



## Castro County Centennial Early Days

1891



1991

# Aten-McClelland gunfight recalled

Even Castro County wasn't without its showdowns during the late 1800s.

One recorded shootout occurred on Jones Street. The argument causing this show of arms stemmed from a debate on the selection of a county seat.

Ira Aten, a former Texas Ranger who moved to Castro County to homestead a place near the XIT ranch, proposed that Castro City (a site south of Dimmitt) be chosen as the official county seat.

Aten moved to Castro County on Dec. 1, 1890, when it was still unorganized.

Texas Ranger Jim Mull in 1983 gave an account of Aten's life during a dedication ceremony of a historical marker on the courthouse square about the shootout. Here's a portion of his history about Aten:

"Ira knew that the county where he had located would probably be organized within a few months. A town called Dimmitt already had sprung up within its borders. Logically, the community looked forward to becoming the county seat, but trailing the homesteaders were the usual land agents and politicians who started running for office the minute they landed in the Panhandle.

"Two slick adventurers had chosen Castro County for a fat living in a lean land. Leading a politician ring was Andrew McClelland, a lawyer who had announced for county judge in the first election, still to be called. Paired with him in the booming real estate business was his brother, Hugh. The McClellands were recent arrivals from Tennessee, and had never cast a vote in Texas. Grouped around them was a crowd of drifters anticipating posts in a courthouse yet to be built.

"Ira was outraged when he estimated the sky high profits that the brothers were making from the sale of lots in Dimmitt. Their sales pitch was Dimmitt's prospects as a county seat, and they claimed that it would outgrow Amarillo once the railroad had been extended into the county. Their prices were enormous for this section, where ground had been literally dirt cheap.

"Many citizens were opposed to the high-handed McClellands, but up to now, none had dared to try to organize a counter-faction; the brothers' marksmanship was understood to equal their ambition. All that was changed when an authentic Texan, with a Ranger record, joined the ranks of the nesters.

"With funds realized from the sale of some steers, Ira bought a tract of ground and had it mapped out as a town site he christened Castro City. Ira offered lots to settlers at much lower prices and on longer time payments than could be had from the McClellands in Dimmitt. At the same time, he announced that Castro City would compete with Dimmitt for the county seat when the election was called.

"The reaction of the brothers was quick. They called a public meeting

in the schoolhouse to denounce Ira Aten as an irresponsible Johnny-come-lately. Ira attended, listened to their abusive harangues, then took the floor to expose the McClellands for what they were.

"In the middle of the former Ranger's speech, Andrew McClelland jumped from a bench and shouted, 'You're a liar, Aten!'

"Two minutes of taut silence passed. Finally Ira answered.

"Neighbors," he said to the audience, "I did more fighting in the Texas Rangers than I ever want to talk about. But no Ranger ever started a fracas where women and children were present. Mr. McClelland has publicly called me a liar. I'll be asking him to repeat that statement—after the election."

"He strode out of the schoolhouse, mounted his horse and rode back to his dugout. Next day Potter County officials met in Amarillo to call an election for Castro County. Heartened by Ira's example, the anti-McClelland forces nominated a ticket headed by a settler named Gough for county judge. During the campaign, Ira spoke and electioneered for the slate. Ten days before the poll, some worried residents of Dimmitt came to Ira's dugout.

"One of them said, 'We want to make you a proposition. Our town is already built; yours is something on a piece of paper. If you'll withdraw Castro City from the county-seat race, we'll back the Gough ticket against he McClelland one.'

"Ira answered immediately. 'All right men, that's a fair trade. Castro City's buried before it was ever born.'

"The settlers went to the polls in November, 1891, 11 months after Ira Aten's arrival in the county. They gave the ring candidates the worst electoral trouncing ever suffered by any clique of roving politicians in the Panhandle. Hugh, the homesteader, crushed Andrew McClelland in the race for county judge....

"Ira waited till he was informed that Castro County's first officials

had been sworn in by a district judge from Amarillo. Then he buckled on his .45 and rode to Dimmitt."

On arriving, he saw Andrew McClelland standing in front of a store. Aten dismounted, walked up to Andrew McClelland, and reminded him of his calling Aten a liar at the meeting. When asked if he still felt the same, Andrew McClelland answered that he did, but was unarmed and therefore unable to protect himself.

Andrew McClelland was told to get his gun while Aten waited.

Hurriedly returning, Andrew McClelland fired the first shot, and Aten returned the fire, wounding Andrew McClelland in the left arm, and caused him to spin to the ground. Aten holstered his gun, he told Andrew McClelland to get to his feet, that they were now even.

Then the sound of a bullet caused Aten to turn. He saw Hugh McClelland duck behind a small wooden store building. Aten drew and shot toward the corner of the building, heard a cry, and knew he had hit his mark.

The new sheriff, C.I. Bedford, was now on the scene. Without contest, Aten walked up to Bedford and surrendered himself. Aten remarked that he was Bedford's first arrest and also suggested that a doctor be sent to tend the McClellands.

In Ranger Mull's account, it says that Judge Gough helped Ira and filed charges against the McClelland brothers, who quickly closed their land business and returned home to Tennessee.

In April, 1892, Aten's trial was set to be heard in Swisher County. Since the McClelland brothers did not appear as witnesses, Aten was acquitted of the charges filed against him.

Ranger Mull's history of Aten's life continued with his appointment as sheriff. Here's more of that account:

"On Feb. 3, 1892, Ira married Imogene Boyce and brought her back with him to Castro County.

"In the fall of 1892, a horde of range thieves descended on Castro County from New Mexico. Thousands of cattle were stolen from the ranches. Dimmitt soon became a have for outlaws from New Mexico, Oklahoma and South Texas. The new sheriff of Castro County took no action at all against these outlaws and the citizens of Castro County called on Ira to take up the fight.

"Ira, remembering a pledge to his wife not to carry a badge as a lawman, refused to become involved. Finally, in March 1893, while Imogene was in Austin, the sheriff of Castro County was removed from office and the people pleaded with Ira to take the job.

"Ira became sheriff of Castro County during March 1893. Imogene, upon hearing of this, wrote Ira that she would not return to Castro County until he resigned. After an inter-family council, Imogene returned to Castro County, buckled on two six shooters and took on the job as county jailer.

"It didn't take Ira long to get started in his new job, and in less than a year, Castro County was back under law and order.

"In January, 1895, Ira resigned from the sheriff's department because he was unable to make a living for his family on a sheriff's wages, and became superintendent of the XIT Ranch's Escarbada Division, with over 600,000 acres under his control.

"Ira died on Aug. 5, 1953, at the age of 90, and is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in El Centro, Calif.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Information compiled from Castro County Diamond Jubilee history book and feature stories printed in the Aug. 12, 1976 and July 7, 1983, issues of the *Castro County News*.)



TAKE THAT!—Deputy Sheriff Ron Jenkins, portraying Ira Aten, draws a bead on Hugh McClelland in a re-enactment of the Jones Street Shootout of 1891 following dedication ceremonies in 1983 for a new historical marker commemorating the event. In the background, on the porch of Mrs. M.B. Fowle's Dry Goods Store, Earlene West portrays Mrs. Fowle and C.J. Johnson portrays his uncle, Kenneth Turner, who was a witness to the shootout.

We're proud to be a part of  
Castro County's past . . .  
and look forward to a bright future!  
Happy 100th Birthday Castro County

**The Company Store**

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IRA ATEN AS A TEXAS RANGER  
... Later to become county sheriff, XIT foreman

100<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary!

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DIMMITT HART HAZARETH  
**100**  
CASTRO COUNTY

**Happy 100th Birthday  
Castro County**

Founded in 1947 to do collectively what no individual could do alone, the Dimmitt Chamber of Commerce has been helping our merchants and other members work together to build a bigger, stronger community. Our emphasis has continued to be improving our town, whether through beautification, economic development or involvement in community projects. We challenge all to join us as we work together for a stronger future as well.

**Chamber of Commerce**

115 W. Bedford      647-2524

# It's A STAMPEDE!

## of Good Wishes on Castro County's 100th Anniversary!

We are proud to have been a part of that 100-year history. A recent report shows Castro County is second in the state in commercial cattle-feeding operations, and Dimmitt Feed Yards is responsible for a large part of the figures that put us on top. Our loyal customers have enabled us to continue to offer our safe, efficient services in cattle feeding since we first started in 1966.

We look forward to many years of continuing service to our customers and to our community.

## Dimmitt Feed Yards





WITT-RAWLINGS HOTEL  
...opening day in 1930

## Early hotel building now home for insurance agency, tenants

One of the oldest remaining structures in Castro County today is the old "Rawlings Hotel Building," located in the 100 block of North-east Second Street in Dimmitt.

Today, the building's ground floor houses the offices of Traditions, Jones - Rawlings Insurance, H&R Block and the Retail Merchants Association; while the second story has been made into a few apartment units.

The building was originally constructed in 1930 by W.B. Howard.

Mr. and Mrs. Witt bought the land for the hotel on July 15, 1930, and 10 days later Witt signed a contract with Howard for building the "Witt Hotel."

The original building was designed with two stories and had 30 rooms on the second floor. The hotel lobby, a coffee shop, offices and other businesses occupied the first floor space.

Witt operated the business until he sold the building to Arthur Haddaway of Fort Worth on Dec. 20, 1936. Mrs. Witt died sometime before 1942, according to Tina Rawlings, and that's when Witt closed the hotel.

The Rawlings family moved to Dimmitt in 1936 when Witt was still operating the coffee shop.

Rawlings said that it was in 1942

that the state highway department decided to pave the main streets in Dimmitt.

"At that time I believe there were no streets paved," Rawlings said. "There wasn't lodging enough for the paving crew, so it was in 1942 that I rented the second floor of the hotel to house the workers."

Rawlings and her husband, Jimmie, purchased the hotel building in 1945 from Haddaway. The coffee shop was owned and operated by several different people during the transition including Garnet Holland and Melton (Red) Richardson.

"Red's cook, Dutch Bleeker, awakened everyone in the hotel each morning at 5 o'clock by turning on the nickelodion," Rawlings remembered. "There was no insulation between the walls to block the sound. I called Red one morning at his home and asked him to have his cook refrain from this disturbance of the hotel guests, but I don't believe she ever did stop. Soon after this he closed the coffee shop and it stayed closed until sometime after 1951 when I re-opened it."

Rawlings said business at the hotel was good for a number of years after she and her husband opened it.

In addition to traveling salesmen,

workers and travelers passing through Dimmitt, they had business from the cattlemen who sent their cattle to the county to graze on wheat, which Rawlings said was "bountiful at that time."

"The cattlemen sent men to oversee their herds. Each year after the cattle were taken off of the wheat, it would not be long until wheat harvest. Naturally, we had good business from the harvest crews of different kinds. We enjoyed good business from the vegetable shippers for a number of years."

"Later, when our harvest season came about, the work crews brought their own living quarters. Also, the farmers planted less wheat and more corn and other crops."

"Then, when the Colonial Inn was opened, it took most of the business away from the Rawlings Hotel," Rawlings said.

Jimmie died in 1977 and in 1978, Rawlings closed the hotel.

On March 23, 1981, the hotel building was sold to Ben Holcomb, who stripped the second floor of the building and made it into apartments.

Danny and Sandy Lewis bought the building from Holcomb in the fall of 1989 and now live in one of the apartments.

## Hart residents relate memories of 'Uncle Mose'

A legend that lingers in the hearts of Hart residents who have "been around for awhile" lives on in the memory of one described as "a giant of a man"—everyone's "Uncle," Mose Ewers.

Perhaps the story is true that "Uncle Mose" once had a sweetheart who died before they could be married. Maybe he just preferred being a bachelor. There is no question, however, that he was loved by many and remembered by all who knew him.

Mose Ewers moved from Hale County to Castro County in 1907 to land just one mile north of the present townsite of Hart. He loved beauty and planted shrubs and flowers around his place.

He planted a large orchard and fruit from it was given to friends and neighbors.

"He had it announced at church one morning that everyone should come and help themselves to fruit," Lena Maples recalled. "'Uncle Mose' was one of very few. The present generation will never know anyone like him," she said.

"Uncle Mose" was indeed a giant of a man, in both physical stature and the regard of his fellow men and women. Recollections vary as to his height. Some say he was "well over six feet tall" and another will say he was "almost seven feet."

"He was one grand person," recalls Nina Jobe Brown. "I guess he was what you'd call a Good Samaritan."

"You know, 'Uncle Mose' never helped himself but he helped everybody else. He heled the other fellow all the time and he wouldn't take anything for it," recalls Morris Jobe.

Winnie Scott Hankins smiles and describes him as "Our best friend. He was so good to everybody."

"Everybody liked him," agreed Lucy Henderson Kanady, "especially children. He always noticed them, they especially liked him."

He was "the biggest, roughest fellow," recalls Maples, "but a wonderful fellow. He was really a good neighbor."

Maples remembers a long ago time when so many were ill during an epidemic of flu and "Uncle Mose" went around to check on them.

"Uncle Mose" would ride around and see about the neighbors. Then he took it one year. One of the Rice boys sat up with him. When his fever broke, "Uncle Mose" said, 'Boys, I'm hungry. Go get that side of fresh ribs and bring it in and cook them' and he crawled right out of bed and ate a hog's bait. Nothing could keep him down."

Morris Jobe and Nina Brown recall when their own family was stricken with the flu.

"It must have been 1918," Brown recalls. "Maude was living in Tulia. She'd married Charley. He went to the first World War and Maude came home. She had the flu when she got here and gave it to all of us except Brother (Ewell) and Morris."

"They had to fix us something to eat. All we could eat was butter-milk. I want you to know," Brown laughs, "they strained it through a dish rag."

Jobe laughs at the memory. "'Uncle Mose' said, 'I'll hold that dish rag and y'all pour that milk in there.' Then he'd take it and pull it through his fingers to strain it all through. Dad saw him doing that and got well real quick."

"I'll never forget that first buttered biscuit he brought me," said Brown. "It was the best thing I'd ever eaten."

Zella Scott Rice remembers a bit of mischief "Uncle Mose" encouraged with a group of fun seekers.

"Carl (Hankins, Zella's brother-in-law) had a watermelon patch and he'd threatened 'Nobody better get in my patch.' We knew he didn't really care but that made it more fun for us to do so."

"Uncle Mose" suggested we get us some melons one night, so after they'd gone to bed, a bunch of us went out there and ate watermelons. There were Ewell (Jobe), Vernie (Carl's sister), myself, John (Scott, Zella's future husband), my brother Herman, Fred (Carl's

brother) and 'Uncle Mose'."

Laughing, Rice remembers that when Hankins looked out the window towards the watermelon patch the next morning and noticed the mounds of rinds piled up in a heap, his first impression of what he was seeing led him to exclaim to his wife, "My goodness, Winnie, I believe that old mare is dead."

"He thought she had gotten into the watermelons and had eaten enough to kill her," Rice said.

## Highway 86 is paved to the east

Paving of Highway 86 from Dimmitt west to the Parmer County line, was completed in August 1949 by Ernest Lloyd Construction Company of Fort Worth.

With the completion of the local paving project, the last gap in the highway from Estelline to Bovina was closed. Grade and drainage work on the unpaved portion of the highway was completed in the winter of 1948.

The highway paving program in Castro County was ushered in before World War II when Highway 86 was paved from Tulia to Dimmitt. Then all other highways in the county were completed before work was resumed on the initial job of paving the east-west thoroughfare.



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**INVESTING IN OUR TEXAS**

# Roquet anyone?

## Former resident recalls unusual early-day entertainment

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This story was submitted by former Dimmitt resident, Farren Broadstreet. It is about a roquet court which was built and used for entertainment during the early days. He decided to "jot down a few things from his own remembrances." He adds that this isn't a true history, just events and things that he remembers. He now lives in Corpus Christi.)

By FARREN BROADSTREET

No history of Dimmitt and Castro County would be complete without the story of the community roquet court.

I imagine everyone that can remember it thinks that it was part of the Broadstreet homestead, so let me now correct that thought with this little story.

My dad, John Broadstreet was working at Ramey-Harman Implement and had to run over to McMahon Blacksmith for a bit of welding on a spring day in 1942 or '43. You may remember that the business was across the street and north of Higginbotham-Bartlett Lumber Co.

I saw Dad cross the street, so I sprinted over to listen in on all the "man talk." That was very important for a boy of eight or nine and besides that, the blacksmith shop was my second home.

At the time, my favorite song was the sound of Mr. McMahon beating out a plow point on the anvil. He had a great beat; I'm sorry you missed it.

I had a big smile on my face when I found out that C.G. Maples and Edd Bleeker were there. You see, C.G. always talked to me just like I was one of the guys and he was never in too big of a hurry to explain his latest project. Back then he was always making something. It's too bad C.G. never got channeled in the right direction or he could have been a great inventor.

Clem, who was C.G.'s dad, didn't understand that he had no real interest in cattle or farming.

Edd Bleeker lived too far from New York—he would have made a great stand-up comedian. Every comment was a one-liner and he never cracked a smile.

The four of them began complaining about the lack of anything to do, what with the war on, gas not available, etc.

Edd Bleeker told them about a game he had played in the city park at Lubbock. It was something similar to croquet, but it was more manly, less genteel and definitely not a woman's game. You took a squat stance like a baseball batter, aimed like a pool shooter and used a mallet with a 10-inch handle. The game appealed to all four of them and besides, Edd had a rule book at home with a layout of the court on the back page.

Now the first problem was where to put the court. We lived in the old Reynolds place—that was how all houses in Dimmitt were designated in the days before street signs and

numbers. (That meant we lived in the house built by Carlos Reynolds. It was two blocks north of the square on the northeast corner, across from the Olen Rice place. That meant Olen still lived there. When they moved, then it would become the old Rice place. See how it worked?)

Anyway, at the time, there was nothing behind the old Reynolds place but pasture land all the way to the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad tracks, so naturally, there was no road or street on the north side of our house. (You see, back then they didn't build a street unless it went somewhere.) Now let me give you the logic that prevailed at that time: No one would complain if the people used the street that nobody needed and besides, the people owned that land. Sure enough, no one ever complained.

Now this logic made things simple, and as this was a city street then of course Edd would take the city road grader over and smooth off that part of the street necessary for the court and the parking.

The next part was getting a small donation of a few 2 x 4s from Ward Golden at Higginbothams. Ward was an easy touch to help with anything that sounded like sports. Besides that, C.G., O.B. and Dad were good customers and there was also the thought that those three could have made life miserable for anyone because they were all prone to mischief.

Old tire treads made great wall bumpers. John and C.G. cut the wood, made the walls and laid out the court. O.B. made up the wickets and posts at the blacksmith shop. C.G. dug out his lathe and started making mallets. Just imagine it—there were about a dozen custom-made mallets—no two were alike and no one paid him a dime.

Now the hard part came. You see, at that time all the men in Dimmitt worked the same hours, daylight to dark, so naturally, a full-time outdoor hobby would require lighting. After much discussion about who and how the electric bill would be paid, it was decided that the question should be put to Archie Bussey. Now Archie was the local pole climber for the power company and as the statute of limitations has expired, along with most of the participants, I will explain.

A loop was installed at the pole to the back of our house and a breaker box was mounted on the side of the house. By "loop" I mean the line looped around the meter. (A belated thank you to the electric company from most of the men of Dimmitt at that time.) The funny thing about it is, I don't believe Archie ever played one game there, but that's the way things went back then. I do know he wasn't paid one dime for the work he did.

During this preparation time, O.B. was busy at the blacksmith shop making wickets and posts, C.G. was building custom-made

mallets with hard rubber ends for striking the ball and soft rubber on the other end for roquets and those soft, just right shots.

Everyone had their favorite, but I do believe C.G. made them all and they were there at the court for anyone to use. C.G. claimed ownership of only one—his favorite.

Benches were built at the sides of the court, first intended for the many spectators that came to watch.

Then the games began. Players came out of the woodwork. It would be easier to list the men who didn't play than to list those who did, as it eventually became a county-wide event.

So many games were to be played and so many wanted to play that it became an unspoken rule that losers dropped out and winners stayed on. It behooved you to become good if you wanted to play. Practice was the "in" thing.

As the court was part of our house, I naturally became witness to most of the games, but most importantly, to most of the local men. I discovered character in men I knew by name, but not by their nature under the pressures of competition.

Let me cover a few (of the men) beginning with the four that started the organized madness.

John Broadstreet, father to me, loved to win, was a good loser, but really enjoyed causing discomfort and even anguish to his opponent, especially if it happened to be his good and lifelong friend, O.B. Winkle.

Now to all who can remember him, O.B. was a good player and he had to be, because he hated to lose more than any man I have ever known. He replayed every game after it was over, trying to remember the unlucky break that was the cause of his loss. Sometimes it was the dry court, or the wet court, the light or the blind luck of his opponent. In defense, seldom was it the poor play of a partner.

C.G. Maples was by nature good at anything he attempted. He enjoyed the competition, played with a calm, seemingly careless abandon and he usually won.

Edd Bleeker was a hard one for me to figure. He was very skilled, calm and never got rattled. I know he must have hated to lose, yet it never seemed to bother him. He probably played more than anyone that came there and was always the last to leave at night.

Tournaments became the big thing. Entry fees were paid, brackets were drawn up and partners were drawn for or chosen.

