THE EAST TEXAS ECHO

Vol. 4 No. 11 N.S. | Supplement to the Woodsman Vol. 12 No. 45 | Woodville, Texas 75979 | November 6, 1991

Ferry hunting on the Neches

Much has been written about the old roads leading into Tyler County.

But for each of those roads, coming from the north and the east, there had to be more than a road. There had to be a way to cross the Neches River.

And so there was the ferry.

Minutes of the Commissioners Court, beginning in 1849, record the continuing appointments of supervisors for roads leading from the new county seat of Woodville to already established ferry sites. Instead of taxes, county citizens paid for these roads by their labor and that of their "hands."

According to historians, Wyatt Hanks was operating a ferry at Town bluff, the earlier seat of government, as early as 1833. He was followed in that general area by the Colliers, the Ogdens and the Barlows, who catered not only to incoming travelers but traffic going up and down the river as well. The exact spot for each of these ferry operations changed slightly with the years and the variations of the river itself.

Even today the Neches River is ever changing as gleaming white sandbars, one of the ecological wonders of the Big Thicket and Deep East Texas, build up and close off long used channels while the tide cuts new river beds through the pineywoods.

It was these sand bars that caused the Indians to name this beautiful waterway, Snow River.

And beautiful it is, a fact almost impossible to appreciate, when crossing the river by bridge at 55 miles an hour.

Even on a cold day, the first of the season, the beauty of this river and its diversity was at times almost breathtaking, as our group viewed it from a pontoon boat slowly making its way first north, then south from Sheffield's Ferry.

Except for those unfortunate spots where humanity has deemed it necessary to dump old refrigerators, cars and trash onto the embankments, supposedly to stop erosion, the river looks much as it did when the first Anglos made their way from the states to see what the Mexicans had won from Spain and were now offering to the hardy migrant with a wanderlust.

The river is quite wide and the topography changes frequently. North of the old Sheffield Ferry landing on FM 1013 east of Spurger, we found outcroppings of rock, which we thought could only be found on the upper reaches of the county near Rockland. The bluffs are very high, all the way north to the dam. Why, we wondered, would people choose these high bluffs from which to operate a ferry. Because of the rising waters, we were told. In the spring, the river can reach half way up these canyons and more.

South of Sheffield, the river made big hairpin turns through the low lands. No ferries here. Some cypress. Feathery willows, lots of them, hanging precariously over the embankments. And, in spots, air roots hanging from these trees in big balls or bundles above the water, indicating the high water line. A strange sight indeed.

The presence of herons, and every-where, several off them sneaking by the water edge, but there was little sign of human life on the southern end of our trip. But then we didn't go too far. When the trees on the west bank cast their shadows across the river, cutting out the sun and

(Continued on 3A)

ANCIENT STEAM BOAT WRECK-The decayed hull of a steamboat run aground during high water on the Neches protrudes into the water below the old Sheffield's ferry site, terminus of a Beaumont shipping line.

Twilight tour on Dec. 7

It's not the gift, but the spirit in which it is given, that makes it special.

And that's one of the reasons the Heritage Society's early Christmas gift to the community is such a unique treat.

The gift, of course, is the Annual Twilight Tour of Heritage Village Museum on December 7, following Woodville's Annual Tour of Homes.

As you step back in time, you know this is Christmas as it should be celebrated, simply and with good cheer.

The setting is a small East Texas village as it might have appeared during the second half of the 19th Century, swathed in the sights and sounds of Christmas, the smells of cooking, the old fashioned decorations, the smell of hot spicy punch and delectable cookies.

You'll witness a living nativity scene in a 145 year old log barn. You'll hear the reading of the Christmas Story in the Village's historic Cherokee Church. And wherever you go, you'll be surrounded with the voices of Christmas as area choirs and choral groups gather in the candlelight to bring back the joys of Christmas past.

The Museum Store, of course, will be open for your early Christmas Wish shopping. Twilight Tour hours are from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

And, because it is the Village and the Heritage Society's gift to the community and the county at large, everywhere, there will be no admission charge.

Tour of Homes slated in Woodville Dec. 7

Once again, on Saturday, December 7, the Federated Women's Clubs of Woodville will get the Christmas Season off to a festive start with its 14th Annual Tour of Homes.

Sponsoring clubs are The Woman's Study Club, which was organized and federated in 1924, the Woman's Reading Club, chartered in 1941, and the Heritage Civic Club, organized in 1964.

Featured in this year's tour will be the homes of Jimmy and LaWilda Chapman at 40 Lake Drive in Chesswood, their neighbors, Richard and Dede Cordes, at 36 Lake Drive, and the turn-of-the-century home of Rusty and Renie Koenig at 201 N. Village in downtown Woodville.

According to Mrs. Chapman, who is principal of the Warren Elementary School, their home is filled with mementos collected all over the world during her husband's military service.

Lt. Col. Chapman, U.S.A Ret., teaches math at Chester High School. The Cordes' lovely brick home, which Dede describes as traditional, features antique wicker and other treasurers, which she and her husband have collected over the years. Richard is Health Director at the Alabama/Coushatta Indian Reservation Health Clinic, and Dede has a private practice as a Speech Pathologist.

