

From the Scrap Book of Mrs. Frank Hill Elmore, Conroe, Texas

Living Come Back for a Day to Old Waverley, Once Proud City of Aristocrats, Where the Dead Rule Now

500 Gather With Ghosts of Past and Tell Again Story of Railroad That Went By

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The living came back Sunday to a city where the dead rule.

They came back to Old Waverley, on the Walker-San Jacinto County line, once a rival of Houston in culture, trade, and education, but now as dead as Nineveh or Tyre.

Where a little group of aristocrats from Alabama and Georgia and Louisiana and Virginia once lived leisurely, working their big plantations with slaves brought over from the old states, their descendants gathered.

Nearly 500 persons met at the roof of what once was the north end of Main street for the second reunion of Waverley's first families.

"My Children, Sallie"

It was, "Hello Joe!" and "Howdy, Bill!" and "I want you to meet Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Lewis," and "These are my children, Sallie. Yes, they have grown, haven't they?"

Youth was here under the giant oaks and the whispering pines and elms and gum trees.

Little children, skipping merrily about through the sand and, because of the heat, keeping the water barrels in a state of constant siege.

Pretty young girls, escorted by the inevitable young men.

But for the most part it was a day for their elders. White-haired, stooped old ladies obviously were guests of honor, watched carefully by children or grandchildren glad they were having a good time but anxious lest they overtire or overexert themselves.

Old Men Meet

Elderly men whose steps have passed the peak of life and now are bent slowly and more slowly down the last slope, meeting for the first time perhaps in weeks or months or many years, reliving the past.

"Do you remember, John—"

Joy was there, and laughter, and handshaking and backslapping and jokes, but always there seemed an undercurrent of seriousness, almost of sadness.

These people were for a day looking backward at a heritage of which they are proud, recalling the glories of a bygone day, and it was as if they were taking communion together, pledging themselves to carry on and be worthy of that heritage.

Pioneer Names

Here were the Abercrombies and the Campbells and the Browniers, the Cohns and Elmore, the Fains and the Hardys and the Fishers, the Hills and the Lewises and the Cunninghams.

The Neiderhoffers were there, the Powells, the Spillers, the Traylors, the De Armands, the Fitzes and the Fitzpatricks.



Three who were young in the heyday of Old Waverley talk over old times together. Left to right: Mrs. W. W. Traylor, 81, formerly Miss Sallie Fisher, now of Conroe; Mrs. Emma Elmore, 87, who still lives in the Old Waverley community, and John T. Brownie, 87, of 4019 La Branch street, who clerked in an Old Waverley grocery store in 1858. \$4 years before he became mayor of Houston in 1892.

First families of Waverley. And many others, of course, who came later and perhaps hardly came within the small circle.

The coming of a railroad sounded the death knell for this little town, visitors are told. This community of perhaps 500 souls once had wealth and neighborliness; culture and education and religion, trade and tradition.

All that a community needs, it would seem, it had including a beautiful graveyard on a windswept knoll, where Spanish moss drapes gracefully and mournfully from cedars and oaks over the graying tombstones of loved dead.

City Block Killed City

"This is the city block which killed Waverley," the old timers say, pointing out what is now a little stump-dotted cottonpatch.

"That block blocked the railroad. A doctor owned it, and the railroad wanted it. The doctor wanted \$30,000 for it."

The wind ripples the cotton softly on a little plot of ground, worth \$30,000 in 1873, now worth perhaps \$30.

Col. H. F. Elmore raised the money in the community, and then the doctor changed his mind, and the railroad didn't come here at all, but went eight miles away.

Down a dim road which winds through a pasture, often dodging trees, you go and stop at a grove of tall cedars which have sprung up above a few little mounds.

Elmore Mansion
This is a place for ghosts and dreams. For here was once a huge 25 or 30 room mansion, in which old Colonel Elmore held continual open house.

Men in tall silk hats and lovely ladies in crinoline alighted from shiny carriages, there were the long grass ripples in the breeze, or strolled in the moonlight there where still persists in radiant bloom the lavender tree Mrs. Elmore brought from Alabama.

A dining room 30 feet long was here, with a table running the full length of the room and groaning with delectables served by a parade of negroes. When the colonel went to church, he often invited the whole congregation to his home for dinner.

Yupons He Planted

Under that row of yupons he planted were the colonel's big beehives. Still farther down, above the ice-cold Elmore spring from which the servants carried the house water supply, perhaps a mocking bird sang his heart out as he did today.

There was education and culture in this community. There, where a clump of briars grow riotously, was the Female Seminary. Two blocks farther on, there where the matted pine needles and the grasses mingle, once stood the Male Academy.

There, where six red brick chimneys rise from a well-kept white house, is the only original Waverley mansion still kept up. It was the home of Col. John Hill, father of mine, who had 65 slaves.

He built this house 78 years ago, much larger than it is now. For every time a child married, he tore down part of the house and moved it to where they wished to set up housekeeping.

All Are Gone But the Dead

And now all the leisurely civilization, the gaiety and the culture, the wealth and the neighborliness have thinned and dispersed and gone. All are gone but the dead.

The dead rule Old Waverley—the peaceful sleepers in the lonely graveyard where lie 38 Confederate warriors, one Union soldier, one man who fought in the American Revolution, and hundreds of others.

Who knows but that their ghosts, stately and dignified and proud, did

not hover unscen Sunday above their descendants gathered to do their honor.

And it seems probable that, surveying this group of sturdy men, gentle women and attractive children who live after them, they sigh-

ed in content and returned to their resting places where the wind moans softly through the pines above and there is quiet and peace.