When partners were drawn for, men became deep friends with others who had previously been just acquaintances. Sometimes, however, enemies were made.

Sometimes betting on the side did occur, although I don't think it was of a serious nature.

Speaking of betting, I can remember when it rained and the farmers had some time off. I used to perch on a side bench and watch many a game played by Joe Butler, G.L. Willis and Sam and "Punk" Gilbreath. It was rumored that they bet on their games. I never knew for sure, but I do know there were never any other players waiting to play the winners.

Punk and Joe seemed to have a bit more intensity to their playing and I recall them as the two better players. Usually, they went head-to-head with one of the others as partners. I know that G.L. and Sam usually had more fun.

Next to Higginbotham - Bartlett there was a drugstore owned and operated by one "Stub" Jones. He surely had another name, but I assure you no kid alive then knew anything other than "Stub." We all assumed it came from the perpetual cigar stub that hung from his mouth. He may have had a way of removing it to sleep, but I will bet he learned to eat with it in his mouth. Now Stub was the biggest teaser in town as far as the kids were concerned but still his place was the town hangout.

All tournament pairings and brackets were always posted on the mirror behind the soda fountain for all to see, therefore, that is where all games were replayed the day after.

As is often the case with big

teasers, it turned out that Stub wasn't a great player and was definitely not a great loser. Most of the best shots Stub made were with the side of his foot while everyone was watching the next shooter. For each poor loser, there is always one constant nemesis. Dimmitt was no exception.

That nemesis was one B.M. Nelson, a friend of Stub's and apparently self-appointed minister of honesty.

B.M. was the newspaper of Castro County, not just the editor, but the newspaper, and as such I would like to be able to say he was the guardian of honest and fair play in all sports events; however, this was not the case.

B.M. got more delight in catching Stubby while he was trying to cheat than the ethics of journalism called for, in fact, he absolutely delighted in such. Finally, B.M. discovered his true joy and that was over-correcting Stub's wayward foot shots.

You see, after Stub kicked the ball forward about six inches, B.M. would manage to sneak around and kick it back about 12 inches. Justice served. Everyone watched Stub like a hawk and I may be the only one who knew B.M. was gaining justice his way. God, how B.M. loved it. How those two remained friends, I'll never know.

Eventually, the game became county-wide. The Hunter brothers from Jumbo, the Sadlers from Sunnyside, the Drerups from Nazareth and others from Hart, Flagg and all parts of the county. Often, no spectator seats were left vacant and no parking places were left on the side lines. Lights would burn until after midnight nearly every night. The last persons to leave put the balls and mallets in the bin by our house and turned the lights off.

We kids knew we played until supper time, then the men took over. We got pretty good ourselves. Besides myself, there was Stanley Fulfer, Junior Fulfer, Lonnie Rice, Kenneth Fulfer, Bob Mooney and Carl Jowell just in the block. Bill, Ray and Ray Murphy, Thomas Finley, Jesse Burch, Elmo Blackwell

and Kenneth McDermitt filled out my age group while Dub Parks, Jo and Thomas Earl Harrison filled out the older group. Many good times were had by all.

I will always remember one session in particular. There was no great skill involved and no great competition, but . . . well, let me explain.

One afternoon I was just messing around by myself when a car pulled up, so I just backed off to let them play. Lester Gladden, Elmer Youts, Earl Harrison and Elvis Burch got out to give me a lesson or better yet, an education.

None of them were in the class of expert except in the art of having fun. I don't care who made the good shot, they all applauded. They joked, they teased, they tried their best to win, but above all, they enjoyed it. I do not know which team won, and you know, I think that is what that original foursome really meant for it to be about.

That little rectangle of dirt on a future Dimmitt street really represented Castro County at that time.

It was started by an implement mechanic, blacksmith, city road grader and a farmer. No meetings were held, there were no elections, no committees, no fundraisers, no study's, no taxes were raised and you didn't have to be a member to play. Most of all, no one objected. Any maintenance that needed to be done was just done. If you were there, you did it. If you weren't there, no one cared. To the best of my knowledge, there was never a drink taken around the court and as I think back, there were some real two-fisted drinkers around. I watched many an hour of play and I never saw money change hands around the court. There were no posted rules, no supervisors other than a gentleman's unspoken mutual agreement about conduct beyond reproach, and not once was there even a hint of a fight.

As long as the court existed, there was not one instance of vandalism, even to the extent of not returning the equipment to the bin and turning the lights off.

Could such a thing take place in Dimmitt today?

# You know us... we serve you!

We've been around a long time. You might say we've grown up with you. We were here when you needed help getting a crop planted, or help financing that new equipment. We stood beside you and your family through good times and bad.

We're still here. By now, you know us very well and we know you. Our manager Ann Armstrong, loan representative Mark L. Kleman, and secretary Janet Morgan have served you for many years.

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Isn't it great to have a Production Credit Association that understands you and your needs?

And we're wishing Castro County a

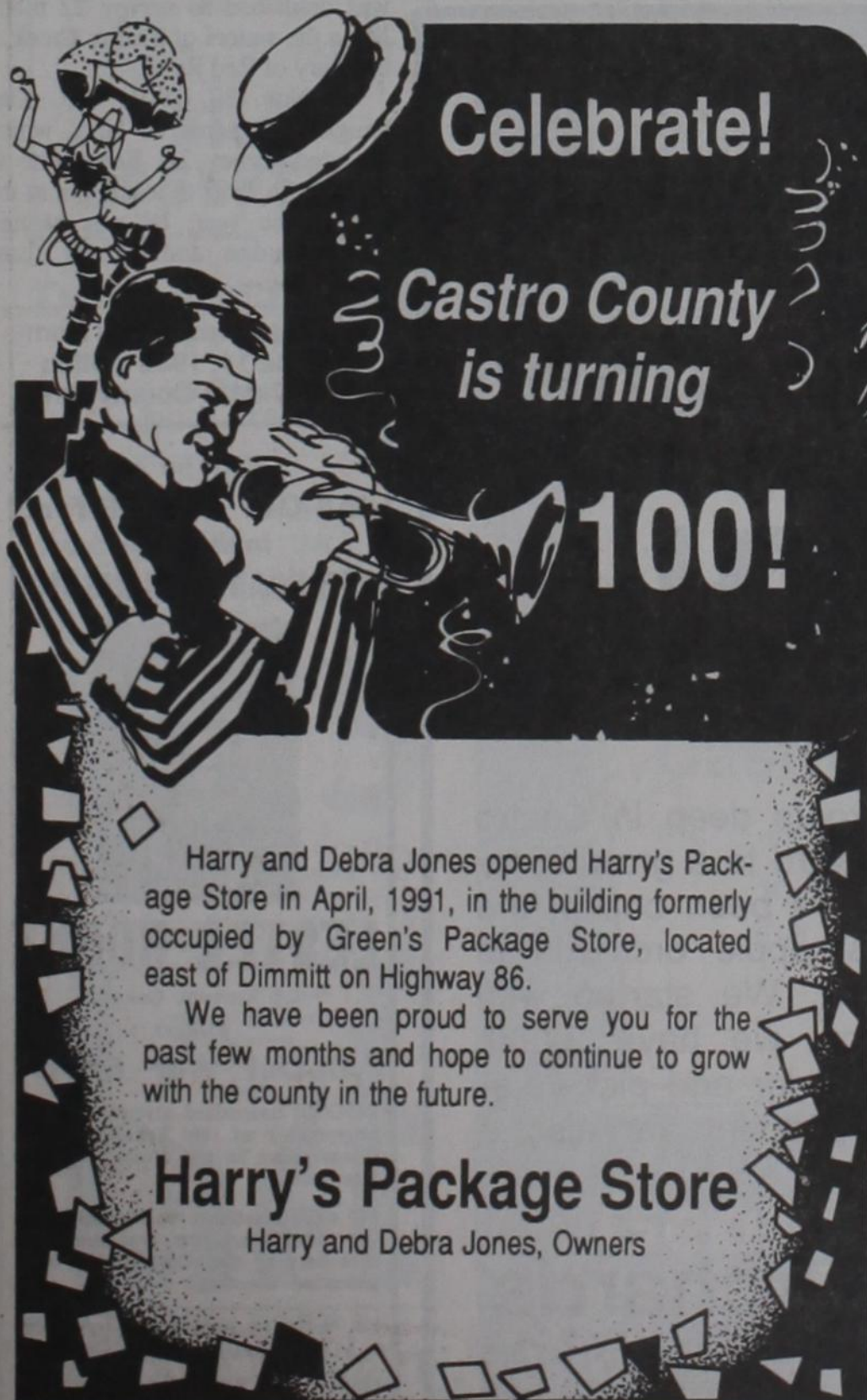
## Happy 100th Anniversary!

# Production Credit Association

Ann Armstrong, Manager  
Mark L. Kleman, Loan Representative  
Janet Morgan, Secretary

647-3169

N. Hwy. 385, Dimmitt



**Celebrate!**

Castro County is turning **100!**

Harry and Debra Jones opened Harry's Package Store in April, 1991, in the building formerly occupied by Green's Package Store, located east of Dimmitt on Highway 86.

We have been proud to serve you for the past few months and hope to continue to grow with the county in the future.

**Harry's Package Store**  
Harry and Debra Jones, Owners





# Museum preserves the



THE MARK COWSERT FAMILY, CIRCA 1911: From left are Jack, Ruth, Aunt Bertie (Mrs. Cowsert's sister) and her children, Minta, Mary, Ray, Mark, Helen behind Mary, and Josephine in front.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The facts reported in this article were gathered from past issues of the *Castro County News* and the museum history album.)

The dreams of a few citizens at the 1971 Old Settlers Reunion became reality in the spring of 1976 when 27 people met in the city hall community room and decided to form a museum association.

In 1975, Judge Weldon Bradley appointed a Castro County Historical Survey Committee consisting of Mrs. Helen Richardson, chairman, Mrs. Clara Vick, Mrs. Florene Leinen, Mrs. Teeny Bowden, Mrs. Sid Sheffy, Jack Cartwright, Father Stanley Crocchiola and Kent Birdwell.

The group urged county residents interested in preserving the county's history to meet at the city hall on Jan. 15.

Although writing a county history was essential, the group concentrated on the possibility of organizing a museum.

The museum idea took prece-

dence, and the group discussed renovation of the Old Flagg Ranch Headquarters, which first served as the J.W. Carter home.

Other suggestions included one of the quonset barns at the fair grounds, the Dimmitt Catholic Church (which was for sale) and the Walter Haynes building.

On Jan. 12, Robert Duke, Lon Woodburn, Mr. and Mrs. B.M. Nelson, Bryce Dowell, Allie Mae Willis, Teeny Bowden, H.C. Nelson, Jack Cowsert, Jim Elder, Helen Richardson, Jack Cartwright and Clara Vick met with the commissioners' court, requesting the quonset building.

However, the commissioners related that the quonset building was used by the FFA and 4-H organizations at the county stock shows.

In their Jan. 22, 1976 meeting, the group chose a name, temporary officers and board members.

Jim Elder was elected president; Helen Richardson, vice-president; and Clara Vick, secretary-treasurer.

In addition, Mrs. Henry Sears

and Mrs. George Turrentine of Hereford informed the group on how the Deaf Smith County Museum was organized. Sears was a promoter of the Deaf Smith project. Turrentine gave information on how to catalogue, store and exhibit items.

After several episodes of rejected locations, temporary president Jim Elder told the group on Feb. 12 that his sister, Mrs. Charlie Hastings, had agreed to sell two and one-half acres and the old Gilbreath home for \$18,000. The offer seemed ideal.

Later, the Hastings family offered the entire five-acre plot.

With the Gilbreath home for a museum, the group decided to move the Carter home in later as an exhibit.

"We didn't have the funds to move it (Carter house) at the time, so we (museum association) thought we'd wait and get it later when we had the time and money," Vick said.

Before the home was moved, the structure burned.

"But that's part of a good lesson," she said. "Looking back, we should have gotten the money and moved it."

On March 8, 1976, the museum association decided to accept Hastings' offer of \$36,000 for the five-acre tract with \$6,000 down and seven and one-half percent interest payable over a 10-year period.

"There's two special days for us," Vick said. "June 3, 1976 and Feb. 19, 1986 — the day we bought and paid for our museum."

The association adopted by-laws and elected nine directors on March 25, 1976. They were Clara Vick, Teeny Bowden and Eules Waggoner for three years; Bryce Dowell, Weldon Bradley and George Bagwell for two years, and George Sides, Robert Duke and B.M. Nelson for one year.

Nelson was elected president; Dowell, first vice president; Robert Duke, second vice-president; and Clara Vick, secretary-treasurer.

In February 1977, the association learned of the Manpower Training Program, a division of the Texas Panhandle Community Action Cor-



IN THE PARLOR of the Castro County Museum house was this square grand piano, donated by Maurine Bice, former Dimmitt resident. The piano had originally been a gift to her grandmother in 1895. The sheet music was donated by Myrtle

Sheffy, and dates back to the early 1900s. The coffee urn on the left and the picture album on the right on the top of the piano were donated by Clara Vick. They were brought to this area from Michigan by her family, the Norrises.

poration, that funded community workers.

Mrs. Madge Robb was employed to open the museum from 1 to 5 p.m. each weekday, through the Manpower funds.

Later that year, a representative from Green Thumb Inc., a public service employment and training program sponsored by National Farmers Union, picked up the salary tab for museum worker Robb, and now pays Mary Edna Hendrix.

Throughout the association's history, the same faithful names recur. Presently, Lon Woodburn serves as the association's president. Other officers are: Dale Winders, first vice president and Clara Vick, secretary-treasurer. The late H.C. Nelson served as second vice president.

Madge Robb, George Bagwell, Ralph Lambright, Don Moke and Jim Wright serve in the board of directors.

Marguerite McLain, Ed Drerup, Alice Anthony, George Bagwell, Bryce Dowell, Dale Winders, Helen Richardson, Clara Vick, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Lambright and Frank Robbins raised \$745.

George Sides' team collected \$1,640. His team consisted of: Jim Elder, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cartwright, Jack Cowsert, Robert Duke, Mrs. and Mrs. Eules Waggoner, Mr. and Mrs. Lon Woodburn, Percy Hart, Mrs. Oleta Raper and Dean Sanders.

"We sold them to whoever we ran into in the coffee shops or on the street," Elder said. "Everyone was pretty excited about the museum."

In addition, the association sold brand displays for \$25. Of the more than 600 brands registered in the county, 36 are displayed at the museum.

The museum also sells life memberships for \$500 each.

## Fundraising

With a location cited, the association realized funds were needed to pay for readying the museum.

After several ideas of how other museum associations raised funds, George Sides suggested a campaign for donations.

Those members present divided into two teams to sell charter memberships.

The group decided that the losing team would treat the other team to steak dinners.

B.M. Nelson's team of Mrs.

## House and Property

The museum association purchased the five-acre tract of land and the Gilbreath house from Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Hastings of Lubbock.

Hastings is the son of J.R. Hastings, the original owner of the land.

J.R. sold five-acres to Jeff T. Gilbreath in March 1909 for \$325. B.M. Nelson's team of Mrs.

to farm in 1903 then later moved to town in 1909 when he opened a general merchandise store.

The white slat-wood home had no bathroom fixtures, but at that time, there was no running water either.

The home changed owner and occupants several times before the museum association acquired it. Gilbreath moved back to the farm in fall of 1910 and sold the house to Mark Cowsert on Oct. 10, 1910 for \$1,300.

The Cowserts lived in the home about two years. Records show the increasing value of the property — Cowsert sold the home and acreage for \$1,800 in October 1912 to George W. O'Brien and wife, Geneva. The O'Brien's in turn sold it W.J. and Helen Slover in August 1914 for \$2,000.

The next year, Slover sold the place for the same price to George Douglas, who owned it until E.V. Elder bought it in February 1930 for \$4,665.

Elder conveyed ownership to his daughter, Rubye Elder Hastings and her husband, Charles, in 1941 for \$500.

The Hastings lived there until the 1950s, when they moved to Moore County.

In 1957, Mr. and Mrs. Oran Follis rented the house. Lucille Follis continued to live there after Oran's death.

The land itself changed ownerships several times also.

Patented by the state of Texas to Thornton Jones Jan. 23, 1894 as a part of a 160-acre tract, the land was described as survey 22 block M on the waters of Trinity Creek, a tributary of Red River.

On Nov. 30, 1901, C.F. Kerr bought 320 acres of land, which included survey 22. Kerr came to Dimmitt in 1897 to teach, but at the end of the year, he was elected county judge and served three terms.

This ad was pulled from the June 11, 1942 edition of the *Castro County News*.

Vote for an  
**"All-Out War Effort"**  
in the Texas  
**RAILROAD COMMISSION**



**LESTER BOONE**

A Tarrant County  
pledges

**"All-Out War Effort"**

BOONE has called attention to the importance of the Texas Railroad Commission in the United Nations war effort . . .

He calls attention to the fact that for more than one year only two members of the Commission have attended meetings.

HE PLEDGES HIMSELF TO ATTEND ALL COMMISSION MEETINGS

Political Adv. Paid for by Lester Boone

FLAGG FERTILIZER CO.

## CONGRATULATIONS

TO CASTRO COUNTY

### FOR 100 YEARS OF HISTORY

from the employees of

## FLAGG FERTILIZER

<p>Delton Tischler Leland Jennings Vickie Jennings James Everett</p>	<p>Owners:</p> <p>Fred Kuntz Helen Kuntz Ricky Kuntz</p>
--	--

## Flagg Fertilizer

We want to wish you a

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

## Castro County

as you turn

# 100!

We've planted our roots deep in Castro County, and look forward to a growing future. Since 1985, we've been one of the few true commercial apple orchards in the High Plains area. We started with 1,000 trees and now we have 3,000. Fresh-pressed apple cider and pick-your-own tomatoes and peppers are also a big part of our business.

## Maxwell Orchards

Dale and Elsie Maxwell, Owners      North on US 385

# past for future generations



COUNTY JUDGE B. D. WOODLEE used this desk. It was brought by Percy Estes, and his daughter, Helen Richardson, donated it to the Castro County Museum. It is displayed in the living room. All the office equipment on the desk came from Cowser Abstract.

Kerr and wife, Eula, sold 120 acres of the 160 to O.B. Hoover on Feb. 20, 1907 for \$2,000. Hoover sold it the same day to Max Roberts for \$3,000. Roberts sold 120 acres to J.R. Hastings on Dec. 1908 for \$3,120. He then sold five acres to Gilbreath.

## Exhibits

To date, more than 500 exhibits grace the Gilbreath home.

Catalogued as the first item, Mrs. Maurine Bice donated a 92-year-old concert piano bought by her grandfather, Mark Allen, the day her mother was born.

Allen bought the piano in Boston in 1885. It was shipped to Albany by train and then by wagon to Throckmorton, where the family lived.

Leta Allen married Eck Smith and they had two children: Mark and Maurine. After Smith's death she married E. S. Parks, who had two children Jo (Gregory) and Wade. They moved to Castro County in 1925. Maurine married Tom Bice after the family moved to Dimmitt.

This ad was pulled from the June 11, 1942 edition of the Castro County News.

**WE BUY IRON**  
EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK!  
Weighed at Kimbell Elevator in Dimmitt.  
WILL PAY TOP PRICES.  
**BILL ROBERSON**

**Dr. R.F. McCasland**  
DENTIST  
Heard and Jones Building  
TULIA, TEXAS

This ad was pulled from the Jan. 28, 1943 issue of The Castro County News.

**BOYS' LIFE**  
There is a tremendous need for a clean, wholesome and educational, yet entertaining boy's publication. That's why, for 30 years, the Boy Scouts of America has published BOYS' LIFE. It's the magazine you will be glad to give your son... or a friend's son.  
Only \$2.00 a year... \$4.50 for 3 years  
Send your order to:  
BOYS' LIFE, No. 2 Park Ave., New York  
Or to your newspaper office or local agent



ANTIQUE TRACTORS from County Judge Weldon Bradley's collection are on display at the Castro County Historical Museum. Although they're a far cry from the air-conditioned powerhouses of today, they were considered marvels in their time. From left are a

1924 Fordson, a 1926 IHC 15-30, a 1947 John Deere "D," a 1926 Farmall, and a 1926 Rumely Oil Pull. The historic old tractors are lined up on the back of the museum lot.

July 27, the windmill was pumping water again.

Helen Richardson donated the large rolled-top desk used by B.D. Woodlee when he was judge of Castro County (1916 until 1922) when he opened an insurance and real estate office.

Woodlee and his wife came to Dimmitt in 1905 to teach school. Percy Estes bought the desk and it was used in the masonic lodge until replaced. Then, it was in Richardson's home.

The late Es Noble made arrangements with Bob McLean for the bank vault used in the first three bank buildings in Dimmitt by the First State Bank. However, getting the vault to the museum proved quite difficult, according to the museum history album.

George Sides, his sons and two employees, Frank Sepeda and Jesse Mendoza, went to investigate and found the vault too heavy to budge with manpower. Buster Cooper at Farmer's Supply loaned them a tractor with a three point rear-end tractor lift and three men (Leon Sandavol, Gary Butler and Michael Goolsby to help move the heavy Mosler safe.