The Koenig home, known for years as the "Rock" House after its long time owners, Thomas Carrol and Anna Wickline Rock, was featured in the August issue of the East Texas Echo, shortly after the Livingston couple purchased it. Built by Elijah Cruse between 1900 and 1905, when he passed away, the home was purchased in 1906 by Henry H. and Annie Vilula Collier Wickline. The Wickline's great granddaughter, Carol Ann Phillips, who is a member of the Women's Study Club, will be putting a lot of her memories of that house into its decoration for the tour.

Refreshments will be served at all three homes, at which Christmas crafts and edibles will be available for sale. Tour tickets are $3 and can be purchased from downtown merchants or at any of the three participating homes.

Following the home tour, Heritage Village Museum invites visitors to make their early taste of Christmas complete with a Twilight Tour of the Village, from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Wood ducks return

By Beth Houseman
Park Ranger
Big Thicket National Preserve

"Jump! Jump!" the mother seems to call to her babies. And with only a slight hesitation, the day-old wood ducks climb out of their nest and jump out of the tree. They land safely; their soft, flexible bones absorb the impact from the 50 foot fall. The ducklings follow their mother towards the water, losing some siblings to the many hungry predators waiting in the shadows. But, wood ducks are survivors. After all, this species was facing imminent extinction less that a century ago and today, has made almost a full recovery.

In the early 1900's, wood ducks were found in abundance throughout woodland swamps and bottomlands in the United States. But, heavy hunting pressure and habitat reduction caused population counts to plunge. Because the wood ducks' haunts were popular hunting grounds for other species, wood ducks were hunted over a longer period of time than other ducks. Hunters sought the colorful birds, whose scientific name "Aix sponsa" loosely translates to "waterfowl in wedding attire," for stuffed displays in their dens.

Answering the warnings from naturalists predicting extinction, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918. This gave the Federal Government power to enforce a ban on wood duck hunting for five years. As it turned out, the hunting season remained closed until 1941 when hunters in 14 states were allowed to keep one bird per bag.

With the ban on hunting, the wood duck population continued to rise except in the Mississippi Flyway, where extensive lumbering in river bottomland and swamps severely destroyed nesting and feeding habitats. Forests were logged and the hollow trees the birds sought for nesting were moved, leaving the wood ducks unable to increase their numbers.

Along came waterfowl lovers to the rescue. A widespread program began where thousands of wood duck nest boxes were constructed and placed, by the public, in nesting habitats. The adaptable ducks readily accepted the artificial homes. Today, the recovery of the wood duck can be considered a success.

Wood ducks are commonly seen in Big Thicket National Preserve. A good chance to see "woodies" is on the Beaver Slide Trail, in the southeast corner of the Big Sandy Creek Unit. This 1.5 mile loop trail winds around a series of ponds formed by beaver dams. Access to the trail is off of FM 943, approximately one quarter mile west of FM 1276 and FM 943 intersection.

The story of the wood duck best illustrates the need for effective wildlife management programs. Annual bird counts are a common method used for determining popular/species status. Big Thicket National Preserve will again be participating in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count on December 28, 1991, (Turkey Creek Unit) and January 4, 1992, (Beech Creek Unit).

If you are interested in volunteering to count the different birds migrating through the Preserve, contact Ranger David Baker at (409) 839-2689. Beginner birdwatchers are welcome.

The East Texas Echo

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Tyler County COMMUNITY CALENDAR

November 1-30

SALUTE TO VETERANS. An exhibit at Heritage Village Museum by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Woodville Chapter

November 9, 1991

EAST TEXAS BLACKSMITH ALLIANCE. Gathering at the forge, 9 a.m., Heritage Village Museum.
CHRISTMAS BAZAAR, Woodville United Methodist Church, beginning at 9 a.m. Includes outstanding barbeque dinner, $5.
BARBEQUE DINNER, 11 A.M. TO 6 P.M. at the Woodville Nutrition Center. $5 per plate
LIGHT UP THE SQUARE CASUAL DANCE, 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Woodville Inn Ballroom. Larry flanagan, DJ. $5 per person. Proceeds benefit Christmas lights program for the Courthouse Square. BYOB

November 14, 1991

OUR LADY OF THE PINES SPAGHETTI DINNER, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.,

November 16, 1991

SPAIGHT'S BATTALION, SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS, 10 a.m., Heritage Village Museum

November 23, 1991

SACRED HARP SINGERS. Practice for Heritage Village's Christmas Twilight Tour, 10 a.m. to noon, Heritage Village Museum
BLUE GRASS, Wood Fain Opera House on the Square. Open Stage 7-10 p.m. Buffet available.

November 26, 1991

BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR THE TYLER COUNTY COURTHOUSE, will include the lighting of the square with thousands of Christmas lights, a Tree of Lights for needy children, a live Nativity, muscial entertainment, and the arrival of Santa Claus, 5 to 7 p.m.

