

Thoughts Of By Gone Days

In my communication of the 20th unit in speaking of the LaGrange, carries my mind back to the spring of 1836. The few families that were then living in the neighborhood of Woods Prairie, in which West Point is located, got ready as best they could, to fall back east out of the Mexican Army's reach. Some families in sleds, some in 2 wheel wooden cart, but few had wagons, all using ox teams, they met at the old Woods place in said prairie crossing the Colorado at the Grassmeyer place, above the Primm farm, then owned by Wm. Bartos, the families were as follows:

Wm. Barton, Zedick Woods, Norman Woods, Montroville Woods, James Robinson, George Speers, Noah Karnes, (the father of W.P. & G.W. Karnes, living near Plum post office.) and W.A. Faires, the father of R.O. Faires and brothers, L.F.T. Cottle and my fathers family, and some others the names of whom I have forgotten.

The families effects were floated over the river on beef hides. After crossing the river we camped the first night at the old Cunningham place near the river. Some of the teams wandered off that night, which caused two or three days delay in hunting them. On the morning that we intended to make an advancement for the town of Washington, on the Brazos River, just as day was breaking the Commanche Indians, who had concealed themselves that night in the river bottom, made a dash through the field, rattling little tricks of their make. Stampeeding and running off nearly all the horses that were in the crowd. The night previous, the indians pulled down the fence in various places so as to pass out of the field with stock. W.A. Faires was up that morning quite early and went out to get his ponies, in going along the fence he found some gaps in it. He put up two of the gaps and found one of his ponies outside of the field, hobbled and his head tied down to the front feet. As he got his horse untied the indians made their start through the field and Faires for the camp on his horse without saddle. Stopping and putting up those two gaps in the fence saved him from being cut off from the camps by the indians.

Some of the crowd were up and saw the indians run the horses out of the field and off. I saw the sight but it was done so quick that there was not much to be seen. After the excitement was over the men concluded it would be best to recross the river which we did and camped the first night at the Barton place. Next morning three of the men started out to hunt

some of the lost teams. They were Montroville Woods, Wesley Scallorn, the other name I have forgotten, came very near being cut off by the indians, they making a charge on us that morning, but having to run over ground that had been plowed that spring saved the three men.

From the Barton place we went down and crossed the river at the old Labide Crossing, which is at or near the R.R. Bridge at La Grange, camped at Col. John E. Moore's little log cabin and a block house in the yard used as a fort against the indians. This was about the first week of April of 1836. The ground where Col. Moore's cabin stood is some 4 or 5 blocks up the street from the Northwest corner of the public square of your city. Then no one ever dreamed of a town being built on that ground and in after years a railroad built over the land.

The families being destitute of teams as well as vehicles and horses to ride, the women and children that were big enough to walk had it to do and besides walking they had to carry grub and bedding on their backs. It was a very wet spring that year we had mud and water without end.

Don't talk about hard times during the Confederate War. It was nothing to be compared with those days. To see nearly the whole crowd walk through mud and water up to their knees, men, women and children, then sleeping on wet ground at night without tents, was surely a trying time. About halfway between the Colorado and the Brazos, Noah Karnes was killed accidentally by Wayne Barton, he was rapt up in a bed quilt for his coffin and buried where he was killed. On reaching the Brazos it was up over all the low bottom wagons, & carts were crossed over in a ferry boat, each wagon by turn. The boat was run day and night until all was crossed. The families arrived at Robbin's Ferry on the Trinity River on or about the 15th of April 1836. At the Trinity River we found a large number of families awaiting their turn to cross the river, the Trinity was up over all bottom land, it was five miles wide, took one day to make two trips with the boat which was slow work. Before our crowd got to cross we got news of the Mexicans being whipped at San Jacinto on the eve of memorable day, the 21st of April, then the shouts of women and children went up for joy at the prospect of going back through the mud and water to their little log cabins they left behind them.

Mrs. O. Fitzgerald and Mrs. Gorham are the only two women that I know of who was in our crowd that was anything like grown and W.P. and G.W.

Karnes of Plum neighborhood, and myself, are the only men living, that were in the crowd, that were not grown. There may be others living if so I have entirely forgotten them and their names.

In those days there was no fencing and nobody to want a fence, but plenty of hostile indians, buffalo, mustangs (wild horses), wild cattle, deer, turkeys, and other small game and but few people to eat the game, in those by-gone-days, all we had to do was to take our guns, go out and kill any kind of game you wished, broil it over the fire and eat it without salt and be happy.

Yours &e

J.Y. Criswell
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