Noble, a retired vice-president of the bank, cranked the vault open and revealed the six inches of plate steel around the vault and a steel-cone fitted door a foot thick.

He explained that the hammer and chisel marks above the top of the door were the attempts of robbers, who at two different times using tools they had stolen from the nearby blacksmith, had tried to break in.

Amidst all the items donated, the museum association longed for a kitchen stove to complete the furnishings. David Bellinghausen of Nazareth was trying to get a kitchen range ready, but had sent word early in the week that he couldn't finish it.

Late in the evening of Aug. 19, Bud Steiert and his daughters brought in a large Rival coal stove they had gotten out of storage in their basement.

It had a warming oven, water reservoir and a baking oven. It had been used by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. L.A. Steiert, who came to Castro County in 1907.

The stove had some rust on it, but several volunteers began the task of refinishing it.

"I tell you, we looked like we had been through a chimney and back," Vick said.

## Open House

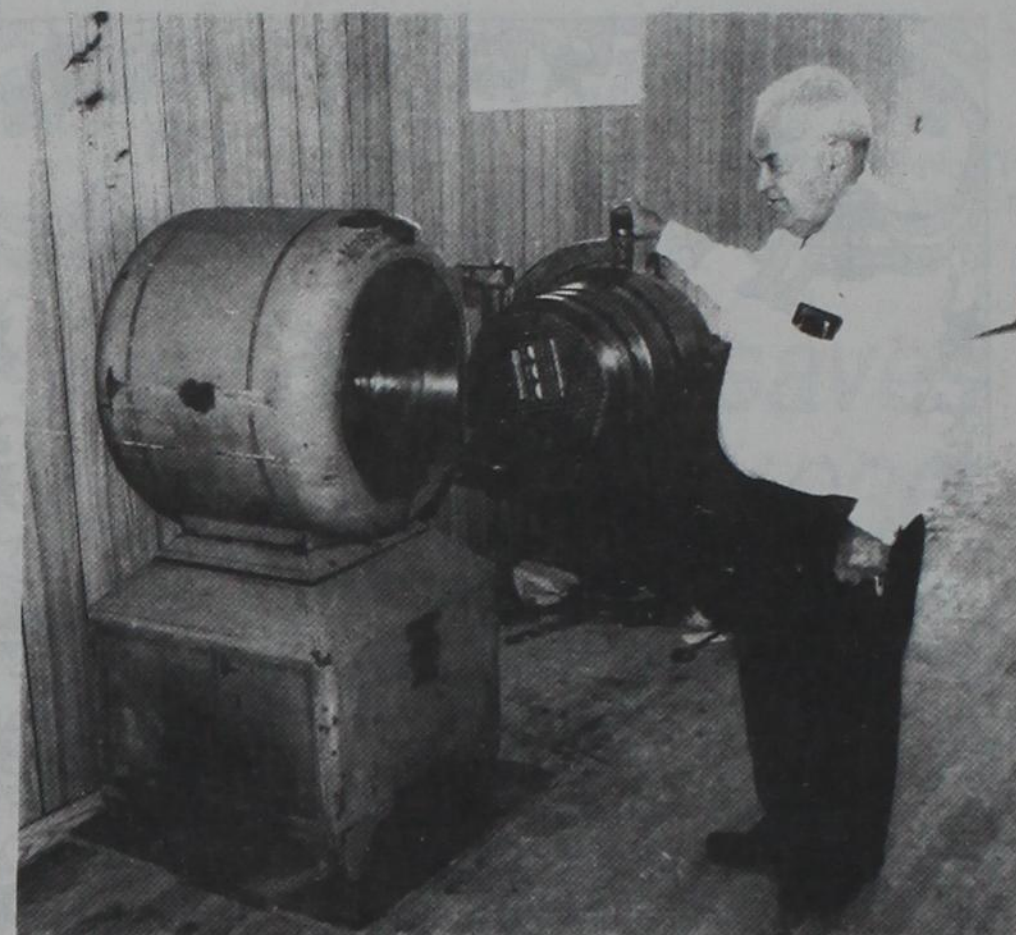
The morning of Aug. 22 found everyone furiously putting the finishing touches on everything, Vick said.

The register listed 331 visitors that day, but Vick said several hundred more were there.

"The line of people was amazing," she said. "People were mingling everywhere...we even had some directing traffic."

Charter memberships, which totaled 923, ended at midnight on this day.

"We're so proud of what is there (at the museum), but none of it would have been possible without the gracious generosity of the people," Vick said.



ONE OF THE EXHIBITS at the Castro County Historical Museum is an old Mosler safe dating back to the 1920s, on loan from the First State Bank of Dimmitt. This photo shows the late Ester Noble, one-time vice-president of the local bank, opening the safe with a crank to show what a safe-cracker would be up against—six inches of plate steel around the vault and a steel-cone fitted door a foot thick. Still, Noble recalled, would-be burglars tried pounding their way into the safe in the 1920s, using tools stolen from a nearby blacksmith shop. But they only succeeded in knocking paint from the top front of the vault before they gave up.

## Millions of Americans wear Castro County wool.



Estacado Industries, Inc., is proud to have been a part of Castro County's diversified economy since 1972, when we constructed our modern lamb feedlot at Sunnyside.

Since that time, we have fed more than two million head of lambs and shipped them to slaughter plants in Texas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nebraska, New Jersey, South Dakota, Iowa, New Mexico, Canada and Old Mexico.

During that same time we have shorn and marketed more than eight million pounds of wool.

And we have provided a market for more than half a billion pounds of Castro County feed products.

We join in celebrating the Centennial of a great county—ours!



## Estacado Industries, Inc.

Route 1, Dimmitt

647-5136-7

Corporate officers and directors: Ray Joe Riley, Milburn Haydon, Edwin L. Dawson, Eddie O. Haydon, Edd C. McLeroy, Dr. Don Beerwinkle.

**Happy 100th Birthday Castro County**  
We are proud to be a part of the community!

## George's Exxon

402 N. Broadway

647-4641

# Names link county towns to heroes, pioneers

By DANETTE BAKER  
*... And yet they think that their houses shall continue for ever and that their dwelling places shall endure from one generation to another; and call the lands after their own names.*

Prayer Book

As Henri Castro rode horseback across the 160 miles of desolate prairie land, he probably never imagined the possibilities that lay ahead for the land that would be named after him.

Castro described the only visit to his namesake in a diary entry dated July 1843, according to the Castro County history book. He described the seven-day trip: "went without seeing a settlement or a dangerous animal, were herds of deer and wild horses."

More than 100 years ago, a 30-square-mile tract of untouched land

lay nestled amongst the vast open prairie of the Texas Panhandle. Then, in 1845 — 31 years after Texas joined the Union — the Texas Legislature placed an imaginary fence around the land and named it Castro County.

In 1876, the Legislature created 54 new counties from northern Bexar County and named each for early Texas heroes.

Castro, a Frenchman, served as Consul for the King of Naples, Italy, to Providence, R.I. in 1827 and one year later became an American citizen.

In 1841, Castro helped the Republic of Texas accrue a \$7 million loan through La Fite and Company of Paris, France; the next year, he was appointed Consul General from the Republic to his native country, France.

Because of his involvement in the Republic government, the Texas Legislature granted him a

colonization contract. With it, he established Castrovilla — named for him — in 1843 on the Medina River near San Antonio.

Likewise, the county seat was named for a Panhandle visitor.

About 15 years after Castro County was named, town organizer H.G. Bedford dubbed the county seat "Dimmitt" after the Rev. W.C. Dimmitt, a close friend, relative and business partner, according to the Castro County history book.

Their friendship began with the Civil War. Dimmitt, a native Kentuckian who was sympathetic to the southern cause, refused to serve in the Union army, according to the history book. So, he organized Company K, 10th Kentucky Partisan Rangers, serving as first Captain. Bedford served as a scout in the army, and their friendship began.

After the war, Bedford married Dimmitt's niece, Fannie Browder, then encouraged him to join in the West Texas land developments. Thus, the business partnership formed.

Organization of Dimmitt came in 1890 when the Bedford Town and Land Company, of which Bedford and Dimmitt were parties, developed a section of land near the county's center.

According to the history book, Dimmitt's only excursion to the county was the 1890 buying trip.

In the late 1880s, homesteaders in the southeast portion of the county named the second largest town for a retired school teacher turned rancher and mailcarrier: T.W. Hart.

"Mr. Hart rode to Kress about once a week for the mail, then riders would come from the other towns around and carry it on," said Sarah Hart, whose husband Joe, is the late T.W.'s grandson.

"He had the horses (from his ranch), and would give those who came a fresh horse to ride back on, then they'd trade back the next time," she said.

When time came to name the town, Sarah said several suggested "Hart", after T.W.

Another rendition in the history book relates that several names were submitted but rejected. Therefore, postal officials suggested "Hart" and the name was accepted by the settlers.

In the spring of 1892, Thomas Patrick McCormick of Hornsville, N.Y., arrived at his unseen homestead, about 10 miles north of Hart.

Although now known as Nazareth, pioneers disagree on the original name of the McCormick community. Some call it Wind, others Wynne for Billy Wynne,



THIS OLD HOUSE—More than a century ago, the J.W. Carter family settled southwest of Dimmitt and established the county's first homestead. Carter brought wood from Colorado City in 1883 to

erect his family a home. Later, the weather-worn structure served as headquarters for the Flag Ranch, founded in 1904 by C.T. Herring.

Castro County File Photo

## Sears

### Authorized Catalog Sales Merchant

In July of 1969, the first Authorized Catalog Sales Outlet for Sears was opened in Dimmitt by Tom L. Persons. The store was located at 110 W. Jones. Persons passed away in 1977, and in 1978, his wife sold it to Jack and Clara Patton of Dimmitt. The Pattons sold it to E.B. and Evelyn Noble in 1980. The Nobles relocated the business to its present building at 108 SW Second Street in 1984. Mr. Noble passed away in 1986, and in 1988 Evelyn sold the business to Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Brockman, who, along with Margaret Womack, have operated it up to the present.

A hallmark of the local outlet has been its personal service and good customer relations.

The Brockmans and Mrs. Womack want to thank all their loyal customers who have continued to help them and their business have an important part in the life of the local community.

They extend their best wishes for a  
**Happy 100th Birthday  
 For Castro County!**



## We're proud to be a part of Castro County's great cattle industry!



There has been some sort of cattle business in Castro County for more than 100 years.

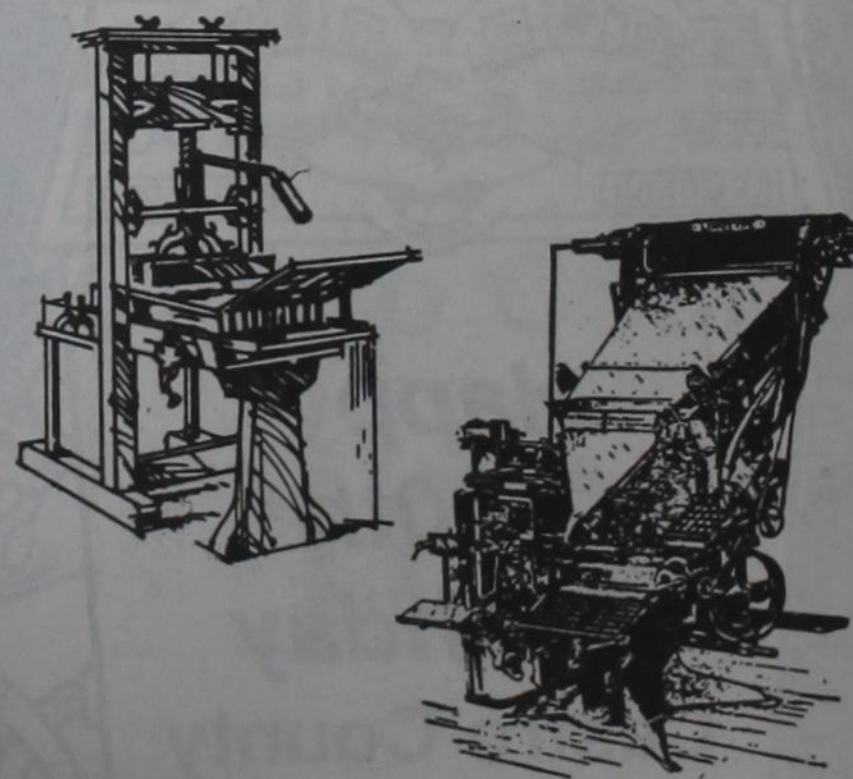
Grass and wheat pasture cattle have since advanced to the commercial feedlot ear... Americans still enjoy eating good beef.

**Rafter 3  
 Feedyard, Inc.**

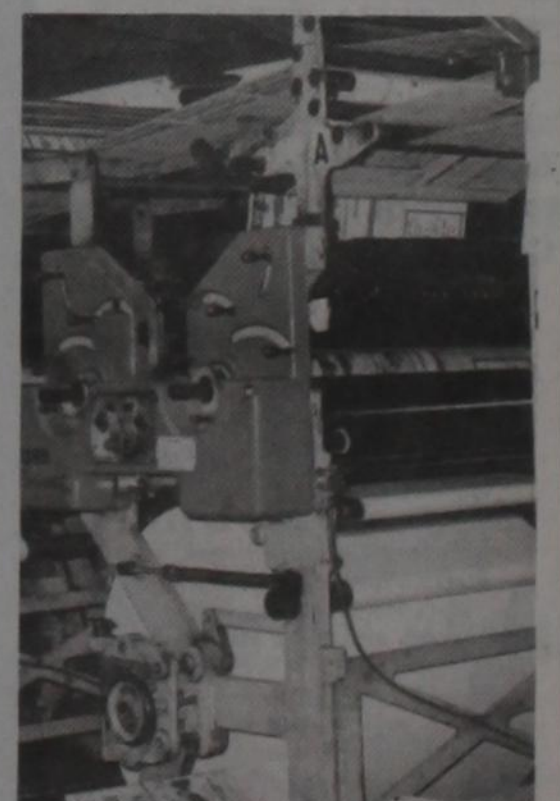


# 100 Years of Progress in Printing

*Congratulations  
 Dimmitt and Castro County  
 on the progress you've made.*



We're proud to have printed this centennial Edition



**Palo Duro Offset Printing**

4th St. & Hereford Hwy., Canyon

655-0611



# Dorothy's pigtails

By RICHARD O. THOMAS

*This incident occurred in the spring of 1936 in Dimmitt's old two-story elementary school, long since demolished, and I remember that the classroom was on the southwest corner of the top floor.*

I think it's about time to confess to something I did while in the sixth grade. Not that it was so horrible, but it really did happen, and perhaps some of you will enjoy reading about it.

In the days before ball-point pens, we had a little round hole in our desks in which we set our ink bottles, and of course the lid was off whenever we were using a pen. Sitting in front of me one day was a girl, Dorothy Graham who had pig-tails. So what did I do, but dip one of them into the inkwell. Of course, she knew right away what I had done, so she turned around in her chair, picked the bottle up and threw the ink right at my chest. Since I didn't think that was a nice thing for her to do, especially since I was wearing my favorite sweater, I slapped her right back.

There followed a very quick trip to the principal's office, where I got not only a stern lecture, but a good whipping and orders to get myself home and not come back

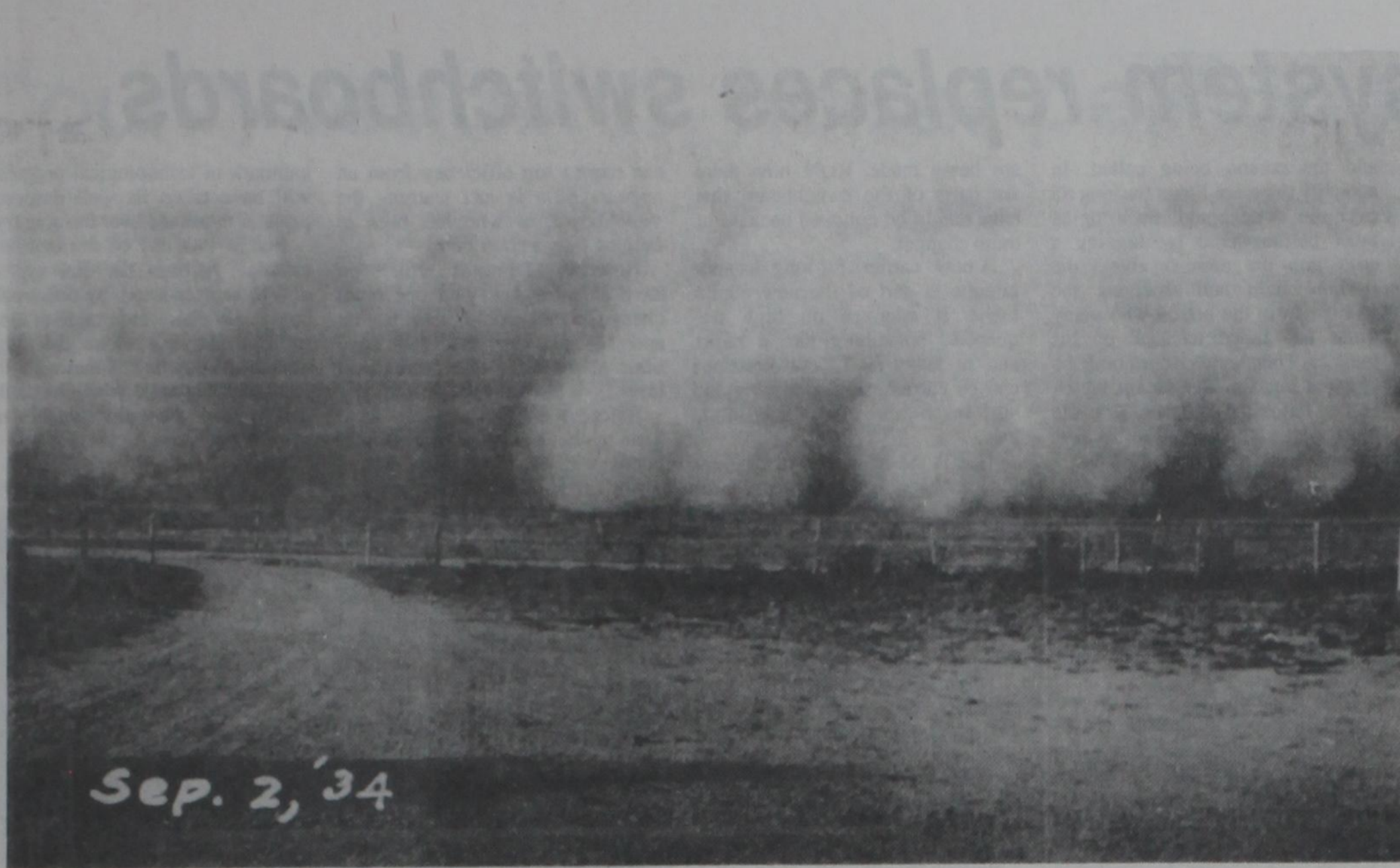
the rest of the day.

When I got home, all ink covered and, I'm sure, crying like crazy, and told my side of the story to Mother, right away she took off for the school to give that mean old principal a piece of her mind. The very idea, treating her child like that!

But you can all guess what she found at school — an entirely different story. So when Dad got home from work that night, there was probably another spanking for me, though I really don't remember that detail. Needless to say, I wasn't very popular with Dorothy for a long time after that.

Interestingly, we moved from Dimmitt a year later, and I never saw Dorothy again, but while I was at Texas A&M, she was at Baylor University in Waco, so we arranged for a date up there. Another Aggie and I left College Station, hitchhiking to Waco, but got stuck in Marlin for four or five hours, less than thirty miles from Waco, and had to call and cancel the date. So I never did see her, but I'm sure she remembers our time together in the sixth grade in Dimmitt, Texas.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Dorothy Graham is now Dorothy (Mrs. Ted) Sheffy of Dimmitt.



Sep. 2, '34

ROLLING DUST CLOUD ATTACKS COUNTY ... During 1934 "Dust Bowl"

## 'Dust' covered everything in 1930s

The infamous storms of the "Dust Bowl" days in Castro County in the 1930s made farming impossible and threatened lives.

All efforts to raise any type of crop during 1934 and 1935 were fruitless.

It all began on April 14, 1934, when a large black cloud appeared to the north. The citizens of Castro County first discounted it as being anything other than a bad "norther,"

but soon realized it was no ordinary cloud.

As it came nearer, there were distinguishable currents of dust rolling along the ground and within an instant, the storm's effects were upon the area.

Lights had to be turned on in the

### Brooms were first manufactured items in Castro County

Castro County's first manufactured product was the broom.

Wendelin Litsch and Ben Huseman, two of the early settlers of Nazareth, bought a broom-making machine just after the turn of the century to utilize the straw from broom corn, one of the first crops in the area.

Brooms manufactured at Nazareth were sold there as well as in Hereford, Tulia and Dimmitt.

houses due to the sunlight being blocked. But even in the homes, visibility was limited severely. Night and day became indistinguishable, the food served at meals was covered with dust and all bedding and furniture in the houses were so covered that the patterns in the materials could not be seen. The residents resorted to using damp cloths over their mouths and noses to gain some relief in breathing.