December 7, 1991

ANNUAL ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT PANCAKE BREAKFAST, sponsored by the Woodville Rotary Club, 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., Woodville Inn. $4 per person includes coffee, milk or juice. Bacon or sausage $1 extra.
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TOUR OF HOMES, sponsored by the Federated Women's Clubs of Tyler County. Three beautiful homes open from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tour tickets are $3 at area businesses and at each home on the day of the tour.
ANNUAL TWILIGHT TOUR OF HERITAGE VILLAGE MUSEUM. 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. No admission charge.
YOU CAN BE A STAR, Wood Fain Opera House. Auditions and open stage 3-7p.m., showtime 7 p.m. Admission $3.

Paid For By The City Of Woodville Tourism Fund

* Ferry hunting on the Neches

(From Page One)

setting our teeth to chattering, we decided to turn around and try again another day. But some time in the long forgotten past, when the river was higher, a steam boat had taken a curve a bit too fast. All that was left was the outer ribs of the hull sticking out of the embankment.

Attempting to locate old ferry landings is a job that cannot be undertaken in haste. And once located landside, the site isn't always easy to spot from the water.

Our one success was the Works Bluff Ferry, recognozed as one of the oldest ferries on the Neches, which Tom Bower operated from around the turn of the century until 1929, when he ended his own life.

Dr. John Work came to Tyler County prior to 1850. He and his family are listed in that year's census and again in 1860, but there is no sign of them by 1870, nor can anyone by that name be found in the County Cemetery Book. Dr. Work settled in Town Bluff and owned extensive property on the river north of Spurger. It was known as Works Bluff. We have no exact information, however, as to when the good doctor actually operated a ferry there.

Former County Commissioner Bo Jordan lives on the road known as Works Bluff Ferry Road. He led us from his home all the way to the river, where Alex Bower, son of Tom, lives on the high bluff overlooking the old ferry site on the otherside of a deep branch or ravine.

Tom Bower was the son of Rufus K. Bower, Spurger's first postmaster as well and the operator of a large general store. During his term of office, the post office was naturally located in his store.

On our way to the ferry site, Bo Jordan showed us where the road once crossed the branch, which still flows with fresh artesian spring water. In the days of wagon, mule and horse traffic, travelers drove right through that branch during low tide to the landing on the north side. When automobiles became the mode of travel, a bridge was built, but that has long since rotted away.

According to Vivian Jordan's "Spurger Area History," Works Bluff Ferry Road was once the main road into Spurger from the east. On the Jasper side, we were told, the road followed the river north a ways, then turned east and went into Magnolia Springs.

After our trip down this historic trace, we returned to FM 92 and drove north to another road that exits two miles north of Spurger. Built many years later, this road took us directly to the old ferry landing, where there are a number of camp sites and year around homes. We marked our spot with a ribbon down on the river bank and found it two days later from the river.

Another ferry site we searched for was that attributed to Ephraim Thompson, purported to be the earliest settler in the Spurger area. Born in Kentucky in 1792, Thompson came to Texas in 1829, living first in the Beech Grove area of Jasper County. Five years later he applied to Lorenza de Zavala for a league of land as a colonist. Title for this Spanish Land Grant was issued in October 1834, the land divided by the Neches River. The 2612 acres in what is now Tyler County included the Sheffield Ferry area, so one might wonder if that might not have been the logical place for him to operate his ferry, if indeed he did so. The homesite, where he and his wife are both buried, is on a high bluff at least 50 feet above the river. We visited the area, which the locals refer to as the Redfields, and were taken to the burial site of these early pioneers, but saw no evidence of the ferry site historians say he used to cross to his Jasper County holdings. Ephraim Thompson died in the spring of 1836.

As for the Sheffield Ferry, the last ferry to operate in Tyler County, it was owned and operated first by Jeff Sheffield, who came from Georgia in that mass evacuation of Early County around 1852. At one time, he owned a large piece of the land that had once been part of the Thompson land grant, stretching north to the Redfields.

According to Phebe Young Armstrong in "From the Forks of Turkey Creek," in 1881 the Tyler County Commissioners authorized the establishment of this, the last public ferry on the Neches River, creating a much needed link between Spurger and Kirbyville. Later operators were a Dr. Ogden, who couldn't make a go of it, Hardy Simmons, Henderson & Pool of Jasper, and finally the Jenkins family, who ran it from 1917 until the bridge was built in 1959.

There are many places up and down the river, including the ramp we used on the southeast side of the Sheffield Ferry bridge, where a boat or canoe can be launched for a river ride. Or special tours can be arranged by calling James and Nelda Overstreet of Timber Ridge Tours (409) 246-3107, who have regular weekend schedules out of Evadale during the summer months and charters year around.

Meanwhile, now that we're stirring up interest in our ferry site search, we hope our readers will help us fill in some of the gaps for future stories on the river crossings our ancestors used, when they came to Tyler County.

History attracts tourists

Historic attractions are one of the top three most popular reasons why the nation's visitors come to Texas, according to the Texas Department of Transportation's 1991 Auto Visitor Survey.

Among these attractions, historic tours and visits to historical museums are the most frequently cited activities. In addition, among the top things that visitors like best about Texas are its small towns and Texas historical markers. Seeking information on historic sites even outranks travel breaks as one of the chief reasons why visitors stopped at the state's 12 Travel and Information Centers when entering the state.

