on the verge of new horizons, new challenges, and greater opportunities in completely new fields of endeavor. New industrial and recreational projects are now under construction in the area which will hurl Willis into the seventies and the future with boundless opportunities for each and every one of us to grow, prosper and enjoy our own brand of "the good life". Success is at our doorstep just for the taking, whether we do succeed in conquering the challenges which will give us success of course depends on our individual actions. No area, no peoples have had greater opportunities thrust at their feet. How we handle the challenge is the only determining factor.

The descendants of the founding families of this area



Willis Male and Female College, later used as public school
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Tadlock

have a heritage of past accomplishments and deeds they can exhibit with honor. We who are the new residents can promise to make this area

justly proud of us when in the future our own lives are presented to the public in stories and pictures.

Stan Crawford

THE CAVILL FAMILY



by Wayburn Castleschouldt

Mrs. Son Cavill recalls her family's early days in Willis:

"Ten kids in that family, 5 boys and 5 girls. I can still remember them in order of their birth. First, there was Willy, then the twin girls, Eddie and Sally, and Campbell (Son), that was my husband, then James and Hood. Them kids worked, make a living farming and hiring out. They farmed 182 acres right along there where Mrs. Trudy Clark now lives.

One of the oldest most respected colored families in the history of Willis is the Cavill family. They were hard workers and a good family.

Mrs. Cavill continues: "My great aunt was a slave on part of what is now the Billy Woods farm. After slavery times she just stayed on the place till she passed. My Great-grandmother was also a slave in this country. Her name was Margaret Shalkelford. My mama and I both was born right up there in old Danville. Used to be quite a town. I was born May 1, 1883 right in Danville. My folks worked for the Abocrombies. They owned a farm where Mr. Weldon had his dairy. The Spillers had the biggest farm near there. My mama's name was Delsey Shalkelford.

"In 1918, I married into the Cavill family. Me and him worked hard till we had 580 acres. At one time we had 7 families sharecropping on the farm.

Ed Philpots's family was one of the families. He lived and farmed there for 16 years till 1939 when Son passed on.

"Every morning Son'd get up early, saddle his horse, feed him and while he was eating Son would eat. Then he would ride over his farm and see that everything was all right. He had six teams of good mules. Better not nobody mistreat one of them either. In the afternoon he would ride over the place again.

"Always remember in 1928 Son built me a house right where Mr. Hyman now lives. Said to me: 'I'll build you a house and pay for it but you gotta furnish it working on the halves.' He did build me a nice home and I went down to Wahrenburger's and bought some of my furniture. The first year I made 2 bales of cotton. The first was his and the second was mine. I got my money and went down to Conroe and bought me our first divan.

"In 1924 me and Son went down to Conroe and bought our first car. It was a brand-new Dodge. We didn't either one know how to drive. Son just told the salesman, 'you teach

my wife how to drive and she can teach me.' The salesman done it too, right out there in the fields, then I taught Son.

"We made as many as 80 bales of cotton one year on our farm. We raised everything we needed. I'd take our '24 Dodge over to Camp Letcher and sell vegetables to those folks. We had to work and peddle. We had three kids in Wiley College at one time. Fact is all my kids got a college education.

"We had a 75 tree peach orchard. Folks came from all around. We sold them fruit, vegetables, and syrup. The trees finally started dying out so we replaced them with pecan trees. Now we sell enough pecans to pay the taxes on the farm.

"Only two things Son Cavil wouldn't do. That was milk a cow butcher. I had to do all the milking and he hired someone to do the hog-killing.

"My husband helped lots of folks in his time, both colored and white. He's the one that had that road put down. They try to call it

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WILL BROWDER LAW OFFICE was located in back of Moran Building. Mildred Lucile Coleman standing in front.

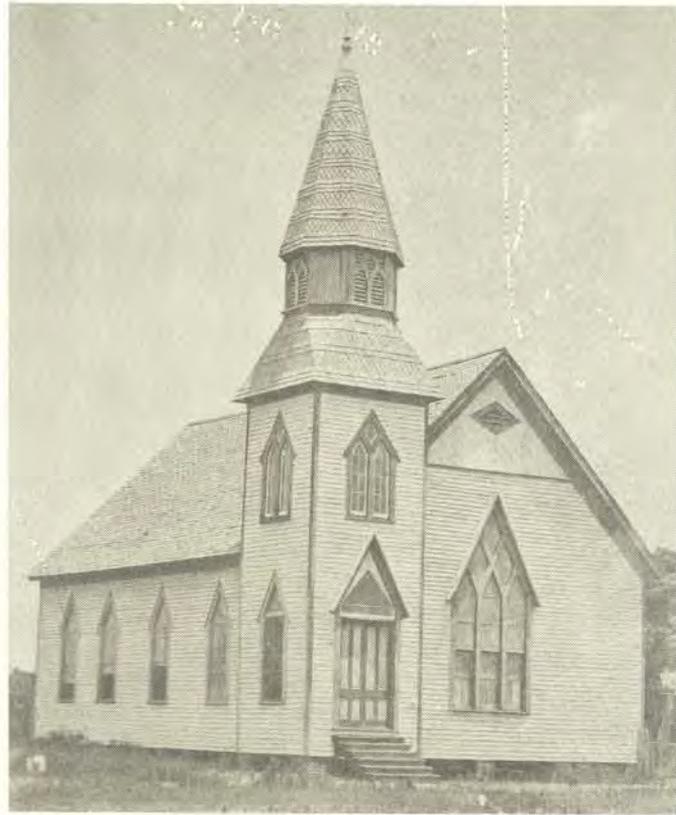
Cavill Family Cont.

Calvary Road, but it's not. It's Cavil Road. Took 8 acres of our land when that road was built.

"In 1939 he got bad sick. I took him to the doctor and found out he had cancer. He must have known he was in bad shape. He made up his will and told me: 'If I die on a Monday, don't bury me till the following Sunday. Don't nobody work none the rest of the week--take my body home for my friends to pay their last respects.' He died on Monday morning at 7:45 and I did just what he asked. He told the kids what would be theirs, but they could not have it until I passed. I still got cattle on the place and when I pass everyone will know just what belongs to them.

"My generation of folks, both colored and white, got along together better than folks do now. Why I was at Junior Smith's wedding and when Frank Novark and Margaret Snoe married, I was there too. Never will forget Lee J. and Lena Billnoski--they had an old mule called "Ole Jube." They would take that old mule, hooked up to a slide, pile the sled with blue bells and sell them to Houston folks.

"After Son died, I moved to Conroe, but I still love Willis and feel like it's my home."



AFRICAN METHODIST —

—ORGANIZED IN 1877

The Willis A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Church was organized in 1877. The first building was constructed on African Hill, just north of town. In later years it was moved to its present site by the late Reverend Sam Carrol.

During the storm of 1900 the church was destroyed, but was rebuilt while Reverend Sonley was pastor.

Some of the pioneers of the first church were Elbert Lindsey, Mose Hunter, Dow Mosley, Lemon Mitchell, Kelly Straughter, Ralieg Derry, Tom Car, M.V. Lawson, Frank White, John Traylor, Delbert Scott, Bettie Mitchell, Clarinda Scott, Della Scott, Ella Smith, Delphine Mosley, Debby Straughter, Mary Traylor, Arelia While, Nancy Hunter, Annie Scott, and Irma Robinson.

The present pastor is the Reverend Sister O.C. Dudley. Trustees are Frank Moses, Alex Williams, Mary Turner, J.T. Ferguson, Pinkie Campbell, Waymon Ferguson, and Lizzie Baltrip.



MAE HAMMOND



A Brief History of Willis

Willis was begun in 1870. It was named for P.J. and R.S. Willis, large landowners, who formerly were merchants in the area. They deeded the townsite located on the Houston and Great Northern Railroad route.

Willis began to move in 1872. Most of the businesses from the nearby town of Danville and many of its residents moved to be near the railroad. By 1873 the population had grown so much that some thought Willis should be the county seat of Montgomery County. On September 7, 1874, an election was held and Willis was chosen as the county seat by a majority of 142 votes. The county seat was never moved to Willis because of a feud with the neighboring town of Montgomery. Eventually, in 1889, the county seat was moved to Conroe -- the new oil boom town.

In 1875, the WILLIS OBSERVER, the town's newspaper, gave this account of the merchants and newly organized Grange Store:

. . .The merchants of this place have good stocks on hand, and are selling more goods than we thought could be sold in these hard times. They are selling principally for the cash -- though some little "trusting business." The Grangers are doing very well here, and are increasing in number every meeting. They have opened in this place a Grange store, upon a smallscale, which is destined to become of great benefit to the farmers; we are told that its effect is being felt already. The store is under the management of Colonel Israel Worsham, kept in the building occupied by F.J. Williams. . .

Willis also had a newly organized Male and Female College. Exercises for the institution began on August 1, 1875 and continued for ten months. The tuition rates were \$2.00 and \$5.00 a month; a student taking music was charged \$5.00 more. The expense of a student, including board, didn't need to exceed \$175.00 for a whole term. The college consisted of three buildings: the main building, dining room and kitchen, and one other building. The third floor of the main building was for laboratories and rooms for boarding students. There were two-hundred and fifty students who boarded in the college or homes located on the street to the west of the grounds and in nearby homes or boarding houses.

The curriculum provided for the study of ancient languages, history, mathematics, literature, science,

by MARY KAOUGH

vocal and instrumental music, art, and physical culture.

The administrators of the college were Reverend S.N. Barker and wife, George Stovall, F.P. Crowe, J.A. Kookan, John W. Hoke, M.A. Kline, and Cyril M. Jansky.

At a certain hour each week-day evening, the janitor of the main building would ring a bell which was in a housing on top of the main building. The ringing of the bell meant that all boarding students were to retire to a study hall for supervised study for two to three hours. Those in homes and out-of-town boarding houses were to go to their study tables for the same period of time.

By 1886, Willis had the appropriate number of people to incorporate as a town. Upon a petition of forty-nine resident citizens asking for an election to be held to incorporate the town at the Market House of R.E. Roach on March 16, 1886, the election was held and by a majority vote of fourteen, the citizens voted against incorporation.

In 1890, the census showed that Willis had a population of 832. It was running close behind Montgomery, which had 921.

There was a building boom in Willis about this time. Many new stores and businesses were constructed. Some of the businesses were: T.W. Smith's General Store; Sandel's Store; Powell and Walker's Drug Store; Leslie's Brick Yard; First and Last Chance Saloon; and the Pearl Saloon. An opera house was constructed in 1893 by T.W. Smith.

In 1895, Willis gained a lot of recognition through the tobacco industry that had begun. In the late 1890's Willis had developed the industry so well that it was a well-known town in the tobacco trade. Fine grades of tobacco were grown in the vicinity. T.W. Smith and his son, Owen Smith, encouraged the industry by constructing a large brick cigar factory and employed more than one-hundred men and women to roll the tobacco into cigars. Willis at one time had seven cigar factories. Tobacco buyers from various eastern places came to Willis to buy tobacco because Willis was said to have a flavor not found anywhere else. The tobacco raisers liked the "Vultra Abago" variety of Cuban tobacco and sent to Cuba each year for fresh seeds. The industry was successful until Congress lifted the tariff on Cuban tobacco, which had a very outstanding effect on the industry in Willis because Cuba, with cheaper labor, could raise tobacco cheaper than Willis and manufacture cigars cheaper too.

After the tobacco industry died, the lumber industry began to prosper and keep Willis alive. Willis now has sawmills and planers which employ much of the population and is one of the town's main sources of wealth.

Today, Willis is a small town, but it will grow--- with the expansion of Houston, the new Georgia-Pacific complex now under construction at New Waverly, the Gulf States power plant, Lake Conroe, new shopping centers---and the ever-increasing need for more space for the growing industries and population of today's world.



by Wayburn Castleschouldt

"When I first opened my bank, was only me and one other fellow. Man named Sam Beard, Jr. He was assistant cashier and I was cashier. Folks said I couldn't do it - run the bank that is. I was only 20 years old at the time.

"I came to Texas from Tennessee over 60 years ago when I was just 10 years old. Not sorry of it either. Willis has been good to me.

"My daddy died when I was 7. My mother had a brother living in Huntsville. He wrote to us and told my mother to come to Texas and live with him and bring along the kids.

"Huntsville is where I got my formal education. Went through high school and started to college. Judge Elkins, with Hill and Elkins, Attorneys offered me a job keeping books for them. I took the job and after awhile we heard about the bank in Willis going to close. On December 20, 1916, Judge Elkins and I came to Willis and looked around. We got a new charter for a bank and started with just \$49,000 in deposits.

I had that bank open in the same spot for 50 years. Some weeks I had to work every day but I was determined to do a good job. When I sold the bank in 1967, we had total deposits of over one-and-a-half million dollars. During this time I was also president of the Guaranty State Bank of Cold Springs and the People's State Bank of Shepherd. In 1950 I sold my interest in those two banks, now I'm affiliated only with the Conroe Bank of which I am a director.

"In 1930 I courted and married the former Estelle Moon, daughter of the Methodist preacher here at that time. One of the most wonderful women in the world.

"I was here when Willis' main business section burned to the ground. Wasn't much left on the west side of the street. When Willis was first incorporated in 1937, I was a member of the first city council and am still serving the city in that capacity."

Leo C. Cooper is now retired from business. When I asked him what he wanted to do now that he is retired, his answer was: "travel, I love to travel. Trouble is, getting my wife to go along."

I will always remember and appreciate Mr. Cooper for helping me once without my having to even

ask him. It was exactly two weeks to the day after we had opened our store in 1960 when someone broke in and robbed us, taking a considerable amount of money and merchandise. I had to use the \$500 that I had been saving to help purchase a home for my family for cash register money for the store, therefore not being able to buy the house. Somehow, Mr. Cooper heard what had happened and a couple of days later when I was in the bank, this happened:

"Heard about your bad luck, here take this." He threw an envelope on the counter. I took it and opened it - inside were five \$100 bills.

"What's this, Mr. Cooper?"

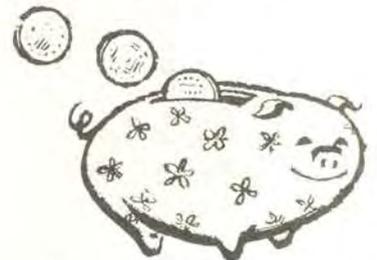
"That's to buy that house you want, Boy."

"Now Mr. Cooper, I don't have any money and don't know when I will be able to repay you."

"That's all right, Waymus (he has always called me that) - just pay me when you can."

I appreciate the confidence he placed in me. I have heard similar stories about what he has done for many people. Leo C. Cooper has played a large part in helping build Willis into what it is today and what it will become in future years.

TO TEXAS...



