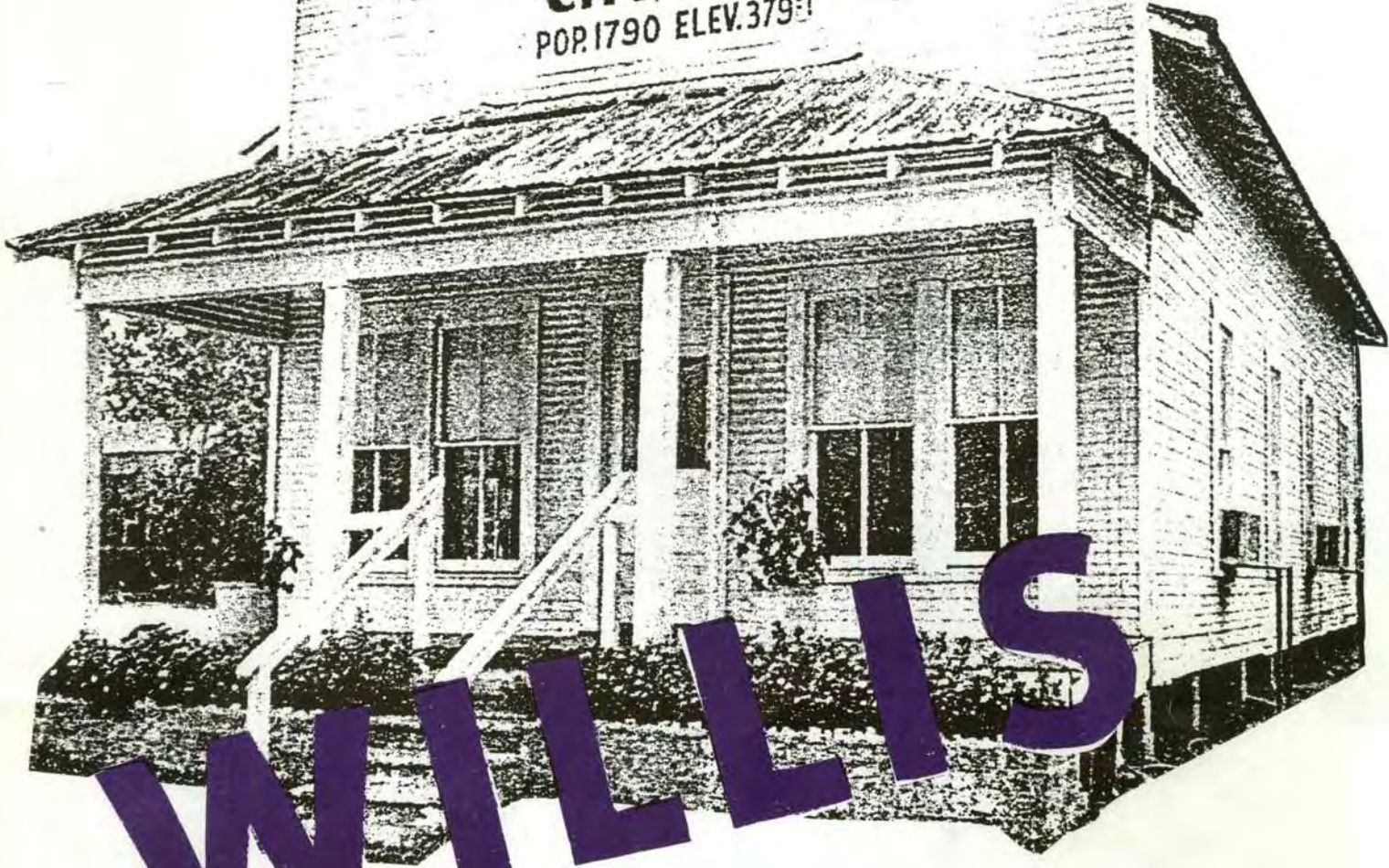


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WILLIS

**A PROUD PAST
AND A BRIGHTER
FUTURE.....**

COLLECTOR'S LIMITED EDITION 1995

A proud past and a brighter future.....

We, the members of the Willis Historical Committee, are proud to have had the opportunity to create this magazine commemorating the 125th birthday of Willis. In it, we have attempted to connect the past with the present in the hopes that future generations will realize and appreciate the rich heritage which is theirs.

Those of us on this committee have special memories of the people and the places featured in this magazine, and we realize how quickly the landmarks are changing or disappearing entirely. The proud past of Willis is revealed in its churches, schools, industries, organizations, and most of all, in its people and families. The foundation has been laid by our forefathers and ancestors, who at one time were the "newcomers" to Willis. All of us who now call Willis home, old and new residents alike, have the honor and responsibility of guiding Willis to that brighter future.

It was not possible to include all of those who played a part in the founding and raising of Willis. None was left out intentionally.

WILLIS HISTORICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Peggy Fowler	Mattie Lou Hulon
Beverly Vornsand	Kenneth Vornsand
Poodle Meador	Lloyd Meador
Jeff Traylor	Tina Mae Philpot
Laura Belle Paddock	Dorthea Altman
Malu Parrish	Clyde Parrish
Earnestine Richardson	Russ Clanton
Ruth Castleschoult	
Sue Ann Powell, Chairman	

Luther Powell and John Paul Watson
Technical Assistants



Historical marker located at roadside park, Hwy 75S entrance to Willis (Courtesy Kenneth & Beverly Vornsand)

WILLIS, TEXAS 1870-1995

by Beverly Vornsand

In this 125th year of the founding of Willis, Texas, the residents of Willis today can look back into the lives and times of their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and other ancestors with a great sense of pride. The pioneers of this area of Montgomery County were realists, never fearing hard work or personal sacrifice. Because of this legacy, Willis continues to grow.

During the late 1800's, hundreds of areas throughout Texas and the Southwest were settled by various peoples dreaming of new beginnings and promising futures. Not all of the towns that were started during this period are still in existence, but Willis lives and thrives some 125 years later. For a small settlement to mature into a proper town, its residents must have faith, courage, be willing to sacrifice and work hard, possess a sense of community pride and responsibility, and have a feeling of oneness with their neighbor and his problems. All of these things the early families of Willis held dear and necessary. Although the early pioneers of this area lived and died without national fame and glory, they did not live and struggle in vain, for their great-great-grandchildren and others to come will hold their memories and continue their dreams.

Now we are continuing in the second century in the history of Willis, a dramatic new frontier has evolved before us. There are new industrial and recreational projects completed or under construction in the area with boundless opportunities for everyone of us to grow, prosper, and enjoy "the good life."

The descendants of the founding families of this area have a heritage of past accomplishments and deeds they can exhibit with honor. The newer 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.

The past 25 years have seen the Willis area grow in all four directions, with the developing of the Georgia-Pacific lumber complex at New

Waverly, north of Willis, the Gulf States power plant on Lewis Creek, and the numerous subdivisions on Lake Conroe to the west of Willis, Panorama residential development and the Outlet Center with 80-plus stores to the south of Willis, and the Texas National Golf Course to the east of Willis. In 1890, the census showed that Willis had a population of 832, today it shows approximately 2,800 within the city limits, but it is home to hundreds of others in the surrounding area just beyond the limits of the city.

The Willis Independent School District is continuing to grow and expand as this magazine goes to print. In December, Phase 1 of the new Willis High School will open with a capacity for 1,400 students. At that time, the present high school will become the Lynn Lucas Middle School. Other facilities include the C. C. Hardy Middle School, Jennie C. Roark Primary School, Mel Parmley Elementary, A. R. Turner Elementary School, Janie Stubblefield Alternative School, and the Cargill Educational Support Center, which houses the central office administration and business office. The current enrollment stands at 3,786 and growing--"a proud past and a brighter future" for education in Willis ISD.

Willis residents remain interested in the activities of their county. There are plenty of fishing and boating activities on Lake Conroe; for the golfers, Texas National Golf Club is only two miles to the east of Willis. In February and March, members of the Willis Community help the county get into the spirit of being a Texan with residents taking part in the Montgomery County "Go Texan Parade" and the Montgomery County Fair. Participation in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo gives area youngsters an opportunity to be involved in activities relating to agriculture.

Antique stores, grocery stores, medical and dental facilities, hardware stores, a nursing home, pre-schools, fastfood establishments, fire and police protection, a post office, library, ethnic eating establishments, banks, churches of many denominations...all can be found within, or on the outskirts, of downtown Willis.

Willis Population: 2,764

Elevation: 379 feet (some things haven't changed!)

Mayor Ruth Castleschouldt:



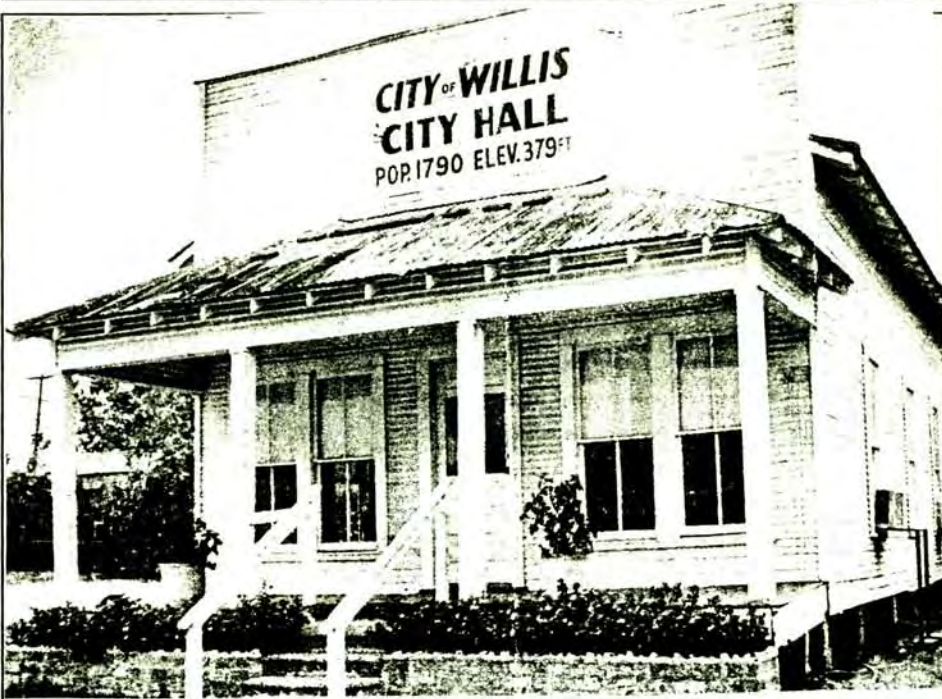
Committed to utilizing practical experience and formal training to improve the quality of life for the families of Willis and Montgomery County by working closely with education, community, business and political entities ranging from city to county, state, national, and international level.

A Willis graduate, Ruth Castleschouldt has devoted 35 years to the field of education, and 16 years to the City of Willis as an elected official. She is serving her second term as mayor of Willis. Under her leadership, Willis has grown and continues to grow.

A very family-oriented person, she and husband, Glen, have four children and six grandchildren. They have also provided a home to three foster children.



Present City Hall (Courtesy of Kenneth & Beverly Vornsand)



Former City Hall

HISTORY REMINDS US

Only history reminds that Willis was once the most progressive, thriving, enterprising young city in Montgomery County; that before 1900, it boasted cigar factories, an opera house, a college, and numerous business establishments, hotels and saloons.

Willis is named after two Galveston merchants, Peter J. and Richard S. Willis, who were large landowners in Montgomery County in the mid 19th century. The brothers deeded the

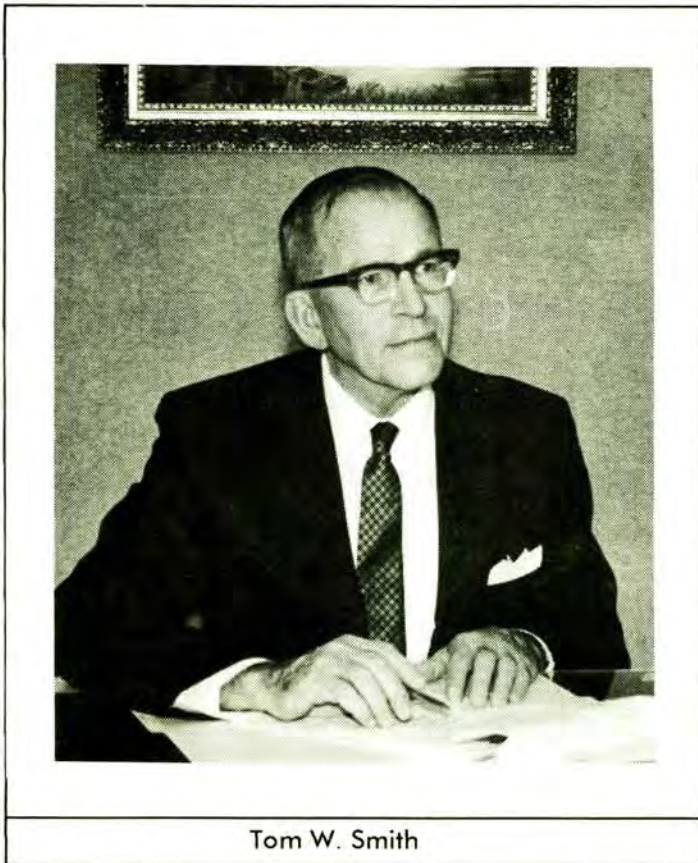
town site on the Houston and Great Northern Railroad route in the 1860's, and settlement was begun about 1870. By the mid-1890's, Willis was the center of a burgeoning tobacco industry. According to the Texas State Historical Association, cigars from Willis won a gold medal at the St. Louis Exposition, a world's fair, in 1904. The lifting of the tariff on Cuban tobacco ended the tobacco industry in Willis.