"Texas is truly fortunate to have such a colorful history," said Curtis Tunnell, executive director of the Texas Historical Commission. "It's evident that a significant part of the state's cultural and economic well- being depends on the strength of efforts to preserve the tangible reminders of our heritage," he added.

Texas boasts hundreds of small history museums, such as Heritage Village Museum and the Allan Shivers Library in Woodville, and numerous outstanding landmarks. The fascinating history of key events in every phase of the state's development, from early archeological sites to the making of the first electronic transister, are recorded in thousands of Official Texas Historical Markers along roadsides and at historic structures and sites around the state.

EAST TEXAS GARDENING:

Landscaping for the birds

By Diane Mowry Sitton
Garden Editor

Birds are a natural part of home landscapes. Besides delighting us with their beauty and entertaining us with their songs, birds eat insects and weed seeds. Birds of prey, including owls, make a contribution as well. They help eliminate small rodents and snakes from lawns and gardens.

Not surprisingly, birds are drawn to one place instead of another for some of the same reasons that people are drawn to one place instead of another. Birds want a friendly environment that is stable and non-threatening. Like people, they want a supply of food and fresh, clean water for drinking and bathing. They also want a protected, comfortable niche where they can build a nest and raise a family.

Landscaping Basics

One of the surest ways to attract birds is by planning a landscape that meets their needs. As you plan, remember that each species of bird has its preferences and requirements. To attract that species research its background and design the landscape to conform to its likes and dislikes.

Basic guidelines call for you to plant evergreen and tall trees at the back of your property where they will form a border. Plant smaller deciduous trees near the evergreens. Bushes, flowers, vines and grasses add to the diversity of vegetation.

Incorporate open, grassy meadows into the landscape. Birds will appreciate the space, especially those that feed on the wing. Plants will respond to the fight by developing good form and by increasing their yields of fruits, nuts and seeds.

Also remember that many of our old friends, including cardinals, sparrows, warblers, and hummingbirds, nest in the branches of trees and bushes. These natural-site species look for foliage that is dense enough to conceal them, yet open enough to fly through. Spiraea (bridal wreath), a fast growing, ornamental shrub, makes a thick border. Plant it alone or make a mixed border with spiraea and forsythia (golden bells). Blue jays and mourning doves nest in oaks and pines. Robins nest in maples.

Birds also appreciate bushes and thickets; two natural havens from enemies and storms. A mass of cedar tangled with honeysuckle or Virginia creeper is a detriment to mischievous cats. Eastern red cedar, with its thick evergreen foliage, provides shelter during storms.

Trees as a Food Source

Besides providing nesting sites and shelter, trees and shrubs are an important source of food. In early spring elm trees attract goldfinches and purple finches who feed on their protein-rich seeds. Oaks, whose acorns are eaten by woodpeckers and blue jays, are sought out by 35 other species of birds including chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and grosbeaks. Beech trees attract several of the same species.

Fruit-bearing shrubs, trees and vines are bird-pleasers as well. For your home landscape select varieties that provide a succession of fruit. Varieties which bear fruit or berries during the winter months are especially valuable and include crabapples, which attracts woodpeckers, robins and 22 other species of birds.

Sixteen species of birds flock to feed on the red berries of firethorn (pyracantha). Nineteen species of birds enjoy the pulpy sweet fruit of hawthorn. Holly, another winter food source, attracts 28 species of birds to its colorful berries. Elderberry and nandina are winter favorites as well.

Bayberry, a small East Texas shrub, also acts as a winter feeding station. Bayberry attracts brown thrashers, downy woodpeckers, flickers, and mockingbirds.

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SONG--graces gardeners that plant to suit him

The red winter berries of flowering dogwood, a native of East Texas, are relished by bluebirds, brown thrashers, cardinals, flickers, robins, thrushes, vireos and others. In all, some 45 species seek out the fruit.

Vines are another important food source, attracting a variety of birds. Wild grapes, native to East Texas, are sought out by blue jays, cardinals, robins and summer tanagers. The fruits of Virginia creeper attract over 35 species including bluebirds and flickers. Trumpet creeper attracts mockingbirds, robins and vireos. Virginia creeper and trumpet creeper are favorites with hummingbirds as well.

In addition to trees, shrubs and vines, several commonly grown annuals produce good crops of seeds that attract sparrows and other seed-eating species. The list includes: cosmos, marigold, moss rose, sunflower, poppy and zinnia.

Offering Food

Incorporating changes in your landscape to attract birds can be a slow process as you wait for trees, shrubs and vines to grow and mature. In the meantime you can entice a variety of birds to your lawn by offering them food.

Winter feeding is especially appreciated because the natural food supply is at its lowest. However, even when nature's bounty is abundant in spring and summer, many birds will gladly snatch up your offerings.

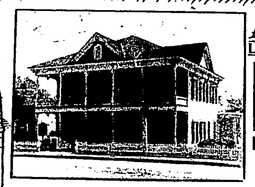
Seeds of any kind, especially sunflower seeds, whet the appetites of sparrows and cardinals, who also enjoy corn. Fruit-eating birds, such as mockingbirds, robins and jays, savor raisins, currents, apples and oranges. Chop the apple into bits and cut the orange into chunks before offering it at the feeder. Woodpeckers, chickadees, jays and others appreciate suet.

