

Indians on the Homefront

2022 MCHC -INDIANS ON THE HOME FRONT, part one

August 12

--The Land and Its Early Indian Inhabitants by Cecil N. Neely

Many legends have been told about the Old San Antonio Road. One that is particularly interesting concerns early Spanish travelers on a section of road that now borders Madison County. Sometime in the early days, a Spanish caravan of pack mules laden with silver stopped to camp for the night. After dark, Indians attacked the sleeping men. The Spaniards, fearing for their lives, dumped the silver in a lake and fled. Only three escaped and, years later, one returned to search for the silver. He never found the treasure, although coins, called Spanish sovereigns, have been found along the road. One coin was dated 1775, which predated the American Declaration of Independence.

Chapter IV, Early Settlers and Related Incidents by Cecil Neely

Another early settler in Madison County was Major William Foster Young. In 1829, after the death of his wife, moved to Texas, settling in the vicinity of present-day Midway. He left a son and three daughters with his brother in Georgia. He established a homesite and lived by himself in the wilderness for several years. While hunting one day, Young came upon an Indian hut where two Indian men and a tall handsome white boy were sitting. To his amazement, he saw that the white boy was his son, William C. Young, whom he had left in Georgia. Young and the Indians exchanged crude sign language and Young was able to determine that the Indians had found the boy wandering lost in the wilderness and had taken him as one of their own. After much debate, Young was able to barter for the boy. Later, the son told his father that he had taken a horse from his uncle in Georgia, joined a Texas-bound wagon train, and headed for Texas to join up with his father. After leaving the wagon train, the boy had become lost in the vicinity of the Trinity River and was found by the Indians. Fearing his father's disapproval of his conduct, the boy decided to remain with the Indians and not try to escape.

George Washington Robinson was one of the founders of the Elwood settlement and one of the first doctors in the area. He braved the dangers of the Indians to administer care to the widely scattered settlers.

Another early settler was Thomas B. Bozeman. His descendants tell of the harrowing experiences Bozeman suffered at the hands of the Indians. Bozeman constantly fought off the Indians and kept them from pillaging his property. As a result, the Indians fostered deep resentment against the Bozeman family. One day Bozeman placed the wheels of his wagon in a shallow spot on the Trinity River to swell the spokes. Bozeman, with his small son accompanying him, later went to retrieve the wagon. Upon reaching the site, the Bozeman's were met with a flurry of arrows fired by the Indians from a concealed position. One of the arrows struck the Bozeman boy in a vital organ, killing him instantly. Holding the lifeless form of his son in his arms, Bozeman swore to live to see the savages driven from the land. He lived to see his promise come true.

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INDIANS ON THE HOME FRONT, part two

Chapter IV, Early Settlers and Related Incidents by Cecil Neely

About 1851, Dr. L.J. Goree moved his family into an area along the Trinity River where Indians still lived in tents. He died in 1853 and it became Mrs. Goree's responsibility to raise the family. P.K. Goree, her son, later told of his mother's feelings about the Indians:

My mother's policy was to leave them alone. Lose property rather than human life. We dared not leave livestock penned (unpenned) or hen houses unlocked, however, if they came up all night to pilfer, they were never driven away. Mother could use a weapon, and early taught her sons to use theirs, but it seemed rude to leave them alone to avoid retaliation from them.

In 1834 Robert and Steven Rogers settled Rogers Prairie located in the northwestern corner of Madison County. For several years they were the only settlers in that area. The Indians frequently robbed them of their horses. In 1840, the Indians attacked a family named Gregg who were moving west over the Old San Antonio Road, a few miles from the Roger's homesite. The account follows: *The Indians killed all but a Negro man and woman who escaped with two or three of the children and one young man who was shot in the back. The survivors fled toward Rogers Prairie and took refuge there. The Indians plundered the wagons and stole the horses. The dead settlers were buried in the Rogers Prairie Cemetery.*

Another early family, the McIver's, witnessed similar accounts of Indian brutality. Their son, J.E. McIver, later related the gruesome incident as it affected the Rogers family:

The first grave in old Rogers Prairie Cemetery was for a Mrs. Rogers. One evening at dusk while her cows were penned for milking, Indian bucks rode up, opened the gate, and drove them away. In her anxiety and excitement, the widow attempted to follow them begging them to leave them alone as it was her children's only milk source supply. Looking back as they galloped away, they let fly their arrows and left her body where she fell.