(Continued on next page)

Happy Memories of WILLIS

by Tom W. Smith

My family has had close friends among the people of Willis for generations. The continuation of those friendships became the source of many happy memories. As a teacher, however, my memories are centered around the school. Happy memories there are too numerous for more than casual mentioning.



Tom W. Smith

History Reminds Us (Cont'd.....)

For the first half of the 20th century, the lumber industry dominated and the population crested at 1,750 in 1950. When the picture of the old City Hall was taken in 1977, the population was 1,790. Also recorded on City Hall was the elevation of 379 feet, a figure which makes Willis the highest point between Houston and Palestine.

Today's population is 2,764 within the city limits. The development of Lake Conroe and the proximity to Houston are contributing factors in the continued growth of Willis.

Working with a dedicated faculty and receptive students is an ideal situation for a teacher. We had both at Willis. All of our faculty members were well-versed in their teaching fields, and our students seemed appreciative of our efforts to impart knowledge. The classroom experiences in themselves became happy memories.

Beyond the classroom, the close association between teachers and students are now sources of happy memories. For this teacher, there were the boys' and girls' tennis teams, the basketball teams, and the "six man" football teams.

Lastly, there are the memories associated with being scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 161. There were the weekly meetings after which we "camped" overnight in the gymnasium. There was the project of building our log cabin at the "Duck Pond," which kept us busy--and together--for a long time. There were our summer camps at Clear Lake. Then, there was our long "moving camp" through the Colorado Rockies.

Only memories now. But they are memories that have kept us together in spirit through the passing years--memories that enable us to enjoy getting together and talking about our happy days in the Willis School.

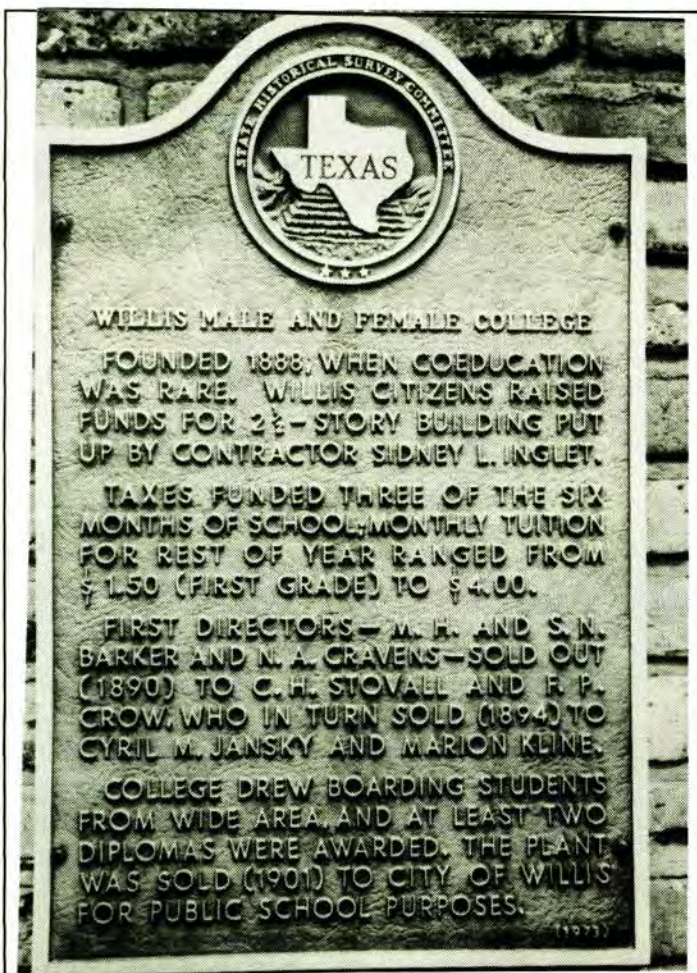
Tom Smith began his teaching career in Willis in 1935, and was named Superintendent in 1942, a position he left when he was called into the Army. He later served as County School Superintendent for twelve years.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

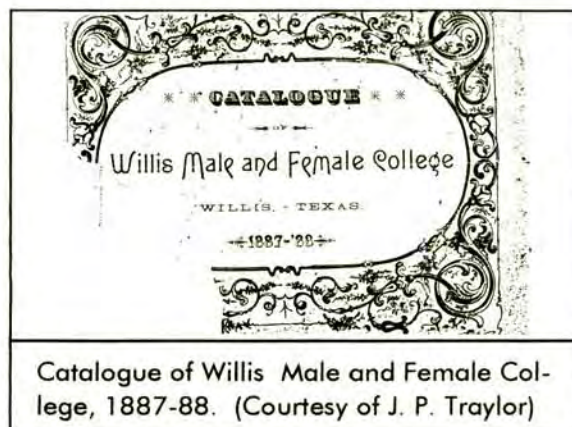
WILLIS!

Public education in Willis passes the century mark

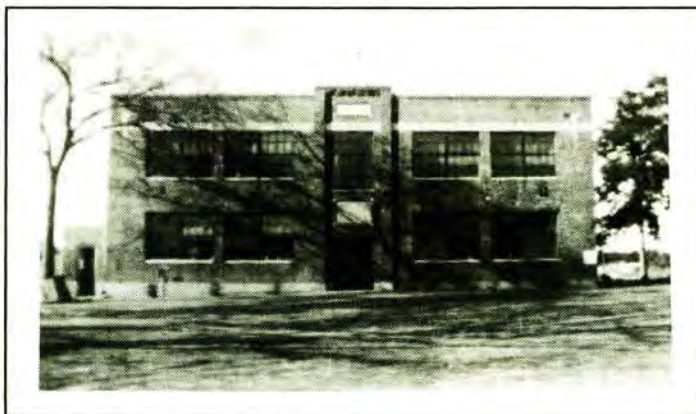
It has been said many times that the destiny of our future lies in the hands of our children. That we should teach them well, and share with them the experiences of our past so that they can learn and grow from our accumulated knowledge. For 107 years, there has been some form of public education offered in the Willis area, beginning with the Male and Female College, which housed all grades and a college.



Historical marker at the corner of Rogers and Thomason, serves as a reminder of the site of the Male and Female College. (Courtesy of Kenneth & Beverly Vornsand)



Catalogue of Willis Male and Female College, 1887-88. (Courtesy of J. P. Traylor)



Willis Elementary School later became the Willis Community Education Building. Built on property which formerly housed the Willis Male and Female College. (Courtesy of Betty J. Fountain)



A practice at one time of the Male and Female College was for the janitor of the main building to ring the bell, which was in a cupola atop the building, at a certain hour each weekday evening. The ringing of the college bell was the signal for all boarding students and those in the homes and out-in-town boarding houses to retire to the study hall of the college, or to their respective study tables, for supervised study of two or three hours. (From "A History of Montgomery County, Texas", p. 85). The bell is now located on the east side of the Cargill Education Support Center.

C. C. HARDY-- providing stabil- ity in the midst of growth, progress, and change

by Sue Ann Powell

When C. C. Hardy Middle School opened in 1983, recognition was given to a man who devoted 41 years of service to the Willis schools and the Willis community. C. C. "Cliff" Hardy joined the faculty of WISD in September of 1942 as a Vocational Agriculture teacher. He became Superintendent in June of 1946, and remembers that the district boasted a total of eight school buses that year.

He began his career in education in 1925 in Karnes County in a one-teacher school. While teaching in Nordheim, he met his wife, Lois, who was a music teacher. They married in December, 1941, and will soon be celebrating their 54th anniversary. Mrs. Hardy joined the faculty in Willis, teaching choral music and orchestra. Their son, Jim, is an area realtor.

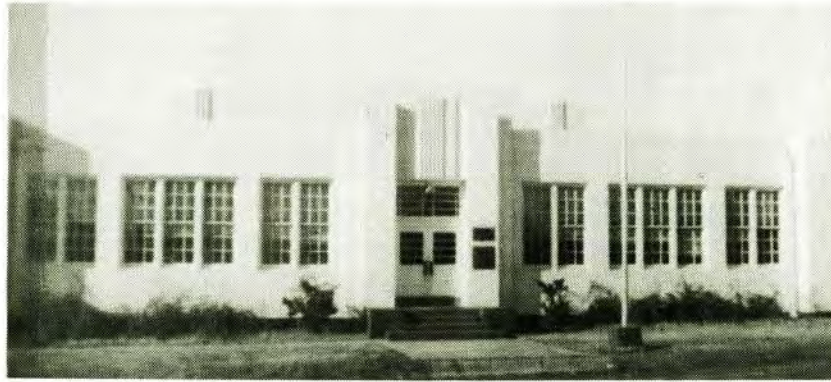
From his vantage point of living across from the school business office (former high school), Mr. Hardy has seen many changes in education and in the Willis Independent School District in particular. In the midst of growth, progress, and change, the name "C. C. Hardy" has been



synonymous with stability. After a career spanning 57 years in public education, Mr. Hardy retired in 1984, leaving a "proud past and ensuring a brighter future" in education.



C. C. HARDY MIDDLE SCHOOL



WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL (Courtesy Betty J. Fountain)

Administration Building re-named

In a ceremony honoring longtime educators who dedicated their lives to the Willis Independent School District, Superintendent Tom Crowe stated, "We owe a debt to these people who have created our proud past and laid the foundation for a brighter future." One of the four re-named buildings is the white brick building on Rogers Street which now houses administration and educational support offices. It is now named the Cargill Education Support Center, in honor of a family who served a combined 115 years in the Willis school district. Completed in 1939, the building was used longest as Willis High School.

Velma Cargill taught two generations of children of many families during her career of 34 years as an elementary school teacher in Willis. She took great pleasure in repeating anecdotes about "her kids", and she remained a "teacher" until her death in June, 1993.

At one time Dorothy Cargill was the only secretary in the district. She served as secretary to the principal, superintendent, business manager, and as a payroll clerk during her 47 years of service.

Many of these years were spent in the building which now bears the family's name.

Jeanette Cargill Wilson, who served as a secretary in the business office and also in the tax office for 26 years, was able to see the growth and progress of the district from the financial aspect of education. Sue Ann Cargill Powell was the only counselor in the district for several years. She also served as district test coordinator and communications coordinator during her eight years with the district.

Not only were these four employees of Willis ISD, all four attended and graduated from the Willis schools.

CARGILL
EDUCATIONAL
SUPPORT CENTER



Pictured from left to right: Dorothy Cargill, Jeanette Wilson Cargill, and Sue Ann Cargill Powell (Courtesy Susan Johnson)



Velma W. Cargill

CLASS OF 1944...still going strong.....

by Malu Parrish

'Children of the Great Depression' could have been said of the 29 students of the Willis High School graduating class of 1944. Four boys of the class were already in the armed services because of World War II: Lt. William Avis Hunter, U.S. Army; John F. Belnoski, Raymond Tucker, and Harold Gene Williams, all in the U.S. Navy. Williams would not come home again, he was killed while training in California. Later, other boys from the class would leave to serve their country. Little wonder that our class song was: "When the Lights Go On Again".

Out of the seventh grade graduating class of 45 students, there were 29 who went on to graduate in 1944, and many of these continue to live in the area. There are some whose children and grandchildren have attended and graduated from the Willis schools.

Several months before the 40th anniversary date of the Class of 1944, four of the class met to make plans for a reunion to be held in June of 1984. The four were: Ruby (Dean) Knox, Linda (Meador) Hooper, Peggy (Thomason) Fowler, and Malu (Elmore) Parrish. There were 14 ex-students who attended as well as husbands and wives. Also, at that time, the class of 1945 held their reunion.

Since that time in 1984, the group of four: Ruby, Linda, Peggy, and Malu, has met each

month at one another's homes. The fun and enjoyment of these 'old friends' who are called 'The Cheerleaders' has now reached out to include: Lloyd and 'Poodle' Meador, Gordon and Dorris Carew, Browder and Ann Traylor, Mattie Lou Hulon, Bettie Pearl Hulon, Bonnie Morrison, Beth Bailey, Winston Knox, Clyde Parrish, Marvin Reaves, Chelo Palmer, Betty Jean Fountain, and Marcell Parsley. Everyone brings food, and NO ONE counts calories!

From children who played together throughout their childhood, later to disperse to raise their families and pursue the duties of life and work, this happy group has come full circle. The words of their class song gave them hope and confidence at a time when the future of the world seemed uncertain:

"When the lights go on again all over the world...And the boys are home again all over the world...And rain or snow is all that may fall from the skies above...A kiss won't mean 'goodbye' but 'hello' to love. When the lights go on again all over the world...And the ships will sail again all over the world...Then we'll have time for things like wedding rings and 'free' hearts will sing--when the lights go on again all over the world."