Other foodstuffs for the feeder include: cured cheese, chopped hard-boiled eggs, bread, corn bread, crackers, dried fruits, hominy, cracked nuts, oats, pumpkin seeds and squash seeds.

Quenching Their Thirst

No environment for birds is complete without water. During hot summer months nothing has more potential to attract birds than clean, safe places to drink and bathe. Birds even enjoy flying through the cool spray of sprinklers.

Although birds will take water from saucers and small containers, they are not as convenient as birdbaths and shallow pools. Select a rough-textured birdbath with a sloping bottom. For bathing, birds prefer shallow water that they can stand in.



Allan Shivers LIBRARY & MUSEUM
NEWS
302 N. Charlton,
Woodville, TX

Wednesday Nov. 6, 1991
9:15 Early Childhood Film
10:00 Day Care Center film
10:45 Wee Wisdom Film
2:00 Little Eagle's Nest Film

Friday Nov. 8, 1991
1:00 St. Paul's School

Wednesday Nov. 13, 1991
9:15 Early Childhood film
10:00 Day Care Center Film
10:45 Wee Wisdom Film
1:30 Allan Shivers Board Meeting

Thursday Nov. 14, 1991
2:00 Books delivered to both nursing homes

Friday Nov. 15, 1991
1:00 St. Paul's School

Sunday Nov. 17, 1991
9-11:00 McKinney Heard Museum Tour

Monday Nov. 18, 1991
10:00 Retired Teachers meeting

Wednesday Nov. 20, 1991
9:00 Early Childhood Film
10:00 Day Care Center Film
2:00 Little Eagles Nest Film

Friday Nov. 22, 1991
1:00 St. Paul's School

Wednesday Nov. 27, 1991
10:00 Day Care Center Film
2:00 Little Eagles Nest Film

Thursday Nov. 28, 1991
Closed Thanksgiving Day

Paid For By The City Of Woodville Tourism Fund

South Prong Ranch in Family since 1834

By Kenneth Morgan

When the casual observer travels down FM 252 five miles South of Jasper and sees the sign "South Prong" at the entrance of the long, well-tended driveway leading to a two-story house, he might think the name was inspired by the popular television series "Dallas." Nothing could be further from the truth. The creek that constitutes the northern boundary of the property was sometimes referred to as the south prong of Walnut Run on the Mexican maps of the early 1800s. The present owner, Bobby McLemore, Phd., colonel in the U. S. Army Reserve and heir to the old home place, decided on this name after seeing an old map of the area.

The old homestead is by no means as large now as it was in 1834 when Sally Glenn, Bobby's step-great-grandmother, was granted 4,400 acres or a league of land by the Mexican government. After her husband, Duke Glenn, died in 1833, leaving her with three sons to raise, Sally petitioned His Excellency Lorenzo DeZavalla, a representative of the Mexican government, asking to be accepted as a colonist in the State of Coahuila and Texas. She was soon granted the league or headright as it was often called. Her headright adjoined that of her brother-in-law, George Washington Smyth, a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, who married Sally's sister, Frances Mitchel Grigby.

Since 1834 a portion of the land has passed from generation to generation down to McLemore and his brothers and sisters. Some of these ancestors were their great-grandmother Ann T. Orton, grandparents, Rev. Alfred Cuthbert Sims and Frances Amanda Allen Sims and parents, Ivy Augustus and Kate Elizabeth Sims McLemore.

Rev. Alfred Cuthbert Sims, a civil war veteran, started clearing some of his land about 1887 or 1888, helped by his ten-year-old son, Stephen Day Sims and two older sons, Jacob Francis and James Russell Sims. In 1888 they built the "dog-trot" house that still stands in good condition. The lumber for that house came from Westbrook sawmill, located in the Pine Knot Community near the present day historical monument to George Washington Smyth, McLemore's mother, Kate Elizabeth, was born in that house, married there and lived out her life there.

I had the good fortune to tour the old place with Bobby McLemore, whom I've known since school days. I had expressed an interest in finding a linn tree; as the old timers called it, or Carolina basswood (Tilia caroliniana) as McLemore more properly identified it. He should know after spending 30 years with the U. S. Forest Service.

My interest in the linn tree lay in the fact that it was used in this area to make ox yokes. The wood was easy to shape, yet very strong, durable and lightweight. McLemore told me there was a linn tree on his property and invited me to come see it.

I took the opportunity to not only see the tree, but tour the old place. On the fence was a sign designating the property as being a Century Farm by the Texas Family Land Heritage program, stating that it had been in the same family for 100 years. Actually, it was properly listed as having been in the same family for 156 years, since 1834.

McLemore and I sat on the front porch of the dog-tro, and as I looked up at the exposed rough-sawn pine rafters of the porch roof and the pine board roof, he told me some of its history.