The Indians were a constant menace to the early settlers. Roy Jackson wrote about the settler's fear of Indians that continued into the 1870s. Jackson recalled that his grandfather, Joshua Ford, purchased about land in the vicinity of Rock Prairie in 1853 and settled there. Jackson commented: *My father told me that he could remember the men taking their guns to church on Sundays and stacking them in the corner of the church because of the few of an Indian raid. This must have been about the year 1870.*

August 14

INDIANS ON THE HOME FRONT, part three

Chapter IV, Early Settlers and Related Incidents by Cecil Neely

H.C. Hollis one of the first pioneer settlers in the west end of Madison County placed a record of some of the hardships his family endured in a Baptist chronicle. His son wrote about those hardships many years later. He tells of coming to Madison County in 1837 with his parents. The Hollis family crossed the Trinity River at Robbins Ferry and proceeded west along the Old San Antonio Road, and eventually settled near old Rogers Prairie. Because of the Indians, the family was forced to move twelve times within a few years. An interesting account as told by Hollis follows:

"Our nearest neighbors were wild Indians. We were surrounded by the war-whoop, howling of wolves, and bellowing buffalo. We formed our settlement (some five families came over with us and we remain to this time close together). At only nine years old, I stood guard with my gun while my father chopped wood. A number of our settlers The Barton's and Mr. Taylor had been killed by the savages.

They scattered the settlement. Our horse all save one had been stolen. The only neighbor remaining was Mr. Tidwell and his family, his wife, and four children. Late in the afternoon of July 18, Indians rode by our house and stole the last horse we had. We did not protest as we knew we could not make a fight. Mr. Tidwell had slipped

out to his garden to work when they rode up and he was cut off from the house. He was killed and scalped. They went into the house, captured his wife and four children, the youngest six weeks of age, place the woman astride of a horse with her legs tied under the horse's belly, took the children, and sped away. While this attack was being made my father hid all of us children in the fireplace. There were three of us, with the nine-day-old baby in the fireplace while he and a man who lived with us stood guard over my mother, who was sick in bed. When my little sister began crying for fear, the man tried to put a rag into her mouth to drown the cries as the Indians galloped by without stopping.

They had taken our only horse and father said that was what they wanted most. The next day we buried Mr. Tidwell's body. In a few days, the white settlers farther up the Brazos rescued Mrs. Tidwell and three other children. The baby was killed the second day after the capture, Mrs. Tidwell said."

Tom Greer, of the Greer community, was one of the last settlers to be killed by Indians in Madison County. In the late 1850's Greer, together with a group of Madison County citizens, attempted to track down an Indian raiding party that had been stealing cattle from him. Greer was mortally wounded by an Indian arrow.

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INDIANS ON THE HOME FRONT, part four

LARRISON SETTLEMENT

The Larrison family moved through Madison County in 1828, on their way to Gonzales County. When they arrived, the Indians were so bad that they returned to Madison County about 1892, and settled on Larrison Creek. Stories have been told about a tribe of Indians coming by to fight other Indians east of this settlement. When they returned, they had scalps on poles dancing around.

ROGERS PRAIRIE

The Indians caused much suffering and grief to the people of the area. In 1840, the Griggs family was traveling west on the Old San Antonio Road a few miles west of Rogers Prairie when they were attacked and killed by Indians. One woman, two children, a wounded white man, and a Negro man hid and were spared. Those who were killed were brought back to the home of Robert Rogers and given a Christian burial. Theirs were the first graves in Rogers Prairie Cemetery. The cemetery is all that is left of that once thriving little town. In 1841, the next grave was that of Stephen Rogers the young son of Robert Rogers. The Indians cut him off from the house in the late afternoon and killed and scalped him.

MEMORIES, Submitted by Roy Jackson

My father told me that he could remember the men taking their guns to church on Sundays and stacking them in the corner of the church due to the fear of an Indian raid. This must have been about 1870. Some other things they told me were that the grass grew so tall that in the early mornings they could not ride through it on a horse without getting wet from the dew

MAHLE-BROWN

John Wesley Mahle was born in 1823 near the Trinity River, long before Texas was free from Mexican rule. His father, John H. Mahle, operated a trading post in this new territory, but by 1825 was forced to return to Louisiana by the constant Indian raids

WILLIAM (BILL) M. AND MARTHA ANN KEYS BULLARD

There was a friendly tribe of Indians who lived close by, and in exchange for coffee and sugar, the Indians

would help the Keys children with their chores.