The cloud finally passed on, but the air remained dust-filled. The huge task of cleaning faced the townspeople; all linens were changed, furniture had the dirt beaten out of it, and the sand was swept—or in some cases, shoveled—from the houses. The fields had been blown completely out, and there was no hope for a crop after this devastating storm.

The dust storm lasted 40 minutes, but the darkness lingered for three hours.

On May 10 of the same year, the

winds came from the west at a speed of up to 100 miles per hour. This was a different type of storm. Dust was lifted by the wind until it blotted out the sun and completely fogged the land. Two days later, New York and the eastern states were enveloped for five hours by the dust.

Except for two days in February, 1935, the dust continued to blow throughout the remainder of 1934 and 1935.

The unusual black rolling sandstorms caused the land to become a desolate expanse, with sand completely covering roadways, fences, outbuildings, and equipment. Tumbleweeds would pile up against any object that would deter their rolling and the sand covered the weeds to hide fences and vacant buildings.

The early settlers, relieved when the storms finally subsided, agreed that it was a time they hoped never to see again.

## Four-year-old saves baby sister in 1936

Calmness and quick thinking on the part of four-year-old Lloyd Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. C.S. Smith, enabled him to save the life of his 22-month-old sister, Mary Cathryn, in 1936.

The girl had fallen into a stock tank on the Singer farm, eight miles northwest of Dimmitt and her brother saved her from drowning.

The two children, together with an older sister, were playing in the yard. The smaller girl had gone to the stock tank to get a bucket of water and when she didn't return, the four-year-old boy went to hunt for her.

When he reached the tank, which had almost two feet of water in it,

he found his baby sister lying under the water. Quickly, he reached in and pulled her to the surface; then called for help.

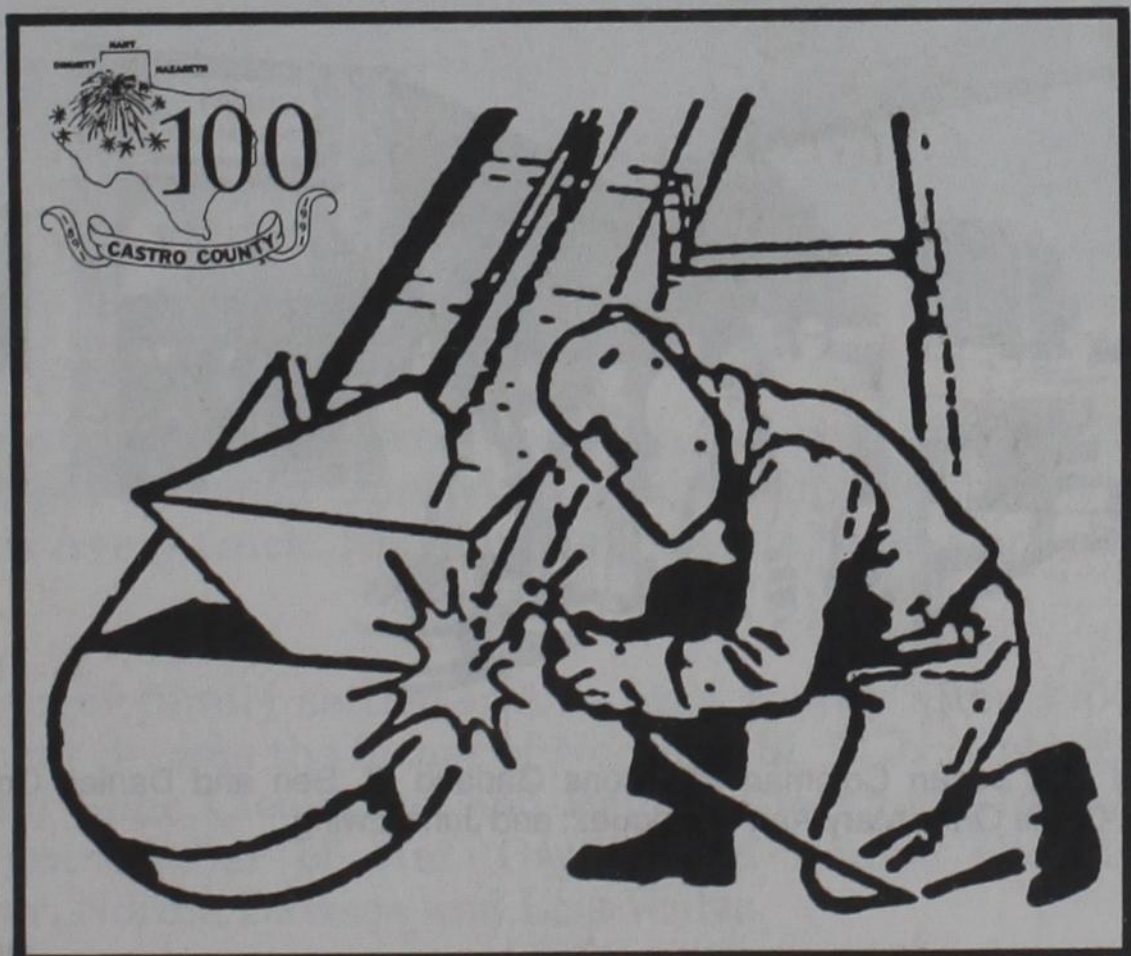
When the parents reached the child, she appeared to be lifeless, but after use of artificial respiration she regained consciousness and was rushed to Dr. Cogswell's office for treatment.

A June 4, 1936 story in the *Castro County News* indicates that the child was recovering and there was no indication of ill effects from the experience.

1891 1991



Congratulations  
CASTRO  
COUNTY



It has been a pleasure  
to serve you for 10 years!

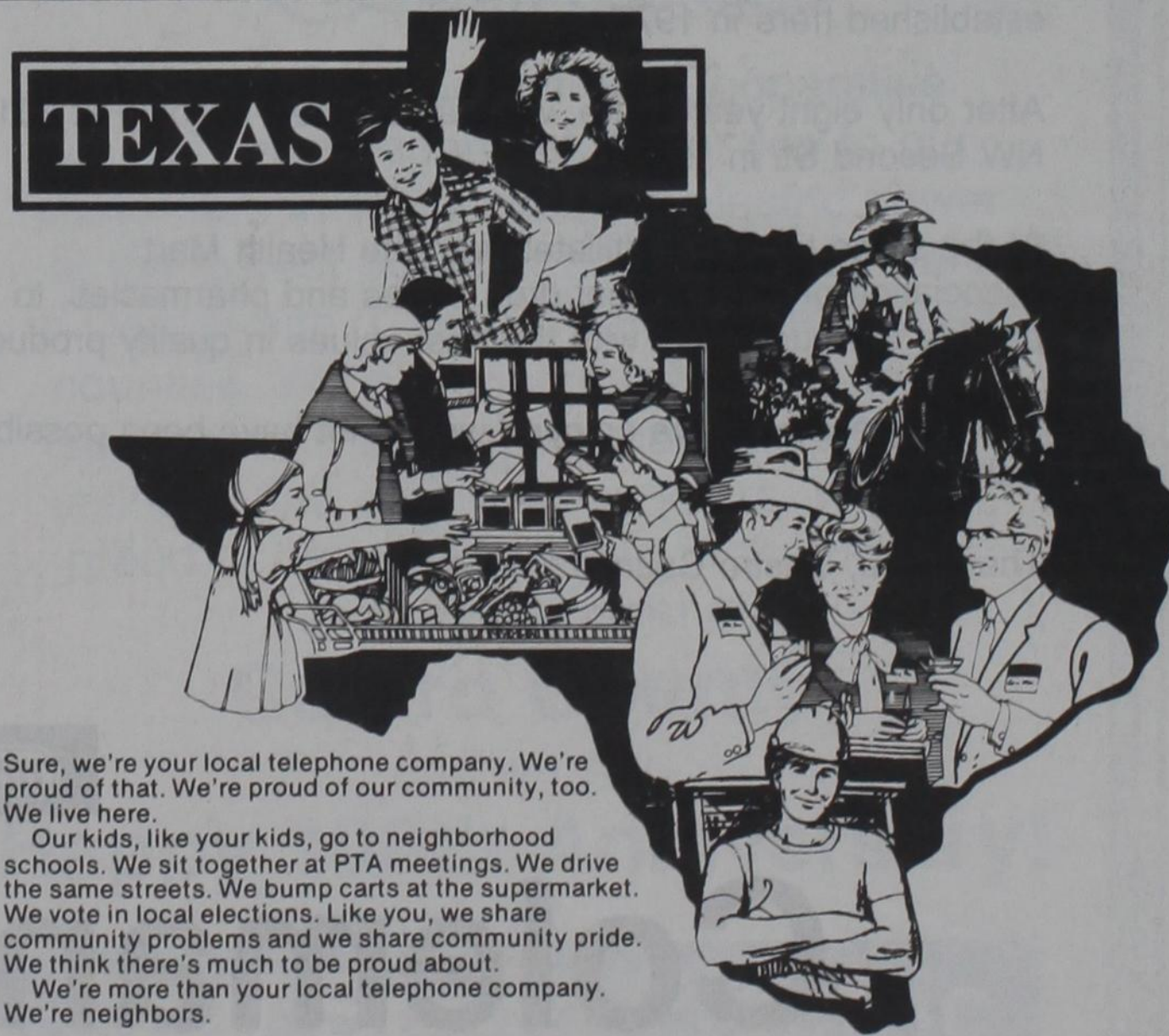
**Gerber Welding  
& Repair**

205 Wheat, Dimmitt

647-5726

HOORAY FOR  
DIMMITT  
IT'S OUR  
HOMETOWN

Let's Talk Community Pride.



Sure, we're your local telephone company. We're proud of that. We're proud of our community, too. We live here.

Our kids, like your kids, go to neighborhood schools. We sit together at PTA meetings. We drive the same streets. We bump carts at the supermarket. We vote in local elections. Like you, we share community problems and we share community pride. We think there's much to be proud about.

We're more than your local telephone company. We're neighbors.

**CONTEL** of Texas

# Telephone dial system replaces switchboards

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This story by Penny Nelson was published in the Nov. 12, 1959, issue of the News, just before West Texas Telephone Co., which served Dimmitt, implemented updated dialing systems.

By PENNY NELSON  
 In a short while, the constant flashing of small lights on the switchboard at the West Texas Telephone Company office will cease, and the intricate, everchanging criss-crossed pattern of circuit cords which connect Castro County citizens with their requested numbers will no longer exist.

In the place of this mechanism will be a far more complicated dial system.  
 The person who sees for the first time the series of impulses he sets off when he picks up his phone and casually asks for a number, and realizes that some 40 or 50 people are doing the same thing at almost the same instant, comes to view his telephone with new respect.  
 Until he makes a person-to-person visit with the operators and switchboard, there are but three factors involved.  
 First of all, there is the intended conversation of the person making the call, the intermediary operator

and the person being called. In actuality there are lights flashing all over the switchboard. Each signal must be answered by lugging a cord into the number above the flashing light and receiving the number from the patron who many times has failed to look up his number. Then another cord must be plugged into another socket which is the requested number. For the most part, this operation is performed almost in the form of a reflex action.  
 If one watches the board long enough, he sees that many conversations last for some length. Sometimes the board becomes more and more crowded with closed circuits until at last there is not a spare cord left with which to answer new flashes.  
 This situation can cause an unfortunate delay in placing an incoming call or the accidental disconnecting of one already in progress. The disconnection occurs when the switchboard is heavily loaded, there are more lights coming on and a party has ended a conversation. The operator quickly reaches to disconnect the number to accommodate the new request and because of the multiplicity of connections, pulls the wrong cord from the board. This is a mishap that will happen to any operator at some time or other, no matter how deft her hands are.  
 Any switchboard service is limited because it can only service a certain number of calls at a time, but with the new dial system, a patron need only pick up a directory and dial the number he wants, regardless of the number of other calls being placed. In order to give this kind of service, a tremendous amount of new equipment is being installed that resembles, somewhat, the complex nervous system of the human body. One peek behind the switchboard at the jungle of terminal blocks, wires, coils of wires, trunk lines, fuses, switches, etc., and the classic remark, "What hath God wrought?" comes to one's mind and is as significant, if not more so, than it was on that day in March 1876, when it was spoken by Alexander Bell's helper. Along with the installation of the dial system comes the problem of keeping up the service while changes

are being made. Right now there are parts of the switchboard that have had to be removed because of these changes.  
 A new "carrier" for long distance circuits is part of the new equipment. It operates on high frequencies something like a radio, and as many as 12 conversations can be carried on at one time and with much more clarity than in the past.  
 This is the busy time of the year for the telephone people as it is for all other businesses in Dimmitt and Castro County. With the harvest seasons there is an influx of people into business establishments there are highways crowded with cotton trailers and there seems to be more auto traffic, too.  
 There is more work to be done than there are people to do it and the telephone switchboard is no different.  
 Operators have stated that it is not uncommon during the early morning hours to have all the circuits tied up at once.  
 When asked what they wish most that people would do to facilitate their use of the phone system, they stated that it would be a great help if everyone would use his directory, and try to remember that when he places a long distance call, most generally, it is received by a local operator and she in turn must transfer it to the long distance operator.  
 When the long distance operator is on the line, she must have the same information that has been given to the local operator. Actually, the person placing the call should ask for long distance to begin with and save themselves the trouble of having to repeat the same information.  
 As in other businesses, there is always a turnover in personnel at the phone office. Frequently, when an operator has become efficiently trained, which takes a minimum of three to four months, and can only be done by actual work at the switchboard, she for one reason or another decides to terminate her work as an operator and the training of a new one must begin all over again.  
 Elton Singer, one of the owners of the company, stated that their operators are all good, but no one

can expect top efficiency from an operator who is just learning the switchboard, or who has been in training only a short time.  
 However, Dimmitt will soon have a dial system and one more change toward more mechanization and modern progress will have been effected on one more local level.  
 Before many more years have gone by the "old fashioned" switchboard which at one time was a

hallmark of technological progress, will have taken its well deserved place in museums over the country.  
 But in this day of miniaturized missiles, perhaps the dial system will be replaced, too, by one small, complexly compact miracle of electronics that will make the huge amount of equipment that runs the local dial system look and be as the dial system makes the switchboard system look now.  
 Who knows?

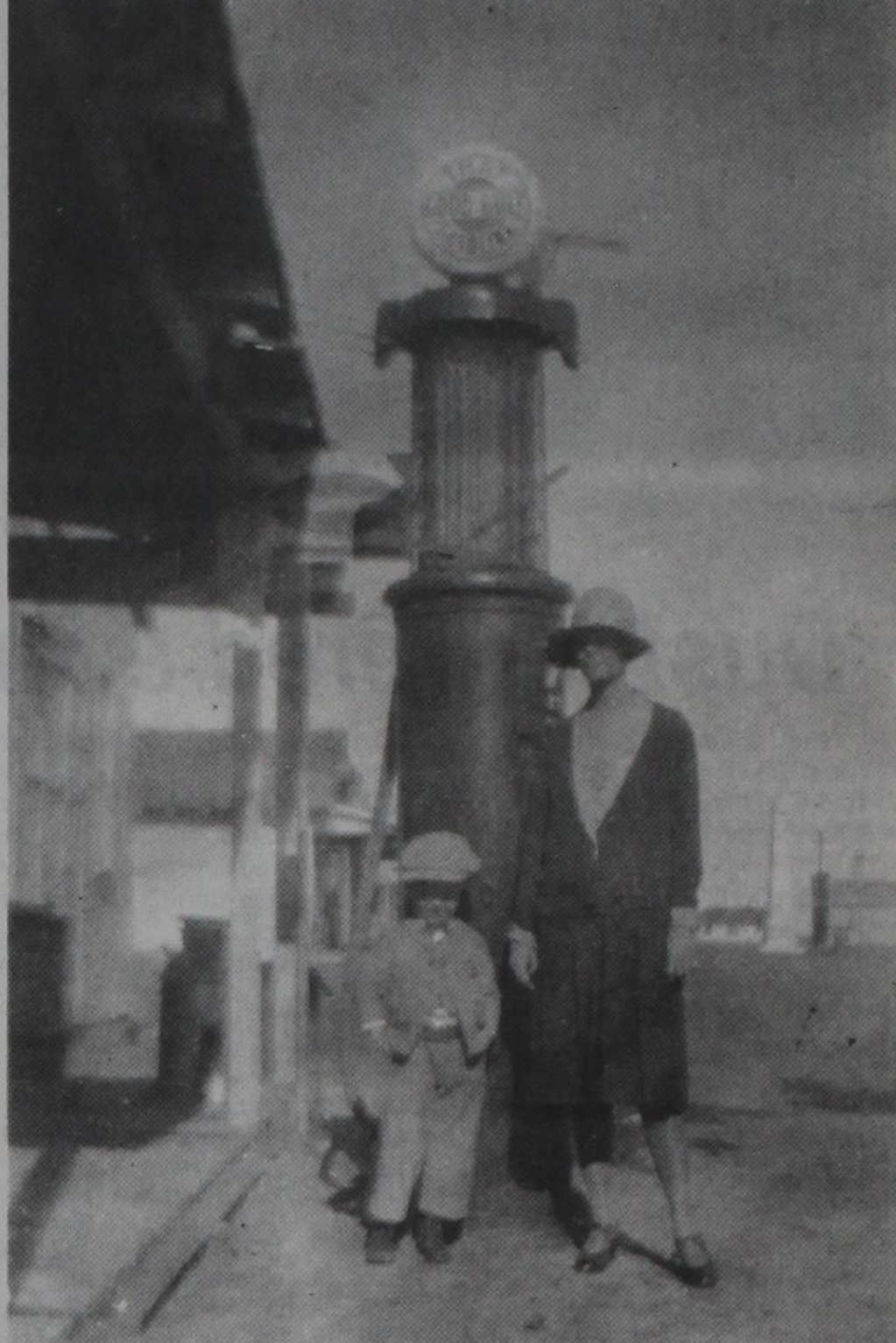
## First train pulls into Hart in November, 1928

The first Fort Worth and Denver trail pulled into Hart on Wednesday, Nov. 21, 1928, and many believe it's one of the most important events in the city's history.  
 Three passenger cars were filled with officials of the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad Company including F.E. Clarity, vice president and general manager.  
 A lead story in the Nov. 21, 1928, edition of *The Hart News* tells the story of the "day the train came to town."

"The coming of the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad into Hart and this part of the country is another great step forward, perhaps the greatest and most important to date. No community can grow and prosper without adequate transportation, and in years past Hart has been entirely dependent upon highways for all transportation facilities, making a handicap well nigh insurmountable."  
 The account tells that school was to be dismissed so that students might march, en masse, to the station to help greet the special trains.  
 The first depot agent was Jack Hall the arrival of the railroad to Hart came after years of promoting, planning and labors of a number of Hart Supporters. Fort Worth and Denver had declined to consider Hart until 1925 when an inspection of the area was made and Hart was approved.  
 The first schedule was for the train to run every day and remain overnight in Hart. It had one coach and the freight. This was soon changed because the demand for grain cars was so great. Several passengers also rode the train to Dimmitt or Plainview.  
 A test run with a locomotive to try out the road was made prior to the special day and young L.J. Rice was given a ride on the test run by Bob Morris, civil engineer.

This ad was pulled from the June 11, 1942 edition of the Castro County News.

**'YOU CAN GET IT FIXED IN DIMMITT AT THE M'MAHON SHOP**  
 Good Work, Honest Dealings, Fair Prices, and Real SERVICE - ALWAYS.  
 McMahon's Blacksmith Shop



THE FIRST GAS PUMP in Dimmitt was installed in 1926 by Sid Huckabay at his feed and produce store. It was a hand-operated Gulf pump. Here, standing proudly in front of the new pump, are Huckabay's wife, Iva, and their three-year-old son, Bob. Sid Huckabay also started the first ice house here, in partnership with Joe Gollehon; and Iva Huckabay opened Dimmitt's first beauty shop.

# Thank You, Castro County!

We at Coleman Health Mart Pharmacy share a lot in common with the county we have chosen as our home.

Even though our county is 100 years old, it's still one of the youngest counties in Texas, with a progressive attitude. Even though Garland Coleman is a second-generation registered pharmacist, Coleman Pharmacy here is still fairly young—established here in 1977.

After only eight years here, we built our new building at 201 NW Second St. in 1985.

At the same time, we affiliated with the Health Mart association of independent drug stores and pharmacies, to provide our customers with the best values in quality products.

The progress we have enjoyed would not have been possible without you.

Thank you, Castro County!



Garland and Susan Coleman with sons Garland III, Ben and Daniel; Connie Nelson; Chole Ortiz; Mary Ann Rodriguez; and June Ewing.



# Coleman Pharmacy

Garland Coleman, RPh  
 Susan Coleman, June Ewing, Connie Nelson, Mary Ann Rodriguez, Chole Ortiz

201 NW 2nd, Dimmitt

647-3151

# County residents, horses petition for organization

Did you know that several horses names were on the petition to organize Castro County, which was sent to the Oldham County Commissioners Court in the late 1800s? Well, they were.

The early settlers felt like they were getting little return from their tax dollars because they had to travel to Tascosa for judicial purposes and official business and law enforcement and administration under Oldham County was of little benefit to them, so they decided to draw up a petition to organize the county.

But there was one problem with their idea.