"That's the original roof that Grandpa Sims put on the house, when he built it in 1888. Daddy installed the tin over the board roof about 1920. The worn places on the joist above you is where the ropes to Mama's swing were fastened when she was a little girl. You can see the old log cotton house down there close to where I built my new house. Further up this way is the old wagon shed with Daddy's slide still in it. The building by it is the car shed. When Daddy traded in his Model T for a more modern car, he had to make the shed 3 boards longer. In 1913 Daddy bought the old place from Grandpa and Grandma Sims, and they moved to Erin. Out here in the 'stomps' is the old syrup house and tater house. Do you know what a stomp is?"

Yes, I knew. We had a stomp between our back yard and field where the cows gathered in the evenings around a cow chip smoke.

"We used to shear sheep and butcher hogs out there under the big beech and magnolia trees," he said. "The well you see out there with the wood curb around it is the one used to water the livestock."

We got up and walked to the back of the dog trot. "We had a well back here with the porch built around it where we kept butter and milk cool. Here's the water shelf where Daddy kept his water bucket, dipper and wash pan. He kept his lantern hanging here on the wall where it was handy since he started his day before light.

The corn shuck mop hanging there was not an original, he told me. "I built this one for the Jasper County Historical Commission. The old sugar mill is gone but we're setting up another one out there for the Historical Commission.

"Daddy was a very progressive farmer for his time, the first one in the neighborhood to have a telephone or radio. And the first gas lights. The tank would hold 200 pounds of carbide that would last about a year."

As we moved from room to room in the old house, I was amazed at the good condition and fine workmanship of the old plank doors built by Alfred Cuthbert Sims, or "Uncle Cub" as many people called him. A wooden window shutter slid as smoothly in its tract as it did in 1888.

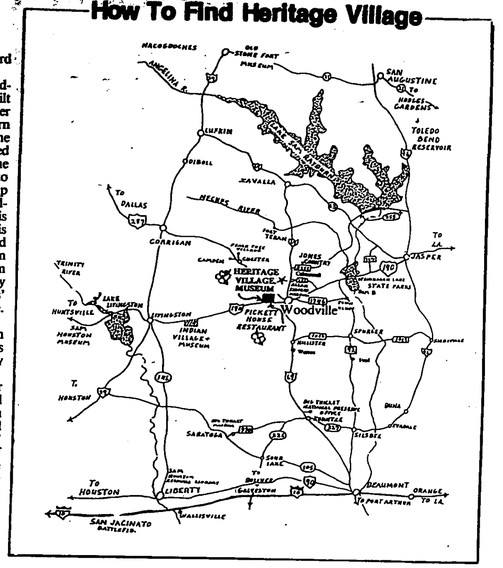
The inside kitchen was used in later years, the original kitchen being a separate structure from the house.

We ended up in the fireplace room, where I saw a cowhide bottom chair that was part of Mr. Ivy McLemore's inheritance.

After leaving the house, we drove north on a road that lays on the west portion of the property across the small wooden bridge over Spring Branch to where the larger bridge that crossed Little Walnut Run, or South Prong, was washed out. We walked a short distance west of the road, and that's where McLemore showed me the old original wagon road used by the first settlers. As the road leads up to the creek, the deep cut or trench, where the wagon wheels cut into the steep embankment, is still visible.

Bobby McLemore is justifiably proud to walk the land where his forebears walked and toiled, lived and died. There is an acute sense of nostalgia connected with a place where that many generations of one's people have lived. I have no doubt that South Prong will belong to the same family 150 years from now.

How To Find Heritage Village



Gunfight on the Rio Grande

—Border Patrolmen battled to control Mexican Rum Runners—

By T.E. Phillips

I've tried to tell this story many times, but each time, after reading what I wrote, I put it in file #13.

Some times at night I think about it and wonder what, or if, I did wrong.

You see, this was the only gun fight I was in during my 24 years in the US. Border Patrol, in which a woman was involved.

During Prohibition, when most of my gun fights took place, many of the old Pancho Villa gang still lived in Camargo, Mexico, and continued to smuggle. They had their own men and regular crossing spots on the river, where their customers would meet them.

Below Mission, however, where the Military Highway was sometimes five miles from the river, the smugglers had to bring the liquor to the highway, where trucks would be waiting for their cargo.

Of course, all Border Patrolmen were warned repeatedly not to go south of this highway. The Mexicans still considered it part of Mexico and would shoot at any officer foolish enough to do so.

At the time of my story, I was in charge of the Patrol Station at Mission. I had one older man, who had been with me before I got my promotion, and eight new men, some only a few months in the service. One of these young men was almost ready for his final examination. We had been in a couple of gun fights together, and he was very good.

There was one smuggler, especially dangerous, who had sent word to me several times to stay out of his territory. One day I heard there was to be a pick up of eight sacks of liquor at his crossing. His truck driver was the one who had passed on his warnings, so I knew exactly where they would be going. It would have been easy to have waited and arrested the driver, when he came into Mission with the liquor, but I decided to go and see just what that smuggler would do at the crossing.

I guess what I was really trying to do was show him that this was not his territory and that we would come to the river in spite of his warnings.

Taking my old officer, Harry Helmke, and the young probationer with me, we drove up the highway and hid the car, then walked to a spot on the river just below the proposed crossing, where we could see the sandbars on either side.