FRANCES E. DAY BURNETT

Frances remembered that often the Coushatta and Kickapoo Indians would come plundering the plantation for food, chickens, and livestock. Frances' mother would hide the youngest children in the chimney with a sack of sugar to munch upon until the Indians left.

FAMILY OF LEVI CHILDRESS

Mary remembered, as a small child, living in Levi's home and Indians coming to the home. Levi told the boys to round up a steer. The Indians left driving the steer ahead. The Indians were hungry, dirty, and ragged. Near this homestead lived Anadarko, Tonkawash, and Caddo Indian tribes. The Indians moved in 1869 or 1870 to Oklahoma.

THOMAS SIDNEY AND MARY ELIZABETH BOONE HOLLIS

Very little is known about Mary E. Boone's background except she was reared by her grandparents. Indians raided her parents' home and killed her mother and father, and she escaped to her grandparents' home.

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INDIANS ON THE HOME FRONT, part five

JAMES P. AND CALPERNIA FRANKLIN MITCHELL

While on the way he saw a place he thought would make a desirable home near the Trinity River about six miles from Robbins Ferry. The league of land, for which he received Certificate #315 on April 20, 1835, was located about two miles west of the present town of Midway. A fort was first constructed and then houses were built inside. The area became known as Mitchell Prairie. Indians came quite frequently and the family depended on dogs to help keep them away. One of the older boys would blow a horn to give warning of their presence.

JIM M. MOTT

Jim Mott, a Christian, trustworthy and honest man, was born in Quitman, Mississippi in the early 1800s. He came to Madisonville with John Mott about 1860. John Mott went to fight in the Confederate Army and Jim was left to care for the women and children. His duties were to keep the Indians from destroying what John had left behind.

JOHN RODERICK McIVER

He remembered the early years when the only trees in the county were located in the river and creek bottoms, and the grass was stirrup high to a man on horseback. He related that the Indians had a practice of burning the countryside regularly to keep timber down. He monitored his ranch on horseback.

FRANCIS M. AND ANN ELIZA GRIFFIN McMAHAN

He and his family were victims of an Indian assault that resulted in the death of his wife and four children on January 26, 1795. Mr. McMahan and a daughter, Sally, were taken captive. Mr. McMahan was able to escape and his daughter was later ransomed from the Indians. When my grandmother, Jennie Ruff was five years old she was sitting on her father's lap, the family was sitting around the fire and talking. They began to hear noises coming from the horses, the men knew the Indians were there. The grandfather would not let

anyone go outside for fear they would get killed. The next morning when it was daylight they looked out and on each side of the steps, there were footprints of an Indian who would have killed them if anyone had gone outside. The horses were gone and all the cows were killed.

The Burkburnett Texas Newspaper, in an article on him the week of his eighty-ninth birthday, quoted him as saying he had been personally acquainted with Sam Houston in Madison County. In recalling incidents in his early life, Reverend Toby said, "Sam Houston was a great man, sometimes he chased Indians and sometimes they chased him."

JIM WINBORN FAMILY

Grandmother Hannah told many interesting events of their life in Mississippi that related to Indians. The Choctaw Tribe lived nearby. Once, while alone and making lye soap outside, a group suddenly surrounded her menacingly. She drove them away by dashing boiling soap at them. They would silently appear, grunt, then beg for fire. Despite their fear, her young sons would play with the Indian children, and Jim learned to speak Choctaw.

THOMAS HENRY WREN FAMILY

The following is an article written by Mrs. Bill (Spitfire) Rhodes and published in the Madisonville Meteor in 1935, which covers the Wren family in Madison County. He came with his father and mother to the Lone Star State at the age of eleven years. Here he and his family knew the same experiences that characterized the life of the pioneer settlers, living on the alert and ever fearful of Indian attacks. He recalls an instance when he and an older brother, in company with a grown man, were squirrel hunting when they were almost overtaken by a band of fifteen Indians. They spied the Indians before they were seen, dropped into the tall sage grass, and stayed until they deemed it safe to emerge. Fearing that tragedy might overtake his family of four boys and four girls, Mr. Wren's father returned to this section, settling at Lola, in Grimes County.

HENRY AND JANE WELCH PEARSON

Henry and Jane Pearson, with five children, came to Texas in 1848. They purchased 200 acres of land on Larrison Creek, on June 14, 1849, from Ransom Allphin. One of my favorite stories was of the "friendly Indian stump." Since Jane and the children were left on their own a good deal of the time, they had a deal worked out with friendly Indians of the area that if they stood on an old stump outside the cabin, they were allowed to water their stock and trade with the family. If they were hostile Indians, they would not know about the stump, therefore the family could take precautions.