One hundred and fifty signatures of residents were needed to ask for organization, and the early settlers knew there were not that many people in the county.

All residents in the county signed the petition, but there weren't enough signatures.

Castro County Texas, 1891-1981, quotes Mrs. C.G. Mapes, and other old timers, who revealed that the settlers asked all the cowboys on neighboring ranches to sign, but they still didn't have enough names.

Next they asked people passing through town to sign, and when they still couldn't come up with enough names, J.W. Carter, the first settler in the county, gave surnames to his horses—Joe, Sam, Bob, etc.—and added the names to the list until it bore the needed 150 signatures.

The history book says that while the petition was being circulated, developers of different town sites were competing for the location of the county seat and each used the railroad as a reason for the county seat to be used at their town site.

The Bedford Town and Land Company, which was organized in Grayson County on March 4, 1890, was the largest of these development companies and members were E.S. Jones, E.F. Halsell, G.M. Etter, R.R. Dulin, A.R. Andrews, J.B. Stinson, R.L. Belsher and W.L. Bean, parties of the first part; and W.C. Dimmitt, H.G. Bedford and J.W. Hinton, parties of the second part.

If these names sound familiar today, just drive through Dimmitt and look at the street signs. You'll find most of the names on signs.

The promoters bought the E.L. Pierce section of land near the center of the county on May 27, 1890, and promptly built a large hotel on the block southeast of the courthouse square.

Castro County was named for Henri Castro, who was born in France in 1786.

In 1876, 31 years after Texas was admitted to the Union, the legislature created 54 new counties from the northern part of Bexar County and each one was named for a Texas hero. Most of them had never seen their namesakes.

The county is 30 square miles with 900-plus miles of level prairie.

After a debate between Castro City and Dimmitt, Dimmitt was chosen as the county seat and it's located about two miles west and one mile north of the geographical center of the county.

## The first settlers

The history book says that the Abstract Book of all original Texas Land Titles in Castro County lists 45 men who owned land in Castro County before J.W. Carter bought his 72 sections of land, but none of the men lived here.

The Abstract Book lists the first land patented in Castro County was to John Alexaner on June 6, 1877, for Section 5, Block M-10A, and the southeast corner of this section is marked by the original Summerfield Monument. On the same date, land was patented to C.B. Buck, R.T. Higginbotham, Henry and John E. Corwith, Henry Clipper and F.J. Agnew.

Carter shows up on the books in February 4, 1884, according to the Castro County History Book. The entire 72 sections of land were Block T, R.M. Thomson, Block T3 R.M. and T.A. Thompson and Block T4, T.A. Thompson. The dates extended to 1891 and 35 patents were issued in February 1884.

In 1884, Carter moved his wife

and their three children, James, Ellen and John, from Buffalo Gap (near Abilene in Taylor County) to Castro County.

The family made their way from Taylor County to Castro County in wagons, bringing with them carpenters, lumber and all necessary supplies and tools to build and equip a four-room house.

They also brought with them a year's supply of groceries, which included 1,000 pounds of flour, a barrel each of brown sugar, white sugar and molasses, 500 pounds of bacon, beans, hominy and coffee.

According to *Castro County, Texas, 1891-1981*, the Carters established ranch headquarters on the north side of Running Water Draw in the southwest part of the county, about 14 miles south and west of Dimmitt.

Carter fenced 18 of the 72 sections for a horse pasture and that was the first known fencing to go up in the county.

Their house was built by digging into the side of Running Water Draw at the top of the slope. Their home was a two-room dugout, with another two rooms on top and a roof of lumber and it had an east entrance.

The Carters brought 1,000 head of cattle when they moved to the county, and they returned for 1,500 more later and the increase from the heard brought the total to 3,000 head, which he raised on open range. He branded with a 7-UP and his ranch was dubbed the 7-UP Ranch.

They hauled coal from Colorado City, went to the breaks for wood, sometimes, but used surface coal (cow chips) most of the time, according to the history book. When the railroad came to Amarillo in 1887 they began to buy their supplies there.

Sometime between 1885 and 1895, Carter hauled lumber from Amarillo and built the house that many have assumed was the original residence. It was built to the east of the half-dugout.

Carter had tried to help out some friends in Amarillo, giving them security, but by 1895, his 52,000-acre 7-UP Ranch was encumbered with a \$50,000 debt. In an attempt

to save part of his land and cattle, Carter bought into the store the men owned, but he learned their was a \$100,000 note against it. The history book reveals Carter was forced to sell the land to pay his creditors on May 4, 1895, and the highest bidder was the Scottish American Mortgage Company Limited with an offer of \$47,650.

The Carters also had to give up the house they had built. The old house stood until 1978 when it was burned to clear the way for a farming operation by the new owner.

The Carters built a 30-room hotel in Dimmitt, the Castro Hotel, (where the telephone company is located today) and the history book says it was the first to have water piped into it and it had a bath and hot water. The water system also furnished the barber shop and drug store.

Mr. Carter died in 1916 and his wife, Ellen, died in 1942. The couple is buried in Castro Memorial Gardens.

After their death, the hotel was sold to J.E. Hyatt and later it was moved to Plainview.

## The first mortgages

Carter is listed as the first mortgagor in the county, marked in the *Register of Chattel Mortgages and Liens on Personal Property* on July 23, 1890. The mortgagee or trustee was A.H. Wood—First National Bank of Amarillo. It was for 891 head of stock cattle with an N brand on the left side and an O on the left hip—various marks. There were three 60-day notes for \$2,500, \$699.40 and \$4,405.16.

The book lists the second mortgage on December 18, 1890, also to Carter. The mortgagee was R.L. Brown—J. Gorgon Brown. It was for 750 head of mixed stock cattle on the Carter Ranch branded with a circle cross on both sides and a mark under each ear.

## Homesteads

*Castro County, Texas 1891-1981* says the first application for a homestead in Castro County is recorded for Homer Beach and is

dated July 29, 1890.

Since this was before the county was organized, it was addressed to the District Surveyor of Oldham Land District.

Other homestead applications filed in 1890 were J.W. Douglass, S.F. Flores, S.L. Richardson, C.H. Harlan, Mrs. M.B. Fowle, W.E. Jones, A.R. Ferguson, J.E. Turner and C.J. Ivy. They are the homestead that were filed before the county was organized. Field notes were found on the survey of W.E.

Jones, S.F. Flores, J.E. Turner and C.H. Harlan. They were made by D.B. Beard, district surveyor of Oldham Land District with C.A. Sharp and W.F. Harlan as chain carriers. R.F. Powell was deputy surveyor of Castro County. The field notes were dated Sept. 9, 1890.

None of these homesteads were proven because they aren't recorded in the General Land Office in Austin, according to the history book.



*We're hanging  
in there with you  
Castro County!*

**HAPPY 100th  
ANNIVERSARY**

It's been  
a pleasure  
serving you  
since 1959



**Alvin's Drive-in  
Cleaners**

104 NW 3rd647-3225



M. E. Cleavinger Sr. (shown here with his son, Jess, in 1913) hauled freight between Springlake and Plainview in the early days in this Avery truck. Note blade-type metal mud grips on rear wheels.

The Cleavinger family settled in this area shortly after 1900. M. E. Cleavinger Sr. was the father of Norman, M. E. Jr., Jess, Elmer (Dutch) and Gene Cleavinger and Beulah Cleavinger Miller. He was the grandfather of Jim, Orville and Ronald Cleavinger, Carole Dyer, Norma Dawson and Lois Wales.

We're proud to have been a part of Castro County during its first century.

**Happy Birthday,  
Castro County**

from

**C&S Battery & Electric**

301 SE Second St., Dimmitt

Jim Cleavinger

647-3531



With the formation of our Cooperative in 1937, we began actual service to our customers in 1938, bringing electric power at the lowest possible cost to subscribers in Deaf Smith, Castro, Parmer and Oldham counties. We have increased our lines of service from zero up to more than 3,000 miles of line during those years. We are proud to have been a part in the history and development of

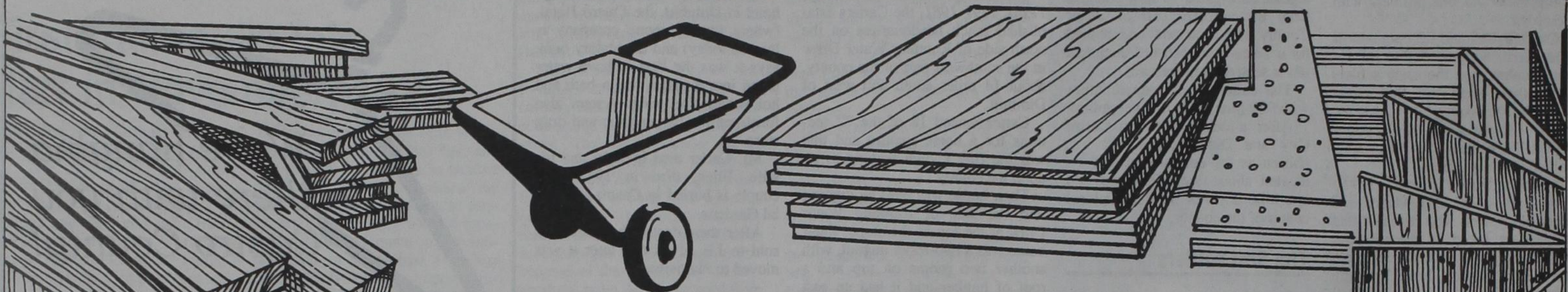
**Castro County**

and we say

**Happy 100th Anniversary!**

**Deaf Smith Electric  
Cooperative**

Hereford, Texas



## Your Home . . .

and your barns, and your horseshoes, and your horseshoe nails, and your rope, and your fencing, and your windmill, and your stock tanks, and your cattle prods, and your batteries, and your lumber, and your hammer and nails, and your bolts and nuts, and your screwdrivers, and your pliers, and your saw, and your linoleum, and your windows, and your screens, and your kitchen cabinets, and your faucets, and your pipe, and your paneling, and your paint, and your switches, and your outlets, and your insulators, and your storm windows, and your carpet, and your vacuum cleaner, and your hoe and rake, and your wheelbarrow, and your lawn mower, and your shovel, and your grain scoop, and your truck tarp, and your lawn sprinkler, and your hose, and your drill, and your wood stain, and your lacquer, and your varnish, and your brushes, and your thinners, and your wrenches, and your punches, and your screen, and your caulking, and your glass, and your putty, and your putty knife

probably came from

## The Higginbotham-Bartlett Company

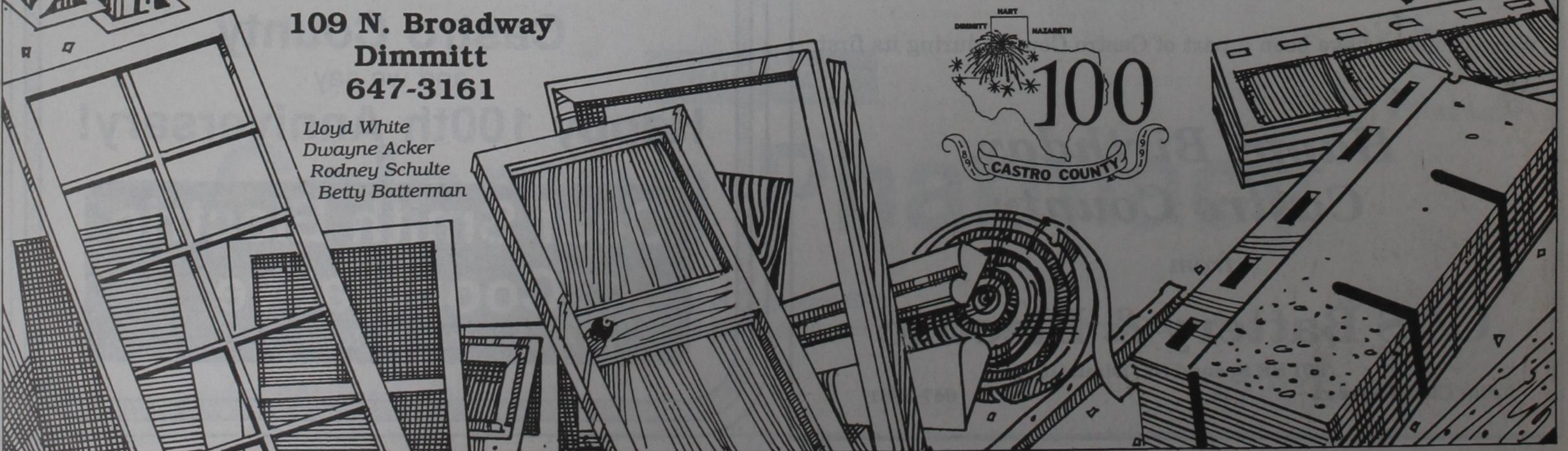
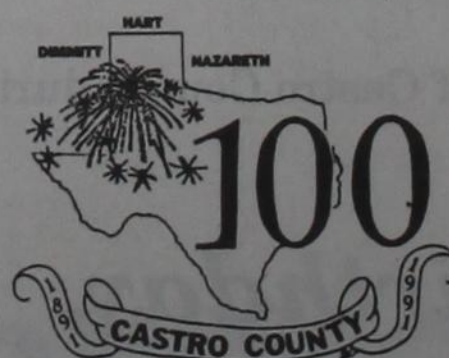
The folks in Castro County depended on the Panhandle Lumber Co. to supply their building and hardware needs until 1936, when the landmark business was purchased by The Higginbotham-Bartlett Co.

Higginbotham-Bartlett has had only four managers during its 55 years of service here—Ward Golden, George Howell, Frank Welch and Lloyd White.

We're proud of Castro County's progress during its first century, and of the role our company has played in it.

**109 N. Broadway  
Dimmitt  
647-3161**

*Lloyd White  
Dwayne Acker  
Rodney Schulte  
Betty Batterman*



# Hart family recalls trip to county

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This story was reprinted, with permission, from the Oct. 7, 1976, bicentennial edition of *The Hart Beat*.)

When the T.W. Hart family moved to Castro County in 1899, it was not a trip made by wagons, the conventional transportation of that day. Instead, their box house was placed on skids and moved from Swisher County with five-year-old Percy and three-year-old Nina "at home" all the way.

Coming west for his health, T.W. Hart had filed on one section of land in Swisher County, complying with the Homestead Act. When the Texas Legislature amended the Act to allow a person to file on four sections of land, T.W. relinquished his Swisher claim and selected four adjoining sections of Castro County land.

The two-room house was pulled by a team of horses with the move taking two days. All the family's household goods were left in place so they were right at home during the journey, as well as when they arrived at their new place south of where one day a town would be named after the head of the pioneer family—Hart.

Their house was put in place near Running Water Draw, when a few months later, other early settlers persuaded Hart to open a post office in his home.

The post office was established about 1900, but postal regulations demanded a new name for the post office be submitted to headquarters in Washington, D.C. The submitted names were not approved, and a postal official inquired, "Why don't you call it Hart?"

They did and that's how Hart got its name.

Mail service was provided by a carrier riding horseback to Dimmitt three times of the week.

"Part of the time," Percy Hart remembers, "the carrier would go on to Olton. We kept a mule and a horse for relay. He'd come here on his own horse, leave it and go on to Olton on the relay. When he came back, he'd swap again at our place."

"I don't know how they did it in those days—it was a hard trip. People were just more rugged then, I guess."

One of the early carriers is still remembered by Percy.

"He always carried coffee with him, and of course, it would always be cold. We'd offer to heat it up for him, and he'd always refuse, saying, 'I like cold coffee—hot coffee makes you cold.'"

T.W. and Lillian Hart received income from the number of cancellations they had. Few letters were written, Percy remembers. Sometimes the proceeds might run \$12 or \$15 per quarter of the year.

Along with the post office, the Harts stocked a few staple groceries which had to be hauled from Plainview, Hereford or Canyon. Enough supplies were purchased to last six months. They included such things as flour, corn meal, pinto beans, soda, baking powder, a few canned goods, lard, tobacco and snuff.

Not long after the railroad had reached Hereford, T.W. made a trip for supplies and was daught in a snow storm. It was snowing when

he left on the homeward journey that morning and he was able to cover just seven or eight miles.

He reached the Axe place just south of the Deaf Smith County line where he stopped to wait out the storm. He stayed a couple of days and when the snow had stopped, he was ready to resume his journey.

Although there had been little wind to drift the snow, it stood 12 to 18 inches on the level, making it impossible to travel by wagon. T.W. rode one horse and led another, stopping to change horses at intervals to rest the one he had been riding. He traveled from the Axe place to Dimmitt, spent the night there and made it home the next day.

Planning to be gone from home just three days, he had been gone seven. His long exposure to the sun's reflection on the snow-covered world had almost blinded him. Lillian put Percy on a horse and sent him to Arthur Edwards for help.

The first needs, however, that faced the newcomers, was to find water. The Harts hauled water in barrels from the Hutson place about four miles away. Percy doesn't recall if water was hauled for stock or whether they watered at the draw.

It wasn't long before T.W. arranged for his own windmill. It was just 40 feet below the surface that water was reached. A well at the same site today (1976) is set at 150 feet, Percy says.

Soon after getting settled, T.W. bought cattle and marked them with the Hart brand. A pasture was fenced so they could keep the milk cow and a couple of saddle horses.

"If you didn't have a fence around your pasture, you were afoot," Percy recalls. Horses would join neighbors horses or herds of mustangs.

T.W. Hart had his own system for keeping up with his own stock.

Percy recalls, "We had it arranged that the cattle had to come down a lane to reach the wagon where the fed, salt and water was. It was mine and Nina's jobs to stay at the wagon."

"The Longhorns belonged to the Spade Ranch, but roamed all over the country. They were afraid of us and when they'd come for water, we'd raise up from the wagon and they'd be frightened away. If they couldn't get water, they wouldn't stay around to graze and wouldn't eat our grass."

Percy recalls there were probably no more than 10 acres of land broken when his family came to the county and very few persons had settled here at that time. He remembers there was one settler on the Iley Scott place and another about eight miles away.

Later on, three more daughters were added to the Hart family—Ruth, Fannie and Annie Dee. Soon after Annie Dee was born, Lillian became ill with blood poisoning and died. Her mother took the baby and cared for her until her own death five years later.

The Hart children attended Lone Star school, which was located about a mile south and one mile

east of their home. It was later moved nearer to their home, on the Tump McLain place, and was finally moved into "Old Hart."

T.W. Hart taught school at Lone Star for a short time, a profession not new to him since he had taught in Grayson County. Miss Elmina Robinson was one of the first teachers at Lone Star.

She and T.W. married in 1916 and later became the parents of a daughter, Mary Madeline.

Gathering cow chips was the responsibility of the Hart children. The chips were used for fuel both in winter and summer. Coal was used very sparingly because it had to be freighted from Canyon.

"When we could find a place where cattle had bedded down, we could find plenty of fuel," Percy remembers.

"We had beds all over the place and there wasn't a closet in the house—not even in the new five-room house that was built in 1908. There'd be a curtain strung across the counter and the whole family hung their clothes there. We had a nail on the wall to hang our coats with a lower nail for the little ones to reach."

Percy, as a young man, began "batching" and worked for a cattle buyer from Missouri, Mr. Piggott, who stayed in the Hart area for two years and lived with Percy during one of those years.

"He had four sections of pasture on the Red Barn Place. When the market was right and the cattle were right and everything was right, we'd go over and cut out a car load or maybe two. We'd ship them to Kansas City."

Percy vividly remembers Mr. Piggott sending him near Running Water to get two milk pen calves.

"I asked him why didn't he buy 40 or 50 head. I'd rather drive that many than two milk pen calves. I told him, 'I don't know if I can get them or not.' He said, 'Get 'em if you can.'"

"Well, I knew I was going to get them when I went down there and I knew how I was going to get them. I'd connect them together! Why, you couldn't drive two milk pen calves! One would go one way and another, the other."

Nina married Ray Jones. She died in 1945 and was the first person buried in Hart Cemetery.

Ruth married Fred Hamm, whose parents came to Castro County in 1905. She died on their 50th wedding anniversary, Dec. 22, 1973.

Percy served in World War I and has never known any other place as home since arriving in Castro County as a five year old. He was married in 1926 to Edna Livesay Horton. They have a son, Joe Percy Hart, who lives just a short distance from the "home place." Joe Percy and his wife, Sarah, have three sons, Vic, Marlin and Gary; and a daughter, LaDonna.

## Did cowboys dance in the first courthouse?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Information for this story was obtained from *Castro County History, Vol. I*.)

By KATHLEEN LATHAM

The cowboys held dances on the second floor of the first Castro County Court House built in 1892.

"They probably did hold the dances there because that was the only place in town where they could have," Lon Woodburn said recently. "Cowboys would come from ranches all around and from a few of the ranches here in Dimmitt, but not from any further than Hereford. The XITs, they couldn't come that far over here."

The second floor of the ornate wooden court house had been built without partitions, perhaps with this community service in mind. The court house also served for church services, singings, picnics and reunions as well as business.

The court house was struck by lightning during a storm and burned to the ground in 1906.

"My father was county commissioner then, and I'm pretty sure they weren't having a dance the night lightning struck and the court house burned down," Woodburn said.

Despite calls to several Dimmitt and Castro County history aficionados as well as a few relatives of people who might have been at the dances and some people "in the know" in general, no more details were forthcoming about the dances that were held in the first county courthouse between 1892 and 1906.