**A HAPPY 125th TO THE CITY OF WILLIS
FROM THE WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATES OF 1944!**



WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1944: (Front row, l. to r.) Marvin Reaves, August Bilnoski, Orpha Grace Helm, Dorott Woodruff, Genie Williams, Malu Elmore, Lorene Dillard, Frank Goodney, Newton Free, Bobby Ross. (Second row) John Parsley, Ruby Jewel Dean, Juanita Champion, Peggy Thomason, John Browder, Bonnie Ruth Dean, Gene Gibbs, Gene Re Wayne Chatham. (Back row) Mr. C. C. Hardy, Mrs. Georgia Watson (Class Sponsors), Betty Holladay, Mr. J. T. Bolton Superintendent, Linda Meador, Norma Lee Dean. Photo taken by Mrs. Mamie Ross. (Courtesy Malu Parrish)

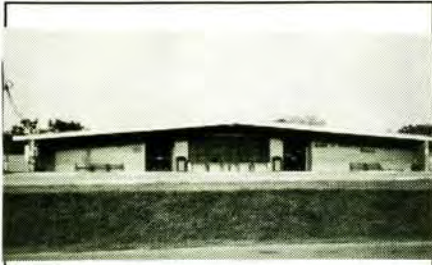


1994 REUNION OF WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1944
 (Front, l. to r.) Peggy (Thomason) Fowler, Linda (Meador) Hooper, Lorene (Dillard) Carey. (Back row) Roy Myers, Malu (Elmore) Parrish, Ruby Jewel (Dean) Knox, Johnny Parsley, Marvin Reaves, S. E. Skelton. (Courtesy Malu Parrish)



1984 REUNION OF WILLIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1944: (Front row, l. to r.) Newton Free, Malu (Elmore) Parrish, Peggy (Thomason) Fowler, Linda (Meador) Hooper, Ruby Jewel (Dean) Knox, Raymond Tucker. Back row: Johnny Parsley, Gene Red, Bobby Ross, Genie (Williams) Hill, Norma Lee Dean, Martha (Pearson) Johnson, John Browder, Marvin Reaves. (Courtesy Malu Parrish)

Willis Schools continue....



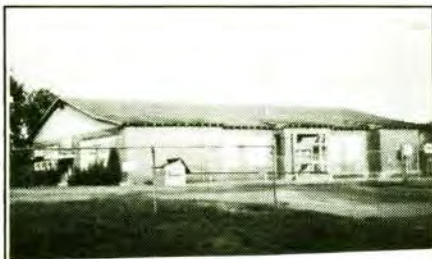
Jennie C. Roark Primary School



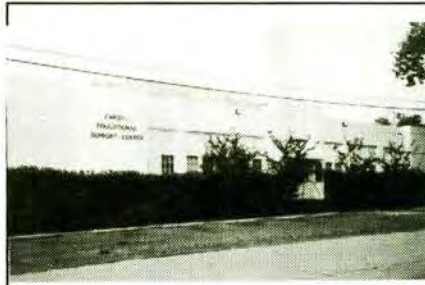
Mel Parmley Elementary School
(formerly Willis Elementary School)



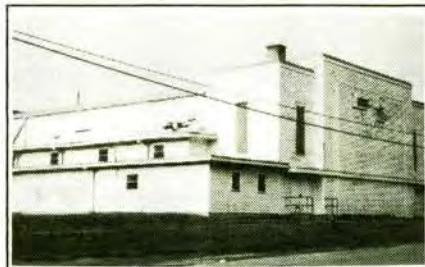
A. R. Turner Elementary School



Willis Community Education Building/Pre-Kindergarten



Cargill Education Support Center



Old Gymnasium



Berton A. Yates Stadium



C. C. Hardy Middle School



Janie Stubblefield Alternative School



Present **Willis High School**
To become **Lynn Lucas Middle School** in December, 1995



New **Willis High School**
To open December, 1995



WILLIS FOOTBALL LETTERMEN 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.

Standing: J. Wilson, C. Harvey, C. Reed, D. Tubbs, Coach J. Shanklin, Kneeling: C. Young, J. Singer, T. Blair, and S. Woodley.



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.



1911 WILLIS GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

**SCHOOL
DAYS**



MRS. VELMA CARGILL'S SECOND GRADE CLASS - 1948
(Courtesy Sue Ann Powell)

SCHOOL

DAYS

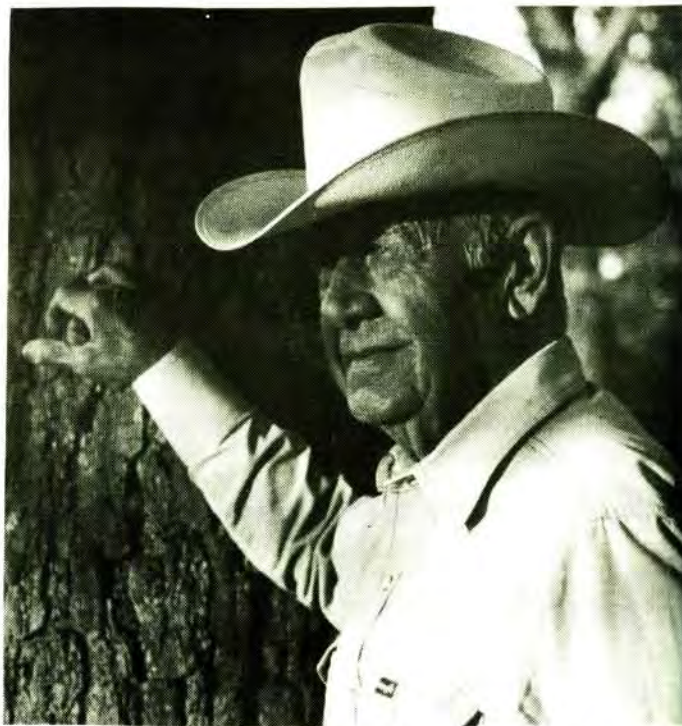
Local rancher shares memories

Dick Calfee went to school his first five years at the White Oak School on White Oak Road (near White Oak Creek) now known as Longmire Road, about six miles southwest of Willis. There was one teacher for grades 1-8, and two children sat at one desk. There were about 25 students in the school.

Later he attended school in Willis and walked the six miles many times. Hamburgers were five cents then!

In about 1926, Dick remembers helping drive 400 head of cattle through downtown Houston from Willis in 24 hours. They met one car between Spring Creek and Houston!

Dick was born March 20, 1912 in Willis to Delphia Lee Duke and Homer Clinton Calfee. He married Ada Ruth Fultz in 1937, and is the



father of Gary Bruce and Wanda Carol Calfee Van Alstyne. Dick still lives on the old Calfee land on Longmire Road. His son Gary and wife Patty live beside him in the old Calfee home which they have remodeled.



Dick Calfee, third from the left, with his graduating class of 1929

JANIE W. STUBBLEFIELD.....

Janie W. Stubblefield touched and influenced many lives of the Willis community. She began teaching in the Willis School District in 1936. She taught here for 37 years and retired in 1973. During her tenure with Willis I.S.D., she was an English teacher, Choir Director, School Librarian, Drum and Bugle Corps, Band Co-Director, and Senior sponsor. She taught at the Willis Colored High School, the A. R. Turner High School, and Willis High School.

Mrs. Stubblefield was always very actively involved in all aspects of the church and community. She was the pianist and Choir Director for her church, Antioch Missionary Baptist, from a very young age to 1990. She also willingly served as pianist for many of the other churches

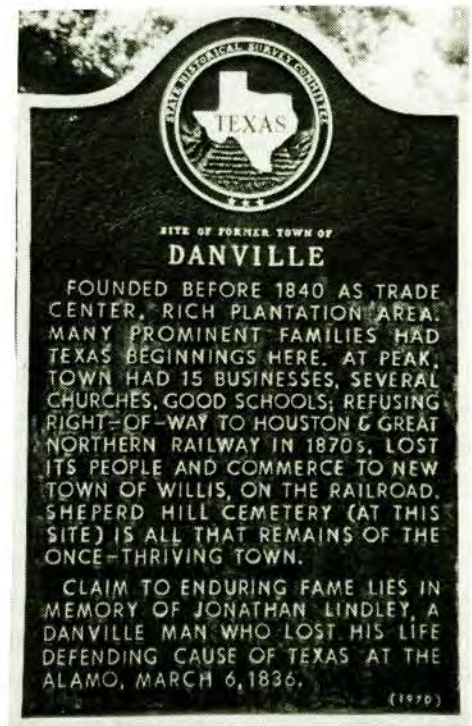
in the community when she was needed.

She was very active in the Montgomery County Democratic Party where she worked with Voter Registration, was a convention delegate, and the Election Judge for Box 23. She worked as one of the coordinators with the government commodities Foods Subsidy Program, and is one of the Founding Members of the Friends of the Willis Library.

Janie Westmoreland married Y. E. Stubblefield January 1, 1930, and is the mother of five sons, Walter Earl, Tobias, Sr., Ferman, Melvin Ray, and Godfrey Van.

Recently, the Willis I.S.D. named its Alternative School the Janie W. Stubblefield Alternative School in her honor.

Mrs. Stubblefield presently resides in Texas City due to her health, but her influence is a very present force in the Willis community.



Pictured above is historical marker commemorating the former town of Danville. Many Willis families had their beginnings in the Danville area.



In Nostalgia

by J. P. Traylor

In the early twenties as I was a small boy, I lived with my grandmother, Eugenia Powell, she being the wife of the town doctor of Willis, Dr. W. P. Powell.

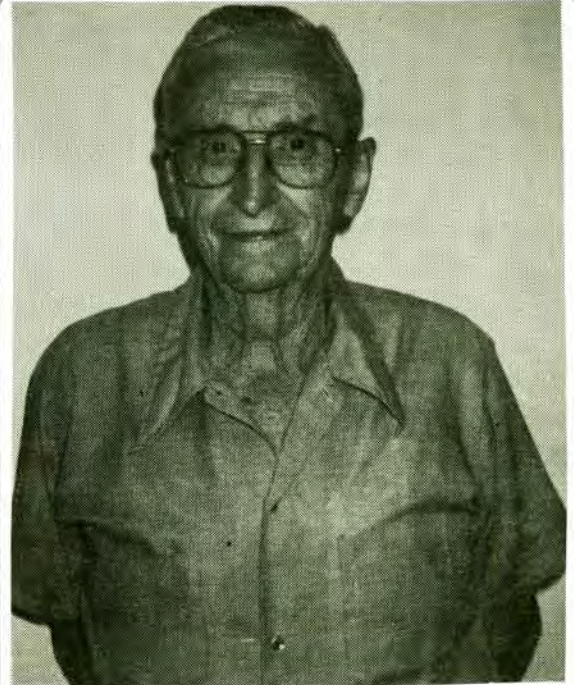
I went to grade school in the old wooden building that was formerly the Male and Female College, located where the Cargill Education Support Center building now stands. In those times, the classes were conducted in rooms having about forty students. During winter months, the rooms were heated with large cast-iron stoves that sat in sand boxes. As there were no lunch rooms in those times, the kids brought their lunches in paper sacks or metal lard buckets. Mine was a large metal bucket.

Our restrooms were not called that, they were several outdoor outhouses, always with the crescent moon cut in the entrance door. The best part of this school was the outdoor supper given in the school yard by the parents, and of all the good food there, I always sought the dessert tables which were abundant with color and pies of all sort. Being a pie man, I went after those pies with gusto!

Willis in those days was a small community, and everybody knew one another. The streets were sandy, and being no stock law, cattle and horses roamed at will. Most people had fences around homes and during night time, the horses would come to the fences and attempt to reach over some to get at the bushes growing in those areas. The town was inundated with bitter weeds that occasionally caused problems with the cows.

With the cows and horses, chickens, turkeys, and occasional pigs roaming the streets, it made quite a rural setting; and in early morning, the crowing of roosters, the call being returned by others, made a feeling of security.

My most enjoyable times were on a Sunday when I would start checking at lunch time several aunts' homes to see who had pie for dessert--and the one that did, that's where I invited myself to dinner. Oh, how I loved pie!



J. P. (JEFF) TRAYLOR

The railroad train station was an interesting place to visit, watching as the trains came and went. The trains that stayed to load and unload passengers, the engineer always climbed down from the engine cab and proceeded to oil the various drive wheels with the largest oil can imaginable, the old engine sitting there hissing with steam and other noises. The dormer windows at stations always had a telegraph key covered with a Prince Albert tobacco can that emanated loud clicks. Boy, this was exciting! The super train, known as the "Sun-Shine Special" would come whistling, clanking and hissing with steam pouring from numerous outlets through Willis--no stop. However, south of the rail station, there stood a tall metal pole that a mail sack hung on; as the train passed, suddenly a metal arm protruded from the mail car and snatched the sack from that pole. Man, that was a sight to behold! Really exciting because you wanted it to

(continued on next page)

Nostalgia (cont'd.....)

miss! North of the station, several hundred feet away, stood a large water tower that the steam engines stopped to take on water. This was interesting to watch.

Along main street, now known as Danville or Hwy. 75, stood the City Hall, cotton gin, and several large wooden vats filled with brine when pickles were being made. There were wooden steps leading up to a platform that circled the vats completely. Men walked around and around with large wooden paddles stirring the cucumbers.

Further down main street, corner of Montgomery and 75, stood the Florida Bar, a favorite spot. North of the Florida Bar stood the "Willis Mercantile" run by Mr. Melville Paddock, and my Uncle Scraps Powell worked there. This was a favorite shopping spot for the people. On Saturdays, people would come from surrounding areas to buy their flour, sugar, tobacco, and lard, etc.

You could see horses, wagons, and a few cars parked all over town. People were busy buying, selling, and just visiting with one another. My favorite store was the "Willis Mercantile" because my first pair of shoes came from there--"Buster Brown" in my world, that was tops!