Leo Cooper recalls his years in Willis

Sidney Inglet

came, stayed and contributed

by WAYBURN CASTLESCHOULDT

The sign on the fence says: "Last Chance." Many are the times I have passed and wanted to stop but time just didn't warrant. Today I was just going to take time. I had always noticed how well-kept the place was and I knew that Mr. and Mrs. Walter Inglet lived there, but I didn't know much about them. As Mr. Inglet himself said: "I don't blow my horn much, so folks don't know much about me."

"First of all, I'm a free thinker and non-conformist like my daddy. I been readin' since I was 10 and forming my own opinion since then. I don't agree with anybody just because they said it. I have my own opinion and stick to it. Never have been sorry of it, either.

"Just like right over there across the road from here, there is a road called "Calvary Road: It is really supposed to be named 'Cavil Road. That's the real name of it. Named after a very respected, old colored family--the Cavils. They are still respected in this area. Johnny Cavil still lives down there on the end of the road. Why are folks always trying to change the names of things from their rightful names? Those folks are from one of the oldest families around here.

"I'm 81-and-a-half years old and most of what I say, I know to be the truth. I can tell you some of what my daddy told me about before my time. Spent all my life here--born right out where the big Gulf States plant is being erected--nearly 82 years ago. Been here ever since, except for 14 years I spent in Houston and California. Why I know and remember things---just like it was yes-

terday.

"My daddy came here in 1844, from Augusta, Georgia. Sailed to New Orleans and on to Houston. Right where Allen's Landing is where they got off the boat. Then Houston wasn't much bigger than Conroe is now. On the way from Louisiana most of the people on the ship contacted the Asiatic Cholera. Most of them died right down there at Decker's Prairie. Old man Decker was one of the finest old men he ever knew. Helped us bury our dead right there. My daddy lived under three flags in Texas. The Republic of Texas flag, the Union flag and the Confederate flag. He thought that Texas should have stayed in the Union, not pull out. Some folks thought hard of him for this but he wasn't the only one.

"Daddy lived at that time at Danville. Wasn't no Willis then. From Danville he went to Mexico for 10 years and built some of the finest churches ever seen. In 1860 he came back. Then Willis was just a railroad switch. They had a round house, a coal chute and a turn table. Willis was as far north that the train came for awhile. Then another railroad came in from the north. It was the Great Northern and the one from Houston was the International. They merged and it was called the I&GN.

"My daddy was one of the finest builders that ever hit this country. In 1870, a woman contacted him and had him build the first house ever built in Willis. He built it right where the First State Bank is now located. Used it as a boarding house for railroad men.

"You know who had probably the first newspaper in Willis? A guy named Price Daniel whose son later became the Governor of Texas. Yeah, he was born and raised where Mrs. Weldon now lives. His brother Lee was a merchant downtown here. The paper was called The Willis Enterprise. Later on Mr. Daniels moved to Dayton.

"Then a man named Judge Craven ran a newspaper here called The Willis Index; later the Colemans had one for awhile but moved it to Conroe.

"Tell you something else most folks don't know. My Daddy moved Sam Houston from Cedar Bayou up to Huntsville. Moved him and his family with wagons and teams."

"Used to be a funny sight in Willis when the trains came through. Four came through every day, two going north and two going south. All along the street in front of where Mr. Goodney's business is now; that street was a fine shell street, people would be lined up all along there---sometimes several hundred. All of them would be dressed up in fine white suits. Willis was mostly just a 'white collar town.' Lots of wealthy folks. Nearly

(Continued, next page)

Sidney Inglet

everybody in town met those trains.

"Back long time ago, Montgomery was the county seat but Willis was growing so fast that a movement was started to move it here. An election was held and Willis won. Meantime, someone found out that the county seat was supposed to be in the geographical center of the county. A big political argument ensued, and Conroe came out the winner. The land where the courthouse is now was owned and given to the county by a man named Jim Ayers. He sold lots around the square for businesses. From that, Conroe slowly grew into what it is today."

"In 1880, Daddy, along with his family, bought and moved out on the farm. Brother Sam lives out there now. Daddy bought it from Tom Peel of Montgomery. Later on he bought a place next to him from P.J. Willis. Mr. Willis was the founder of Willis. That place is now the site of the dam of the Gulf States lake. We had a big place out there, don't remember how many acres we farmed but we had 6 tenant farm families working on the place. We raised and grew everything needed in those days. We even had a school on the place by the name of Lone Oak. Man could go as far as he wanted with his education. Funny thing, right across Wier Creek was another community called Pleasant Grove and another school. Folks over there thought if their kids went to our school the creek would dry up or something. I went to school at Lone Oak and Ella, that's my wife, went to Pleasant Grove. Anyway, the inevitable happened and we married.

"We married in 1911 and lived on the farm. My brother ran the farm and I ran the commissary. We had anything people needed. Had about \$7000 worth of stock--that was lots of stock at the time. We bought the original stock and fixtures from Charlie Johnson's father in 1910. We had over 200 accounts on our books. All of them good ones too. I ran the store for about ten years until World War I came along. That hurt us and bad. When it started, we were solvent, buying and selling on long term. Sometimes we had to carry people for as long as a year before they could pay. Money got hard to come by. Folks just didn't have any, so they couldn't pay. If they couldn't pay, we couldn't either. We ran on some hard times and lost the store.

"Two of my kids, Earl and Sidney, were born out there on that farm. After we closed the store, Ella and I moved into Willis, from there to Houston and then to California. We were gone 14 years before we returned. When I came back I farmed for awhile but that didn't pay off so we moved up here and opened that mill. Ran it 34 years and did all right with it. Mill's just sitting there now. Couple of fellows came by the other day and wanted to buy it. I just don't want to sell it. I'll tell you why. My son helped me build that mill and someday he may want to run it himself. There's three or four logs down

there right now waiting for him.

"I'm getting ahead of myself so let's go back to about the 90's. Before then Willis was mostly a cotton and corn raising community. In the mid-90's, everybody went tobacco crazy. Tobacco actually brought in the money. The Smiths, Powells, Carsons, and Morrisons owned most of the best farms. They raised a special leaf used to wrap the cigars in. The industry created some good jobs and they brought in the right machines to work the ground. Those tobacco farms were as clean as most folks' gardens, not a root or weed anywhere. When the plant was harvested it was cut off close to the ground and hung in big sheds 165 feet long; and about 40 feet wide. My daddy built most of these. In the end of them was built a sweat box. It was used for curing the leaves and two cigar factories sprung up right quick. One of them was real large. It was located where Mr. Johnson's warehouse is now over by the railroad. It was a two-story building with a basement. Worked 13 women and I think it was owned by the Smith family. The other was across the railroad tracks. It was owned by some folks named Blum. They stayed in business there until about 1900. The Spanish American war killed the industry for us. Those Cubans and Mexicans could just produce tobacco cheaper than we could.

"In 1872 Captain Smith let my Dad have a contract to build the Manor House for the Smith family. He was

(Continued, next page)

BIG SAVINGS
IN EVERY AISLE

**DUANE'S
DRIVE INN
GROCERY**

OPEN 6 A.M. TO 11 P.M.

MONTGOMERY ST. WILLIS

Sidney Inglet (Continued)

the granddaddy of Arnold Smith. Dad cut the house out at Hostetter's Mill over in Walker County. Brought it over to the site and nailed it together. You remember it--it was across the street from Mrs. Margaret Ella Watson.

"My Daddy built that college you hear so much about too. It was a big, nice building. Three stories, with the auditorium on the second floor. It was named: The Willis Male and Female College. After he got it built they couldn't pay the bill so he had to rent it to them for about two years. They finally paid him off in 'chips and whetstones.' Man named Professor Barker was the ramrod. That happened long in '89.

"Recollect just like it was yesterday--New Year's Eve night, just before 1911, old man Sam Beard had a bank right where Nick Scott had his store. Came a most terrible freeze ever in these parts. Was plum warm when the sun went down. Before dawn, the temperature got down to 6 degrees. Some folks were trying to rob the bank, the nitroglycerin they had wouldn't explode because it was so cold. They had wire stacked all along the front of the bank. Mr. Beard knew they were in there and was shooting at them, but couldn't hit them because of all the wire in the way--anyway, they got all the money. The next morning I went down to borrow \$100, but they didn't have any so Mr. Beard went over to the Carson and Morrison store and asked Mr. Carson to let

me have the money. I needed it to send my sister back to school. She was going to a Catholic school over at Castroville. I got the money too.

"During that time Willis had about eight general stores. The largest of them belonged to Carson and Morrison. It was right where Francis Meador has his Humble station. It ran from that corner all the way up to the next corner. It was a huge place and my Daddy built it too. You could always recognize one of his buildings--he had a style all his own.

"We wasn't here when the town burned down. The fire destroyed all the buildings in the main part of town, but the one where the Florida Bar is now. Most of the buildings built were destroyed in that fire. The last remaining house that he built was the Crawford home, known to oldtimers like myself as the Smith Manor.

"Willis had some good doctors in those times too---Dr. Powell, Dr. Leslie, Dr. Harrell, Dr. Wright, Dr. Sharp, and a French doctor, but I can't remember his name. Probably several others that I can't remember.

"My Mama and Daddy raised nine kids, 4 girls and 5 boys. My Daddy didn't just make us work, he taught us how to work. We didn't just have chores to do; when the farming was laid by, we learned how to make a wagon-wheel--you know ain't many folks can do that. We could shoe a horse, build a house, or a wagon, we could do anything that needed to be done.

"One time when my folks lived in town, one of my brothers was born just about where Turner Wise lives now. It was a big old house. They lived in one end and the Hightowers lived in the other end. My brother, Andrew and Lubie Hightower were born in the same house on the same night--only at different ends of the house.

"So you see, I've lived round here a long time. Been some bad years, but most of them good. Got a good wife and raised a good family, right here in Willis. When I say something happened, I know what I'm talking about. Some of these newcomers round here think they know what's what, but they don't, just like the naming of that road--makes me mad just to think of it."

All in all I spent about 3 hours at the Inglet home. All the time Mr. Inglet was talking, Mrs. Inglet sat quietly by, offering correction on dates from time to time. Only once did she offer any information:

"I was born into the Tadlock family but I don't know anything about its history. I was interested, but just waited too late to try to trace any of them.

"Our daughter lives in Georgia now. They kept asking us to come and see them. Always saying they were going to send us the tickets to fly over there--so last September we went. First time the wife was on a plane."

"What did you think about the ride on the jet, Mrs. Inglet?"

"Well, the thought of it kinda excited me, but when I got on and started, it was just great. Really surprised me--I really enjoyed it."

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WILLIS BASKETBALL TEAM - 1924. (top row, l to r)- Alex Hildebrant, Morris Snapp, Marvin Pursley, Hayden Malone, Ben Hill and Coach Jack Mason. Bottom row, l to r) Cleo Smith, Robert Carr, Leo Paddock, Kirk Dixon and Clyde Coleman.



ONCE A STAGECOACH INN-Located in back of Florida Bar, was torn down in 1950's.

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The General Lewis Plantation

by JOSIE PATRICK

“ELMS WOOD”

Three miles northwest of Willis as you drive out on Farm Road 1097 you see, on your right just beyond the highest knoll around, part of the gigantic power plant of Gulf States Utilities.

Across the road on your left is the home of Charles Cluxton. He can look from his living room window and see the early morning mists swirling around this huge dynamo and watch the sunset glint the towering steel in the evenings. This is a different era from the twenties and thirties when Charles' boyhood home stood on that very knoll.

“Sure, I well remember the old place,” Charles Cluxton says. “It was known as the ‘Old Lewis Place,’ and I lived there for a number of years.” A smile creases his strong featured face. “But I don't spend much time thinking about the past. I live in the present and think mostly about the future.”

The truth of this virile man's words is evidenced in his surroundings: The spacious modern brick home where he and his wife live and a similar one a few yards away which houses his son and his family; the freshly mowed lawns and well kept grounds. Everything speaks of progress and prosperity. A few heirlooms in the present home are about the only reminders of the days on the hill at the “Old Lewis Place.”

Charles Cluxton's sister, Mrs. Mary Irving Peacock of Conroe Plantation Apartments, cherishes other relics from the old home: A rosewood chair (beautifully reupholstered by Mary herself), a Seth Thomas clock mirror, a walnut bedroom suite and a mahogany center table. Behind the table, light streams through a window filled with African violets grown by Mary. The sunrays strike two very old blue patterned porcelain pieces on the buffet against an opposite wall.

“That pitcher was broken once,” Mary smiles engagingly. “It took the restorer in Houston over a year to put it together again. She patched it with pure porcelain instead of just an adhesive, and there were so many tiny little pieces.”

“Our grandfather, Thomas M. Cluxton,” Mary continues, bought the ‘Old Lewis Place’ in 1898, and it was retained in our family until Gulf States Utilities bought it a few years ago. Of course by then the big old house had been gone for a number of years. It was torn down in

Two Years in the making

1938 and replaced by a smaller home.”

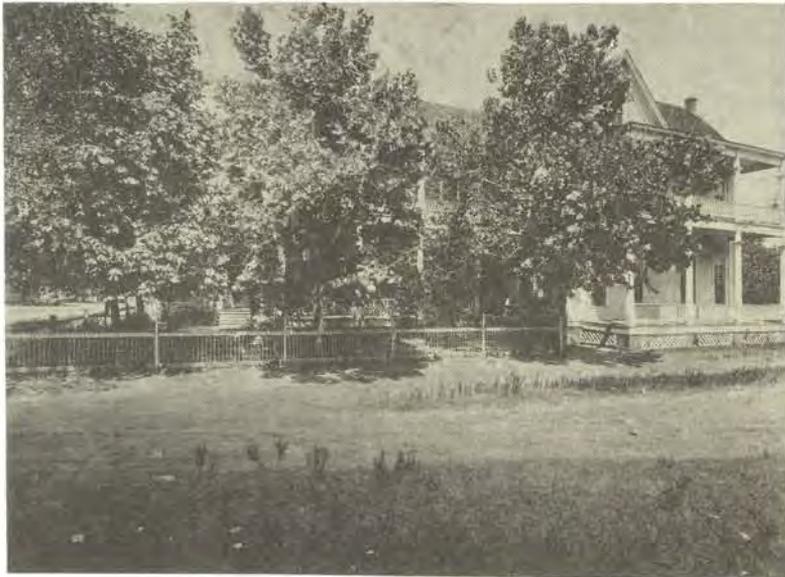
Mary's and Charles' father, Ben Cluxton, and his family had lived in another house on the place. But when Ben's wife (the former Ruby Walker) died, Ben and his children moved into the large house with Grandfather Cluxton. This was Mary's home until she married twelve years later and Charles' for somewhat longer.