From our hiding place we could see the neat wagon trail the smugglers had cut down the bank on the Mexican side. On the U. S. side, their landing spot was in the middle of the sand bar. From there a trail led down to the end of the bar, then up the river bank at an angle with bushes on either side. It the ran along the river a ways before cutting straight to the highway. Our hiding place was just below the spot, where the trail left the sand bar and started up the bank.

I was hidden in some brush near the river, Harry a short distance back of me, where he could see across the river, and the young man about thirty feet below us. He was to watch for a man climbing a tree to look across the river and spot intruders.

We hadn't been there long before we heard people coming down to the river on the opposite side. We could hear a wagon and several men talking. We also heard a woman's voice, but I didn't see her.

What I did see was the man in charge, the smuggler who had sent me so many warnings. I had seen him many times in Mission. He was carrying a rifle and telling the other men what to do. First he sent a young man down river to climb an Alamo tree and check out the scene on the U. S. side. After the young man obviously gave him a clear sign, he directed his men to pull a boat from behind some bushes and put it in the water. First two men with rifles got into the boat, then a man to paddle and lastly, two sacks of liquor were put in.

When the boat landed on our side, one of the guards walked to the far end of the sand bar, the other to our end just below where the trail led up the bank right in front of our hiding spot.

I fully expected him to come up the trail, but instead the first thing he did I saw was reach up and put his rifle on top of the bank, right in front of me. I could almost touch it. Next, the man's head came up over the bank, his left hand holding on to a bush. He watched the trail for a couple of minutes then started to get on top of the bank. Just as he turned to climb up, he saw me. He grabbed his rifle with his right hand and tried to line it up with his left. I was in a position to shoot fast or die.

I knew if I shot, Harry would too. He had his sights on the boss across the river. I had no idea what the young man would do. But I did what I had practiced doing so many times during my training. I pulled the trigger. Harry's shot was like an echo, followed almost instantly by the young probationer's.

Now that my victim had fallen away from the bank, I could see the boss man lying on the bank across the river. The guard from the upper end of the sand bar came running back, calling to the boat man, who had unloaded his two sacks of liquor, to wait for him. The boat man, however, was already on his way, and when I shot the boat full of holes, he decided to swim back to Mexico.

As a last resort, the poor guard turned to shoot at us, but Harry beat him to it.

Suddenly all was quiet on the Mexican side. All the men had disappeared. I still didn't know what our young man had shot at, but as he walked out a little distance down river, I presumed it was at the man in the tree.

I asked Harry to go over and destroy the two sacks of liquor, while I watched the area on the other side, where the smugglers had been. Just as he got to them, a shot rang out from down river, just about where the man in the tree had been. When I looked I could see the smoke from the rifle. They still used black powder, and it always made a big cloud. I could also see part of a woman as she jumped behind the tree. Now she was out of sight. As I waited for her next move, the young man shot. I saw her fall.

No, I didn't shoot that woman, but there is no doubt that I would have, if she had been in my sights, as I was responsible for Harry, whom I had send out on the sand bar.

I suppose the woman had been with the young man in the tree, and when he fell, she got his rifle and tried to shoot one of us. I don't know who her target was or that it really matters.

We just threw the guard's two rifles in the river and left before a crowd gathered on the far side.

I don't know for sure that the gang reformed after their chief and three of his men were killed, and possibly that woman, but I do know we didn't hear of any more liquor being smuggled across the river at that point.

That was well over 50 years ago, but I still think about it and wonder.

Big Thicket hunters need permits

—Muzzeloaders, Shotguns allowed—

As deer hunting season gets under way, Big Thicket National Preserve Superintendent Ronald R. Switzer reminds hunters that special regulations apply on all areas managed by the Preserve.

Only hunters carrying a valid permit issued by the Preserve in addition to a state hunting license, can legally hunt in these areas, and a copy of the permit must be displayed on the dashboard of the hunter's vehicle.

For those holding permits, hunting is limited to the Beaumont, Beech Creek, Big Sandy Creek, Jack Gore Baygall, Lance Rosier and the Neches Bottom Units. No additional poermits are available for the current hunting season.

Switzer further stated that hunters in these units should remember that permanent deer stands or other structures, deer feeders or other baiting devices, the use of dogs, camping in hunting areas and the possession of alcohol while hunting are all prohibited. All firearms must be completely unloaded while in a moving vehicle or boat and are prohibited anywhere within the Preserve before or after legal hunting hours. Only .22 rim fire rifles, shotguns or muzzle-loading rifles are authorized within the Preserve. In addition, all hunters must wear at least 400 suare inches of "hunter orange' clothing. According to Switzer, park rangers will be watching hunting areas closely to ensure compliance with these regulations.

"Our first concern is for the safety of hunters and visitors during the hunting season," Switzer said. "We are also concerned, however, that the Preserve Hunting Program ensure that the resources are protected and that no hunter has an unfair advantage over other hunters who follow the rules."

Questions concerning the Big Thicket National Preserve Hunting Program may be directed to Preserve Headquarters in Beaumont at (409) 839-2689 or by contacting any National Park Ranger.