Along what is now Thomason Street, between Montgomery and Stewart, was a blacksmith shop that stood north of the Sam Seay Scott home. Here you could see horses be re-shoed and metal rims being replaced on wagon wheels. The Smithy was a large

Dr. W. P. Powell ***Early Willis Physician***

Dr. Powell helped his parents move to Walker County, Texas in the fall of 1858, where the town of Waverly was founded. He returned to Louisiana to complete his medical studies. In March 1859, he graduated and returned to Waverly and began his medical 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. When the War between the North and South broke out, he joined Hood's Texas Brigade in Virginia, where he was appointed assistant surgeon to the Fifth Texas regiment.

Following his return to Waverly after the War, he practiced medicine there until he moved to Willis in 1872, 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

man--along with his leather apron and bellowing forge was an impressive sight.

Willis with its horses, cattle, dogs, chickens, and crowing of early morning roosters, and its bitterweeds was a quaint little town, and as a young boy, it was my world--and I thrilled and enjoyed it all!



Dr. W. P. Powell

Health Association, member of the judicial medical examining board of Harris and Montgomery counties, and an active member of the Texas State Medical Association.

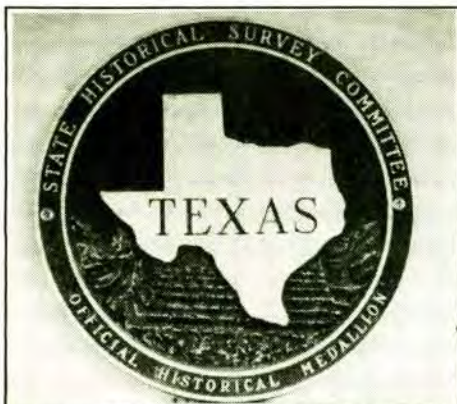
His home is one of the first built in Willis; he owned the first motorized buggy offered on the market and later was first to own a car, a Maxwell. Prior to that, he had spent many hours going about his duties on horseback, or in a buggy.

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 grandson, J. P. Traylor, his

(continued on next page)

Dr. W. P. Powell, (cont'd.....)

great-granddaughters, Sue Ann Cargill Powell and Beverly Holder Vornsand; his great-grandson, Bob Cargill, lives in Conroe. Other grandchildren and great-grandchildren live elsewhere.



OLD DR. WM. P. POWELL HOME
REMAINING PORTION OF 13-ROOM
HOUSE BUILT IN 1872 BY CARPENTER
SID INGLET. POWELL - A PIONEER
PHYSICIAN, CONFEDERATE VETERAN,
MARRIED MISS MARY EUGENIA
THOMPSON, 1863, IN WAVERLY. SIX
OF THEIR 12 CHILDREN BORN HERE.
HE TRAVELED BY HORSE AND BUGGY
TO VISIT THE SICK, USED HOME AS
OFFICE AND IMPROVISED HOSPITAL
UNTIL HIS DEATH, NOV. 6, 1915.
PURCHASED IN 1946 BY JUSTICE OF
THE PEACE, R. M. JORDY.
SITE OF 119 WEDDING CEREMONIES.
RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK - 1967

Historical marker was placed on the former home of Dr. W. P. Powell in 1967. The home was purchased by Justice of the Peace, R. M. Jordy in 1946, and is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Jordy and their son, James.



Sidney Inglet



Dr. William P. Powell and his wife, the former Mary Eugenia Thompson, moved into this home in Willis in 1872. Built by Sid Inglet, it had 11 foot ceilings, and the floor and baseboards were of 12 inch boards. It had a double fireplace and contained 13 rooms. (Courtest of J. P. Traylor)



The 123 year old Powell home is now the residence of the Milton Jordys.

Sidney Inglet, pictured on the left, constructed some of the oldest buildings in Willis. He built the Willis Male and Female College, the Methodist Church, the Powell home, the Captain Smith home, the Collard home, the original Paddock home, the Scott Grocery and Feed Store, and many of the beautiful buildings in and around Willis. He died in 1906 at the age of 72.

RUSS CLANTON-

A LIVING LEGACY

by Peggy McCullen

There aren't too many people who have the heritage that Russell "Russ" Clanton speaks of. His forefathers were settlers in this country just two generations ago, which gives him first-hand knowledge about not only the history of this area, but of settlement from the standpoint of the "covered wagon" days as well.

Russ was born in Esperanza at the "Pear Orchard Place", close to the Spillar Home. (Geographically, Esperanza is located about two miles directly north of Willis on Old 75. Like Danville, the only thing left of Esperanza is memories and tales. Many old-timers say that Esperanza is haunted, and they refer to it as "a ghost town".) He spent many of his childhood years living in Danville, raising and picking the cotton which was as critical to the agriculture of this area as was tobacco.

According to Russ, tobacco growth had reached its peak around the turn of the century and most farmers were raising cotton, corn and vegetables. There were also many dairy farms in the area. Most families raised their own food, and bought dry staples at the general store, or mercantile.

Russ has been a merchant in Montgomery County for approximately half of a century. A master of tales, he speaks of the "Willis Bank Robbery" of 1910, and the later discovery of gold and silver coins from that robbery in November, 1941. According to Russ, the money was uncovered when a power scraper made a cut where a tree had once stood as Highway 75 was being straightened out. "They were digging up some tree roots and all of a sudden those fellas started getting off of their equipment. The foreman was about to fire them for cuttin' out of work early. Those men were picking up gold coins!"

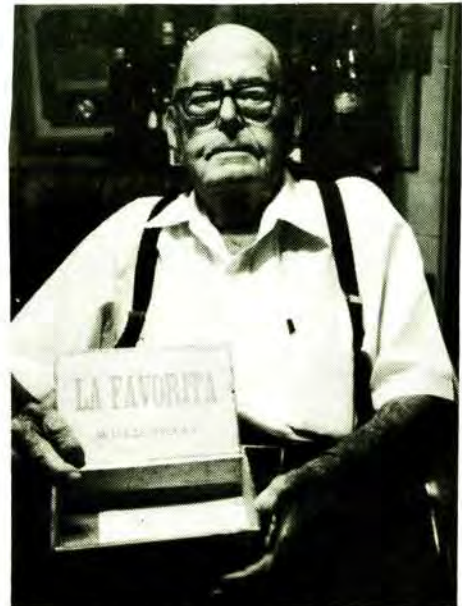
"I was the first commuter in this area. Back in 1935, I bought a Ford without the tires. I made

a deal with my boss to trade-out my time for the tires. I'd go down old 75, over the creek bridges; there was a shell road between Spring Creek and Houston. I was only late to work two times."

Russ worked in Houston during the late twenties, just after he married Leona Robinson, whose father owned the saloon that operated in Willis until 1905 (which later housed the cannery and the jail). He graduated from Willis High in 1926 as salutatorian of his 17-member class. His first job after high school was "doing everything" for the J. W. Thomason Supply Company in Willis. He made thirty dollars per month plus room and board. His fringe benefits were use of his boss' car so that he could date.

"Our Saturday nights consisted of the boys buying ice cream, and the girls baking a cake (flour was a rare commodity back then). After that, we'd go for a hay ride. Once in old Danville, where I lived when I was about nine, we went to the fair. I bought an ice cream in what I thought was a saucer. I took that saucer back to the lady

(Cont'd)



RUSS CLANTON holding cigar box which once held cigars from the Willis Cigar Factory. (Courtesy Kenneth & Beverly Vornsand)

CLANTON, cont'd....

and she told me that it was edible. It was a 'saso,' the first ice cream cone.

"In August of 1915 when that big storm blew Galveston away, we were out in the fields picking cotton. That wind blew so hard that it knocked our house off its blocks. We had an old cow that was standing next to a wagon. The wind was blowing so hard that it was blowing the sides off of the barn. The only thing that kept that cow alive was the wagon. It was shielding the cow from all of the flying debris."

"In the early thirties, when the oil boom came to this area, they used to run out of jail space and chain people to the water troughs outside of the courthouse. It was that oil boom that pulled Montgomery County out of the Depression. Things were bad around her during the Depression. Most families grew their own food, but that was about all they had.

"There was the timber industry, and the sawmills, but farming kept most people alive. We used to dry corn on the roof. We'd grind that up for cornmeal. Flour was real rare."

Russ Clanton was born in 1906, when the life expectancy of a male was about 40 years. Today he thinks as clear as a bell, and recites yesterday as well as his childhood years.

"I work hard, and I treat people right. I had that Mobil Station in Conroe back when gas was 18 cents a gallon. There was no charge for an oil change and it only cost 50 cents to get your tire fixed. People would come for miles, seven days a week, 24

hours a day, to use our phone. We were a service oriented business. You made your money providing service to your customers."

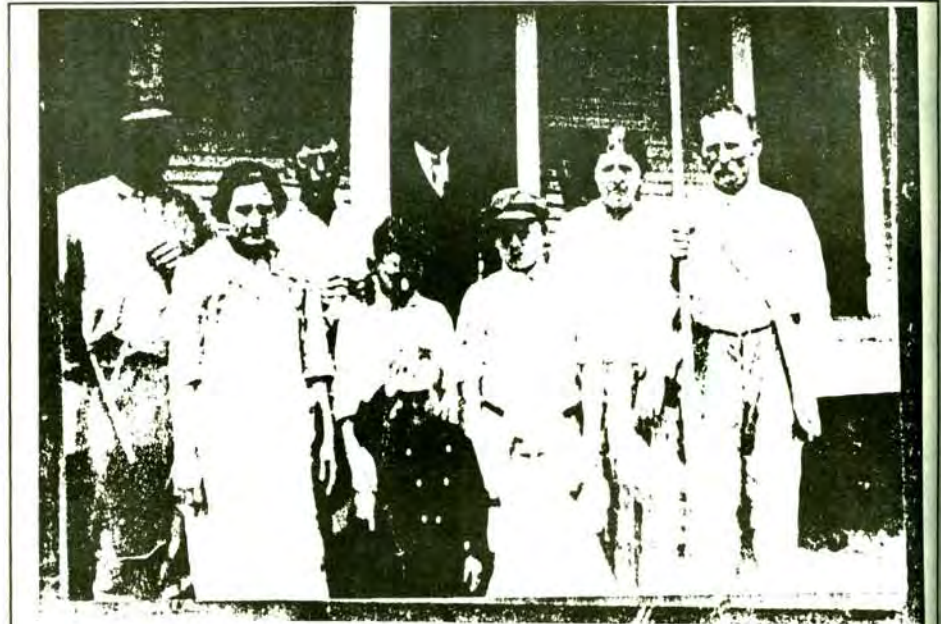
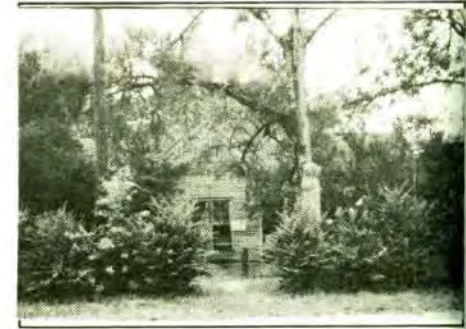
Today, he owns an antique shop located in Conroe at 711 Dallas Street, just east of Frazier. He married Edith Wise after Leona passed away. He's been known to kid Edith about attending her first and second weddings, because in his youth, he actually did attend her first wedding, with his first wife.

In his shop, he displays original bottles and memorabilia from the Willis of yesteryear, which to him in some ways, is the Willis of today.

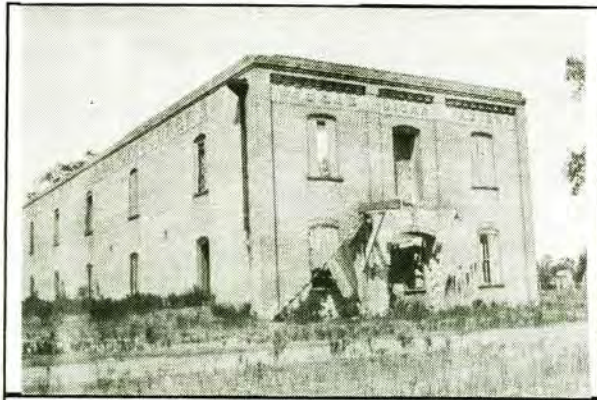


MR. AND MRS. GEORGE B. ROBINSON, who were Charter members of the Willis community, stand in front of their house on Danville Street. It is one of the few old homes still standing. Now owned by Russ Clanton, it is located next to the Moran Utilities Company Building. (Courtesy Russ Clanton)

ROBINSON house stands empty today in downtown Willis., almost hidden from view by shrubbery. (Courtesy Kenneth and Beverly Vornsand).