The mansion, originally called “Elmswood”, was the first frame house constructed in this part of the state. It was built early in the 1800's by John Lewis (later known as General Lewis), a Virginia landowner who possessed more than two hundred slaves. Though records are somewhat dim, it appears that Galveston was Lewis' first stop on his way to Texas. There rumors reached him, from La Fitte's scouts, of the beauties of the lands about the San Jacinto River one hundred miles to the north. Here, young Lewis decided, was the place of his dreams. Two and a half leagues and a half square of land were selected and the Virginian and his slaves left Galveston for their new home. Though there were no sawmills and hauling was laborious, there was timber on Lewis' land and he was determined to reproduce a mansion from his virgin pine forests that would rival the finest in Virginia.

The highest knoll was chosen for the homesite and the slaves were set to work. A couple of years they spent building Elmswood. Everything was handhewn: timbers, window and door frames, boards, shingles and pillars. Nothing but the finest craftsmanship was accepted. Spikes and nails were so scarce that their price was prohibitive, so wooden plugs were substituted and Elmswood was constructed without a single spike. The few bricks, that were used were obtained from Holland.

A huge underground cistern, made of some of those bricks, was sunk in the yard. Its capacity was that of

(Continued, next page)



KING HOTEL - owned by S.A. Beard, Sr. - located behind Paddock Bldg. - faced south. Dismantled in 1929.



A HAPPY GROUP - Lula Belle Calfee standing in back, (back row, l to r) Lucile Kennedy, Azelle Olson, Valarie Thomason, Camille Olson, Estelle Goff, J.D. Gibbs, Front row, Erma Calfee, Emma Frances Elmore, Melba Rhew Kennedy, Billie Bob Worsham and Dick Calfee.

(Lucille Goff)

General Lewis Plantation

supplying an entire army with water. Underground pipes were laid and only the cold winter water was allowed to flow into the cistem. Overhead was built a lattice portico and crepe myrtle trees were planted to shade the pathway to the kitchen.

The tall pillars and windswept verandas faced the old Danbury-Montgomery Road which ran about a hundred yards in front of the house. Leading down to it was a brick walk, arched with crape myrtle. A picket fence flanked the road for several hundred feet and all about the house was a luxurious garden filled with pink crape myrtle, cedars, elms and petunias. Nearby in a cedar grove feathered songsters warbled of the loveliness of the surroundings.

The entire front wing of the third story of the house was a ballroom. A steep bannistered stairway led to the second floor from the front hallway and then curved upward to the ballroom. General Lewis' socials were quite famous and guests came from far and near in carriages and on horseback.

At times the atmosphere of Elmswood was quickened with excitement as word came that Sam Houston, a neighbor fifty miles to the north, was coming for a visit.

A few years after the war between the states General Lewis died. He was buried in an elm grove on a hilltop near his beloved Elmswood. The mansion became the property of his daughter who had married a Mr. Woodson. Later they sold the old homestead to a Burke family from Alabama. The Burkes in turn sold it to a Mr. Green and from Green it was acquired by John Hulon. By 1898, when it was purchased by Thomas Cluxton, the original grant had dwindled to one hundred and twenty seven acres.

During the Cluxtons' residency, many visitors came to the old house. Among them, now and then, was a Lewis

or Burke descendant with dreams of buying the old home back. But this never happened.

For over a hundred years Elmswood defied the ravages of age. But time and progress march on, relentlessly. Now as the blue mists surround the rolling land around the pulsating Gulf States Utilities plant, only an occasional passerby remembers the stately old mansion known around these parts as the "Old Lewis Place."

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KENNEDY FAMILY stand in front of old Kennedy home. Front row, l to r, Lucille, Melba and Rose Aline Kennedy. Back row, Jewel, Clyde, Jim and Mary Kennedy, Lois, and Harvey (Sammie Jim in arms) and Henry Mertz in background.



1934 CLASS AT WILLIS SCHOOL



BOYS' STYLE OF DRESS - Early 1900's (left to right) Leo R. Paddock, Robert Carr and Lawrence Watson. (Leo.R. Paddock family)

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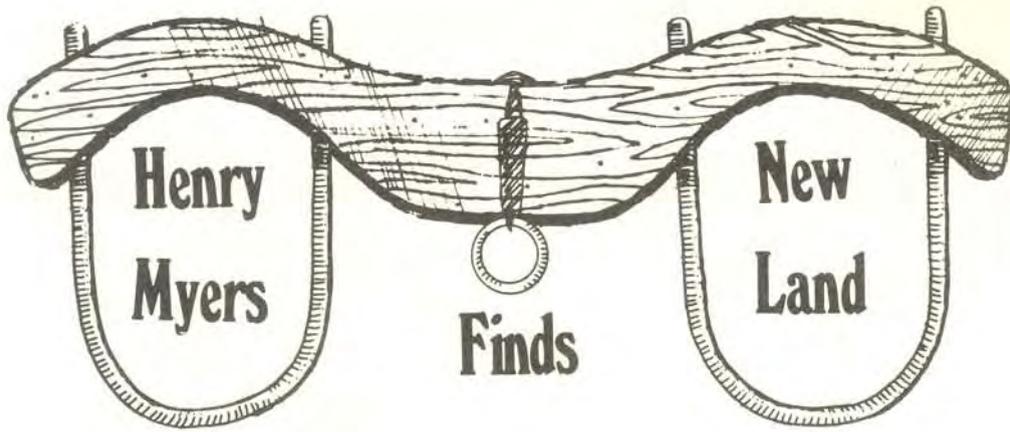
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It was in the late 1800's when Henry Myers decided to move to Texas, possibly in search of new and better land than his native state of Alabama.

He brought his wife, Mattie, and their 7 children, Rodney, Wiley, Emma, Annie, Marshall, Fannie and a young son whose name cannot be found on record. This son was killed from a fall from one of the wagons as they neared their destination and was buried in a small settlement cemetery on the Longstreet Road.

The death of their son caused the Myers to stop sooner than they had planned, as they wanted to be near his gravesite. And so it was, that they settled on Hostetter Creek and purchased 112 acres of land and began their new life in a new area.



Quickly the Myers family built a pole shack to shelter them and lived there until they could build their permanent home. Already, this was a growing community. The Tadlock, John Calfee, Horn, Fance, Fears, Waters, Childers, Woods, Gilfords, Smith and many other families lived in the area.

One of the sons, Marshall Fickland, remained at home to help his parents and one of his sisters, who had lost her eyesight. He married Lena Freeman Myers and

they had 4 children, Walter, Albert, Milton and Jewel. Mrs. Myers passed away in 1918 and later Mr. Myers married the former Inez Baker, from this marriage, another son, Roy, was born.

Milton Myers resides in Willis at this time with his wife, Ernestine and two children, Regina and Clyde, and Albert Myers and his wife, Leone recently purchased a home in San Jacinto county at Old Waverly. They have two sons, Elmer and Mickey.

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First Methodist Church -



Early Willis Landmark

First Methodist Church of Willis was built by pioneer builder, Sidney L. Inglet, between the years of 1877 and 1879. Pastors during that time were G.S. Sander and J.M. Pugh.

Pews and chancel rail used today are the original ones, built by E.A. Anderson.

The stained glass windows were given in memory of members by friends and relatives: There are twelve windows bearing these names: Mr. and Mrs. Louis Berkley McCullar; Ed.,

D.F. Woolridge, Mrs. Kate Woolridge; Mrs. Joanna Cartwright and Wade H. Nesmith; Mr. and Mrs. R.F. Cochran and John R. Cochran; Mrs. W.R. Malone; Edward Americus Anderson and Lucy Hulon Anderson; Charles Isaac Burleson, Mrs. Linnie Leota Burleson and Mrs. Monta Annie Olson; Rev. and Mrs. William B. Moon and Rev. Frank Moon; Margaret Arnold Smith; Mrs. Estelle Smith Watson and Owen A. Smith; Mrs. S.A. McCall; and Mrs. Georgina Emma Paddock.

Since 1886, there have been forty-eight pastors of the Methodist church. They are: F.E. Hammond, George C. Stovall, J.F. Wynn, W.H. LaFevre, L.A. Farrington, C.A. Le Cleer, H.V. Philpott, A.J. Wheeler, R.W. Adams, F.L. Allen, S.H. Morgan, J.F. Bilbro, C.E. Garrett, C.M. Thompson, W.L. Pate, S.D. Horger,

J.E. Buttrill, D.S. Burke, A.J. Frick, C.W. Kennedy, G.W. Riley, J.S. Weatherby, Rev. Red, W.B. Moon, W.H. Edwards, C.H. Doak, M.F. Wells, L.C. Lilly, Harry V. Rankin, C.T. Cummings, C.E. Harris, W.H. McCown, T.C. Sharp, J.F. Wallace, J.B. Davis, Walton Day, S.D. Lambert, J. Mouzon Lee, C.E. Schneider, Paul Blake, Walter Klinge, Claude Hines, Otis Sutton, H.O. Alloway, Denman Easterling, W.R. Cunningham, Herbert R. Rohloff, Jr. and Bill B. Hedges.

The large bell in the steeple was given to the church by pioneer Captain T.W. Smith and the carillon was given by Mrs. Margaret Sykes and T. W. Crawford in memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. S.A. Crawford.

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TOBIN HOME on Danville Street.
(Courtesy L.R. Paddock family)



KENNEDY GROCERY STORE- now Willis Pool Hall. Old water tower may be seen in background.
(Courtesy L.R. Paddock family)



KING HOTEL - Side view. To the right may be seen D.F. Owen's Willis Barber Shop. Leo R. Paddock and Dewitt Holloman in foreground.
(Courtesy L.R. Paddock family)



WOOLDRIDGE HOTEL - later to be known as Pursley Hotel. T.W. Crawford in foreground. Was located across from post office.
(Courtesy L.R. Paddock family)

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Willis' Founder Peter J. Willis

PETER J. WILLIS, -- ORIGINAL FOUNDER OF WILLIS, IN 1870 - WITH HIS WIFE, CAROLINE, (WOMACK) WILLIS, MARY ELLA, TABITHA, CAROLINE, MAGNOLIA, WILLIAM HENRY, AND PETER JAMES, JR. (Picture courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Weisinger)



EARLY LOCOMOTIVE. This photo, taken about 1869, shows one of the first trains to pass through Willis after the completion of the railroad. The buildings in the background are on the east side of the tracks. They were occupied at various times by the International Saloon, the Willis Hill Feed Store and later the Dean & Elmore Dry Goods Store. J.R. Elmore, Jr., son of one of the above owners served as mayor of Willis at one time. (Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Nick Scott)



JOHN HENRY CALFEE FAMILY - 1941: Left to right: Zill Calfee, John Calfee, Homer Calfee, Emma (Calfee) Phillips. Gratten Calfee, Henry Calfee, Benjamin C. Calfee, Allen Calfee. (Courtesy of Mrs. B.C. Calfee)

WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL, 1940



Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

The Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Willis was organized in 1883, and was located near the former site of the J.S. Hunt Lumber Company.

Reverend Jimmy Johnson was the first pastor, and he served the congregation for eight years.

Succeeding pastors were the Reverends Duncan, Boyd, E.H. Dunbar, P.A. Northington, Robinson, Hall, and, in 1910, D.H. Rankins. He was succeeded by Dr. W.M.A. Johnson.

Dr. Johnson was an intelligent, humble, and loveable man. He was not concerned with anything more than with the furtherance of the business of his church. He was pastor of the church for 28 years.

During that time the church building burned down because of sparks from the nearby mill. The owner, J.S. Hunt, proposed to the officers of the church that the new building be constructed on a new site, and volunteered to donate the lumber. The new building was erected across the road, about 200 feet from the old site.

Dr. Johnson was succeeded by B.S. Peebles. Other pastors during this time were Benjamin Bryant, H.L. Thomas, and A.L. Bradley. Because the church was burned out twice more, another site was chosen.

Bradley pastored the church 16 years.

The current pastor is Reverend W.F. Tillis. Deacons of the Antioch Church are Ben Holland, Abe Woodson, Marion Smalley, Pomp Singleton, Ned Barnes, A.R. Turner, John Gay,

Tobe Holland, Sam Martin, Andrew Barnes. C.L. Jingles, John Powell, Doug Johnson, Junious Charles, Edward Philpot, Cummings Philpot, T.B. Barnes, Eddie Harvey, Jr., and Isaac Philpot.



WILLIS SCHOOL BUS, taken in front of the Willis High School in 1940. The driver was Earl Doughtie. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. James Segers)

' SMITH '

by JOSIE PATRICK

As you approach the house at 1202 Pine Shadow Lane in Conroe you see, on the well kept front lawn the name plate bearing the single word "Smith".

"Smith"; you muse. Not an unusual name surely Not even a very unusual name plate, in a way. Yet it is, you discover, as you look more closely. The letters are of reddish hued tile set in a concrete mix base. You study the plate still further. Now you catch that other unique quality that has eluded you: The single word "SMITH". You know that this is the home of E. Arnold Smith and his wife, the former Allene Hopkins of Houston. You know a number of things about the Arnold Smiths. Among these is the knowledge that they met while both were students at Rice University and that they graduated from there together. You know that both Arnold and Allene Smith are well known, he as an attorney and she as a teacher in the Conroe Schools.

"Why then," you question yourself, "does the plate bear only the name "Smith?" Why, you wonder, doesn't it read 'The Arnold Smiths'?"

"It's almost as if it belongs to a different era," you think: "An era far removed from the bustle of the present age; an era when everyone in a quiet little town knew Smith down the street and Jones just around the corner.

"I see you're looking at our name plate," a welcoming voice comes from the door. Smiling cordially, Allene is standing there. "That name plate, you see, was originally Captain T.W. Smith's." Allene smiles again. "It was on the hitching post in the front yard near the gate at his home in Willis."

Now you understand. That was nearly a hundred years. Back then Captain Smith was the "SMITH".

"Captain Smith's home became better known as 'The Old Crawford House, Allene tells you. "That is because it was the home of Captain Smith's daughter, who was married to Judge. S.A. Crawford, for a number of years. When the house burned five or six years ago the Crawford's daughter, Margaret Sykes, who was having the house restored at the time, gave the name plate to us. The letter 'S' was missing so we had to have it replaced and the entire plate reset."

"Captain Smith was my grandfather," Arnold tells you. "Though none of his children are now living, there are several of us grandchildren."

Captain T.W. Smith was born in 1829 in Logan County, Kentucky. In 1845, while still hardly more than a boy, he came to Texas and settled in the town of Montgomery. There he later married Margaret Arnold whose

father was Eliphet L. Arnold. Eliphet and his brother, Dr. E.J. Arnold, had come to Texas from Haddon, Connecticut and settled in Montgomery around 1836.

Captain T.W. Smith's services to his country began while he was still quite young. In 1851 when he was only twenty one years old he was elected sheriff of Montgomery County, and some ten years later he was a Captain in the Confederate Army. Records show that his Commission of Office was signed by P.H. Bell, Governor of Texas at that time.