Dimmitt Printing and Office Supply

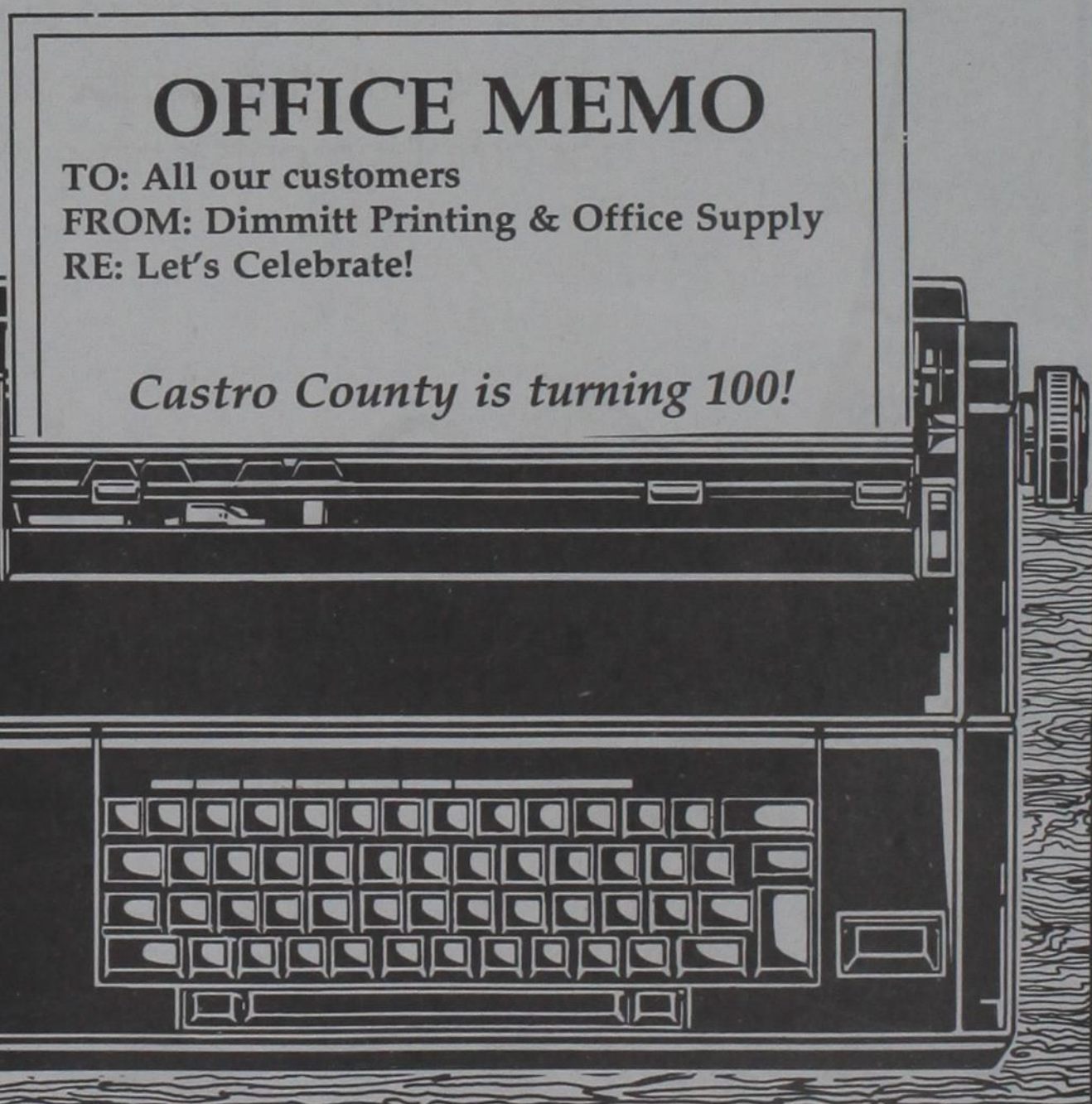


We began serving customers in Dimmitt in June of 1972, when Dimmitt Printing and Office Supply opened under the ownership of Roger Malone and was located at 118 S. Broadway. In January of 1976, the business was moved to its present location, 200 E. Bedford, and Mickey Bishop became a partner in the business in 1978. In 1982, the growing business established a branch office in Hereford, First Printing and Office Supply. The company became a Xerox affiliate in 1983.

Employees of the Dimmitt operation are Ann Widick, Ricky Fudge, Frank Ramos and Gloria Ortiz.

For the last several years we have printed voting ballots and many other important forms and items vital to the lives of the people of Castro County.

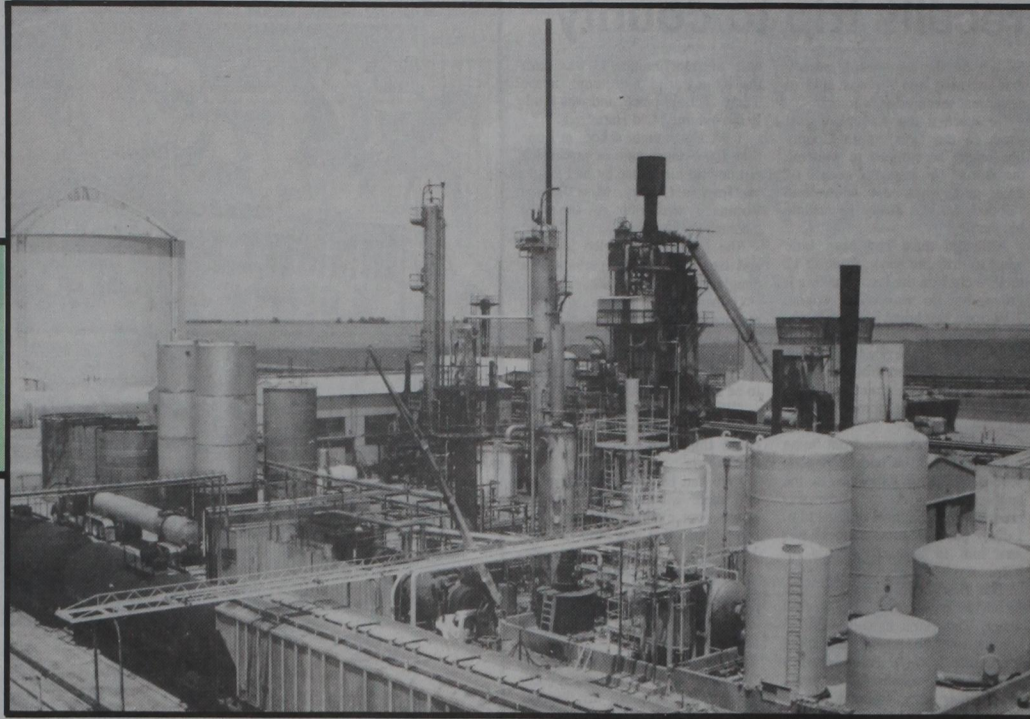
We're proud to be part of the history of this county.



Dimmitt Printing and Office Supply

200 E. Bedford

647-3171



*Now, Castro County Celebrates 100 Great Years*

and . . . It's Time To

## Look To New Horizons

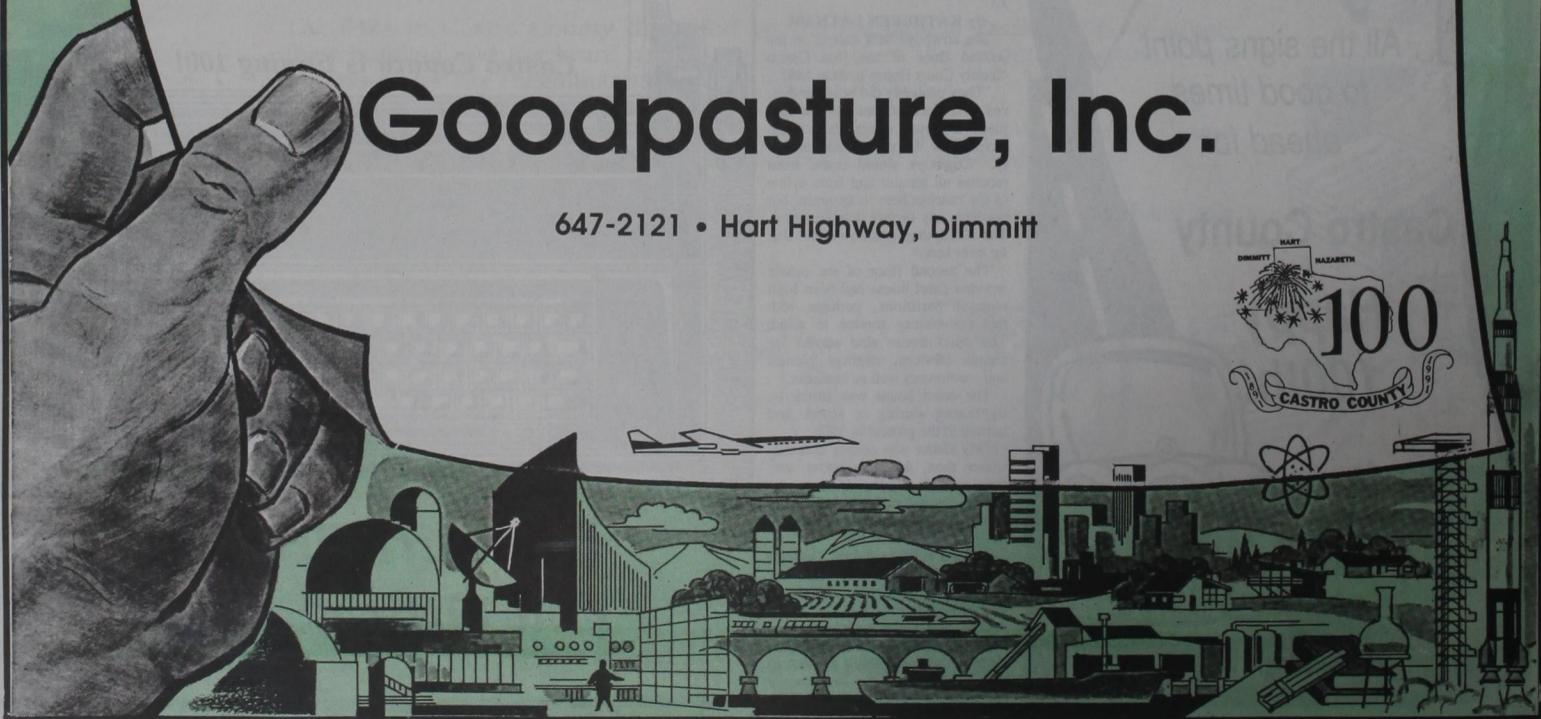
With anticipation and hope, let's move forward and upward, using the future as our stepping stone to greater accomplishments the next 100 years in Castro County.

There is no "impossible dream" when hard work, dedication and foresight exist. The people of Castro County can profit from past achievements and take on goals that can become a reality.

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**COLORFUL TRIBUTE**—What was once the blank wall of a lumber storage shed along the 100 block of West Etter Street in Dimmitt has been transformed into a historical mural as a special Centennial project by the First State Bank of Dimmitt. Artist Bob McClellan of

Morton used old photos and paintings to create a "time line" gallery of portraits, with workmen in the foreground. Bank President Ray Bain said another mural will be painted on a companion building in right background. *Photo by Don Nelson*

**Cover Picture**

Models for the "pioneer family" on the cover page of this Centennial Edition are Harold Bob and Ruth Bennett and 5-year-old Gina Irons, all of Hart.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennett both were born and raised in Castro County—he at Hart and she at Dimmitt—and both are now well-known professionals here. He is in the farming, cattle and feed businesses, and has served as the Amarillo District director of the Texas Dept. of Agriculture. Mrs. Bennett teaches fifth grade in Dimmitt Middle School.

Gina, who represents the coming century in the photo, is the daughter of Kent and Ginger Irons of Hart.

Photo is by Ginger Irons, owner of Ginger's Photography of Hart, using a 6x7mm Mamiya portrait camera. The scene is on the Preston Upshaw farm near the Running Water Draw southwest of Hart.

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**Residents mail candy to soldiers overseas**

Nov. 30, 1960

"I think we're going to have enough candy, and we've got plenty of money for mailing."

That was the good word Wednesday from Reta Welch of Bethel, chairman of the 1969 "Christmas Candy for GIs" program, after candy makers from 8 to 80 had helped assure that all of the county's servicemen will have plenty of sweet treats for Christmas.

Members of the Bethel, Flagg and Mulkey home demonstration clubs, plus several individual volunteers, started wrapping 450

pounds of homemade candy and canned peanuts into 90 five-pound packages to be mailed to 66 county servicemen throughout the world.

Since this is 10 fewer servicemen than last year, Mrs. Welch said, less candy and mailing money were needed for this year's project.

Of the 66 servicemen on the mailing list, more than half are stationed overseas. 28 of the men have San Francisco APO addresses, meaning they are stationed either in Vietnam or elsewhere in the Pacific or Orient.

The servicemen with San Fran-

cisco APO addresses will receive a double helping — two five-pound boxes apiece, to eat and share with their buddies.

The candy will be mailed Friday and will reach the servicemen at their far-flung posts well before Christmas.

To pay the postage, Castro Countians had contributed \$112 to the candy project fund at the First State Bank, "and several people have told me since then that they were going to donate money," Welch said.

"The VFW told us that what we

needed in money, they'd make up," she added.

Candy makers ranged from eight-year-old Blue Birds to one great-grandmother. The largest group contributions of candy were 40 pounds by the Dimmitt High School homemaking girls and 32 pounds by the girls in the junior high CVAE program.



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## Castro County Centennial PERSONALITIES

1891  
★  
1991

### Farmer, Rancher, Aviator

# George Bagwell relives early days in county

By DANETTE BAKER  
Shortly before his 17th birthday, George Bagwell saw Castro County for the first time.

Although he ventured to the area almost a century ago, the white-haired man recalled the 76-mile trip from Floyd County like it happened yesterday.

On April 26, 1917, Bagwell, his father and four neighbor boys "who wanted to come along for the experience," herded 250 head of Hereford cattle northwestward and began the 10-day trek to a section of ungrazed grassland 10 miles west of Dimmitt.

Even though mother nature has a tendency to keep Panhandle residents second guessing, Bagwell said they were lucky to have favorable weather the entire trip.

"Oh, it got cold enough to make a little ice in our water buckets at night," he said. "But we had good warm bedrolls."

But the cowpuncher had little time to think about the cold. Each night, Bagwell sacrificed four hours of sleep to ride night herd on the cattle.

"We'd take shifts, two men at a time — one riding counter-clockwise, the other clockwise — and just make a circle big enough to surround the herd," Bagwell said, talking the process through with his hands. "We had to ride night herd on 'em because some of the old cows wanted to turn around and go back."

Otherwise, the trip remained uneventful, he said.

"We only had momma cows and calves in the herd, no bulls," Bagwell said. "They (cows) don't have a tendency to stampede."

On May 6, just as the evening sun kissed the horizon, the group reached their destination.

"There was nothing but knee-high, green-tinged grasslands as far as you could see," Bagwell said. "The only other landmark was a prairie trail west from Dimmitt."

However, the next morning the situation looked a little differently. Overnight, a 5-inch blanket of snow covered the once-green grasses.

Lack of grazeland sent the Bagwells north. Because settlers had broken most of the land around Floyd County for farming, Bagwell's father bought the ungrazed land near Dimmitt to feed his stock.

George stayed in the county, with his older brother, Jim, until wheat harvest—mid-August—then returned to the homeplace. For the next two years, he traveled between the two farms in Floyd and Castro counties helping his father and Jim with the crops and cattle.

Four years later (1923), George permanently settled in Castro County.

"There wasn't enough land for

all of us (George and his two younger brothers) in Floyd County," he said. "I was the oldest at home, so I left."

In 1927, George rented a section of land and began his own farming operation.

But hardships plagued his endeavors.

"We had our share of blizzards and bad weather. But you didn't pay much attention to it, though. Even through the blizzards you still had to feed and water the livestock," he said.

However, the worst situations came in the '30s—during the Dust Bowl days.

"At three o'clock in the afternoon, it'd get so dark you couldn't see your hand before your face," he said with a hearty laugh.

"You don't know what a dust storm is," he said, comparing the storms of the 30s to the so-called sandstorms today.

In the Castro County history book, Bagwell recounted another such day during the Dust Bowl.

"The winds blew so much dirt into the house, we had to scoop it out with shovels," he said.

As the pioneers faced crop failures from the drought and blowing dirt, fate threw another twist into their lives: the Great Depression.

"But the drought hurt us a lot worse than the Depression, because we couldn't raise crops enough to feed our animals, so we had to feed of them," Bagwell said.

Frustrations of the past crept into his voice as he explained the situation.

"In the spring we'd get enough (rain) to plant a crop, it would start growing. Then another (rainfall) would follow it up and it would get up to about so high," he said, demonstrating with his hands.

After a short pause, he said: "Then, we'd watch it burn up."

Despite disappointments in the crops, George said the '30s hold special memories.

For entertainment, most social events revolved around church or community gatherings. In the summer of 1932, he met Ruby McClung at a Bethel social.

After a year of courtship, they married.

"On June 16, 1933," he said as he looked at Mrs. Bagwell with a newlywed twinkle in his eye.

He met his other "love" in the fall of 1930: a World War I vintage Swallow airplane. George rode the train to Wichita, Kan. and purchased the red and orange aircraft for \$995.

After five and one-half hours of instruction, he flew it home.

Years later, George made a memorable trip back to Wichita. A farmhand from Medford, Okla. wanted to go home for a class reunion, George said.

About an hour into the three and one-half hour trip, one side of the plane began to tip, so George made an emergency landing in a cow pasture.

"When I got out, I saw it was the shock-cord (a rubber rope that acts as a spring), so I tied up the side with a piece of old rope," he said. "We flew on to Medford, then the

next day on to Wichita (Kansas) for a part."

Problems developed on the return trip also, George recounted.

"The engine began missing and I thought I knew what it was," he said.

Because he had been teaching his hired hand how to fly, George turned the controls over to him and crawled out onto the wing.

"Sure enough, there was a spark plug just about ready to pop out of the hole," George said. "So I screwed it back in and it (engine) began hitting again."

As he inched back to the cockpit, George said the look on the boy's face was priceless.

"He had a grim look on his face—like he was too scared not to fly the thing. But I don't think anything could've pried the joystick out of his hands—they were turning white from the pressure," George said.

When George took over the controls, he said the boy turned to him and asked "Why'd you do that?"

"Oh, I didn't want to ruin that nice wheat field," George replied.

In retrospect, George said his farming required far more risks than any flight he took.

When he began, all the land was dry-farming. But later, he drilled irrigation wells.

Sometimes he questions that movement.

"I paid for the land while dry-farming and on irrigation it's about all I could do to keep it," he said.

Since World War II, farm prices have steadily declined, George said.



GRANDFATHER TIME—George Bagwell points to the detail work on one of the 16 grandfather clocks he has made. Bagwell also makes cradles, rocking horses and various other wood projects.

Photo by Danette Baker

"Right now, the prices of our products are below cost of production," he said. "For farmers nowadays, the government subsidies... are the only profits."

For example, the price of wheat falls about 60 cents lower than the cost of production, he said.

George said the county's continuous productive agriculture results from the farmers' flexibility.

"It's only when you change to crops like beets, that haven't been overproduced, that you keep a steady price and have a chance to make profits," he said.

Consequently, George said it's hard to encourage anyone to select farming as a vocation.

"Oh, with some backing, a young man could make a living, but he'd have a rougher go at it than I did," he said.

On the other hand, George said there's something to gain from farming. Along with some genetics help, he attributes his 91 healthy years to hard work — the fruits of working the land.

But for the last 19 years, George has traded his farming tools for woodworking ones.

Since his retirement from farming, in 1972, George has created wooden treasures from the trunks of discarded trees.

"Oh, I'll have someone call and

tell me they cut down a certain kind of tree, and ask if I want it," he said. "I hardly turn one down, most every kind of wood is useful."

With such lumber, George has built 16 grandfather clocks, seven baby cradles, seven rocking horses and numerous plates and bowls.

"I always wanted to try my hand at building a clock," George said. "The first few (clocks), I cut the wood from the trunks, but now I mostly order kits to build them. It's harder to find a good log long enough (to cut a clock)."

In addition, George used his woodworking skills to restore more than 45 horse-drawn plows.

"I began with an old Georgia stock that Dad brought from Indian territory to the Plains in 1906," he said.

Then through searching neighbors' junkpiles, George said he found more plows to restore.

"After I got started, different people would bring me the plows to rebuild," he said.

An incident in the early '20s inspired George to continue with his hobby. One day some young people were at his home and questioned the use of such awkward-looking instruments.

"So I decided to preserve a few of these old things to show them their heritage," George said.



THIS IS THE WAY WE PLOW THE FIELD—before the tractor inventions, says George Bagwell. He has restored 45 horse-drawn plows and keeps a

few of them at his home west of Dimmitt. Bagwell has donated several such plows to the Castro County Museum. Photo by Danette Baker

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# Ramey twins' exploits add color to county's history

By ANNE ACKER

Edwin Ramey winged a big Canada honker in 1913 and nursed it back to health, starting a hobby that eventually earned him the nickname of "Goose."