Emmit, Mullins, Mattie Clanton Mullins, Ruben Clanton, George Clanton, Mrs. Fannie Walker Clanton, Jeff Clanton, Russ Clanton, Eugene Mullen, Louise Mullins, taken 1920



Willis Cigar Factory

**WILLIS CIGAR FACTORY
1872 - Early 1900s**

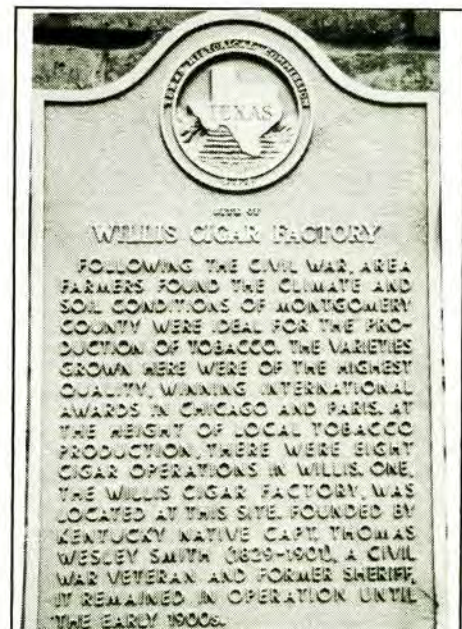


**Leila Lois Smith, daughter of T. W. Smith,
Cigar Factory Owner. Late 1800's in Willis.**

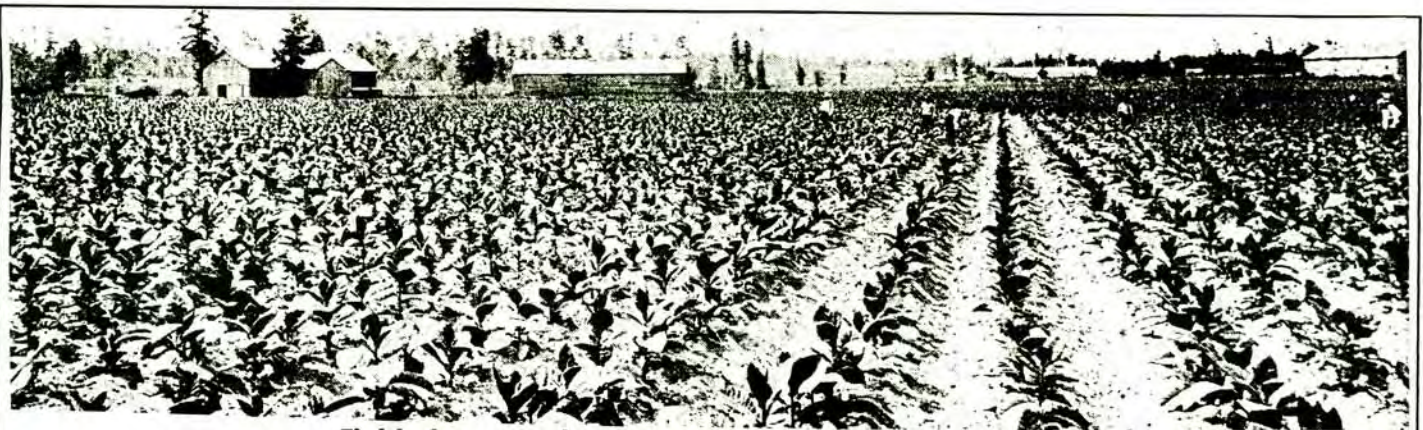


TOBACCO FACTORY - WILLIS, TEXAS

**Program cover for dedication of historical marker, May 3,
1987.**



**Historical marker denotes location
of Willis Cigar Factory at corner of
Waverly and Bell streets.**



Field of young tobacco growing at Willis around 1895

Modes of transportation in early days of Willis

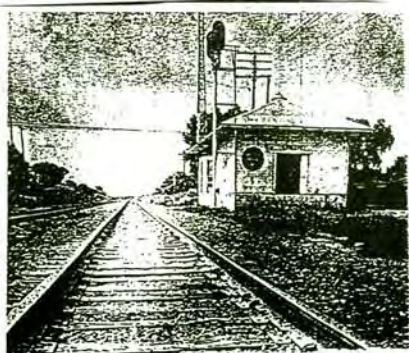


Jess Cargill stops his team to visit a neighbor. (Courtesy Sue Ann Powell)



T.B. HAMMOND AND BOBBY YORK AT CAMP LETCHER

T. B. Hammond and Bobby York at Camp Letcher



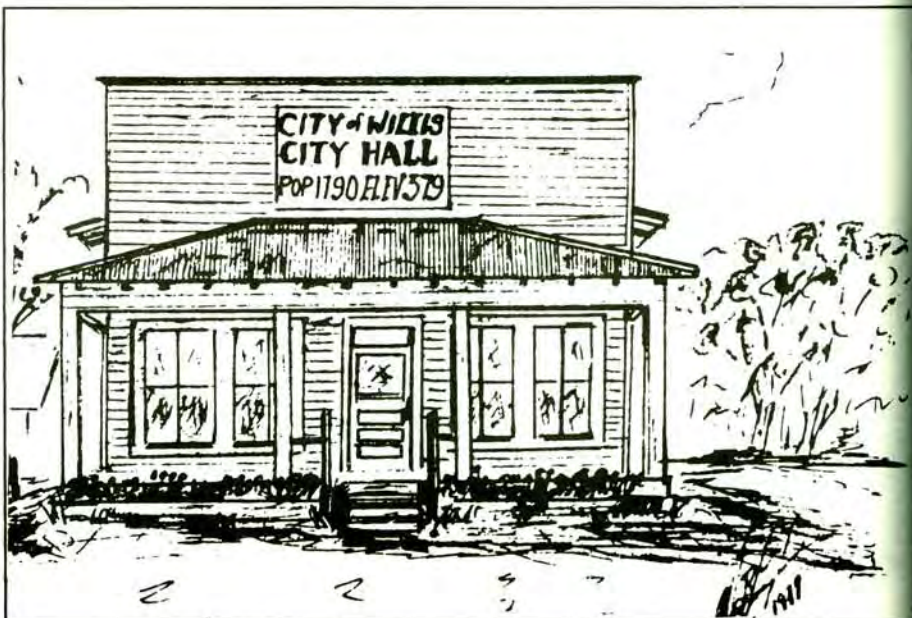
Willis Depot



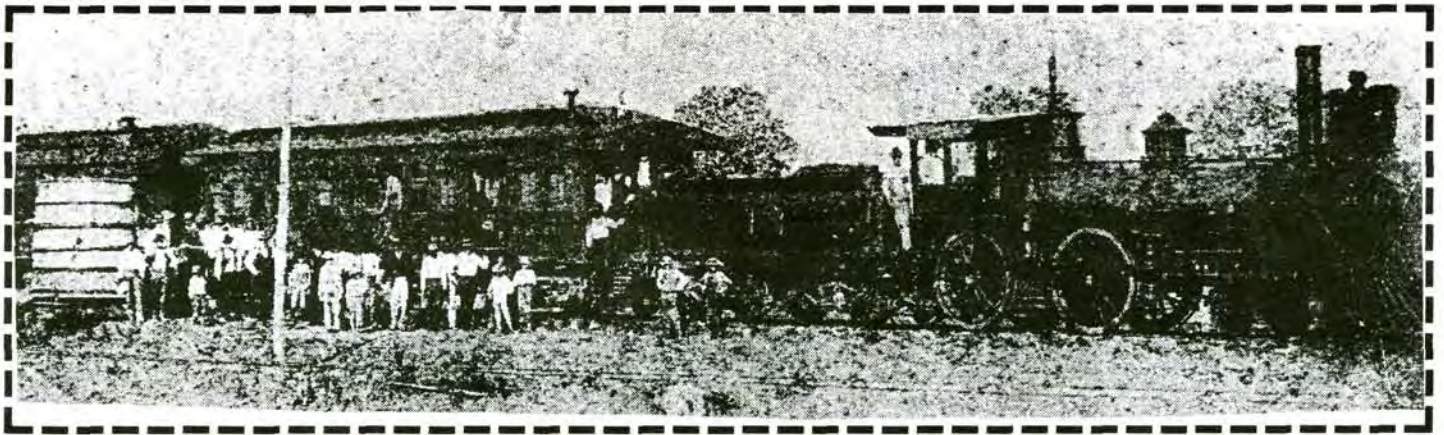
L to R: Arnold (Bubber) Smith, Tom Robinson, Clint Woodson, Scraps Powell, and Jack Wood. Taken out of town on road of Old Waverly. (Courtesy of J. P. Traylor)



Postcard - Willis, Texas (Courtesy of J. P. Traylor)



Transportation, cont'd.....



Postcard - Train ride to Beard's Mill (Courtesy of J. P. Traylor)



1944 School bus driver, John Howell (Courtesy of Melville Paddock)



Mary Peacock Legg



Carriers for R.F.D.'s, Willis, Texas. King Hotel in the distance. (Courtesy of Sue Ann Powell)

SHE REMEMBERS THE GOOD TIMES



Tina Mae Philpot

Local Inventor: John William King

John William King was born August 31, 1895, in Danville. He invented the first turning signal on cars and his number is still on ones of today, #1671845. The patent was for an improvement in the electrical wiring mechanism and signal box. The signal lit up the red and green glass and only showed one arrow at a time. He first used it on an old Oakland car. Thinking it would not sell on the market, he sold it to a man for \$300 to buy lumber for a house, and had enough left over to buy an old "Indian" motorcycle.

Tina Mae Philpot was born in Willis on September 25, 1917, to Ed and Martha Johnson.

She remembers coming into Willis on Saturdays to her grandmother's restaurant on the corner facing the old tobacco factory, across the railroad track. Her grandmother sold fish and plate dinners. She enjoyed playing on the wall of the tobacco factory after it was abandoned.

Another pleasure was looking forward to her prize in a box of cracker-jacks. The thing she enjoys most now is being able to get her mail right in front of her house!

A dedicated member of Thomas Chapel United Methodist Church, where she is a Trustee Communicant Steward and also Chairman of the Program Committee.

John also invented a mold for making concrete wagon wheels. People of Willis remember these as a fence in front of his two homes on the corner of Danville and Powell streets where Zipps Drive-in is now located. At the time of his death in 1975, many of his inventions had not been recorded.

He and his wife, Edna, owned and operated King's Cafe from the 1940's through the 1960's. They had three children, Dorthea, Era Mae, and Johnny.

On September 15, 1935, she married Isaac Philpot. They remained together 43 years until his death. Isaac was a carpenter, educator, and an active politician. He was a deacon of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, and he and members of the church built the present edifice without cost for labor.

He was the first black to vote, president of the Voter's League, first black foreman of the Montgomery County Grand Jury, and Montgomery County delegate to the National Democratic Convention.

It is obvious that Tina Mae Philpot's greatest pleasures are her family, her involvement in church, and her community.



Isaac Philpot



Patent #1671845

THOMAS CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by Addie Lou Campbell Reece, deceased
Edited for publication by Dorothy Weaver Reece, daughter-in-law and assisted by Verland Westmoreland

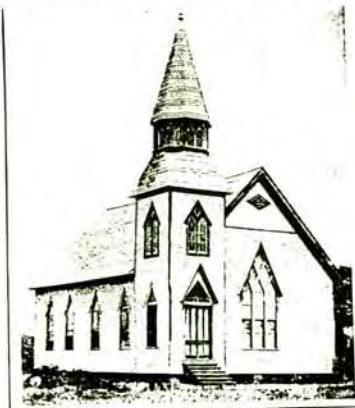


MARTHA JOHNSON
(Courtesy Tina Mae Philpot)

Martha Johnson was born in Willis, February 11, 1885 to Warren Culpepper and Cornelius Hicks. She married Mr. Ed Johnson who preceded her in death. To this union, six children were born: Espanola Johnson Brown, Ada Ruth Johnson, Noble Johnson, Tina Mae Johnson Philpot, Edd Van Johnson, and Dewald Johnson.

She joined Thomas Chapel United Methodist Church at Willis, Texas in 1898, at age 13, and remained a member until her death June 4, 1967. During the 1957-58 Conference year, she was honored with a certificate for her selection as Mother of Thomas Chapel Methodist Church.

She was quiet in her manner and pleasant toward everyone.



THOMAS CHAPEL - 1970

The first Methodist Church for blacks in Willis, built of logs, became a reality around 1867, and was named Thomas Chapel M.E. Church. The building was used as a school as well as a place of worship for a number of years.

As the town grew, the need to expand the present facility prompted the members to rebuild, and the second church, a frame building, was erected on the same site. This building was soon damaged by a storm and another building program was begun. While this building was being built, service was carried on under a brush arbor out in the countryside by the Granger Hall. In 1899, Thomas Chapel M. E. Church, the present structure, was completed. Abstract records show that when the township was established the church was already there.

In 1939, unification of three religious bodies effected a change of name to Thomas Chapel Methodist Church, and in 1968, the name was changed to Thomas Chapel United Methodist Church.

Throughout history, for the black man, the church has always been and still is one of his most important institutions. Its influence was not limited to spiritual matters, but encompassed almost every segment of community life; education took place



THOMAS CHAPEL UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH - 1995
(Courtesy of Kenneth & Beverly Vornsand)

within its walls, as well as social and cultural activities; business meetings concerning the affairs of the community took place here and many times the church building served as a temporary shelter for a family when other places to live were unavailable. Second only to the family in its influence, the church has served as a bulwark of hope and inspiration to countless black people. The church is black history, one of the most important legacies of our ancestors.

I REMEMBER WHEN....

by Betty Doughtie



I have lived in Willis for 58 years, and have seen a tremendous change during that time. I never dreamed I would ever see so many homes, apartment houses, four traffic lights, a Jack-in-the-Box, a McDonald's, and other businesses that have opened in the last few years.

The road I live on, 1097 W., used to be a one-lane dirt country road. When two cars met, they had to take to the ditches, and when it rained, it was almost impassable. Today, that road is the major artery to the lake and many, many cars pass my house every day.

I taught school in Willis for twenty years. We just had a two-story red brick building when I started. The first floor is still in use. The elementary school was on the first floor, and we just had seven grades. Upstairs was the high school, which consisted of four classes, and an auditorium. My salary was \$60 a month for nine months, and I thought I was wealthy! Bread was five cents a loaf in those days.