BIOGRAPHY OF GRAY ARIOLA - by Joe Wren in September 1904

Mr. Gray Ariola, born in 1827, lived on the south edge of Madison County on the north side of Iron Creek, about 9 miles from Bedias. Mr. Ariola says that in 1833 the Simes family settled on the hill just this side of Bedias creek. In 1834 Antone Rivers settled on the hill, just the other side of Bedias creek, now Madison County, and the Ariola's lived on the bank of the Black Lake on Bedias creek.

For their mutual protection against the Indians, three families built a fort around Antone River's house, by setting large logs on end and when there were Indians in the area, they would all seek protection in this fort. Mr. Ariola said that at one time, the Indians stole every horse the three families possessed and his brother Frank walked to San Augustine and bought another which they intended to use in catching wild mustangs and so particular were they in guarding this horse, that One of them would sit up a night and watch him, but finally

they got negligent, their father being on watch with the horse tied to the gallery post one night, the Old man fell asleep and the Indians came and cut the rope and rode the animal away and next morning to tantalize them, he appeared in sight of the house on the fine brown horse and would sport around in company with other Indians and make the horse rear up and jump.

The Indians who gave them the most trouble in those days were the Waco and Tehuacau tribes who lived high up the Brazos River in the region of Waco. Other tribes of friendly Indians hunted a good deal in the country, among whom were the Delawares. The Bedias Indians had a village only a few miles down the Bedias creek at Village Lake. One day during this period, one of Mr. River's cows came up with three arrows sticking in her, thus letting everyone know of the presence of Indians, and young Manual Rivers was sent to warn the other two families and they all proceeded post haste to the fort. His little sister Mary Ariola was riding behind Capt. Friar, who was visiting them, and about halfway to the fort, they passed an Indian who was leaning against a tree, with his gun in his hand but making no effort to shoot, but Deloris Ariola raised his gun and started to shoot the Indian when Capt. Friar threw himself and horse between the two and prevented it. The next day, it was discovered that nearby were ten or fifteen other Indians and the killing of that Indian might have resulted in the killing of their entire family.

Mr. Ariola relates that he has had his father point out the place of the massacre of the Mexican soldiers on Bowman creek, just back of where Bowman's school house now stands. Near this place, the old Labordia (La Bahia) road crossed and was traveled a good deal in those days from East Texas to West Texas. During this time, the Mexicans were returning from Mexico with money to pay the garrison at Nacogdoches and were carrying it on pack mules. They were attacked by Indians and all slain. It was thought for quite a while that the immense treasure was buried somewhere near the sight of the massacre. People have hunted for it but in vain.

Mr. Ariola tells a great many such Indian tales but space will not permit my mentioning at present. However, he told of being in a Buffalo chase in which a large Buffalo bull was killed on Pankey creek near Shiloh church and says that he has killed bears all over this county. Mr. Ariola was sixteen years old before he ever wore a store-bought hat or pair of shoes. He dressed in dressed buckskin, with a coon skin cap, and raw-hide moccasins. When 16 years old he bought a pair of red Russet shoes from a peddler and thought them very fine.

August 17

INDIANS ON THE HOME FRONT, part six

Museum Musings, by Laura Ann Cannon

January 29, 2020, The Madisonville Meteor

--Early county settlers faced hostile elements, natives

For those folks who often ask, Madison County was created in 1853 and organized in 1854 from land taken from Grimes, Walker, and Leon Counties. Of course, settlers were here before that.

Much has been said about who supposedly was our first non-native settler. Some sources say Jesse Young, who received a Spanish land grant in 1835 between the Trinity River and La Bahia Road. Others insist that it was Major William Foster Young, who moved to Texas in February of 1835 and settled near present-day Midway. The schoolteacher in me says there were not sign-in sheets so we will never be sure.

Per family accounts in Madison County, Texas, Volume II, Eduardo Arriola (later shortened to Ariola) was a full-blooded Spaniard who came here in the 1820s. Others say 1832 and that he received a Spanish land grant in 1835. He, his wife, Candelaria Simes (sometimes spelled Sims), and their seven children settled on the banks of Black Lake on La Bahia Road (and knowledge of that road is not exact). Their home was on a hill just north of Bedias Creek. More children were born, and in 1833 Candelaria's brother, Ignacius Simes moved nearby.