To Captain T.W. Smith and his wife there were born a number of children. They were: Wesley J. Smith, the father of W.J. Smith who lives at Montgomery. Irene Smith Pace who lived at Lockhart, a granddaughter of Irene's, Mrs. A.E. Smith, still resides at Lockhart. Owen A. Smith who never married. Maggie Smith Caldwell, whose husband was John Caldwell; from this union there are two living children, John Edward of Galveston and Mrs. J.B. Spiller of Houston. Estell Smith Watson; Estell and her husband, Mr. Watson, were the parents of Margaret Ella Watson who still lives in Willis. Willie Smith died while he was still in his teens. Eliphet Arnold Smith (known as 'Bubba'); his sons are W.F. Smith, a writer, of Conroe; Eliphet Arnold Smith, the attorney, of Conroe; and Thomas F. Smith, Superintendent of Montgomery Schools. Leila Smith who was married to Judge S.A. Crawford. Mr. Crawford was a lawyer for many years. The Crawfords were the parents of Margaret Sykes who married James B. Sykes, a Navy Admiral and Commanding Officer of the U.S. Carrier, Bennington. A son of the Crawford's was T.W. Crawford, now deceased.

While living in Willis Captain Smith engaged in a thriving mercantile business. But in 1872 something very exciting happened to the small neighboring town of Willis. The railroad came through, and with it came an influx of population and industry; so it was only good business for Captain Smith to move his mercantile interests to Willis.

Right across the street east, and facing north, from Miss Margaret Ella Watson's present home, Captain Smith built his family home which later was to become known as "The Old Crawford House." He contracted Sidney L. Inglet to construct this substantial house which was to stand the ravages of many years.

Willis was now building rapidly. The Opera House, which Captain Smith also had built, brought much attraction and many people to Willis. The Methodist Church

Continued on Next Page

"Smith"

was built in 1878 and the Willis Male and Female College was officially opened in 1885. Quite soon Willis became known as an educational center.

A most promising industry of Willis was tobacco. Captain Smith's son Owen grew a large plantation of it and by 1890 his factory had a flourishing trade. His tobacco products were shipped to all parts of the United States. Then came the Spanish-American War of 1897. At the end of the war Cuba began exporting tobacco. Because of cheap labor, the Cuban products were cheaper than Owen Smith could sell his, so his tobacco trade declined and he gave it up and went into mercantiles.

Before the railroad came to Willis, Old Danville five miles north of Willis was a thriving little town. There were fourteen brick buildings, and a stagecoach route went through the town. Arnold's grandmother Spiller lived there.

"I remember her telling about the Yankees coming through Danville around 1864 or '65," Arnold says.

Her father, W.F. Spiller, was away in the Confederate Army and Elizabeth, Arnold's grandmother, her two brothers and their mother were alone. One evening they learned that a Yankee troop was approaching Danville. They hid out near the house all night while the soldiers took over and made their headquarters in the Spiller's home. The next morning the Yankees left, taking all the Spiller's food with them. They left the house and everything else intact, to the gratitude of the Spiller

family.

In 1890 the Spiller family moved to Esperanza. This was where Arnold was born much later. "Esperanza means 'Hope'", Arnold laughs. "But I couldn't see much hope about it. Everything was going to Willis. After the railroad came through, the old stage coach trail went out and Danville went down."

Captain Smith died in 1901 at the age of seventy two. Many of the things of his era are only fond memories now. There are however some more substantial reminders than memories. One of them is the Methodist Church. When it was being restored about ten years ago the original chancel rail was uncovered. This rail and the original pews, put together with wooden pegs, are lovingly cherished today. They were built by the grandfather of Myrtle Anderson Wahrenberger and Mattie Bess Simonton.

Mattie Bess and Myrtle belong to another of Willis' pioneer families. Their father, Mabin Anderson, was the sheriff of Montgomery County from 1900 to 1920 and an uncle, Hulon N. Anderson, was superintendent of Conroe Schools for many years. Mabin's son, Edwin T. was elected sheriff of Montgomery County in 1940.

To Arnold Smith another reminder of the past is the old Spiller home built in 1897 and still standing. Allie D. Smith was a Spiller daughter, and the home is retained and maintained by J.D. Spiller.

Not the least, by far, of the cherished relics of the Captain Smith era is the name plate that adorns the lawn of the genial couple who live at 1202 Pine Shadow Lane.

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MR. AND MRS. GEORGE B. ROBINSON, Charter members of the Willis community, stand in front of their house on Danville Street. It is one of the few old homes still standing. Now owned by Russ Clanton, it is located next to the Moran Utilities Company Building. (Photo courtesy Russ Clanton)



THE ROUSSEAUS--Owners of the Red and White Store, in 1935, now known as Wise Grocery. (Courtesy of Mrs. Willie Inglet Scott)



WILLIS' CHURCH OF CHRIST built late in 1888 or early 1889. (Jewel Kennedy)

In 1872, Lot 5 in Block 54 of the town of Willis was set aside by I.G.N. Railroad Co. for a Christian church site. In 1887, this lot was purchased by M.C. Leslie and H. O'Banion, who were trustees for the Church of Christ.

The pictured building was erected in late 1888 or early 1889.

Benches for the church were hand made with square nails, and some of them are still in use in the classrooms that were added to the back of the original building in 1943.



1929 WILLIS FRESHMAN CLASS. Miss Phillips, Maurine Oglesby, Izean Seward (now Mrs. Johnny Muller) was teacher. Pictured: Orle Hazel, Vera Collier, Louise Sapp, Helen Johnson, Greer, Minnie Pursley, Juletta Harvell, Earl Doughtie, Wilson Ellis, Miron Walker, Kimball Graham, Kelly Wise, Agnes Williams, Lucile Kennedy, W.M. Sively, Tommie Johnson, Emmie Redmon, Kathleen

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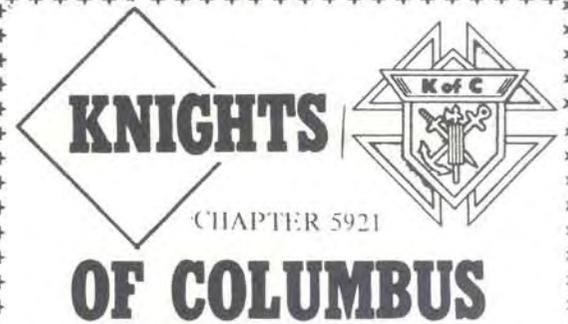
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**PERRY WILLIAMS
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**REBA'S
Conroe**

Dr. W.P. Powell

Early Willis Physician

Relatives of the late Dr. W.P. Powell were kind enough to allow us the use of material they had, in order that we might record in our Centennial edition a history of one of Willis' pioneers. From an unidentified newspaper clipping:

"Dr. W.P. Powell's father, J.M. Powell was born on the Rhoanoke River near the Virginia line, in North Carolina. Dr. Powell's mother (nee N.J. Traylor) was born in Georgia.

In the early settlements of Alabama, while it was considered a frontier country, his father's and mother's families settled in Perry County, near Cahawba River, Alabama. After mature years, his father and mother married, then after successful toil on a farm the subject of this sketch was born in 1835. Three or four years after they moved to Union Parish, Louisiana when that section was almost a wild waste, or in its primitive years. In a few years, the town of Marion was founded, also an academy. At this school Dr. Powell received his

academic courses. In 1852-3 he attended his literary collegiate course at the University of Missouri. He returned to Marion, La. in time to help his father move to Walker County, Texas in the fall of 1858. There a town was founded, Waverly, also male and female academies, where he commenced the study of medicine, read a few months, returned to Marion, La. where he finished his studies under his uncle, Dr. John Traylor, where he had the advantage of a drug store.

He attended his first course of lecture at the University of La. medical department, New Orleans in 1857 and 1858. In March 1859 he graduated. Returning to Waverly he commenced practice. During that year he invented and put into use a bandage truss for hernia, also a flexible rubber tube stethoscope, which proved far superior to the old block stethoscope in use at that time.

After the unpleasantness broke out between the North and South, he joined Hood's Texas Brigade in Virginia, where he was appointed as-

sistant surgeon to the Fifth Texas regiment. He was wounded several times during the war while attending to his duties. At the Battle of Gettysburg he was retained at the field hospital for services there. Being crowded for room he was sent to Cashtown, Pa. to establish other hospitals to accommodate the wounded and took charge of same.

General Lee being forced to retreat, Dr. Powell was captured by the Federal forces and carried with the wounded to Baltimore Md., thence moved to Point Lookout on the bay. He was at the commencement of that prison; and was called on to assist Dr. Burton of Boston, who was in charge. Small pox broke out in the camp and the cases were removed to a separate hospital where Dr. Powell assisted.

On the first exchange vessel, Dr. Powell was permitted to return to Richmond. He joined his old comrades and there remained until the surrender of General Lee to General Grant. He returned to his home in Waverly where he practiced until in 1872 when he moved to Willis and was appointed surgeon of the railroad. He carried out his private practice also, using his home as a clinic when needed. He was quarantine officer, a delegate to the quarantine association in New Orleans, member of the American Public Health Association, member of the judicial medical examining board, of Harris and Montgomery counties, and an active member of the Texas State Medical Association.

His home is one of the first built in Willis, he owned the first motorized buggy offered on the market and later was first to own a car, a Maxwell, in the county. Before, he had spent many hours going about his duties on horseback, or in a buggy.

Dr. Powell not only treated the sick but was interested in research, studied and experimented with various compounds of his own making for the cure of whooping cough, and other diseases. He was a remarkable man, ahead of his field and contributed much to the growth and well-being of the town of Willis.

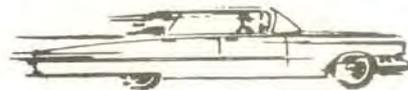
Residing in Willis now are his daughter, Mrs. Minnie Bowers, granddaughter, Mrs. Velma Cargill. His great-grandson, Bob Cargill lives in Conroe.



1911 WILLIS GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM



To Succeed



"I've opened at 5 a.m.
and closed at 9 p.m."

by WAYBURN CASTLESCHOULD'T

The history of Willis would not be complete without the story of Charlie Johnson and his family. Mr. Johnson is living proof that hard work and perseverance are rewarded. Son of a farmer and businessman who was not wealthy; Charlie Johnson has worked long and hard to accomplish his dream.

I went by his office one day to talk to him, and get some of his family's history.

"Now Mr. Castleschouldt," (he calls everyone Mister) "my secretary is off today so we may be disturbed from time to time." I was there about an hour and we were interrupted at least 20 times.

A Mr. Brown came in while I was there: "Mr. Johnson is one of my best buddies. 'Member one time I bought a tire from him on credit--that was way back in '26. Been doing business with him ever since. He had a little old service station over there on the corner."

Mr. Johnson has a sign on the wall over his desk and once while he was waiting on a customer, I copied the following:

There's only one way to succeed:
You've gotta wanta, and it's a
do-it-yourself project all the way.
You can't borrow the ambition.
You can't borrow the perseverance.
Nor can you borrow the self-confidence
it takes to become a success.
But above all, you've gotta wanta
so passionately that nothing - and no one
can discourage you.

Our visit continued:

"My daddy's name was T.J. Johnson. He and mama, Hattie B. (McCormick) Johnson came to Willis from Sour Lake 66 years ago--I was just five years old then. Now I'm 71, been around here all my life. Daddy and Mama had eight kids, five girls and four boys. One child died with the whooping cough. My folks were born in Missouri.

"When we first moved to Willis we lived right where Mr. Moran now has his home. While we lived there Albert and I would load our wagon with vegetables and drive to Conroe and sell them. If we sold as much as \$5 worth, we really had a good day.

"We sold that place and moved out into the country near the Gulf States site. Daddy bought 100 acres for \$3400. He paid \$1400 down and signed a note for the remainder--took us 10 years to pay it off. Two or three

You've Got To Want

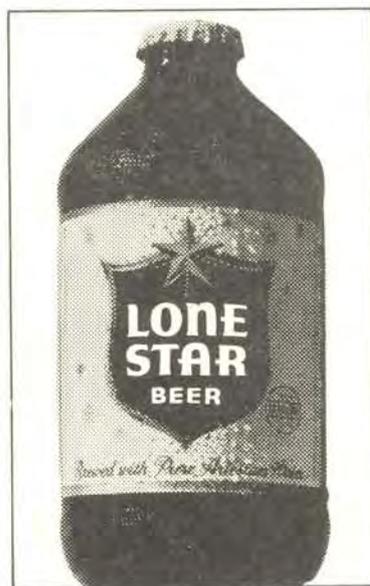
times we thought we would lose it. We raised all kinds of food and vegetables, just as everyone else did. If kids worked as hard today as we had to, there would be less trouble.

"Always remember in 1915 Daddy gave me and Albert a patch of cotton to pick over. We got \$36 for the cotton that was left. We would pick cotton on the side for 50 cents a hundred. My share of the cotton was \$18. Along with what I made on the outside, I had enough to buy my first suit--cost me \$21. Still remember it was green. I wore it so long that under the lapels where it wasn't faded, it was a different shade of green."

"Me and the other kids would walk to school from the farm. If it was too bad for Dad to work the team he would let us use them to pull the wagon to school. Or we would ride them.

"Papa built that house right where the Kaoughs

Continued on Next Page



LONE STAR SALES

715 DALLAS PL 6-3521

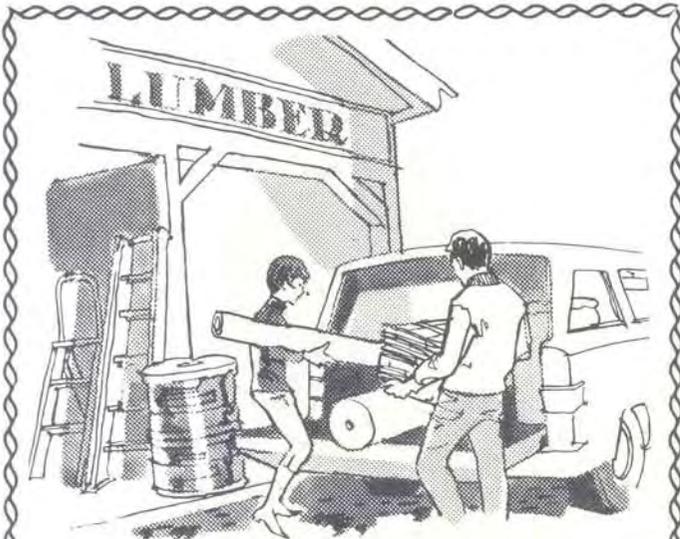
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WILLIS

Johnson cont.

now live. In 1923 on the 23rd day of June, I opened a filling station where the moran building is now. Daddy had \$1200 and Mr. Cooper loaned me \$600--that's what I started with.