The late Goose Ramey lived with the philosophy that wild geese can be tamed by kind treatment, feeding and loving care, and his reputation with the birds earned him acclaim.

Goose and his twin brother, Edgar, who picked up the nickname Unk from his niece and nephew (and the name caught on in the town until everyone used it), were born on Jan. 14, 1890, in Alto.

When the twins were 14 years old, their family packed up and moved to the Panhandle. Goose traveled on a Santa Fe train to Hereford, then joined the rest of his family on a mule-drawn wagon to their new home, six miles east of Dimmitt.

The twins older brother, Bunyon, had come here in the fall of 1902 to buy land for a new family home. He and a younger brother, Alford, had built a house on the land in the summer of 1903, so that when the rest of the family got here they could move directly into their new home.

Bunyon paid \$2.75 per acre for Section 337, Block M-6, midway between Dimmitt and Nazareth.

In a feature interview with *Castro County News* editor Don Nelson in February 1984, Goose said the deed called for 640 acres, more or less.

The first-ever wheat crop in Castro County was planted by the Rameys in 1907 and it made 18 bushels per acre, which they sold for \$1 per bushel. They bought the first mechanical header ever operated in the county, a McCormick driven by six mules, in 1909. In 1919, they purchased the first combine that was ever shipped into Amarillo, a McCormick model drawn by an eight-mule team with an Armstrong motor to run the machinery.

In a feature interview with *News*

Publisher Don Nelson in February 1984, Goose talked about why the area wasn't settled very fast.

"This was big, wide, barren country when we came here and you couldn't hardly run fast enough to get hold of a dollar," said Goose. "That's the reason it wasn't settled any faster. Lots of people wanted to file on land here, but it cost \$20 to do it, and they didn't have the \$20. There wasn't 10 acres to the section plowed up when we came here. There weren't any wire fences."

He also told Nelson that "the younger generation runs out of money and goes to the bank to borrow more. That was a lost art in those days; we just didn't do that. The Dimmitt bank didn't start until March of 1907, and started with a \$12,000 capital. I've seen men carry that much in their hip pocket since."

The twins got most of their education at home, then spent a year of formal education at Clarendon College.

After school, Unk became involved in the farm machinery business in Dimmitt and Goose ran the farm.

Unk served as the second mayor of Dimmitt from 1929 to 1932 and was instrumental in setting up the first public water system here.

Goose became president of the school board, master of the Castro Masonic Lodge and a member of the board of directors of the Masonic Children's Home of Fort Worth.

Although Goose said having a twin was wonderful in some ways, it was embarrassing at times.

In a Jan. 5, 1965, interview with Fred Tripp of the *Amarillo Citizen*, Goose recalled at least one "embarrassing" incident when he was mistaken for his brother.

He said Unk was working at the store and people would mistake Unk for Goose. Goose was on the school board at that time and teachers would go into the store and tell Unk about their troubles, thinking he was Goose. Goose said Unk would listen until they (teachers)



**GOOSE'S TALES**—Edwin "Goose" Ramey eyes the picture of himself and reads the article about his life experiences. The magazine article, which was shown to a *News* reporter in the 1980s before Ramey died, featured many of Ramey's pet projects including bee keeping, his care of geese and his weather records.

File Photo

were finished, then say they probably ought to speak to his brother about it.

But there were times when the Rameys enjoyed being identical twins—like when they wanted to "exchange" dates.

James Austin Dollar once told a story about the Ramey brothers and their girlfriends, and said the twins would probably try to deny it.

"They looked so much alike and talked so much alike when they were young that sometimes they could switch dates and get away with it. And the girls wouldn't even realize it.

"The twins would keep each other clued in on the conversations they had carried on with this girl or that one, so they would know what to talk about.

But finally, one of them left something out—either forgot it or didn't want to clue his brother in on it—and the girl tripped the other one up. So that ended that. The word got around pretty fast among the girls, I think, about what the Ramey boys were pulling.

The Ramey twins' activities kept things interesting in the Panhandle for 73 years, while they were active in everything from weather reporting and forecasting, historical efforts, politics and after-dinner speaking to "goose-ology" and bee-keeping.

"The first wild geese I ever saw in this country was in 1913," Goose recalled. "We had a little patch of sorghum and they got to feeding on it. I hid in a sorghum shock and broke one's wing. I nursed him back to health and got him to mate with a tame goose and I raised some half-breeds."

After that, he learned all he

gallery of his farm house, Buddy would roost nearby.

"From Buddy's flights after Goose's cars, he made some observations on the speed of this bird. Buddy could cruise at 70 miles an hour and he could hit 90 miles per hour for short flights. Buddy could fly just as fast as the average Canada goose.

"One day, Buddy followed his master to Dimmitt. The mule goose was flying low over the pickup as Goose drove into town. This was during a season for hunting wild geese. A boy happened to be waiting in a lumberyard to go goose hunting with his father. The boy had a gun. He was new to the country and didn't know about Goose's pet goose. He shot Buddy out of the air. Goose nursed the mule goose for months, but Buddy finally died."

This is just one of the many colorful stories that have been told about Goose and his pet projects through the years.

Goose always had a weakness for bees, but never could buy any because they couldn't ship them. In 1938, he bought seven hives of bees from a man in Hereford.

Goose had been honored several times. During his lifetime he was awarded the US Weather Bureau's John C. Holm award for his observation and recording of local weather and he was named the Castro County Citizen of the Year in 1970.

In the Oct. 7, 1976, bicentennial issue of *The Hart Beat*, Goose said his family came to Castro County in an immigrant car from Madril, Okla. The cost he believes was \$67 and the trip from Madril to Hereford and on down into Castro County took seven days.

"Nowadays you can make the trip in seven hours. . . . Nearly everyone who came any distance came in immigrant cars. When you got to Hereford, all the neighbors came in wagons and teams to help haul you out," "Goose" reminisced. "There weren't any hogs or chickens in the country when we came. We brought a little coop of chickens, a young gilt, two horses and two mules. Twenty-five or 50

## Ode to Goose Ramey on his 90th Birthday

By VICKY FISHER

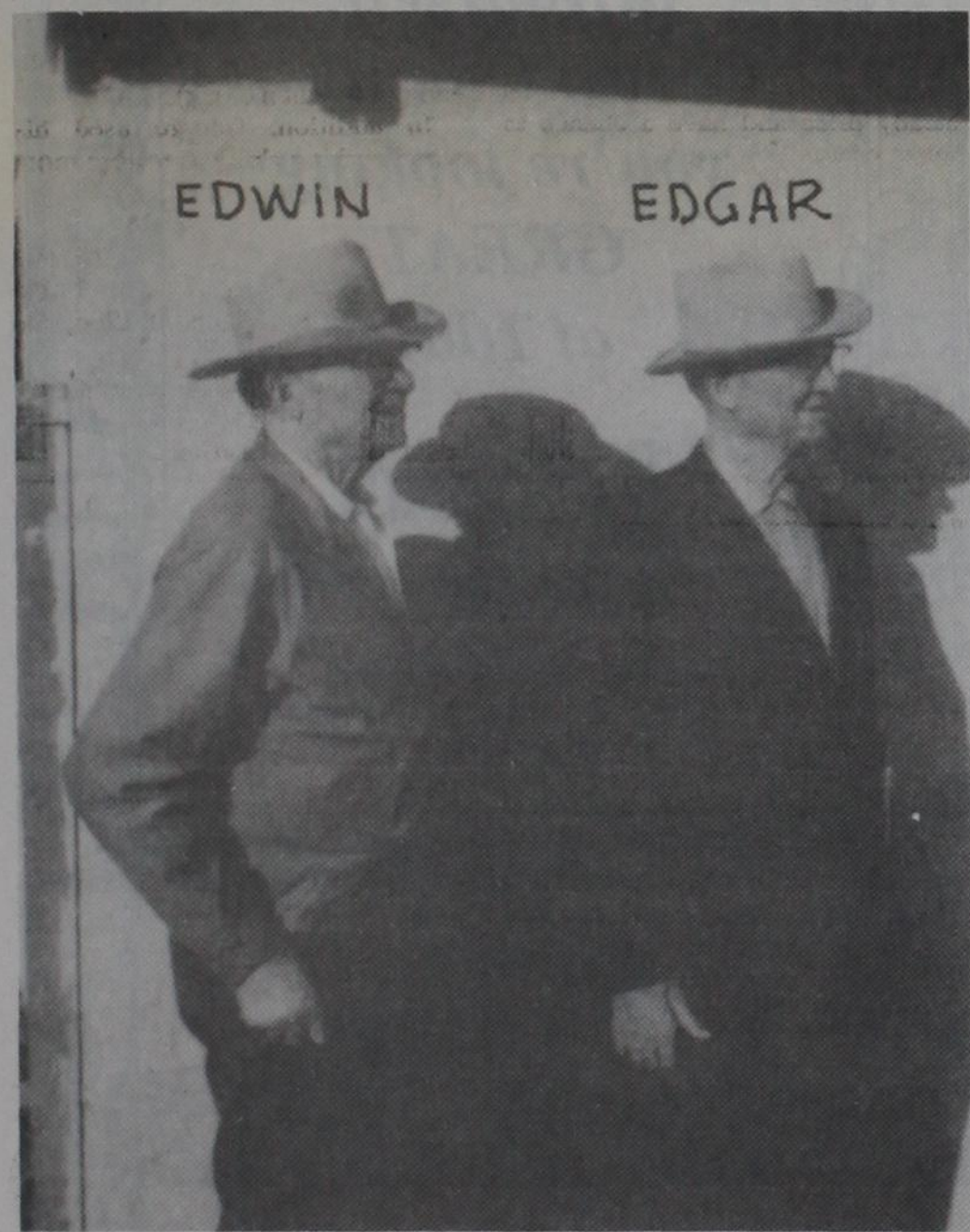
Here's to the "Goose" of the grandest style,  
Who warms our hearts with his wit and smile.  
His example in life and zest for living  
Leads us to be more loving and giving!  
His wealth of knowledge and expertise  
Spans currency, bees, weather and geese.  
On football, Coach Landry could even take notes!  
He even keeps abreast of what is new  
While sharing the past with me and with you!  
What a privilege, Goose, to share this fun.  
And we're all looking forward to number 91!

acres was a big farm in those days. There was no market for nothing you raised! You just raised what you needed to feed your stock," Goose said.

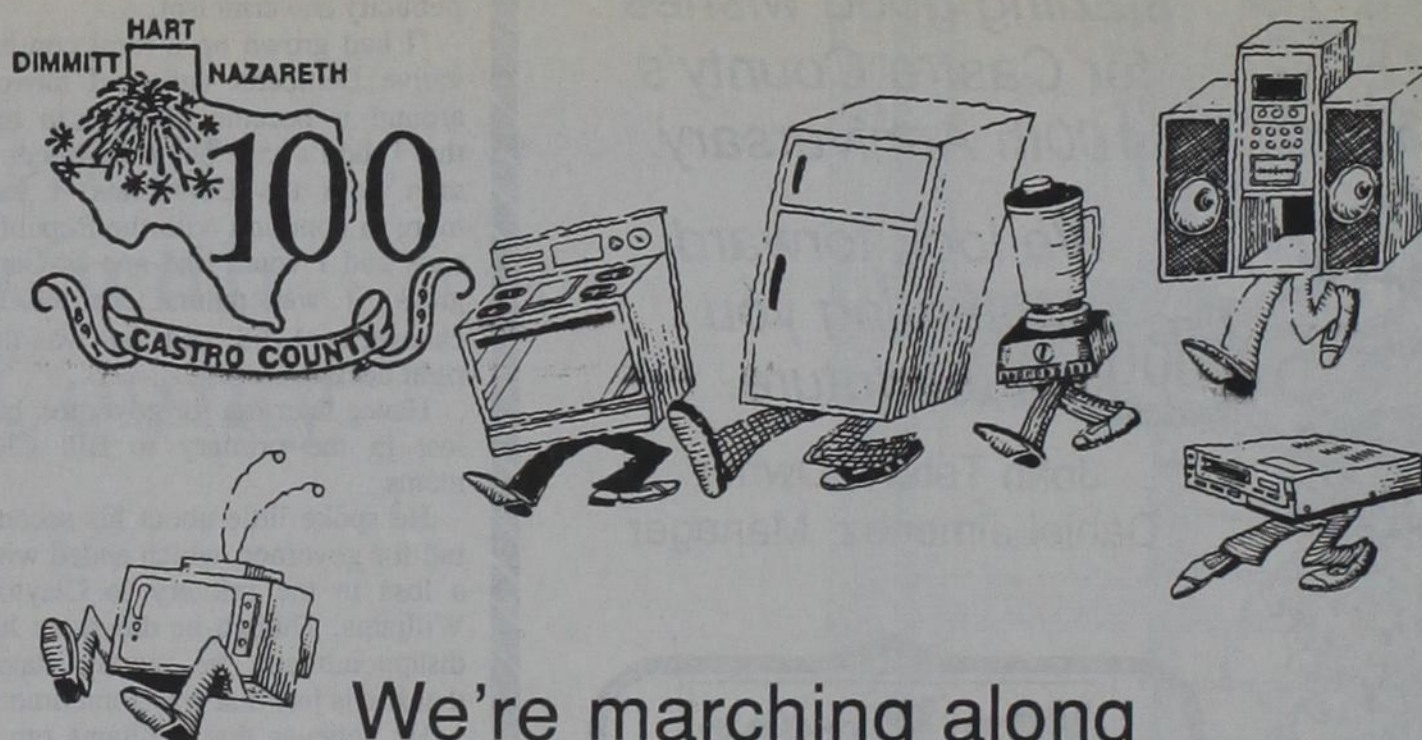
He talked about cooking in the early days, saying it was done on a coal range until butane arrived in the late 1940s. He would talk about how his mother never had the opportunity to live in a house with running water, saying she had to pack water back and forth from the windmill to the house and the "outdoor John" because there was no bath tub.

Goose ran the farm after he married Lena Tate in 1917, and they had two children—Decimae and Robert Jordan. Lena died on June 4, 1973 and "Goose" died in August 1985.

Unk married the former Edith Buchanan of Hereford and he retired from the farm implement business in 1944. He died June 13, 1977.



THE RAMEY TWINS  
Edwin "Goose" and Edgar "Unk"



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# From Dimmitt to the State Capitol

## Kent Hance was two-time gubernatorial candidate

By ANNE ACKER



KENT HANCE

When Dimmitt people talk about "hometown boys making good," one name that crosses a lot of people's minds is that of Kent Hance, former chairman of the state railroad commission, congressman and state senator, and two-time gubernatorial candidate.

Early in his political career, a Democratic Hance held a seat in the Texas Senate, then served in Congress for six years, then ran for a seat in the Senate, but was defeated. After that he switched to the Republican party and later ran for governor, but lost in the primary to Bill Clements. He made a second stab at the governorship of Texas, but lost in the primary to Clayton Williams.

Hance was born in 1942, in Dimmitt, and participated in the usual activities of a Texas farm boy while growing up.

"I loved growing up in Dimmitt. It was a thrill for me," Hance said.

He recalled a statement US Sen. Phil Gramm made to him several years ago in which he (Gramm) credited Hance for having the "best people skills of anyone" he knew, but Hance is quick to give the credit to the people in Dimmitt.

"I think that says something about where I grew up. People from smaller towns are friendlier because they have to get along with everybody. You see the same people on a day-to-day basis and you have to deal with them all of the time, so you have to be able to get along with them."

While growing up in Castro County, Hance lived out on a farm until he was 14 or 15, then his family moved into town.

"I drove tractors during the summer and I always had pigs and sheep that I showed in 4-H and the Future Farmers of America," said Hance.

He not only helped his parents on the farm, but also kept busy with

other jobs such as paperboy, working at a grocery store and as a service station attendant at the age of 16.

Teachers had quite an influence on him, starting with his mother, who taught him how to read before he began school.

"I had good teachers who were real dedicated and worked with me," he said.

One of those good teachers was his high school basketball coach, who always encouraged him to do more than he ever thought he could, better than anyone thought he could.

"I remember I was giving my civics teacher some trouble and she said, 'You know, you're either going to be a great public official or president of Hell's Angels.' I got a big chuckle out of that," he said.

Hance forewent the Hell's Angels route and explored an interest in politics that began before junior high school.

"We had a television we had just gotten and I watched the 1952 presidential campaign—I thought it was very exciting."

In high school, the student body elected him president and that

fueled his interest in politics.

After graduating from high school in 1961, Hance attended Texas Tech University where he assumed leadership roles as a member of the student council and student body vice president. He then enrolled in law school at the University of Texas at Austin, which gave him the opportunity to work in the state legislature, peaking his political interests.

After graduating from law school, he moved to Lubbock where he taught business law at Texas Tech University, and also practiced law. Gov. Preston Smith named Hance to the board of regents of West Texas State University in 1972, making him one of the youngest men in Texas to serve in such a capacity. In 1973, he was named Outstanding Professor at Texas Tech.

His political career began in 1974, when he ran for and won the race for state senator against a 16-year incumbent.

During his first term in the senate, Lt. Governor Bill Hobby placed Hance on two of the most powerful committees, finance and state affairs.

In 1978, he entered the 19th Congressional District race, winning the general primary against George W. Bush Jr. During his first week in Washington, he was named chairman of the Freshman Caucus and later was named Best Freshman Congressman by *Texas Business Magazine*.

One of the things Hance says he really feels good about is his part in the passage of President Reagan's tax bill in 1981, which provided the largest tax cut in the nation's history. He authored the bill which was passed.

While a member of the US Congress, Hance served on the Ways and Means Committee, the Agriculture Committee and the Science and Technology Committee.

Leaving Congress after six years of service, he ran for a seat in the Senate. He lost this race on the Democratic ticket, and not long after he switched to the Republican party, a move that received much publicity and criticism.

"I had grown up a rural conservative Democrat and as I moved around it became obvious to me that I didn't have anything in common with the Democrats. I had more in common with the Republicans and I voted like one in Congress. It was natural for me to change, so I did, and that was the right decision for me."

Hance later ran for governor, but lost in the primary to Bill Clements.

He spoke little about his second bid for governor, which ended with a loss in the primary to Clayton Williams. Though he did share his disappointment, he merely stated that life is just that way sometimes.

He believes that Williams ran a good media campaign and that it was virtually impossible to compete against 10 million dollars.

"If someone's got 10 million and you've got 3.5 million, in this day and time with television being the dominant factor in deciding elec-

tions, you can't overcome that. It made it impossible.

"I've always enjoyed campaigns. I like people. It's a challenge to get legislation passed. I really enjoy putting legislation together."

On Aug. 24, 1987, Gov. Bill Clements appointed Hance to the Texas Railroad Commission, which regulates the oil and gas and transportation industries in Texas. In November 1988 he won the election to become the first Republican ever to serve on the commission. He was elected chairman of the commission in January 1989.

As a member of the railroad commission, Hance was involved in the Middle East crisis by attending OPEC meetings and keeping the departments of state and energy briefed on what is happening. Hance was the first American to attend an OPEC meeting and since the first one, he has attended several times.

When his term on the railroad commission expired in December 1990, Hance went back to practicing law in Austin, but as far as leaving public service for good, former Texas Governor Bill Clements told Hance to never say never.

"I don't know what I'll be doing in say 10 years of so. I'll keep my options open. I enjoy public service. I felt like I understood how it worked, how to get things done, and I enjoyed it."

But there was a down side to politics for Hance—he had very little time for himself and his family.

"Things are going real well for me right now. When I was in politics, I didn't have any time to do what I wanted. This year we went to the Final Four and I also went to a Desert Storm Parade here in Austin—as a spectator for the first time in many years. When I was serving in public office, I was always riding in parades and when you are riding in one, you don't get to see everything that's going on—you just get to see people as you pass by. It's a lot more fun to watch one."

"When you're in Congress, every waking minute of the day is taken and you just have to try and set aside time to do what you want to do. Now I've got weekends to relax and enjoy life and it's great. The general public really has no conception of the sacrifices people in public office make. It's a big commitment," Hance said.

Hance was appointed to the Governor's Energy Council by Gov. Clements in September 1988 and in 1990, Gov. Clements appointed him to the "Governor's Oil Spill Advisory Committee." Hance also served on the "Texas High Speed Rail Commission." He presently serves on the Interstate Oil Impact Commission and the Texas Mining Council.

He served as a member of Wayland Baptist University's board of

trustees from 1982 to 1990 and served the state and his community as one of the original incorporators and founders of Texas Boys' Ranch in Lubbock.

On the personal side, Hance enjoys playing dominoes (something he picked up while growing up in Dimmitt), walking to stay fit, and attending football and basketball games—past times that traditional Texans have participated in for years. He especially loves South-west Conference football.

"I yell for the Texas Tech Red Raiders 11 games out of the year and I yell for UT 10. I've got more loyalties at Tech (among them a daughter who is a Texas Tech law student)."

Today, Hance is a practicing attorney in a partnership with a professional corporation with offi-

ces in Washington, D.C. and Austin — Hance and Gamble. The corporations deals in international law and handles a lot of federal and state agency-type work.