The next year the Antonio Rivers (Rios) family joined the settlers there. Those family histories say they were the first in the area. They banded together and fought the elements and Native Americans to carve an existence in a very hostile land.

There are no records of the final resting place of Eduardo or Candelaria. At least four of their sons are buried at Bethel Cemetery, in Grimes County just south of the Madison County line. One of those, Gregorio "Gray" Ariola (1827-1906), was interviewed by Joe Wren for *The Review*, a local publication, and an account of the interview was published in September of 1904

At that time, Gray told that he had been born in San Augustine and brought to this area with his family in 1832. He said he lived here since then except for his eight years as a Texas Ranger under William A.A. "Bigfoot" Wallace and another period as a soldier in the Confederate Army. His stories about his early years here are worth sharing below.

The Ariola, Simes, and Rivers families thought themselves to be the only white settlers from Midway to Old Washington. For their mutual protection against Indians, they built a fort around the Antonio Rivers's house by setting logs on end. When they knew hostile natives were near, they all sought protection in that fort. One time, Indians stole every horse the three families owned, so Gray's brother Frank walked to San Augustine and bought another that they intended to use in catching wild mustangs. When he got back, they were determined to keep that horse from the Indians, so one of them would sit up at night to keep the animal safe. One night, Eduardo fell asleep while the horse was tied nearby to a porch post. An Indian cut the rope and stole the animal. The next morning, the thief showed off and rode the fine steed in sight of the house, sporting around with other Indians, making the horse rear and jump.

The Waco and the Tehuacau Indians lived high up the Brazos near Waco and proved most dangerous to the settlers. For the most part, closer tribes were friendlier, including the Bedias Indians who lived in a village just a few miles down Bedias Creek at Village Lake. One day, a cow came up for milking with three arrows in her, so young Manual Rivers was sent to call others to the safety of the fort.

One of his young sisters was riding behind a Captain Friar, who was visiting them. Along the way, they passed an Indian leaning against a tree with his gun in his hand but making no move to shoot them. Captain Friar wisely prevented others in the group from shooting that one enemy. The next day they found that there had been ten or more other Indians right there too. If the settlers had chosen to fight, they were outnumbered and would most likely have all been killed.

Gray also told that his father had pointed out the site of a massacre of Mexican soldiers on Bowman Creek, near where Bowman school house later stood and near well-traveled La Bahia Road. When Mexico still controlled Texas -- so before 1836 -- Mexican soldiers were transporting payroll in the form of silver on mules from Mexico City to the garrison at Nacogdoches.

Realizing that an Indian attack was imminent, the soldiers either buried the treasure or sunk it in a creek before they were all massacred. Some stories say three soldiers escaped and came back later to retrieve it, with no luck. People hunted it for years in vain.

When hostilities broke out between Texians and Mexico, travelers going to join the Texian army stopped and rested with their families at Black Lake. On their way to the Alamo, David Crockett and Jim Bowie stopped for water with the Ariola family and proceeded to the Simes family home on the south side of the creek to spend the night.

Gray remembered both of them as riding good horses, Crockett as a tall man dressed in buckskin, and Bowie as not so tall but nicely dressed for those times in "citizens" clothes. General Sam Houston and Thomas J. Rusk (a general at San Jacinto and first Secretary of War for the Republic of Texas) also visited the area several times.

By the 1840s and early 1850s, lives had settled down enough for entertainment sometimes. Gray and old Joe Larrison (maybe Joel Larrison, 1821-1900) were the only fiddle players in this part of the country. They played for dances from Montgomery to Wheelock in Brazos County.

Eduardo and his children were staunch supporters of Texas Independence, and their names appear on several

monuments. In 1836, sons Delores, Francisco (Frank), Juan (John), and Mariano joined one of the first companies of the Texas Mounted Rangers under the command of Captain Elisha Clapp in Mustang Prairie. Eduardo left the family in 1842 and served in the Somervell Expedition intent on invading Mexico to repay Mexico for raiding Texas. In 1856, his wife, Candelaria, received \$37.60 from the State of Texas for his service in that campaign. Gray served as one of the original Texas Rangers under Capt. J.B. McCown as well as Bigfoot Wallace.

We owe such folks a great deal for their service and bravery. If anyone has information regarding The Review publication mentioned above, please contact the Museum. We will also treasure other histories you might share.