"Didn't cost me but \$17 to build the building. Eleven dollars for the brick and \$6 to lay them. Wasn't any light plant in Willis then. We bought a power plant, dug a deep well with an overhead tank, and stocked our store all on \$1800. I opened that place at 5 in the morning and closed at 9--seven days a week. I had a service station and grocery store. Used to buy lots of syrup, sweet potatoes, and sausage from a man named Hall. After I was there awhile, I sold out and moved down the street, across from where Mr. Wise's grocery store is. now. Had my office and a little grocery store there.

"I got in the water utility business quite by accident. I had a few rent houses that needed water, so I had a deep well dug and supplied them with water. As the neighbor's well would go dry, they asked if I would let them hook up to my well.

"Bear in mind now Mr. Castleschouldt, all this time I worked 16 to 20 hours every day.

"After I sold out my water business to the city, we wanted to lay lines into the south part of town. As Mr. Moran laid his gas lines, he was good enough to let the city lay their water lines alongside his, at no cost to the city. At the same time, I loaned the city money, interest free, to lay the lines. They paid me back \$50 a month.

"At one time I owned at least 75 rent houses in Willis, along with 350 lots. Now I don't own near that many. Even during the Depression I made a good living.

"In 1933 I started my Chevrolet dealership--had it 26 years until 1959. In '55, I sold 702 new cars--that was more than any dealer my size in the state of Texas had ever sold--before or since. That was even more than most of the larger dealers have sold.

"I was on the city council for 16 years. During that time the city never operated in the red. The biggest project we put across was the sewage system--then the rebuilding of Montgomery Street. When we put in the sewage system, we doubled the taxes that I had to pay.

"I have one daughter, Eve, and two grandsons. All my waking hours are spent for them and my loving wife. Willis has been good to me and I appreciate it."

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WILLIS



WHITE OAK SCHOOL - 1917 - Front row, Left to right: Florence Runnels, Eugenia Golding, Ruth Motley, Lou Annie Golding. Back row on log: Henry Calfee, Dick Calfee, Allen Calfee, Estil Calfee, Cullee Calfee and Hearn Motley. Teacher-Zettie Schmidt.

(Courtesy of Mrs. B.C. Calfee)



The first post office around Willis was established long before Willis was founded. It was first established at Lone Oak, an area north of the Gulf States plant site, in 1846. There it stayed for almost two years, under the supervision of post masters B.J. Thomason - 1846; and George Thomason - 1847.

With the growth of Danville, the post office was moved there and remained at Danville until 1872. Postmasters at Danville were:

Daniel Robinson, appointed August 19, 1847; Abner J. Grigsby, July 20, 1848; William E. Viser, August 19, 1850; Edmund C. Wooldrige, August 15, 1851; John E. George, March 14, 1855; Welborn D. Westmoreland, November 23, 1858; John E. George, June 1, 1860; Fannie E. George, May 27, 1866.

The following post masters have served at Willis:

John E. George, appointed September 9, 1872; Mrs. Lucy M. Bell, October 4, 1875; A. Richards, December 1, 1875 (failed to make bond); Mrs. Lucy M. Bell, February 25, 1876; John M. Lewis, March 29, 1901; Edgar D. Gooden, June 18, 1908; Clinton Bybee, March 10, 1914; Bennora C. Bybee, August 3, 1918 (acting); Aaron H. Russell, June 4, 1920; Mrs. Mollie S. Berryman, April 25, 1934; and at the present time, Mrs. Nezie Duncan, October 27, 1967.



1919 - 1920 McREA SCHOOL - Front row, left to right: Bertha Gideon, Otha Reaves, Alla B. Williams, Agatha Walding, Alice B. Williams, Curtis Walding. Second row: Ima Jewel Reaves, Annie Gideon, Clarede Williams. On the ladder: Mabrin Walding, Walter Gideon. Fourth row: Jim Bennette, Eugene Reaves absent. Teacher: Edna Oche. (Courtesy of Mrs. B.C. Calfee)

WE AT

L & K

FOOD MARKET

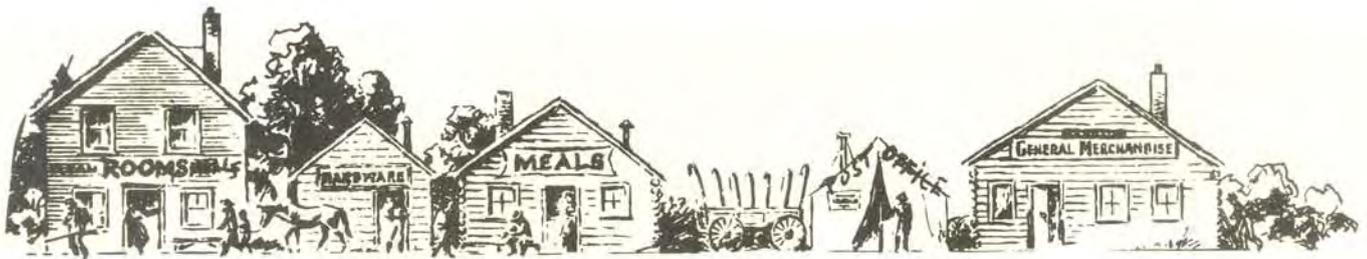
WILLIS, TEXAS

BOTH OWNERS

AND EMPLOYEES

**ARE HAPPY TO HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE
TO HAVE BEEN A PART OF THE GROWTH &
HISTORY OF**

WILLIS



of Teddy & Byspot

The Deans

The Dean Family is probably one of the largest families of the early settlers of this area. There is a saying: "If you are kin to the Deans, you are kin to everyone around here." They have contributed much to the communities they have lived in, serving as: pastors, farmers, postmasters, dairymen, merchants, etc.

Ambrose Dean and his half brother, Jesse Bryant, were born in Birmingham, Alabama to parents: Jimmie and Mary Ann (Beach) Dean. There, the brothers grew up, married and decided to move to Texas.

They came by boat to New Orleans, then by train to Willis,

where they stayed for several months until they could find a suitable location. They settled on Peach Creek at the county line of Montgomery and San Jacinto Counties. Jesse Bryant Dean and family stayed here two years, then moved east and settled at Woodville, Texas, Tyler County.

Ambrose and Mary Ann Dean

reared their ten children in the Peach Creek area where there was a community post office established as Teddy, Texas; later the name was changed to Byspot, Texas. In the years to come these communities lost their post office to the larger towns.

The following are the ten children born to Ambrose and Mary Ann Dean: Ann Elizabeth, Alonza, Martha Matilda, Malissa Caroline, William, Ambrose, Marion, Asa, Mary Elen, John Jesse Dean.

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FAMILY OF MRS. DON SENIFF (Frances Jackson)
 No picture available of her father, W.S. Jackson, who
 came here in 1895 to start the tobacco industry. Left
 to right - Julian Jackson, Lucy, Mrs. W.S. Jackson,
 Mary Sue and Powell.



GRANDPA HULON -- Forefather to
 the Hulon families of both Willis
 and New Waverly.



WILLIS FOOTBALL LETTERMAN
 1929--D.G. Sherman (coach), Fischue
 E. Edwards (captain), Boots Hulon,
 William Hill, J.C. Hataway, Frank
 Hill, Myron Atkinson, Cleburne Jones,
 Estill Malone, Luther Hall, Dick
 Harvell, Joseph Hall, George Rankin,
 and Eddie Snow.

CLYDE KENNEDY--former mayor of
 Willis.



DOWNTOWN WILLIS - Boots Hulon
 on left, Johnny Mann.



T.B. HAMMOND AND BOBBY YORK AT CAMP LETCHER

1870

Willis Schools Through The Years

1970



Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Tadlock

by KATHRYN ROARK

In 1941 during the famous Wilson Strickland oil land suit in Conroe, I had the opportunity of becoming well acquainted with Judge D.A. Franks of Dallas, who was a widely known civil attorney. Judge Franks was a graduate of the Willis Male and Female College. I asked him to write the history of that school, and the information before and during that time came from his paper.

In 1883 when Judge Franks first started to school, the building was where "D.J.'s Garage" is located. There was an old man by the name of Cooper in charge there, with one or two more teachers. The next year a man by the name of Moreland was professor.

In 1881 money was raised and a contract was let to Mr. Sidney Inglet for a three-story frame building. Further financing became a problem, and it was not until 1885 that the school was ready for occupancy. The public school funds were turned over to the Willis Male and Female College which hous-

ed all grades and the College. The site is where the high school parking lot is located.

At that time the Methodist Church had as its pastor, Rev. S.N. Barker. He and his wife became the first administrators of the school. (I have a copy of the Charter of the Willis Male and Female College, dated March 30, 1886.) In 1890 the Barkers left to be in charge of an exclusive boarding school for girls at Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Professors F.P. Crow and George H. Stovall bought the college and conducted it most satisfactorily for four years. The next proprietors were Professors Marion A. Kline and Cyril M. Jansky. The school failed under their leadership, and Professor Crow came back and again headed the school.

In 1901 Mr. Crow decided to sell the building and equipment to the citizens of Willis for the public school. After Mr. Crow left, a man by the name of Williams took over for about two years. He was a very lenient administrator. He was followed by Mr. H.A. McDonald, a much sterner type who stayed 18 years. After his reign, the following men served as Superintendents at Willis:

Continued on Next Page

Willis Schools Cont.

Mr. L.B. Tindell.2 years
 Mr. J.P. Dewald.7 years
 Mr. Morris Addison. . . .4 years
 Mr. D.G. Sherman.4 years
 Mr. N.C. Long.2 years
 Mr. T. W. Smith. called to Service
 Mr. J.F. Bolton.2 years
 Mr. C.C. Hardy.10 years
 Mr. L.L. Swindle.1 year
 Mr. H.S. Malone.1 year
 Mr. C.C. Hardy.13 years
 Mr. R.G. Elam.Present Superintendent

Our students have attended colleges all over the state. Most of our students attend Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, but we do have students who graduated from:

A. & M.	U. of Houston	T.C.U.
Texas U.	Southwestern U.	Ames Iowa
Rice	Texas Southern	Raylor U
S.M.U.	Wiley College	T.S.W.C.
	Prairie View	

Our students have become preachers, coaches, teachers, principals, superintendents, lawyers, doctors, dentists, nurses, X-ray technicians, laboratory technicians, medical stenographers, stenographers, bankers, insurance, real estate, engineers, chemists, physicists, ranchers, farmers, Texas Rangers, beauty operators, merchants, and you name it--we have one of these too.

At the present time the following people connected with our school are a product of the Willis school. On our Board of Education we have Sam. S. Scott, A.B. Strozier and Lloyd Meador. Ray G. Elam, superintendent, and his secretary, Dorothy Cargill. Jeanette Cargill Wilson, tax office, Velma May Woods, secretary at J.C. Roark Elementary; Sharon Oglesby, teachers' aide; teachers: Ruth Norsworthy, Castleschouldt, Earlie Lee Miles Pollard, Janie Westmoreland Stubblefield, Estelle Goff Ray, Bessie Mae McGee Ellison, Earnestine Barnes Lovelady, Evelyn Watkins Micheaux, James Esther Surgers Chatman, Cleon Billnoski, and Kathryn Roark. (Editor's Note)

Kathryn Roark is a very modest person and did not elaborate on the fact that her mother, Mrs. Jennie C. Roark, was one of the great educators of this century. She served as Principal of the Willis Elementary School from 1924 until she passed away on January 15, 1951. The Jennie C. Roark Elementary School now stands as a perpetual memorial to the influence that she had on the lives of those she touched throughout her twenty-seven years of service to this community.

Happy 100th Birthday
 Willis from the Home of
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*Pepsi

*7-up

*Schlitz

Clarke
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GOODYEAR

PL6-3012

315 E. DAVIS

CALFEE REMAINS A PART

OF WILLIS - - -

Many prominent citizens of the Willis area are direct descendants of an early pioneer - John Henry Calfee.

John Henry Calfee, lived about 4½ miles west of Willis. He was a staunch worker of the Church of Christ and an elder of the church

for 50 years.

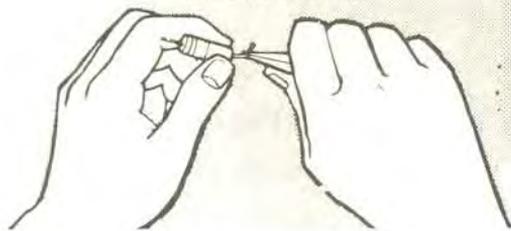
He was married twice. His first wife, Mamie Roten, bore him seven children: Ella, John, Homer, Zill, Carrie, Emma. His second wife, Molly Stewart, bore him three children: Henry, Cullee and Allen.

Calfee was a farmer of cattle, horses, mules, hogs, chicken, geese, sugar cane, potatoes, cotton, corn, and all kinds of vegetables and fruit. He had between 450 and 500 acres of farm and pasture land, with 4 tenant houses. Each equipped with coal lamps, wood stoves, fireplaces, and water drawn out of a well by a rope and a bucket.

Calfee lived in the horse and buggy era. He used to get up and hitch up the team early Monday morning to go to Houston to sell cotton. Returning with sugar bought by the 100 lbs., in sacks, and flour purchased by the barrel. They did not have their first mail route until after World War I. Malcoln Harris was their first mail carrier.

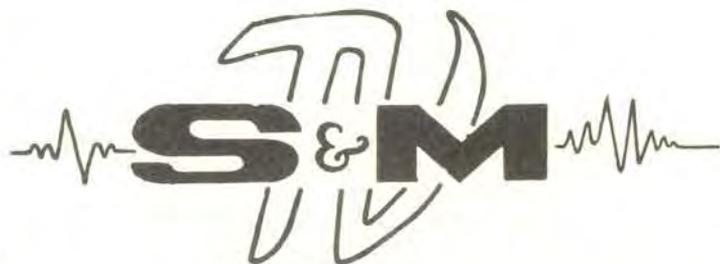
John Henry Calfee died at the age of 77, but the Calfee name is still a part of Willis and Montgomery County.

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PL 6-3525

The Frank Elams

early settlers of

Montgomery

County

The parents of Mrs. Lucy Annie Elam were among the earlier settlers of Montgomery County.

Mrs. Elam, (Lucy A. Weisinger), was born in Montgomery County, Alabama, in 1844. She came to Texas at the age of four, with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Weisinger. After living in other localities in the state, they located near the town of Danville, on the old Stage Coach route between Houston and Huntsville. This was before Willis was in existence. Here Lucy spent her girlhood days.

Her father, while hewing logs for their home, cut his leg with the axe. He died as the result of this injury, leaving his wife with five small children to raise under trying conditions. She was left with both money and slaves but lost everything but her land due to an unfortunate circumstance.

This family endured many hardships, and they were increased when the Civil War started, and the Depression and Reconstruction period which followed.

Mrs. Eliza Weisinger was born in Lexington, South Carolina. She was four years old when she heard General Lafayette speak in Columbus, when he made his last trip to visit the United States, in 1824. She remembered seeing the stars fall in 1833.