PICTURED TO THE RIGHT IS MONTGOMERY STREET (FM 1097) AS MRS. DOUGHTIE REMEMBERS IT. (Courtesy Dorothy Cargill)

For 52 years, I have attended the First Unit Methodist Church in Willis and have taught Sunday School most of that time. It has really grown in membership and in additional facilities, such as the parsonage, educational building, and Sunday School building which have all been built since I began attending 52 years ago. My son, Bob Doughtie, is a retired CPA who travels with a group that constructs church buildings in areas throughout the south.





Edgar Straughter

Edgar Straughter was the first Black Mayor of Willis. He is married to Bettie Harvey Straughter and the father of seven children.

He was a member of the Board of Education of Willis ISD for nine years, a former vice president of the Montgomery County Voters' League, Precinct 1, and was a vice-chairman of the Willis Summer Recreational Program. For 15 years, he served as a Willis fireman.

Recently, he was inducted into the Mayors Hall of Fame.



Erma and Turner Wise and their son, Larry, provide hometown service in their family owned grocery and hardware store.

"Boots" and "Deacon"



by Mattie Lou Hulon

William Eubank "Boots" Hulon was born September 11, 1912, youngest of four to Will and Bessie Eubank Hulon.

He attended the Willis School and graduated as salutatorian in 1929. While in school, "Boots" worked afternoons and weekends in the Goff Drugstore. He had a great personality and loved playing "pranks" on people, and enjoyed "pranks" played on himself, also.

"Boots" owned a little mustang pony named "Deacon", and they were always ready to round up cattle or help someone. They were "well known about town". Although small in stature, "Boots" was a giant of a man in the eyes of his family and friends that knew him best.

In 1936, we married after a whirlwind courtship that lasted 56 years, until his death in 1992. Together we raised eight children--four boys and four girls.



NED EASTMAN BARNES

NED BARNES



inventor

Ned Eastman Barnes was born in 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.

Raised by the Owen Smith family as a house boy, Ned Barnes attended school up to the fifth grade. He married Ada Johnson and they had 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.

Ned and his wife sent three of their sons to Prairie View College.

The Judge leaves his mark.....



remembered. In fact, his last license plates told his story, reading "IM2EZ". James passed away on Thanksgiving Day, 1993.



Newly appointed Commissioner Bo Calfee says howdy to Justice of the Peace James Bailey in front of the old City Hall.

James Bailey moved to Willis in 1935, and finished high school in Willis two years later. Once the family was settled, two miles north of Willis, James' father bought what was then known as the Willis Restaurant in downtown Willis. In January of 1939, James married Beth Christian. They had two children who reside in the Willis area, Linda Bailey Collier, and James P. Bailey, Jr.

In 1969, he was named Precinct No. 1 Justice of the Peace, filling the remainder of his predecessor's term when Bo Calfee was elected Commissioner. J.P. pay, in those days, was not sufficient, so Judge Bailey also drove a school bus.

Over the years, James also served Willis as a City Councilman for six years, and as City Judge for four years. He was elected four more terms as J.P. His health failed, but he was re-elected twice while in the hospital.

James is best remembered for his participation in the Trail Ride, his chili cookoffs, and his motorcycles escapades.

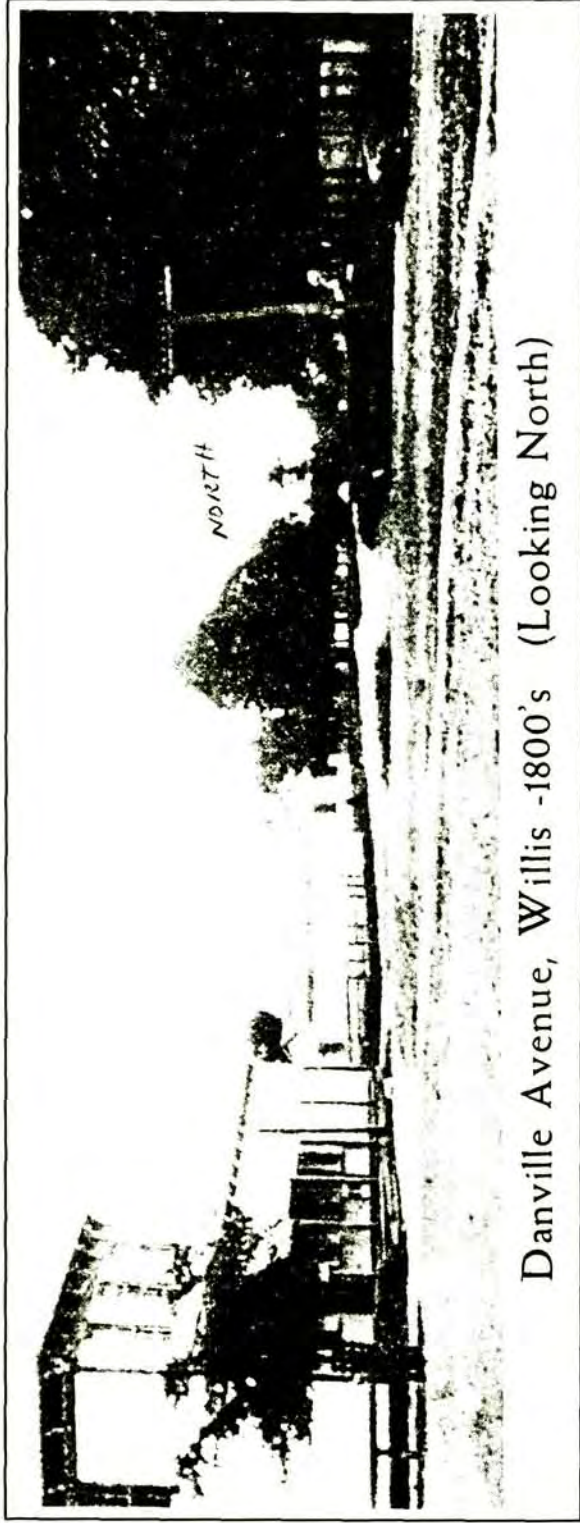
Practical and fair, willing to give the benefit of the doubt to those who, either accused or accusing, may have fallen into difficult times. This is how James Preston Bailey might like to be



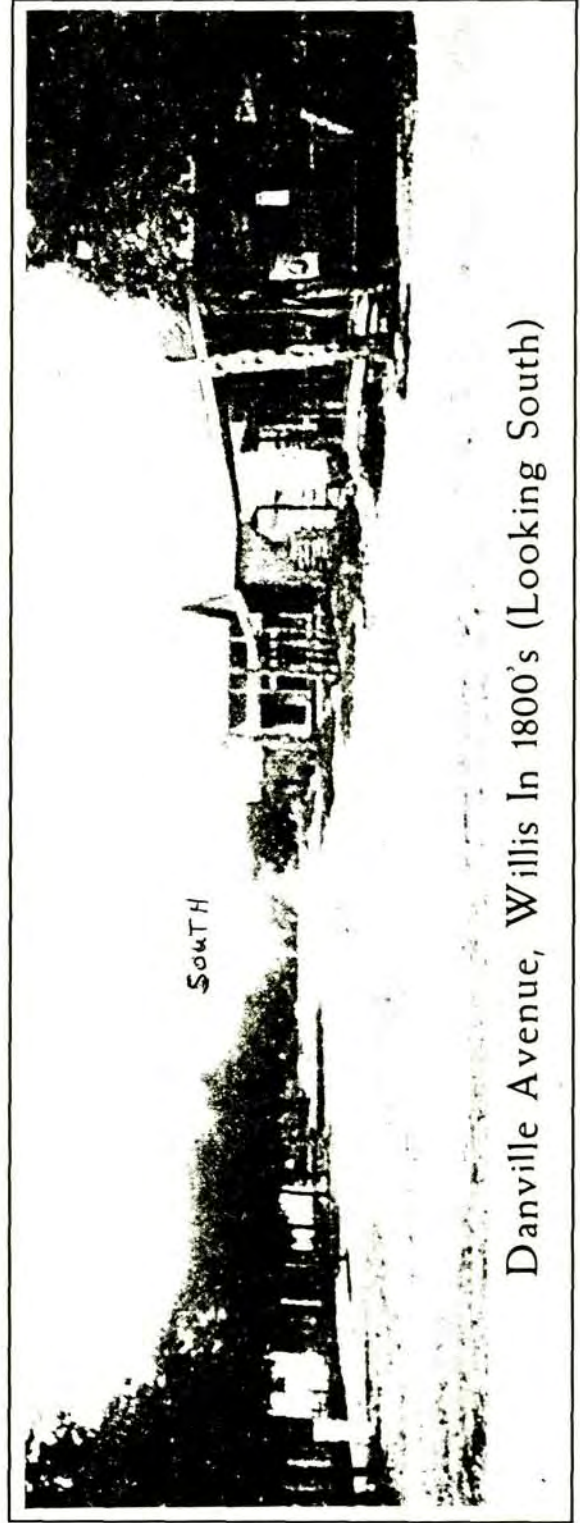
Montgomery County Barn and Office of Constable, Don Chumley; Mike Meador, Commissioner, Pct. 1



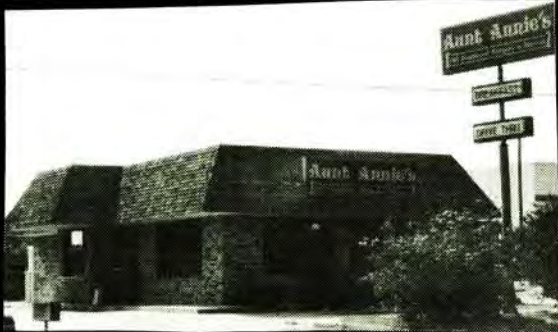
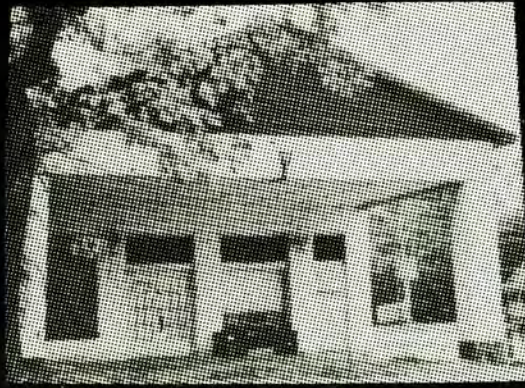
Justice of the Peace, Pct. 1, Judge John R. Kleimann




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



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




 TEXAS
WELLS
 FOUNDED IN 1870, NAMED FOR W. L. AND R. S. WELLS (LARGE LAND AND TIMBER OWNERS WHO FORMERLY WERE MERCHANTS IN AREA). THEY CAME TOWNSIDE ON THE HOUSTON & GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD. WITH THE LINE CAME PROSPERITY AND IN 1874 WELLS AND MONTGOMERY VIED FOR COUNTY SEAT BUT BOTH EVENTUALLY LOST TO CONROE.
 WELLS BOASTED A COLLEGE, OPERA HOUSE, NUMEROUS STORES AND BY 1895 HAD NASTY TOBACCO FIELDS SUPPORTING 7 CIGAR FACTORIES. THIS INDUSTRY PASSED WHEN TRAFFIC ON CUBAN TOBACCO WAS TURNED. PRESENT INDUSTRIES ARE TIMBER AND LIVESTOCK.



DOWNTOWN



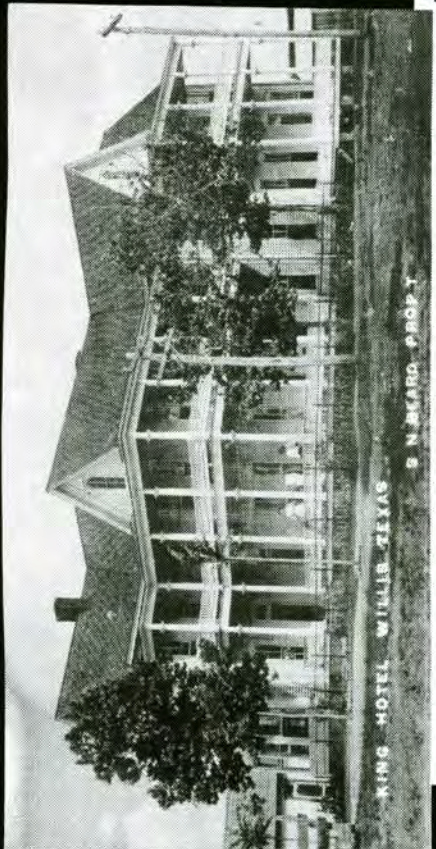
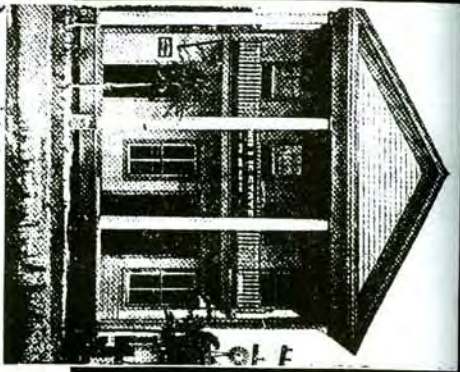


TOWN WILLIS





Montgomery Street



East of Hwy. 75

MEADOR BRANCH LIBRARY

by Judy Reed

The Meador Branch Library, located at 709 W. Montgomery Street provides the residents of Willis with many services expected only in larger libraries. Available are books for both information and pleasure reading, audio and video cassettes, magazines and journals. Use of the automated card catalog makes the collections of the entire Montgomery County Library System and the North Harris Montgomery Community College District available upon request. Computers that utilize various programs such as word processing, health and general encyclopedias, resume writing, typing instruction, phone directories, and much more are available for public use. An automated magazine index provides access to over 140 journals on CD-ROM.