"I just finished negotiating a contract for one of our clients and the Kuwait government for work in rehabilitation."

Hance is married to the former Carol Hays of Dimmitt and the couple have two children, Ron and Susan.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Information for this feature on former Dimmitt resident Kent Hance was obtained through an interview with Hance and from his biographical sketch. Additional information was obtained from a freelance article submitted to the News by Adrienne Jones

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# George Abbott gained fame with 11 fiancees

By ANNE ACKER

As Ripley said, you can believe it or not, but George Abbott, a former foreman for the old XIT Ranch in Castro County, had two wedding rings made for Mabel Shive and himself from engagement rings returned to him by 11 former fiancees.

Was Abbott just unlucky in love?

Nobody really knows for sure, but he was known as a person "who loved fun and the ladies, and wherever he might be, there seemed to be plenty of both," according to a memorial tribute to him, published in 1981 *Castro County History, Vol. 1*.

The story was submitted by one of Abbott's four surviving granddaughters, Bobby Graham Henson, who lives at Happy today. In the story, Henson describes her grandfather as being "a magnificent specimen of manhood, standing six-foot, three inches in height and weighing more than 200 pounds." She says he was "quite a tease" and "quite a character." Abbott's three other surviving granddaughters are Mable Anne Graham Packer of California, Bettie Jean Graham Osborne of Dallas and Billie Graham Chaplowe of Stratford, Conn. He is also survived by 10 great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren.

The story Henson wrote for *Castro County History, Vol. 1*, tells of Abbott's fondness for the ladies, illustrated by the true story of the 11 engagement rings which were returned to him from his various girlfriends when he became engaged to Shive. Seven of the returned rings were used to make two gold bands which served as his and Shive's wedding rings.

Shive was the woman who caught Abbott's roving eye and held it. In 1903, in her parents' home, she and Abbott were married.

Six years later their first child, Nettie Mae, (Henson's mother) was born; and then 20 months later they celebrated the birth of a son, GT. Their happiness as a family was shortlived; however, as Mable caught pneumonia and teamed with complications from another pregnancy, it claimed her life.

Abbott said the death of his wife was "the hardest blow that he could have had."

And the man had been through some hard times, having run away from home early in his youth and encountered many obstacles while trying to "seek his fortune."

Abbott was born in Walla Walla,

S.C. on Aug. 31, 1871. Later, his family moved to a place near Granbury, but it wasn't long before Abbott felt the call of the west and headed out to "seek his fortune."

According to information in the county history book, Abbott's first job was that of following a sod plow on the old Spur Ranch at a salary of \$10 per month. Abbott felt like the pay was fine, but the sod plow was a little too much for a boy who had run away from home to be a cowboy, not a farmer, so he headed west again. When he arrived in Plainview, he heard about a job at the XIT Ranch.

Abbott tried his hand at every kind of work on the ranch, but mainly concentrated on being a "windmill" until he quit in 1896. He had filed a claim to four sections of land four miles east of the present community of Sunnyside and when he quit the XIT in 1896, he built a small house on this section—the same stretch of land he had promised himself he would own the day he traveled from Plainview to the XIT in search of his fortune. (The land was sold in 1982, according to Henson, and today the sections of land today are owned by Harold Smith and W.G. Sanders, both of Hart.)

A Presbyterian Settlement called Shive, settled by Mable's parents, was established and it wasn't long before Abbott noticed Mable, the eldest Shive daughter.

In the county history book's memorial to Abbott, it tells how Abbott taught Mable to dance under the pretext of learning to play "ring games," because the Presbyterians frowned on dancing. The feature also says Mable made a "church-goer" out of Abbott and recounts the story of how Abbott almost broke up a church meeting one night.

According to the story, the preacher asked everyone for a favorite Bible verse and each repeated his choice. When George's turn came, he said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," then, in a stage whisper meant for Mable's ears alone, he said, "specially his oldest daughter." The problem was, his voice was clearly audible to the farthest bench in the church.

Henson said her grandfather was "quite a character" and told a story she remembers hearing about his antics. When he would attend a community or church social function, he and some friends would get the "credit or blame, depending on who you talk to," for "swapping the blankets wrapped around babies and the parents would go home

with the wrong babies."

But after he married Mable, he settled down. After their wedding, Abbott and Mable worked together on the farm during the six years before their daughter was born.

This excerpt from *Castro County History, Vol. 1* tells how Abbott was injured one day while working with Mable on the farm.

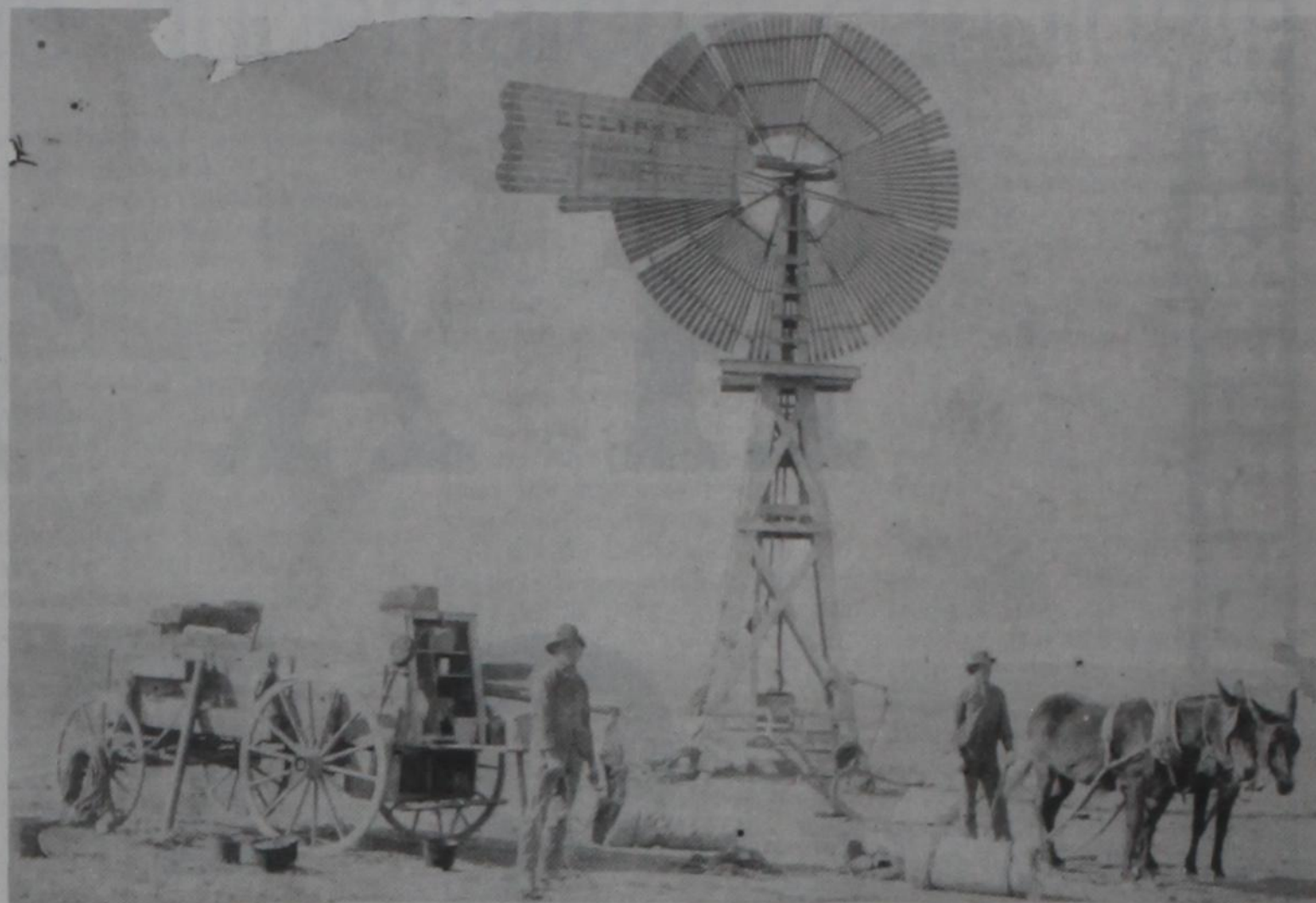
"In order to take Mable with him, George made the buggy do the work of a saddle horse. One day it was necessary to rope a cow, and as he had done many times, he threw the lariat from the buggy. He caught the cow, but in throwing her to the ground, George injured himself severely. There followed a long period when the strong man hovered between life and death . . . Ligaments in his back had been torn loose, causing the formation of fluid in his pleural cavity. Although four doctors attended him at one time, there seemed nothing could be done. From something over 200 pounds, his weight fell to 73 pounds and everyone gave up hope when suddenly the fluid began to drain. After 11 hours of unconsciousness, he opened his eyes, blind from weakness, and asked why they hadn't lighted the lamps."

The births of their children and Mable's death followed. After that many couples were hired with the idea "that the man would work on the ranch while his wife cooked and cared for the children," but the idea didn't work out very often.

Abbott eventually packed up and moved his family to Weatherford to be near his sister, Kate Shaw, and his father. The family wasn't happy there, and soon moved back to the Panhandle, where Abbott built a house and helped organize the Abbott School for his children to attend.

Sadness again befell the family when GT was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1924. After three years, he died at the age of 16. After that, Abbott's relationship with Nettie Mae, which had always been close, became his whole life. She later enrolled in Wayland College to finish high school and attend college, and Henson wrote that it became accepted procedure for the two to double date.

Abbott had grown up with a girl named Stella Milburn, daughter of Albert and Hattie Milburn who lived in Parker County near Weatherford. She was several years younger than he. They went their separate ways, but met again when he returned to Weatherford once.



WORK ON AN EARLY-DAY WINDMILL OUTFIT . . . By George Abbott (left) and George Anderson in 1893

The couple were married in Weatherford on April 12, 1929, and moved back to Castro County.

When he died in 1954, Stella moved back to Weatherford where she lived until her death in 1960.

Nettie Mae married Walter Graham, whom she had met at Wayland, on June 4, 1929, and they moved to his ranch just across the northeast Castro County line in Randall County. Henson was the first of their children to be born.

Henson said her grandfather was always aware of the trouble in the lives of those around him and had a special relationship with people in the German community of Nazareth.

In her memorial tribute to Abbott, she wrote:

"Among his most devoted friends were his German born neighbors at Nazareth. He liked them and understood them, and when they had troubles, they felt free to discuss them with him. If they had litigation in the courts, they were glad to have him on the Grand Jury since he was able to mediate for them, and the case was seldom brought to trial. During World War I, when disloyalty was seen by some in everyone who had a German sounding name, he suffered with them, and shielded them when he could, knowing there were no more loyal Americans in the country."

He helped out many of his neighbors. When the Sunnyside Baptist Church was built in 1925, he was a member of the building committee, even though he'd only been a member for a few months. He was a member of the school board, also.

Abbott suffered a cerebral hemorrhage in 1946 and never recovered, although he lived until Nov. 1, 1954.



George and Stella Abbott

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THE ABBOTT FAMILY—Members of the George Abbott family include (front row, from left) George and his daughter, Nettie Mae and her husband, Walter Graham; and (back row, from left) the Graham's oldest daughter Bobby and her husband, Nolan Henson.

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# Wife accepts husband's role as county judge

By ANNE ACKER

As Mrs. M.L. Simpson Jr., serves out her third term in office as county judge, she jokingly says that her late husband is looking down on her and that he's laughing at what she's doing.

That's because he held the office she now holds, until he died in 1981. Since that time, Mrs. Simpson, known to her friends as Polly, has served as county judge.

"I always tell everyone that M.L. is looking down on me from Heaven and he's saying, 'Oh, look at what she's having to do now,' and he's laughing about it. But I don't think that's very funny," Simpson said, although she chuckles at the thought, anyway.

Mrs. Simpson said she really loves being the county judge, although when she took over for her husband, she knew little about what the judge did.

"I really love this job. It's all a real big challenge for me. I like having court, but I think the biggest challenge I've got is juvenile court, where I'm dealing with young people."

Mrs. Simpson sadly relates the story of the first juvenile case she heard, and she says that it's one of the things that has stood out in her memories of her job through the last decade.

"My very first juvenile case was a little boy—he looked like he was about six years old. I wasn't sure he was even old enough to be in the courtroom, but he was. I was really worried about that. After hearing the case, I recessed court for a minute and went back to the office before I made my decision. I walked in, closed the door and started to cry. I called the attorneys in and said, 'I can't do this. I'll just have to take him home with me tonight.' They told me he might do away with me if I did that."

She stops and thinks about that for a while, then says, "But he was so young. It's really hard dealing with kids. The younger they are, the harder it is. I always try to help them, put them on probation and talk to their parents. It's really sad to see them come through court."

"I've really enjoyed being judge, but I probably never would have been if it wouldn't have been for M.L."



THE SIMPSON JUDGES  
... Polly and M.L. Simpson Jr.

Mrs. Simpson was the oldest child of Jack and Aileen Smitherman and she moved to Castro County in 1937 with her family. They settled near the Hart area and she attended school in Sunnyside.

She married Charley Sanders in 1948 and they had four children before he died in 1959.

She met M.L. Simpson Jr. while attending a Parents Without Partners meeting and the two started dating and eventually married.

M.L. was born in the Jumbo Community and he went to school there. His parents were longtime pioneers of Castro County and they had been dairy farmers. He graduated from high school in Dimmitt. He had four children from a previous marriage (his first wife died) and Polly had four, and although the couple had great experiences with their "joint venture," they agreed that "eight is enough."

Mrs. Simpson related the story of her first date with M.L., adding that she didn't know who he was the first time he called her.

"My boys and I had a paper route at Hart and we got up early every morning to deliver the papers. One morning after we returned home the phone rang—it was about 5:30

in the morning, I guess. This fella said, 'This is Simpson in Dimmitt.'

"I didn't know who he was, so I asked him, 'Who?' and he just said, 'Simpson in Dimmitt.' Finally, I figured out who he was and that I had met him at the Parents Without Partners meeting.

"He asked if he could come and take me to lunch and I said it would be okay. Then I called my sister, who had insisted I attend that meeting, and said, 'I can't believe he's coming here.' I really was a nervous wreck and I was beginning to wish I would have told him no. I told her (sister) I could barely remember him.

"Well, we went out and from then on we started dating, although most of our dates included our kids. We all went to Ruidoso one weekend, and we just had a good time and a good life together," Mrs. Simpson said.

When the couple announced they were getting married, Mrs. Simpson said her father had reservations.

"He (her father) thought I was crazy for getting married. He told me I'd lost my mind and that I'd never be able to raise eight kids. But they all turned out really well and they all graduated from high school here."

The Simpsons moved Polly's house from Hart to M.L.'s farm north of Dimmitt, adding a basement so they would have enough room for everyone.

He was a dairy farmer and the boys worked in the barn with him while the girls and Polly took care of the house.

"I think it was easier to raise kids in the country than it was in town," Simpson remarked.

In 1979, a group of people approached M.L. about running for county judge. They were unhappy about the way things were going and they wanted someone new in the judge's office.

"We discussed it and talked to different people about it and final-

ly, M.L. decided he would run," Mrs. Simpson said.

He'd (M.L.) already missed out on the primary election, so he had to run as a write-in candidate in the general election. This was in June or July—I can't remember exactly. I really didn't encourage him to run because I thought it would be very hard to enter as a write-in, but he wanted to do it, so I supported him.

"He started campaigning and I guess he went to probably every house in Castro County. He came back feeling encouraged and said he felt like he could win.

"The election came and when it was over, he'd won by 12 votes. After that he retired from the dairy farm before he took office in January."

Mrs. Simpson recalled the day he was sworn in as county judge with a shiver, saying "Snow was on the ground and it was a very bad day, but we were so excited. Every child we had was here and every grandchild, too. We had a big crowd. There were probably 40 family members here."

She said M.L. had a "really good time" being judge and he was active in everything he could become involved in.

"He was on the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission Board and every time there was a meeting (like the West Texas Judges Conference, etc.) he always seemed to be on a committee."

The couple enjoyed life while he was judge, but then bad news rocked the family.

M.L. started feeling ill in October 1981 and he went to a doctor in Amarillo to find out what was wrong. After undergoing diagnostic tests, the doctor told Simpson he had spots on his lungs and would need to return for more tests.

"All week long we prayed that everything would be alright," Mrs. Simpson said, with a catch in her voice. "We went to the doctor and they ran more tests, then discovered that he had cancer. We put him in the hospital and he had one chemotherapy treatment, but he couldn't handle it, and he never took another one. He came home, but his health was dropping fast. We put him back in the hospital, but he didn't get any better."

"We brought him home for Christmas and he lived until Dec. 24. When every one of the children got to the house, he passed away," she sadly remembered.

After that, people approached Mrs. Simpson about stepping into her husband's shoes as county judge.

"Heavens, I didn't know what to do. I was grief stricken and really, I didn't know what I was doing. I talked about it with Joe Bob (Sanders, her oldest son) and finally I decided I would try it. There were probably 20 people applying for the job, and they took applications for the appointment.

The commissioners called me in to their meeting after they interviewed each of the applicants and they said they'd decided to give me

the job. But one commissioner said, 'I didn't vote for you Polly, but I'll support you 100%.' That was Jimmy Howell, and he turned out to be one of my best supporters and he still is.

In January, right after she took office, Mrs. Simpson had to announce for election. After that, she started campaigning, but she remembers that it wasn't easy.

"I went to Hart one day and when I got to the first house, I went to the door and the lady there said, 'Oh Polly, I'm so very sorry about M.L.' I started crying, but I tried not to let her see me. When I got to the car, I just burst into tears and I came home. I told Joe Bob that if that's what I had to do, I'd never win."

"That year I had five Democrats and one Republican running against me and everyone said I couldn't win the primary without a run-off, but when the votes were all counted, I'd won. I faced a Republican on the ticket in November and I beat him, too. I didn't have an opponent last time.

"Everybody asks me if I'll run again, and if my health is good, I probably will. I want Castro County to grow and be financially sound when I leave office."

She said the formation of senior citizens centers in Hart and Na-

zareth while she was in office is one of the things she is proudest of.

She said one of the most exciting things she's taken part in since she's been in office has been the plans for the Centennial celebration.

"I'm really sad that M.L. isn't here because he would have loved all of this. He would have been taking pictures of everything. And he would have been so excited about the gazebo," she said. (During his lifetime, M.L. was known for his photography, especially wedding photography. He would also take pictures of the band throughout the year and then at the band banquet, he'd present a slide show of their achievements throughout the year and he's had music along with it.)

During her years as county judge, Mrs. Simpson has been elected president of the Panhandle Judges and Commissioners, and she said she feels like that was a real honor. She also has been elected a director of the West Texas Judges and ads that if she stays in office for four or five more years, she'll get to be president of the group.

"I've got lots of special memories and I've made so many friends. I'm a people lover and I feel really loved here."



### City Council

*SEATED, FROM LEFT:* Councilman Wayne Proffitt, Mayor Wayne Collins, Councilman Lloyd White. *STANDING, FROM LEFT:* Councilmen Roger Malone, Don Sheffy, Robert Jones, Richard Stahl, Larry Gonzales.

# It's Dimmitt's 100th Anniversary, Too

Dimmitt and Castro County have been partners together for a century.

When it became known that Castro County would seek to organize, the Bedford Town & Land Co. bought a section of land in the center of the county and mapped out streets and lots for a proposed county seat. They named it "Dimmitt" after one of the partners in the company, Rev. W. C. Dimmitt.

The first building in the newly plotted townsite was a hotel built by the Bedford Town & Land Co. southeast of the square, where the City Hall stands today.

The first postmaster was appointed in January, 1891.

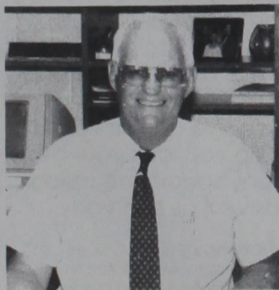
After a squabble between backers of the new Dimmitt townsite and a proposed new townsite called Castro City, Dimmitt was designated as the county seat by petitioners in 1891.

Since then, the City of Dimmitt and Castro County have been engaged in a partnership that has seen dynamic progress.

Throughout its first century, Dimmitt has earned a reputation as a progressive community. And our city has been fortunate enough to have civic leaders and elected officials with the vision and know-how to make our dreams of progress come true. For many years, Dimmitt was the fastest-growing city in the Texas Panhandle, in percentage of population growth.

In many ways, Dimmitt is a model city. Look at the municipal airport, the hospital, the schools, the industries, municipal services, bond rating, civic involvement by our residents, and compare these with other cities our size.

After 98 years as a General Law City, Dimmitt became a Home Rule City two years ago with the adoption of our City Charter. We believe this charter will provide the vehicle for another century of growth and progress.



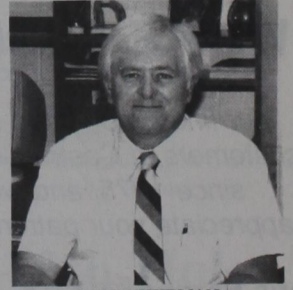
REEFORD BURROUS  
City Manager



JAMES KILLOUGH  
Director of Public Works



JO HAMILTON  
Director of Administration



GARY THURMAN  
Chief of Police



## 100 The City of Dimmitt