In spite of their hardships, her humble home was always open to the Confederate soldiers, the pioneer

preachers, and the foot-sore traveler, and in the 1850's, the Indians would often visit her home and trade venison for ammunition.

Lucy was able to help by doing spinning and weaving to earn money. Later she became a school teacher. Though her salary was pitifully small she was able to help more, especially in buying things for her younger sister, Sue.

Mrs. Eliza Weisinger spent her last years in Willis, at her home on Montgomery Street, with her son and daughter, Jim and Laura Weisinger. They were both almost totally blind. At her death, in 1906, she was survived by her two sons, Jim and Hamilton Weisinger; and three daughters, Laura Weisinger, Mrs. Sue Ellisor, and Mrs. Lucy A. Elam.

Lucy Annie was married to F.M. Elam, on January 5, 1870, by Rev. C.H. Brooks. They took their few belongings and drove further into the wilderness to the tract of land which was Lucy's share of the family property. Here they established their home. Lucy led a lonely life and acquired many unusual pets. A baby coon became very tame and learned to pull the hair pins from her hair. Another pet was a fawn which she and Frank found when they were driving through the woods. It had been terrified by the scream of a panther. She kept it for a long time and eventually it became quite a pet.

Francis Marion Elam, named for the "Swamp Fox", came from Georgia and settled in Montgomery County. When the Civil War started, he joined The Terry's Rangers and fought from the beginning to the end of the war. He was with a Calvary division. When they entered a battle, they whooped and yelled like Indians and fired their pistols, frightening the horses of the Northern Cavalrymen. Many battles were won by completely demoralizing the enemy. He had thirteen horses shot from under him. He was quoted as saying, "No damn Yankee is going to kill me." And they didn't. His narrowest escape was when a bullet clipped the brim off his hat. His health was ruined from exposure and the hardships of war and he was never well from the end of the war to the day of his death, twenty five years later. He apparently tried to live up to the reputation of the famous hero for whom he was named. He died in 1900 and was buried in the Willis Cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. Elam raised six children, two girls and four boys. They were: Mary Elam McNair, of Haslet, Texas; M.H. Elam, who lived in Conroe with his wife, Flossie May and children: Frank Elam and Mary Sue Walker; Marvin T. Elam; Anna Lucy McGar, who attended school at Danville, Willis, and later the Male and Female College of Willis, and taught her first school at Anderson, Texas; James L. Elam, who cared for his mother until her death in 1919. James Elam was a farmer and rancher. He died in 1960.

Talmadge W. Elam is the only surviving member of the children. He and his wife live on Stewart Street in Willis. His wife was Ruby Tadlock, also a native of this county. His children, who are graduates from the Willis schools are: T.W. Elam, Jr., of Richardson; Mildred Elam Pool of Corpus Christi; Anna Jo Elam Morris, Thrall, Texas; and Ray Elam, who is Superintendent of the Willis Schools.



FIRST STATE BANK BUILDING, now called Scott Bldg.

A Builder never dies

You unlatch the iron gate and start up the walk toward the wisteria draped porch. As you climb the stone steps you think, "This place of Mrs. Scott's is truly a home. Not just a house of lumber, stones and mortar." The entire atmosphere is homely: the long windswept porch, the flowering yard and the trees filled with singing birds.

You raise the brass knocker as you wonder, "Who takes care of this lovely place?" You know that Mrs. Scott is eighty-six years old. You also know that she is a widow.

"I'm coming," a voice chimes and presently the door is opened by a beautiful-eyed little lady.

"I'm just not as quick as I used to be," Mrs. Scott smiles as you enter a large hall. "Arthritis keeps me confined to this chair." The chair is also a sort of walker which helps Mrs. Scott get about. Nevertheless, there is much about her that is still young.

"Baby Sister is my mainstay," Mrs. Scott is speaking of a pleasant middle aged Negro woman who has been with her for thirty years. "She keeps the yard and garden as well as the house." A reflective look comes into her eyes. "My husband passed away about a year ago, and you know it isn't easy to get used to being without someone you've lived with for sixty nine years."

For just a moment Mrs. Scott hesitates. "I try to keep busy with my needle-point and quilting."

On her living room walls you see a prayer and Bible verse in cross-stitch and several pictures in needle-point.

"Come back here and I'll show you the quilt I'm piecing." Mrs. Scott leads the way to her bedroom. You notice several needle-point pillows on the bed and the partially finished quilt nearby.

"I lost my patterns so I made this one up," Mrs. Scott smiles dauntlessly.

by JOSIE PATRICK

You are amazed. She is eighty six. Then you remember that she is the daughter of Sidney L. Inglet, the intrepid pioneer builder of Willis.

"There," she is pointing to framed photographs, "is my husband and I when we were first married. And there we are fixing to go on our first airplane trip." Then she points to another picture. "That is my father, Sidney L. Inglet. He built the first house in Willis, you know."

You know also that in this lady's frail body is the same stamina, the same courageous blood that flowed through the veins of her father and his fathers.

The record of the Inglets is traced back to 1200

(Continued, next page)



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117 W. Davis

A Builder never dies (Continued)

A.D. (around the time of the Norman Conquest) and it shows that the Inglets are connected with and related to some of the most prominent English families.

Andrew Inglet, Sidney's grandfather, left England with a group of protesting Protestants. They sailed for America on the ship Franklin and landed in Charleston, South Carolina. Andrew married and settled in Lancaster County and one of his sons was also named Andrew. This son married Mary Smith and settled in Richmond County, Georgia. To this couple, in 1834, was born Sidney Leonard

Sidney's grandfather as well as his father were contractors and builders and they worked together in Georgia and Alabama.

While Sidney was still a young man his family moved to Texas. They built as they moved from state to state, finally settling in New Orleans for awhile. Then around 1849, in an old worn out vessel called The Palmetto, they came to Galveston. By wagon they traveled inland to Montgomery County. As they neared Cypress Creek in Harris County cholera struck the family. Sidney was the only member who didn't come down with it, and one sister and two brothers died.

The family moved on to Old Danville. There Sidney and his father began building for General Wood (a slave owner from the North). It was during this period that an epidemic of yellow fever broke out, and Mr. Wood lost a daughter and forty slaves to the malady.

Not long after this Sidney's father died of blood poisoning from a foot injury. Soon afterwards Sidney's mother died and Sidney was left the responsibility of looking after his sisters and brothers. Finally, finding the load too heavy to bear alone, he returned the children to Grandmother Smith in Georgia. The next few years were spent working in Georgia and Florida, serving in the Civil War and building in and around Mexico City. Then once more Sidney returned to Texas, coming back again to Montgomery County.

On September 11, 1872, at the age of thirty eight Sidney married twenty-year-old Sally Caperton and settled in Willis. Here he continued his contracting and building career.

Probably one of the most historical buildings to Sidney L. Inglet's credit was the Willis Male and Female College. (See history of college-Kathryn Roark)

Though Sidney L. Inglet died September 18, 1906 and is buried in the family plot at Willis, there are many living memorials to him. Among them are the Methodist Church in Willis, the home of Mrs. Scott's and the Marlin Watson home. Others that are gone but remembered in the hearts of many are the Old Captain Smith home, the N.A. Craven house and the Johnathan Collard house. There are many more.

Builders pass on but they never die as long as evidence and memory of their building remains. That there are many of these as memorials to Sidney L. Inglet is sure. Ask any old timer around Willis,



need a NEW buggy?

If your "buggy" is not all it should be, come in and let us arrange an Auto Loan at bank rates. We will work out terms to make repayment convenient for you. See us.

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY TO OUR GOOD
NEIGHBOR, WILLIS



New Waverly

STATE BANK

P.O. BOX 128 • NEW WAVERLY, TEXAS 77358



SAN JACINTO LODGE . . .



Formed at Old Danville -

continues in Willis

Dispensation for San Jacinto Lodge, at Danville, Montgomery County, on the 31st of January, 1852.

The proceedings of San Jacinto Lodge U.D., held in Danville, Montgomery, is somewhat irregular, but the irregularities are of a minor character, and not sufficient to require the withholding a charter, therefore, we recommend that charters issue, on the payment of the usual fees. The dues of San Jacinto should be \$9.25, instead of \$6.40 as reported.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS - 1872

To the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas:

Your Committee on Petitions having duly considered the resolution submitted by Bro. Thos. Tomilinson, Senior Warden of San Jacinto Lodge, No. 106, asking permission in behalf of said Lodge, to change its location from Danville to Willis five miles distant, and on the line of the Houston and Great Northern railroad, believing it to be altogether proper and expedient to grant the request, respectfully recommend the adoption of the resolution following:

Resolved, That San Jacinto Lodge, No. 106, be authorized to remove its location from Danville to Willis, on the Houston and Great Northern railroad.

Fraternally submitted,
D.L. Gurley
For Committee

PETITION

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the State of Texas

Your petitioners respectfully represent that they are ancient free and accepted Master Masons. "Having the prosperity of the Fraternity at heart, they are willing to exert their best endeavors to promote and affuse their genuine precepts of Masonry. For the convenience of their respective dwellings, and for other good reasons. They are desirous of forming a new lodge in the town of Danville, Montgomery County, Texas, to be named "San Jacinto" Lodge. In consequence of this desire, and for the good of the Craft, they pray for a Charter to empower them to assemble as a legal lodge, to discharge the duties of Masonry in the several degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason, in a regular and constitutional manner, according to the ancient form of the fraternity, and the laws and regulations of the Grand Lodge. That they have nominated and do recommend Thos. Carothers to be first Master; B.B. Stan-

dell to be first Senior Warden, and John Johnsons to be the first Junior Warden, of said Lodge; that, if the prayer of the petition should be granted, they promise a strict conformity to all the Constitutional laws, rules and regulations of the Grand Lodge: J.V. Wright, R.A.M.; Thos. Carothers, R.A.M.; M.M. Estitt, R.A.M.; T. George, Me. Me.; W.J. Davis, M.M.; Wm. M. Murphru, M.M.; Jno. L. Johnson, R.A.M.; B.B. Stansell, M.M.; Thos. Flood, M.M.

ABOVE ARE THE CHARTER MEMBERS
U.D. PROCEEDINGS-SHOW SOME CHANGES AND
ELECTION OF FIRST OFFICERS:

Be it remembered That on the night of the 26th day of April A.D. 1853. A.L. 5852 Brothers Thomas Carothers, I.V. Wright, Wm. M. Murphru, Jno. T. Johnson and Thos. Flood Master Masons petitioners of the Grand Lodge of Texas, for a Dispensation to form and establish a Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons at Danville in the County of Montgomery, and State of Texas to be called San Jacinto Lodge, A.F. & A.M., together. Also Master Masons, assembled in a suitable and private apartment for the purpose of forming and opening said Lodge, when and where was then produced and read the Dispensation opened to the petitioners above named and to Bros. M.M. Estell, John E. George and B.B. Stansell also petitioners names and joined in said Dispensation by A. Neill, Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Texas and dated the 31st day of January A.D. 1852 in and by which Brothers Thomas Carothers, was appointed the First Master, Bro. B.B. Stansell the 1st Senior Warden, Bro. John T. Johnson the 1st Junior Warden of said San Jacinto Lodge.

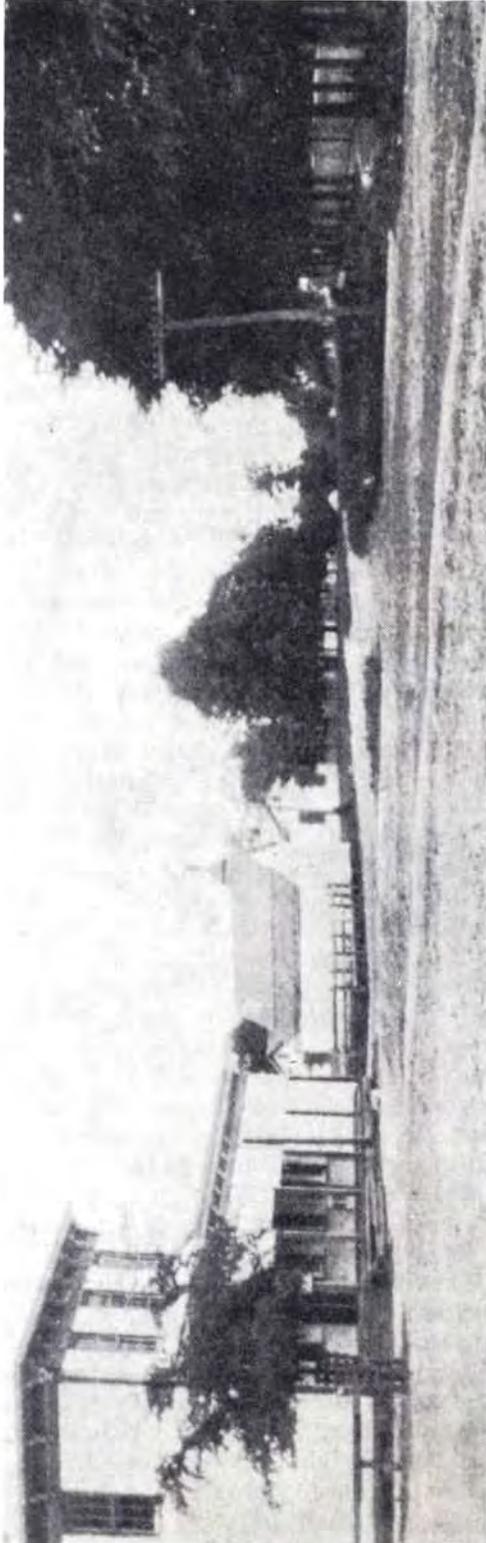
Dispensation, Bro. W.J. Davis, Acting as Senior Warden in place of Bro. B.B. Stansell by instruction of A. Neill Deputy Grand Mastor of the Grand Lodge of the State of Texas. To form and organize said Lodge, Prayers being first offered by Bro. J.V. Wright the Worshipful Master with the Officers and Brethern present opened said San Jacinto Lodge in due form after the manner of Free and Accepted Masons.

The Worshipful Master then appointed J.B. Davis, Secretary for the meeting and Bro. Wm. Murphru acted as Tyler for this meeting of the Lodge. . .