The present library construction began in 1990 with grants received by the Friends of the Willis Library and Montgomery County. Completed in April, 1991 as a branch of the Montgomery County Memorial Library System, the Ruth Frances Meador Branch Library is a 6,000 square foot facility housing more than 13,450 volumes.

Children and adult activities are provided on a regular basis.

Ruth Frances Smith Meador (1898-1966) taught the third grade at Willis Elementary School, and was later a librarian in the Willis High School library. She was born July 15, 1898, in Gause, Texas, and graduated

SERVICES AVAILABLE:

**-Books -Business Information -Videocassettes/Cassette Tapes
-Children's Storytime -College Catalogs -Computers/CD ROM's
-Information File -Interlibrary Loan -Large-print Books
-Magazines/Maps -Meeting Rooms -Newspapers -Photocopies
-Projectors: 35mm -Reference Service/Tax Forms -Typewriter
-16mm Films (upon request)**

from Willis High School in 1915, and later graduated from Sam Houston Normal Institute.

She became the wife of Jesse Meador in 1919, and together they raised four children, Jesse L. Meador, Jr. and Francis Meador, both of Willis, Linda Meador Hooper of Conroe, and Mary Meador of Kilgore. In addition to her position with the Willis schools, she also taught an Adult Women's Sunday School Class at the First Baptist Church in Willis for over 25 years.

Mrs. Meador was a gracious lady who gave generously of her time and talent, and was a credit to her profession and the community.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday - Wednesday

10:00 - 6:00

Thursday

10:00 - 8:00

Friday

12:00 - 6:00

Saturday

10:00 - 6:00

Telephone: 856-4441



(Courtesy Kenneth & Beverly Vornsand)

Willis Cemetery

by Malu Parrish

The Willis Cemetery is located east of Willis on FM Road 1097 and Cemetery Street, with the main entrance gates opening onto Cemetery Street. This site is the final resting place for many of Willis' first settlers before the town of Willis was incorporated. Believed to be the earliest gravesite is that of E. J. Arnold, M.D., born February 15, 1811; died September 12, 1857.

Elaborate tombstones, as well as simple homemade ones are throughout the beautiful, tree-shaded grounds. It is reported that work is underway at this time for the placement of an historical marker to be placed in the cemetery.

In early 1994, an ice storm caused an enormous amount of damage to the cemetery due to tree and limb breakage. A concerned group of volunteers were galvanized into action to clean ice storm debris from the area. It took several work days before that work was completed.

It was at this point that some of the volunteers made a decision to continue with needed work as there were neglected areas where trees and shrubs have grown up around gravesites and through fences of enclosed gravesites, giving those areas a rundown, neglected appearance.

For years, a small group of dedicated people have tried to maintain the finances as well as the upkeep of the cemetery and it is to their credit that the area has been maintained on a continual basis. This group, consisting of the late Ruby Wilson, Melville Paddock, the late Sam Scott, the late Richard Hargraves, Robert Brabham, and Harold Shafer were responsible for the Cemetery being chartered for the first time, effective February 26, 1981. Prior to being chartered, it was considered, as many were years ago, a cemetery of the Willis community. In 1995, Edward Barnes and Clyde Parrish were voted to serve on the Board, replacing Ruby Wilson and Richard Hargraves.

Since the ice storm repair work was completed, several work days, meetings, and work by individuals have taken place in order to protect and keep the cemetery in good repair. A new fence along the east side was built with one-half

the cost being borne by Americal Legion Post #0618 on co-joined lines with the cemetery. This was a volunteer gesture on the part of the American Legion Post and was greatly appreciated. Due to vandalism, many tombstones have been damaged and pushed off their bases. With no gates and few fences, the cemetery had become an open invitation to vandalism and other abuses of the property. Local funeral homes had given some help in the replacement of markers, but there are still many damaged and off their bases.

It is the aim of members of the Willis Cemetery Association to finish the clean up, install north and south line fences so that gates to the cemetery may be locked at night. There will also be a new sign reading "Willis Cemetery" over the entrance of the center main gate, replacing the beautiful old sign which was stolen.

Members of the Willis Cemetery Association urge anyone who is interested in helping with the physical work of the clean up to contact: Edward Barnes (409)856-5729 or Clyde Parrish (409)449-4317. Persons wishing to help with money donations should write or call: Melville Paddock (409) 756-5459, #4 Circle Dr., Canroe, TX 77301, or Mrs. Mattie Lou Hulon, P.O. Box 1202, Willis, TX 77378.

Family ties traced to early Texas.....

The Roark family ties date back to early Texas history. A descendant of Martin Palmer, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence at Washington-on-the-Brazos on March 2, 1836, Jennie C. Roark, her daughters Kathryn and Velma Mae played an important role in the development of education in Willis. Both Mrs. Jennie C. Roark and Kathryn served as Willis school administrators, and Velma Mae Roark Woods worked as a secretary in the Tax Office and the school office. Known as "the sisters", Kathryn and Velma Mae have left a legacy in the contributions they made to the proud past and brighter future of Willis.

The way things were.....



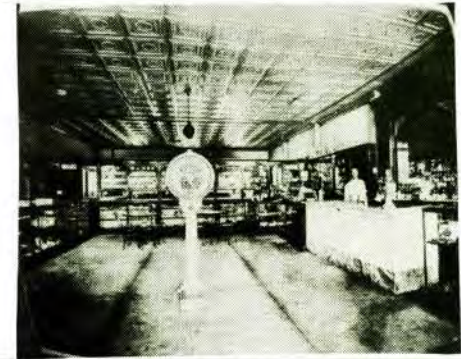
Paddock and Scott Store, December, 1947. L to R: W. P. (Bill Bailey, Archie Paddock, Cleo Calliway (Courtesy of Mel Paddock)



Paddock and Scott. L to R: Clyde Kennedy, Laura Belle Paddock, Ned Barnes, Elton Pryor, Archie Paddock, Sam Scott. July 1936. (Courtesy of Mel Paddock)



Ed Watson's newspaper stand on the west side of downtown. (Courtesy of Sue Ann Powell)



Scales inside Palace Drug Store. Archie Paddock behind counter. (Courtesy of Melville Paddock)



Inside Perry Brothers store. Familiar faces include Wayne Sanderlin, Maude Duke, Henry Wood, Roger Perry, Bill Perry, Pee Wee Gunter, and Mr. Love. Two ladies on left not identified. (Courtesy of Dorothy Cargill)

Community Spirit



Community Building

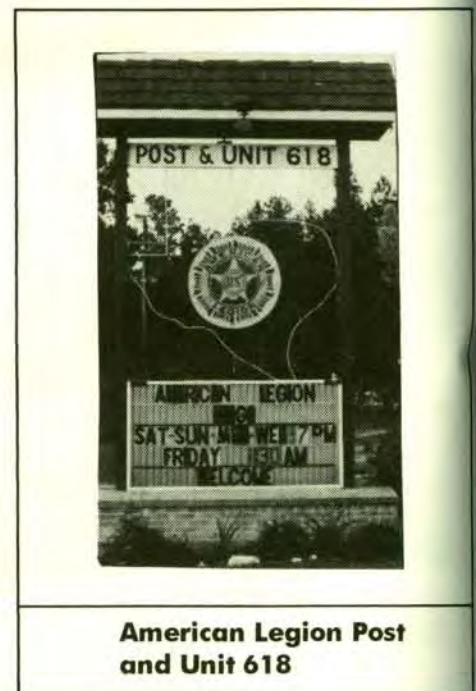


Willis Post Office

According to records, Willis' population stood at 904 by 1940, representing only an addition of 50 people in 50 years. It increased to 1,164 by 1950; 1,577 by 1970; and 1,775 in 1985. The current population on September 6, 1995 is 2,764.



American Legion



American Legion Post and Unit 618

Fire Protection - North Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Department



North Montgomery County VFD

Despite the heroic efforts of the volunteers who have manned the fire department over the years, many of Willis' historic landmarks have been destroyed by fire. Some have been rebuilt, but many remain only a slab of concrete and a memory.....

Thanks to the quick response of our volunteer firemen and the EMS, many Willis area lives have been saved.



Standing beside an antique fire wagon that was in the Ford Assembly Plant that was in Houston yeards ago is Mr. Russell "Russ" Clanton who now lives in Conroe and has an Antique and Collectible shop. (Courtesy Kenneth and Beverly Vornsand)

We salute our volunteers!

The first post office around Willis was established long before the city was founded. It was first located at Lone Oak, an area north of the Gulf States plant site in 1846. There it stayed for almost two years.

With the growth of Danville, the post office was moved there and remained until 1872, when it was moved to Willis.

For many years, the post office and bank were housed side by side in "downtown" Willis until the present facility was built on Campbell Street in 1976. The Willis Post Office now rents 1760 boxes (and more are needed), and offers nine routes with 500-750 boxes on each route.



Post Office was previously located "downtown" next to bank.



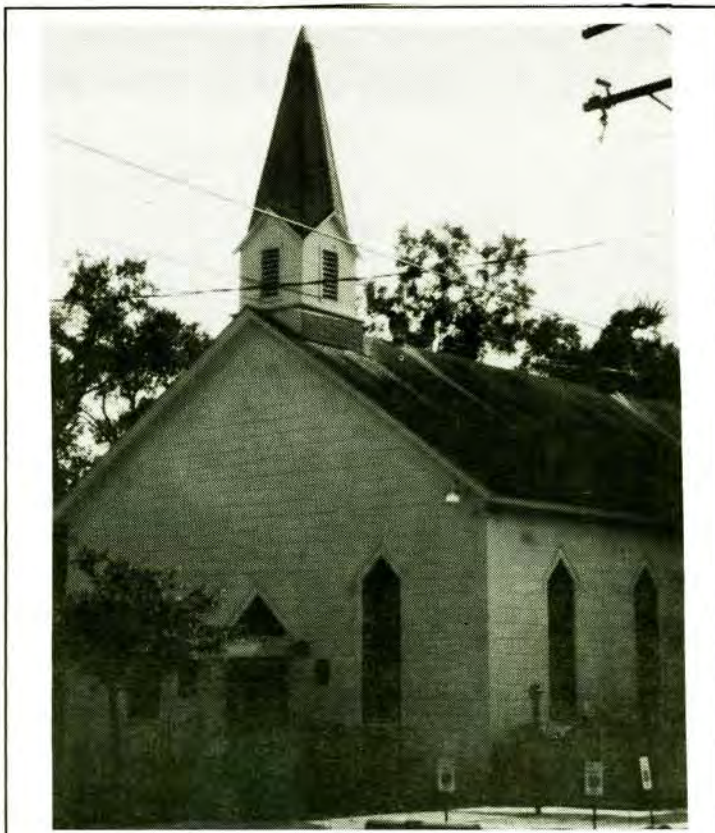
Willis Post Office at Campbell Street location.

Willis landmark: First United Methodist Church

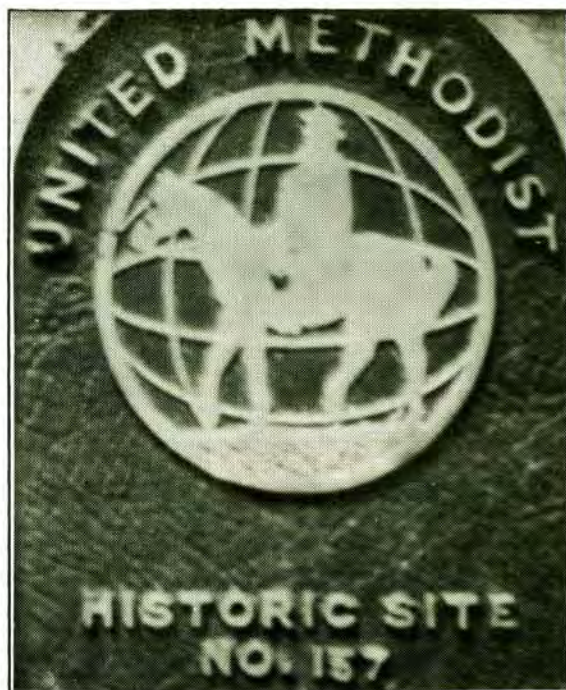
The First United Methodist Church of Willis was built by Sidney L. Inglet, between the years of 1877 and 1879, and the original pews and chancel rail, built by E. A. Anderson, are still in use today.

Early Willis family names appear on the twelve stained glass windows which were given in memory of members by friends and relatives.

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.



First United Methodist Church, Willis, Texas. Since 1877, has been located on corners of W. Waverly and Thomason Street.



On April 23, 1989, a United Methodist historic site marker was placed on the 110- year-old building. The Willis church is known as No. 157 throughout all of Methodism.

CHURCHES



Carroll Chapel A.M.E. Church



Grace Chapel Church



First United Pentecostal Church

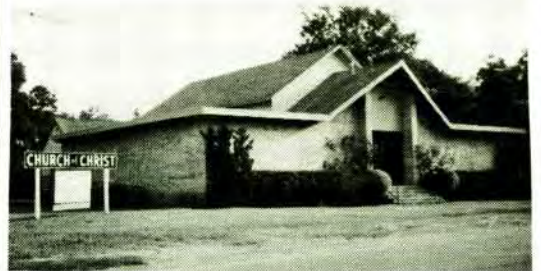


First Assembly of God

meet needs



First Baptist Church



Church of Christ



Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

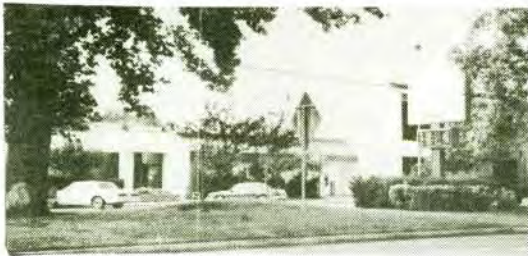


Toliver Memorial Chapel

Progress—the landscape changes



WILLIS PLAZA, built in 1985, is a source for major shopping in Willis. Contains a pharmacy, a hardware store, a video store, a do-nut shop, a cleaners, a tanning salon, and a beauty shop.