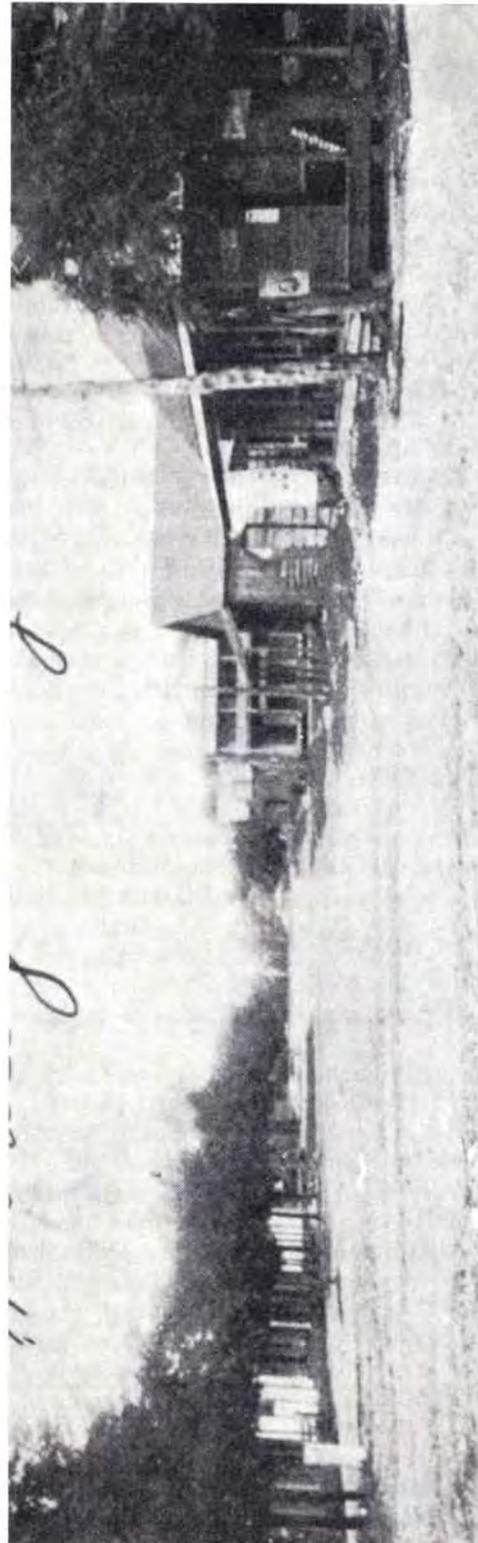
The following petitions for initiation were received, read and said overfurther action to wit, The Petition of Zill McCaleb, J.S. Thomason, and Saml. D. Woolbridge, and the following Committees appointed to examine and report upon each at the next Regular Meeting of said Lodge, to wit, Bros. W.J. Davis, Wm. Murphru and John T. Johnson appointed.

Fire destroyed the Danville Lodge on May 13, 1919, it moved to Willis, May 18, 1919, where it has been in continuous existence since that time.

centennial magazine

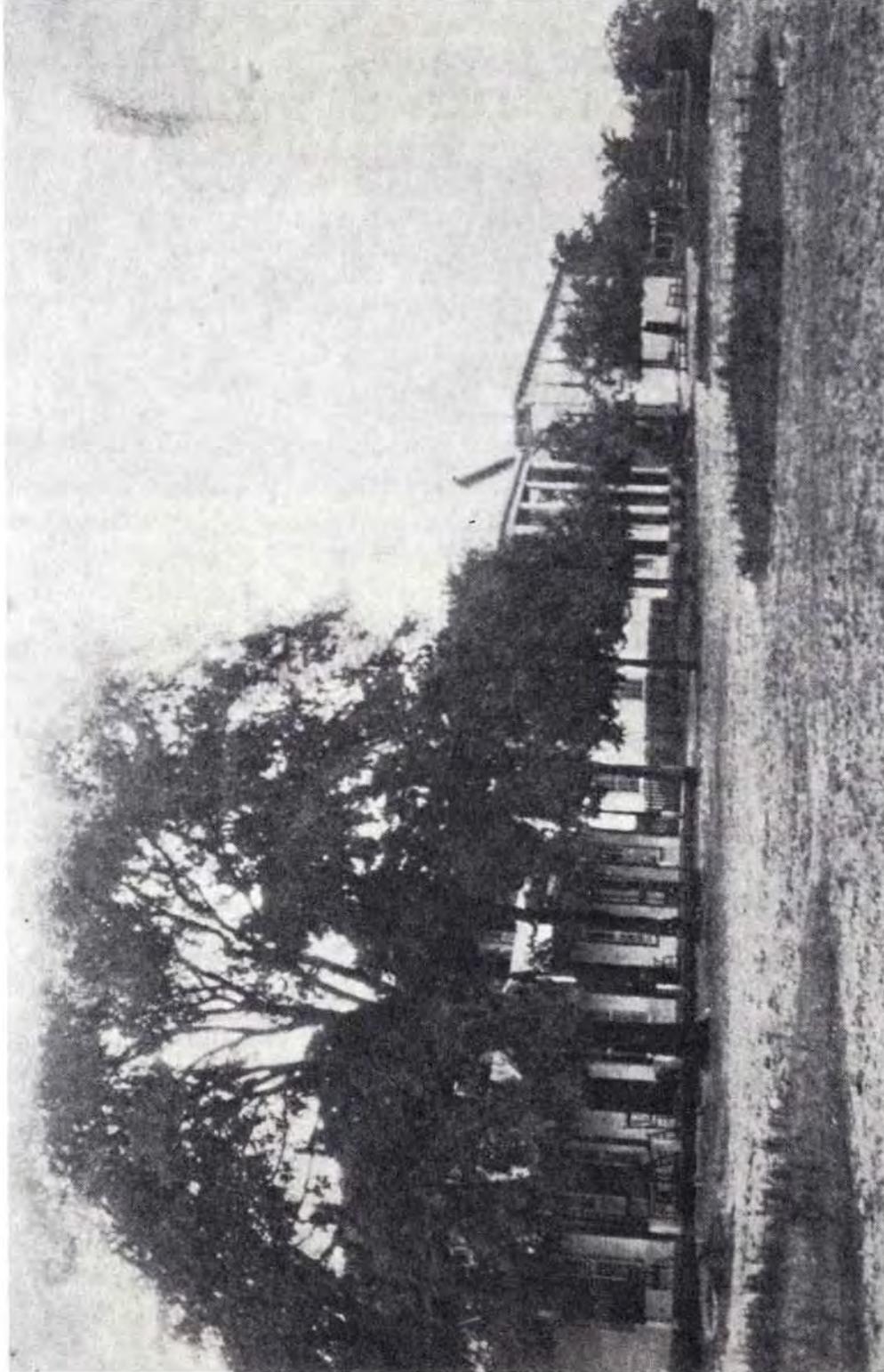


Danville Avenue, Willis -1800's (Looking North)



Danville Avenue, Willis In 1800's (Looking South)

exclusive photos of willis



Montgomery Street - 1800's In Willis

Left to right - Wooldridge Hotel, Scott Building, and Carson Mercantile.

Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Tadlock



NED EASTMAN BARNES

NED BARNES . . .



inventor

Ned Eastman Barnes was born in the year of 1868 in Walker County Texas. His father and mother, Wash and Silvia Barnes and their five sons and three daughters moved to Willis in 1872.

Ned Barnes attended school up to the fifth grade. He was raised by the Owen Smith family as a house boy.

In mature years he married Ada Johnson, to this marriage was born five sons.

Ned Barnes was an inventor and had eight patents issued in his name between the years of 1906 and 1916.

He built his home here in Willis in 1900, cutting most of the wood which was used in the building.

He and his wife sent three of their sons to Prairie View College; two of their children passed away at an early age.

He was deacon of the Antioch Church until he passed away in 1950.



1934 FIFTH GRADE CLASS



LEO PADDOCK- former mayor of Willis



EARLY 1900 EIGHTH GRADE CLASS. School was then held in old Male and Female College Building.



WILLIS FEED COMPANY, owned by Johnnie Dean and J.R. Elmore, Sr. (formerly owned by R.W. Hill), Building was next to where Masonic Lodge is now. In picture, W.A. Dean, Jim Kennedy, J.R. Elmore, Jr. and William Earl Dean.

(Jewel Kennedy)



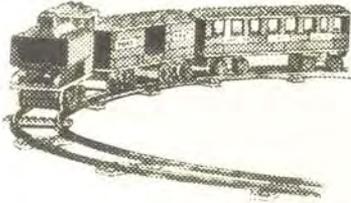
CONCRETE MFG. CO., now known as State Concrete Pipe Co. in Conroe had its beginning in back yard of the Kennedy home in Willis. Pictured here are Clyde Kennedy, owner and Jim Hines.

(Jewel Kennedy)

S.A. McCALL LAW OFFICE was located behind where Florida Bar now stands. Left to right- Rose Aline Melba Rhew and Lucille Kennedy.



Pratts Came By



"Emigrant Train"

An "Emigrant Train" was the term used by the Railroads to describe the method of transporting the worldly goods of people like the Pratts from Missouri to Willis, in 1901. Plows, bedding, kitchen ware and two horses, were loaded into freight cars and moved over the rails.

This beginning of the Pratt family, Northeast of Willis, included Henry M. Pratt and wife, the parents, who died before 1908; Will Pratt and wife who moved to Houston; A.T. Pratt and wife who moved to Floydada, Texas; Mrs. Mary J. Shafer, a sister, and H.L. Pratt and wife who settled on 150 acres in the DeLa Garza Survey.

H.L. Pratt and wife, Lottie, would help found and build the Center Hill Baptist Church, raise and college train seven children, five girls and two boys. All of the children have begun life as Home Economics Teachers, Vocational Agriculture teachers, or A&M Extension Service Agents before branching out into other fields of business or service in Texas cities as far away as Lubbock, Beaumont and Navasota.

Children living in Center Hill today are:

Mrs. O.W. (Allie) Ellis, retired teacher and bookkeeper; H.L. Pratt, Jr. (Henry), ex-teacher and now rancher and Superintendant of shipping and receiving at the new Pepsi Cola plant; Mrs. H.E. (Ruth) McDonald, ex-teacher and piano player for Center Hill Baptist Church; and Mrs. S.W. (Mildred) Klawinsky, ex-teacher and now working as a bookkeeper; Miss Clara Pratt is retired from County Home Demonstration work and lives in Lubbock; Mrs. J.A. (Edith) Wise teaches in Beaumont; and Arthur Pratt has moved from County Agent work to Vice President of the First National Bank of Navasota.

(Editor's Note: This poem, written by Mrs. Hill in 1935, after she had visited in the Pratt home, brings back memories of the area and families at that time. Our thanks to the Pratt family for allowing us to share it with the readers)

AN ALL AMERICAN FAMILY

by Ethel Osborn Hill

My memory book records a trip to old Montgomery County
Where folks are "All American" and live mid Nature's bounty.
A Patriarchy there I found, (too few with moder man)
Where dwell in plenty, peace and pride, the Pratts, a sturdy clan
Here, when the county's lands were rough, came two young pioneers
To build their home and till their fields with faith undimmed by fears
I found, indeed, my heart's ideal--a model farm and home--
The sort that holds your heartstrings fast, however far you roam.

The house, wideporched- and staunchly built--fireplaces wide and warm
Log barns, with ample cribs and sheds, mellowed by sun and storm;
Broad acres, fringed by stately trees--green pastures--fields of grain
Make up a picture fair to see in sunshine or in rain.
The good Earth yields a sustenance, shelter for man and beast--
Stranger and friend is welcomed in to the frugal meal or feast.
With Christian hospitality they open wide the door.
Heap high the fires and fill the plates till one can ask no more.

The Father, dignified and grey--the Mother sweet and mild--
Watch o'er the grow-up boys and girls as when each was a child;
And yet accord to each one grown, the rights of adult life.
The while with council wise and kind, they seek to ease Life's strife.
Far lands do not attract the sons, to manhood's estate grown--
They stay, to work in partnership, the fields they long have sown.
And daughters--wed, at work or school, count eagerly the hours
When they may hasten to that home where happiest Memory flowers.

A trip about the well-kept farm quite filled me with delight--
I saw sleek cows, knee deep in grass, with wee calves red and white;
A thousand hens, or so it seemed, were crackling lustily,
While hogs, as big as half-grown cows, were snoozing lazily.
I stroked the glorious stallion, his coat a chestnut red,
And touched the glistening, silken sides of colts, Kentucky bred.
Then, clothed in grey and velvet black, with ears full two feet long,
I saw what woke me up at dawn, with loud, triumphant song.

'Tis Sunday, day of peace and rest; the whole clan gets together
To go to Sunday School and Church, regardless of the weather.
The father, patriarch, teacher, friend, leads in the prayer and song,
And asks that God will guide their steps and keep them all from wrong
Heartfelt and humble, earnest words, sink deep into each heart,
And friends and neighbors each resolve to do a Christian' part.
Then home again; a bounteous meal is spread upon the board--
The food is sanctified by Grace, thanks offered to the Lord.

For such a heritage as this, the wealthiest man might long--
But wealth can't buy a freeman's pride, or peace or happy song.
About the glowing hearth we sat, when night closed sharp and cold--
Secure and safe from all the world--a memory sweet to hold--
The small grandchildren cuddled up, Aunt Mary, kind and dear,
Father and Mother, boys and girls--a sweetheart lingering near;
The family circle widens out--with always room for more--
A family "All American" can never fail to score.



WILLIS SERVICE STATION - L. to R.-Bill Cargill, Bill Redmond, W. Kuykendall, Roy Watson (former mayor); and O. Olson



WILLIS SERVICE STATION WRECKER



WILLIS SALOON, 1910 -- L.P. Paddock (right) and Billy Wilson.

MR. & MRS.
Wm. J. BENARDINO

CRAWFORD
AVIATION, INC.
Montgomery County Airport

MR. & MRS.
ARNOLD SMITH

MR. & MRS.
TOM B. STILL

WILLIS . . . Frontier of yesterday . . .

by MALU PARRISH



It is said: "that beauty is in the eye of the beholder", and I guess that is true with towns as well as people. Perhaps the beauty that the residents of Willis and its surrounding area, find in this old town is not always visible -- and not always the same for each individual.

There was not enough time or space to tell the whole story of Willis, but it has been a wonderful experience for all of us at The Spectator to try and give as much history as we could in this centennial edition. Wonderful stories have been left out, much work undone but we hope that in the years to come---perhaps a hundred years from now---this book will still provide interest for those who read it.

There were many people who helped: by providing pictures, stories, newspaper clippings - without their help, it couldn't have been done. It was their sharing with us and the readers the pride they have in their town and its past, that made the book possible.

How strange it seems today that a railroad played such an important part in the birth of Willis. Two little ribbons of steel that could have so easily have veered west through Danville or east through Old Waverly. And tobacco, the incredible plant, that is responsible for the first economic boom to the town, now an unheard of crop for this area.

It was the railroad, with its link to larger places that drew people here to live, work, invest and build. Evidence of this activity becomes clear in the old pictures one sees of Montgomery and Danville Streets, the Male and Female College, the tobacco fields -- all signs of prosperity.

They came from everywhere -- these pioneers of the area -- from Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, from 'most every state. Disillusioned with their native states perhaps, they came seeking land and opportunity

they endured hardships and sorrow with the hard work and the loss of loved ones enroute to their new homes. --experiences that we can only imagine -- for the frontiers of yesterday are only memories--gone forever. . .

In 1872, the Superintendent of Immigration estimated there were ninety-one thousand, six hundred immigrants who landed in Texas, which at that time, amounted to ten per cent of the population. Many of these people settled in this area, most of them of Polish descent and they too, helped in the growth of Willis. Some came as contract laborers, fulfilling their contracts -- remaining to buy land in their new country.

Original settlers, immigrants, transients, laborers, business men, traders -- all these and many more, all through this past one hundred years have made the life of Willis possible. . .we pay tribute to them. . . and say. . ."Happy Birthday, Willis".

First Baptist Church Grows With The AREA

Many years ago a small band of pioneers from Danville, England, settled in Illinois, and named their settlement after the home so recently left behind. Some years later a group of these settlers and their descendants made their way to the empire of Texas, and there established the third Danville.

For a number of years, this was a thriving community. As the community began to dwindle, however, the local Baptist congregation voted to unite with the nearby Willis church and the merger was completed.

Since its inception in 1850, as a small group struggling along with fourth-time and half-time preaching, the First Baptist Church, Willis has grown to a congregation of four hundred eighty-eight (488) with property holdings valued to close to one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000). It has been a historic church in every respect. Among the first of its pastoral leaders was Noah T. Byars, a leader in the beginning of Baptist work in Texas. Soon after the turn of the century, Reverend G.M. Daniel, grandfather of Price Daniel, led the church for several years.

The old sanctuary in which the church has worshipped through the years is known to have been at least 84 years old. There has been a continuous growth of membership through the years and in 1946 the existing Educational Building was built. In 1958 the church entered into another building program to build a new sanctuary and was dedicated the summer of 1959. With this growth of the church plant and the activity of the church these buildings have been fully used to



WILLIS' FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Congregation later grew so that it
was necessary to build new sanctuary
(Jewel Walker)



promote the Kingdom work. In 1967, a new brick pastor's home was built.

Reverend and Mrs. W.H. Gray were appointed as missionaries to Mexico in May, 1960 and left in August, 1960 for language school in Costa Rica.

Since 1922 the church has been served by 11 pastors:

1922-1925 L.A. Thigpen

1925-1935 R.J. McGinty

1935-1937 H.E. Van Camp

1937-1945 C.A. Ray

1945-1954 W.F. Sanderlin

1954-1960 W.H. Gray, Jr.

1960-1966 R.L. Culver

1966-1967 Kemp Powers

1967-1969 Milton Bailey

Present Pastor-Cecil Jordan



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH MEMBERS - 1930's

"Kink" Golden Tells It Like It Was

All oldtimers and many of the newer residents of Willis know "Kink" Golden and when visited by Wayburn Castleschouldt, she told him this story of her life:

"I thought my daddy was the only daddy in the world. His name was John Woodly. He was born in Alabama, came here and married my mama. Her name was Delia Culpepper.

"My grandparents, Robert and Eliza Culpepper lived right over there in a log cabin. It had one large log room and two smaller ones. I moved here when I's 8 months old and never been off the place. Been two houses burnt down under me right here.

"My daddy used to work for a man named Alex Chambers. He had a livery stable right about where Mr. "Creepy Red" has his service station. Right behind it was a big, ole hotel name of King Hotel. I's born right there in a little ole house in the lot.

"After a long time daddy worked in a saloon right where Mr. Nick Scott's store is. Man named Grant owned it. Then he worked up above where the bank is now, in another saloon. Later he went to work for the railroad, worked round the coal chute.

"I's a mess when I's young. Didn't get married till I was 22. Made daddy so mad, he run off on his horse and was gone all day. He didn't want me to marry noone. I did though-I married Charlie Golden. Me'n him had 8 kids, 5 boys and 3 girls. Let's see, der's Isadora, Thelma T. (Jack). Ora Mae Cartwright, Lennie Ferguson, Wesley (Buster) Thomas, Frank Edward, and of course you know Levie Mae (Sukey).

by WAYBURN CASTLESCHOULD T

"My husband was a railroad man too. Born right here in Willis, on the Drigger's Farm.

"I worked for folks round town. Worked for ole Dr. Powell long time, he's the daddy to Mrs. Minnie Bowers. He lived right where Mr. Jordy, the justice of the peace used to live.

"Times was shore good then. Didn't have no good cars but we had lots of good horses and wagons. I can still ride a horse right now. I'm 89 years old and can still do anything I want to do. Right now I can walk all the way up to your store as fast as you can. You climb that telephone pole right there and I'll climb it too.

Used to be a colored school right where Mr. Waymon Ferguson has his washateria now. I went through the 9th grade there. That was high as it went. I was raised a Christian girl to respect everyone.

"I lived in Willis all my life and ain't never had no trouble with nobody. My daddy and your ole uncle, Horace Castleschouldt. was a lot alike. Both hard, but good men. He lived right over there on that hill.

"Ain't none of my kids ever been trouble either. Sukey went to work for the Reds when she was 7 or 8. Soon be 50 years old. And ole Buster, he went to work for Mr. Johnson when he was just 15--been on the job with him ever since.

"I lives on my old age pension check. All I wants is for folks to let me live out my days right here in my house in Willis. I loves Willis and all my folks 'round here.

"I's born right here in 1881---right in downtown Willis."

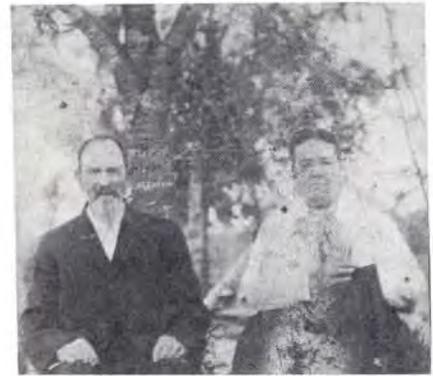
THE EDITION
Our Centennial Edition, as could be expected, does not include all of those who played parts in the founding and raising of Willis. None was left out intentionally. We have tried to let the people who did it --the small and the great, tell the years as they saw it.
---The Editors



WILLIS SERVICE STATION- Bill Cargill and George Willis
(Courtesy Mary Lee Cargill)



WILLIS LUMBER COMPANY late 1800's
(Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Tadlock)



GRANDPA AND GRANDMA HAMMOND



PRICE DANIEL HOME. Father of former governor stands
on top porch.

Towns & cleaning
have changed in
100 years. . .
Drycleaning of the
future is here today
at

Jiffy 39 MINUTE
CLEANERS

1120 N. Frazier

Conroe

Minnie Bowers Memories of Willis

by Malu Parrish

The first impression one gets when meeting Mrs. Minnie Bowers is how incredibly tiny she is, about 4 feet, 10 inches tall. She wears a size 3½ shoe, beautiful gray hair cut short and naturally curly and you have to keep reminding yourself that she celebrated her 87th birthday on March 4th of this year. The twinkle in her eyes and her quick sense of humor contradict her age and she seems to have a Peter Pan-never-grow-old quality about her.

She was born March 4, 1883, in the house where Mr. and Mrs. Milton Jordy and son Frank now live. This home is one of the oldest in Willis and bears a Texas Historical Society marker. Minnie's father, Dr. W.P. Powell had the home built and there, he and his wife raised their ten children. At times it was necessary to use their home as a clinic with Mrs. Powell helping her husband with his patients as well as tending to her other duties. Most of the original structure has been torn away from the old home but the Jordy's have kept what remains in as much the original state as is possible.

In 1920, Mrs. Bowers married Captain Albert Bowers and moved to her present home. Captain Bowers was a member of the prominent Chilton family who were early settlers in Willis. Captain Bowers had been a ship captain, transporting sugar, lumber and other goods out of Galveston to Louisiana before his retirement. He passed away August 12, 1935.

Minnie can recall many memories of Willis. She first attended school in a large frame building built high off the ground where the hogs, who were allowed to run loose, rooted under the building while the children were in class. Minnie

recalled how they would slip off from home with their friends to go and play under the school, and would "catch the dickens" when they returned, muddy and full of fleas. Later they attended school in the old Male and Female College building. Minnie stated that one time she went up in the upper one-half story, climbed out one of the dormer windows, onto the ledge and walked to the next window to climb back in. Seeing the twinkle in her eyes when Minnie tells about this, you realize that even back then--teachers had their problems--and kids had their fun.

When asked if she thought young people were much different today, she replied that they didn't seem much different--they had cars now and more money to spend and it was more a matter of the world having changed. Entertainment in her younger years was candy making, dances and just groups of children getting together when possible she said.

It is hard to imagine the Willis that Minnie and other oldtimers remember--tobacco fields, businesses, college, doctors, lawyers, hotels, saloons--they were all here, prospering and growing at one time. When the economy began to lag, and people--young and old--began to move away, it was folks like this tiny little lady, and others who stayed, that enabled Willis to survive the rough years so that it might now be on the threshold of a new and prosperous future.

Although she does not get out as much as she once did, Minnie has an interest in the world, near and far, around her. Her beautiful home, filled with reminders of long ago days, is spotless and she keeps busy with her embroidery and cut work that she gives to friends and relatives who will treasure them, not only for their beauty, but because of the memory they bring of Minnie Bowers.



"NO MAN IS AN ISLAND"

JOHN DONNE

**BECAUSE NO MAN CAN LIVE ALONE...
...NEITHER CAN A BUSINESS
LIVE ALONE**



"IN 3 YEARS OF DOING BUSINESS WITH WILLIS AND GROWING WITH WILLIS, WE HAVE LEARNED ONE THING SURELY: IT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT TO BE A GOOD MERCHANT AS IT IS TO BE A CITIZEN," - MIKE WESTBROOK



BEST WISHES TO YOU WILLIS, FROM

MOON'S SERVICE CITY

CORNER OF PHILLIPS AND N. FRAZIER ST. CONROE PL6-5549



LET'S ALL

Stop

AND WISH
THE CITY
OF WILLIS
A HAPPY

100th Birthday

S.E. Teaff is proud to be a part of the growing Montgomery County and we wish the people of Willis our best regards during their Centennial Celebration. . .

S.E. TEAFF

(Where Service Comes First)

SINCE 1923

756-6696

2013 N. FRAZIER

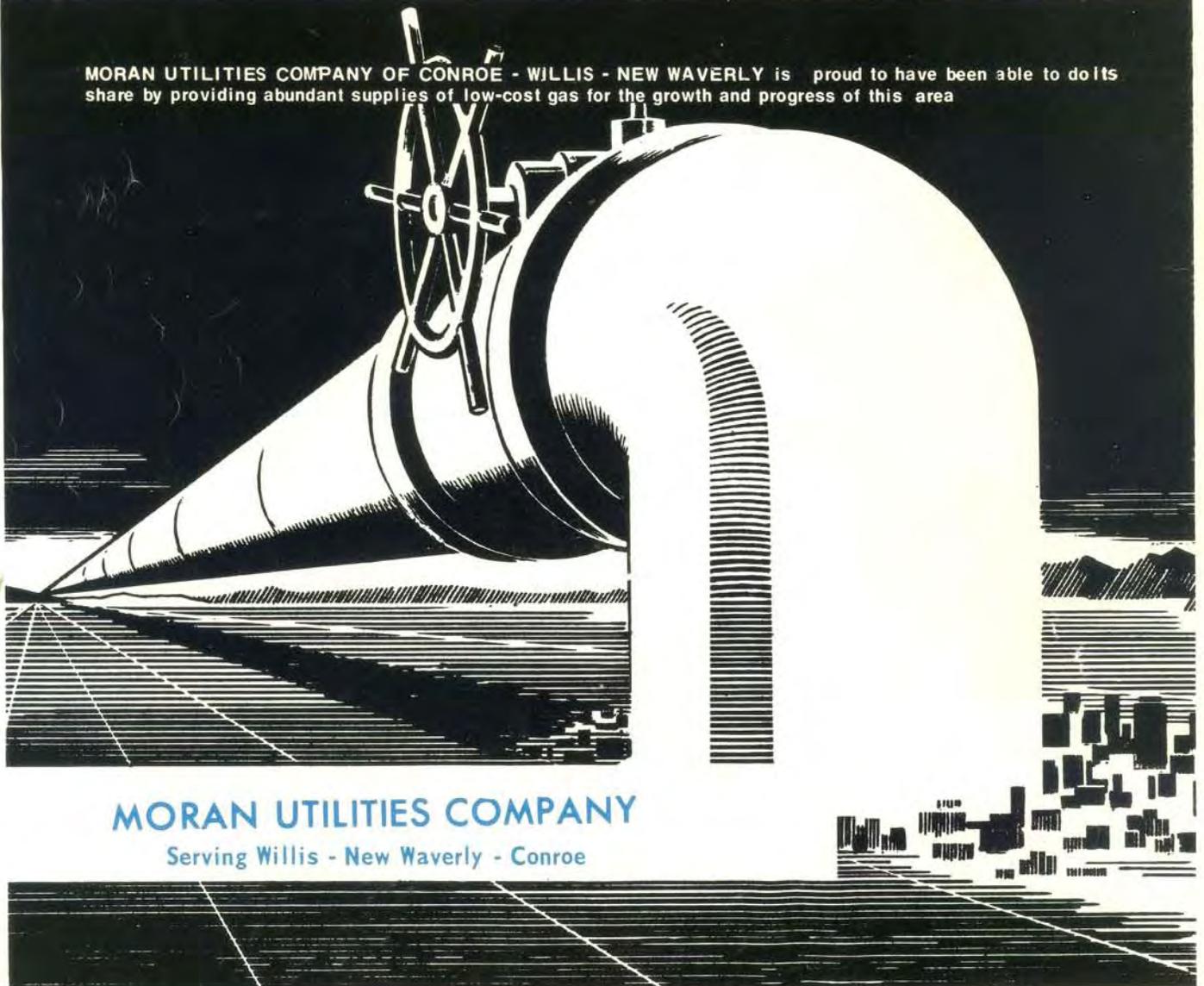
Yesterday's Visions . . .

Today's Realities

THE PIONEERS OF YESTERDAY believed that the Montgomery-Walker County area would eventually become a thriving part of our nation. Life was hard and the going was rough in the early days. But, from crude settlements prosperous towns and cities developed throughout the state until today this has become one of the fast growing areas in the entire country.

PROGRESS THROUGH PLANNING was, and still is, the main ingredient in our formula for growth. This planning process, undertaken by men and industries that had faith in the future, made our forefathers' vision of yesterday a reality of today.

MORAN UTILITIES COMPANY OF CONROE - WILLIS - NEW WAVERLY is proud to have been able to do its share by providing abundant supplies of low-cost gas for the growth and progress of this area



MORAN UTILITIES COMPANY

Serving Willis - New Waverly - Conroe