Newly-named, First Interstate Bank



1st National Bank located inside Blair's



Tejas Financial



Florist shop opens in former Sam S. Scott home



Jack-in-the-Box



McDonald's

Golf Courses, Residential Developments, and the Mall.....



Texas National. Est. in 1970. Located 2 miles east of Willis on Airport Road. Home of the Texas Hall of Fame.

Texas National

Panorama Village and Country Club. Located off I-45 and League Line Road, 3 miles south of Willis across the free-way from the Outlet Center



Panorama Village

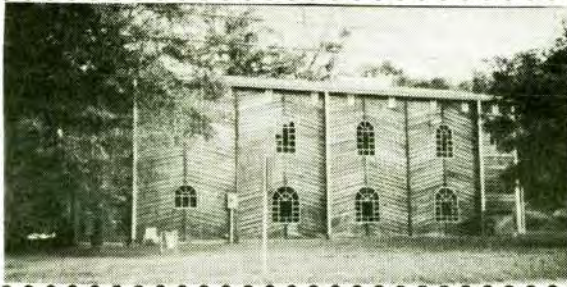


The Outlet Center, located along I-45 and League Line Road has some 80 plus outlet stores for shopping convenience to Willis Residents.

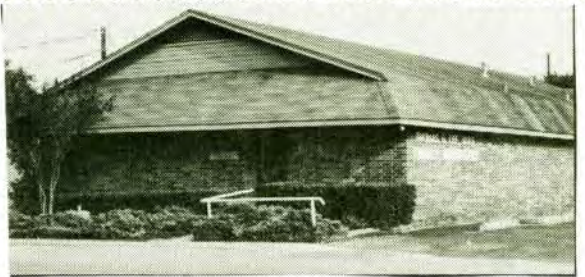
MEDICAL and DENTAL FACILITIES



Willis Diagnostic Clinic



Willis Dental Center



Family Dentistry



Willis Convalescent Center



Willis Convalescent Center Sign



Montgomery County Residential Treatment Ctr.

Parks for

young



Entrance to Willis Baseball Park east of town. Home of W.Y.A.A. Athletic Complex.



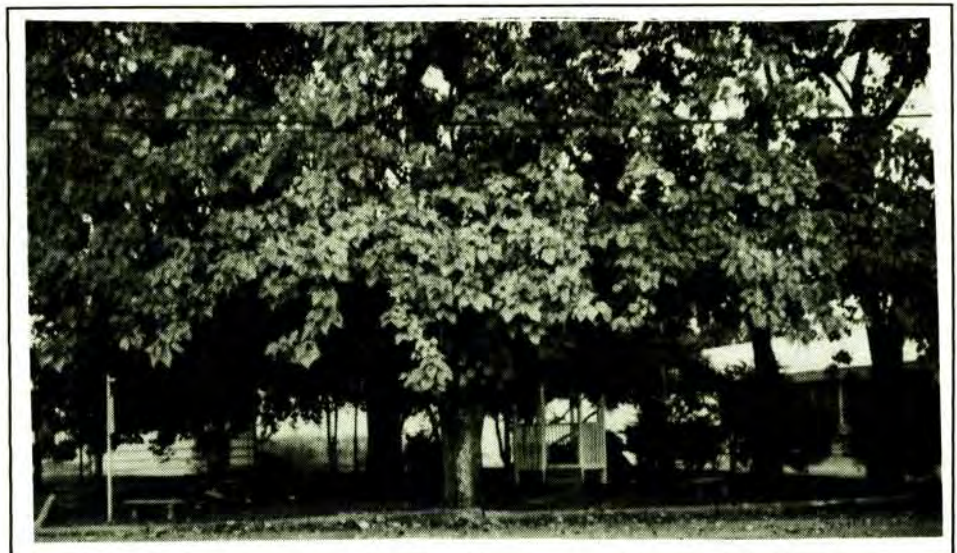
and

young

at

heart

*Crawford's
Corner
Downtown
Willis*





Pictured above is the J. M. Thomason home, built in 1882, on the corner of Danville and Waverly Street, facing East. Remodeled in 1933. Mrs. Thomason won \$100 in a *Houston Post* contest for the best remodeled house. Below is the house prior to remodeling.



Mr. and Mrs. Jabe W. Thomason on honeymoon in Galveston, 1907.



POOLE SHARES MEMORIES

Odine Poole's parents, Lige and Florence Hilton, moved to Willis in 1938. Her mother had a popular cafe, The Snack Shop, on Hwy 75 in downtown Willis until it burned in the early 40's. She remembers her mother sewing all of the majorette uniforms when Willis first started the marching band. Both Odine and later her sister, Billie Ann, were majorettes in the band.

A trip down memory lane...



The Willis Mercantile Company in the early 1900's.



Scraps Powell and Archie Paddock inside the Willis Mercantile.

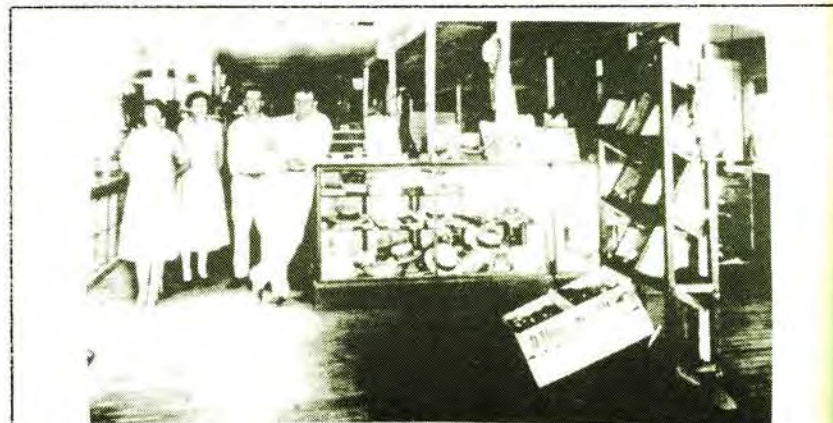
WILLIS MERCANTILE, the place to shop

When you talk to a Willis native who remembers "the good old days" of the early 1900's, conversation usually includes mention of the Willis Mercantile, which was originally owned and operated by Mr. Jabe Thomason. Russ Clanton worked at the store, and he loves to tell about the opening in the upper level of the store where caskets were lowered to ground level when purchased.

In the 1940's, the building housed Golf's Drug Store, and the upper level was the meeting place for the local AA meetings. The building which later became the Florida Bar, along with the Mercantile building and two other buildings next to it, were destroyed by fire in the early 1990's. With them went a part of Willis history.



Oct., '72 view of Florida Bar and Mercantile Bldg.



Mollie Berryman, Lovie Martin, Russ Clanton, and owner of Willis Mercantile, Jabe Thomason.

Happy Birthday,
Willis!

The Watson House

The Watson House in Willis is almost the only visible reminder of the town's more prosperous and genteel past. For many years it was the home of society matron Margaret Ella Watson. The house was built by Owen A. Smith, son of Captain T. W. Smith who was a captain in the Texas Rangers and fought with the Confederate Army in the battle of Galveston. He had come to Texas from Kentucky in 1844, and settled in Montgomery where he raised cotton, then switched to ranching. He moved to Willis in 1874, and by this time the railroad was coming through. The man who had been a soldier, planter, and rancher, decided to become a railroad tycoon and built the roadbed from Conroe to Danville.

Smith then started a tobacco plantation and by 1890, he had a flourishing tobacco business including the Smith and Company Cigar Factory. The factory faced the railroad and covered the whole block. A historical marker is now on that site in Willis at the corner of North Bell and East Waverly Street.

Between 1890 and 1901, Owen A. Smith built the Watson House. His sister, Margaret Estela Smith Watson and her little daughter, Margaret Ella, came to live there with him. Margaret Estela had married a Captain Watson, a sea captain in Galveston who never returned from sea. She lived in the house until she died, and her daughter, Margaret Ella Watson, lived there until her death in 1974.

Many people in Montgomery County remember going to the Watson House for teas, church parties, weddings, and holiday parties when they were children.



The Watson House

ESPERANZA

The plantation-style Spiller home, was built in 1879 by the William F. Spillers. The house contained sixteen rooms and ten wood-burning fireplaces.



Spiller Home, Esperanza

Esperanza

William Spiller named the place Esperanza, which means "hope" in Spanish. They had high hopes for the success of their Texas Havana Tobacco.

WAYMON FERGUSON



Waymon Ferguson

Waymon Ferguson, was born November 13, 1895. Prior to his death on November 12, 1982, he was a farmer and an employee of two lumber mills. In later years, Waymon provided a lawn service and an income tax service. He was married to Mary Lee Johnson. They had three daughters, nine grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren and 31 great, great grandchildren survive.



Pictured on left, the Smith-Crawford House. Built in 1873. Burned while being remodeled in 1964.

Gone...but not forgotten.....

In Memory of
Robert L. Wiley
and
Robert Thomason Wiley
by
Valerie Thomason Wiley

In Memory of
Mr. and Mrs. Lonnie Stowe

In Memory of
Jess Eugene Watson
by
Elsie, Susan, and Dick Watson

In Memory of
Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Thomason
by
Mrs. J. H. Berryman

In Memory of
Dr. and Mrs. Forrest E. Watson
by
the Watson Family

In Memory of
William E. (Boots) Hulon
by
his Wife, Mattie Lou Hulon,
and Children

In Memory of
Lee and Velma Cargill
by
Luther and Sue Ann Powell

In Memory of
Mary Hill and Mae Elmore
by
Clyde and Malu Parrish

In Memory of
Ed and Josie Watson
and
Mrs. Minnie Bowers
by
Luther and Sue Ann Powell

In Memory of
Guy C. Hulon
by
Betty Pearl Hulon

In Memory of
Leon Walker
by
Keith Walker

In Memory of
Big Mama
by
Anthony Wayne Scott, Sr.
and
Demetria Scott Warren

In Memory of his Parents
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Smith, Sr.
by
Tom W. Smith

In Memory of
J. B. and "Baby" Holder
by
Beverly and Kenneth Vornsand
and
Family

In Memory of his Brothers
Arnold Smith and William F. Smith
by
Tom W. Smith

In Memory of
Verland Westmoreland, Sr.
by
Lucy, Bobby, Lorenzo, Alonzo,
Ashley, and Jessica

Gone...but not forgotten....

In Memory of

**my oldest Sister, Espanola Johnson Brown,
and
my oldest brother, Noble Johnson
by
Tina Mae Philpot**

In Memory of

**Samuel J. and Ida Gunter Inglet
by
Edward Goethe and Sarah Inglet Barnes**

In Memory of

**Archie Melville Paddock
by
Laura Belle Paddock**

In Loving Memory of

**Judge James P. Bailey
by
his Family**

Gone...but not forgotten....

In Memory of

**Mr. and Mrs. Jabe William Thomason
and
Katie Louise Thomason Walker
by
Valerie T. Wiley and Peggy T. Fowler**

In Memory of

**Mr. and Mrs. Waymon Ferguson
by
Children, Grandchildren,
and Great-Grandchildren**

In Memory of

**Mr. and Mrs. Turner Ross Fowler
and
T. R. Fowler, Jr.
by
Peggy Thomason Fowler**

In Memory of

**Carmel Anderson, Sr.
by
Wife and Children**

In Memory of

William E. (Billy) Fowler

by

Peggy Thomason Fowler,

Bill, Laurie, Libby, Jabe, Michael, and Peggy

In Memory of

Earl Doughtie

by

Betty Doughtie

In Memory of

A. C. (Clyde) Walker

by

Angie Walker and Arthur G. Walker

In Memory of

Edgar and Sarah Red

by

the Family

In Memory of

Jennie C., Velma Mae, and Kathryn Roark

by

Ruth Castleschouldt

In Memory of

Robert O. and Pearl McKinney Ellisor

by

Edward Goethe Barnes

and

Sarah Inglet Barnes

In Memory of

Col. Herbert L. Ross

by

Alice Ross and Children

In Memory of

Arthur Waldo Turner

by

John and Chris Turner

Gone...but not forgotten....

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COMMISSIONER
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Committee**

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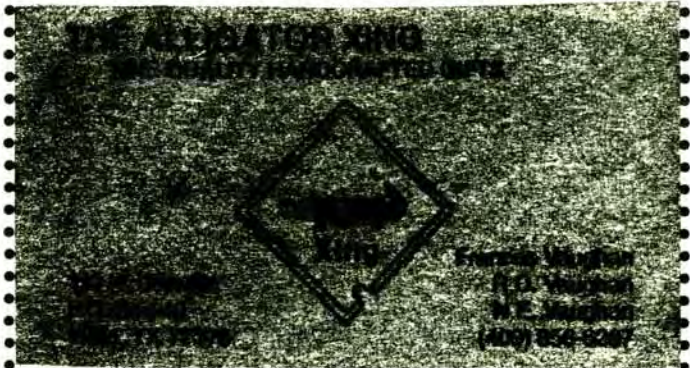


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