East Texas AmerIndians walk the forests in harmony

By Mary C. Johnston

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following essay was submitted to the Echo by its author, a special education teacher in Kountze, who has written numerous books for all ages on the Indians of East Texas. Her interest in these Indians came about when she realized she was teaching a unit of Indian history in her class each year, but had no real information on the Indians of the Big Thicket, where she lived. And so her research began and from that her writings. Many of her books for children can be found on the bookshelves of the Museum Store and Heritage Village Museum.

Soft moccassins once padded beneath the majestic trees of the Thicket, walking in harmony with the forest world. Only remnants exist today due to decimation of the Indian population by disease, war and forced subservience. Their sanctuary, the Thicket, suffered too. Early settlers carved homesteads, chopping the thick woods into pieces. Railroads criss-crossed the forests, exposing its heart and facilitating the exploitation of vast natural resources by timber and oil barons.

In modern times only one reservation, a few archeological artifacts and the occasional appearance of Indian curiosity vendors at East Texas flea markets remain to record the Indian's passage.

Once three groups were associated with the area, the canibalistic Atakapans, the cultured Caddoes and the displaced Alabama-Coushattas. But now, the last descendents are either corraled, interminngled and diluted or gone forever, disappearing as quickly and quietly as the morning mist.

The Atakapans

The Atakapan-speaking Indians lived between the Caddoes and the coast and occupied a stretch of territory from Louisiana, across the Sabine, and as far as the Trinity and San Jacinto Rivers. These tribes were considered dim reflections of Caddo grandeur.

Scattered throughout the region were the following Atakapan tribes: the Akokisas, perhaps meaning "river people," the Patiris, the Bidais, meaning "Brushwood," and the Deadoses. They numbered less than thirty five hundred.

Atakapans were man-eating and were distinguished by deformed heads and tatooing. They wore few clothes in summer but dressed in buffalo and animals skins in winter. For food, they survived on fish and shellfish from the coast and from hunting and gathering in the forest. Some pottery was manufactured; most was traded.

Early explorers Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso de Leon, La Salle and French officer Simars de Bellisle, who wrote a vivid description of their cannabalism, crossed Atakapan territory. In 1745, Captain Joaquin de Orobis was sent by the Spanish crown to investigate French activity. He confirmed French traders in the region bartering for hides, but no existence of settlements. Thus, several communities were established including a presidio, San Agustin de Ahumada in 1756 and a mission, Nuestra Seliora de la Luz in Liberty. Both were abaindoned in 1771.

The Bidais tribe, although friendly with the Spanish, allied themselves with the French and received firearms in return. By the 1830's only one hundred men were left. They were reported as being "good deer hunters, who planted and reaped crops of corn, and being honest and peaceful." The Bidais were moved to the Brazos Reservation in 1854 and then to Oklahoma. Many Atakapans fell victim to disease, while others intermarried into the Alabama-Coushatta tribes.

The Caddoes

The Caddo Confederacy was comprised of approximately 24 tribes organized into 3 units. They spoke a common Caddo language with minor dialectal differences and populated the Gulf Coast, primarily in the north fringes of the Big Thicket. Their society, although remembered as well-developed, productive, agricultural and highly cultural, demonstrated highly barbaric characteristics.

Caddo tribes were organized along matriarchal lines; hence, women had great authority and respect. Political office, however, were delegated to males with heredity being a determining factor. Caddoes were unique because all tribal members performed specific tasks to enhance the well-being of the community. Their political and social system closely resembled modern democracy. But here, the similarity ends.

In family situations, marriage was respected, but Caddoes practiced polygyny, whereby a man inherited his dead brother's wife and children. Destroying unwanted children at birth was an acceptable custom. Tribal shamans had great powers and sometimes commanded cruel medical treatments. Repeated failures, however, could result in their deaths.

War preparations were elaborate. Caddoes warriors took scalps and proudly displayed them on their bodies or in their doorways as a symbol of valor. Women and children often assisted in torturing prisoners of war.

Spirituality was an important dimension in Caddo life. They believed in a God figure who punished evil and rewarded good. This God originated from a strange legend about a mother and her two daughters, one of whom was a pure virgin, the other a monster. Large ceremonial centers, earthen mounds with square or rectangular flat tops, were distinguishing features in Caddo communities. Political power was interlaced with spiritual demands on the people controlled by religious leaders.

Caddo people loved tatoos and painted up for special occasions. Women painted themselves from the waist up in colored streaks, while men painted their bodies for war, using a vermillion color and bear grease. Shells, bones, feathers and pretty stones were worn in the ears and hair. Caddoes became eager consumers of European gee-gaws, glass beads and metal trinkets, when traders entered their world.

The word "Texas" originated from the Caddo word "Tayshas", meaning "friend." Although some of the first explorers were exposed to barbaric treatment, as a whole, this group of Indians were friendly to the white men. The tribes weakened dramatically when exposed to disease, and again a few intermarried into the Alabama-Coushatta tribes.

The strongest record of Caddo existence appears only in fragmented archeological artifacts and names on the map: Nacogdoches, Neches, Natchitoches and Texas. The great Caddo Confederacy as a political and social unit is no longer.

The Alabamas

In the early 1800's, the proud and peaceful Alabamas craftily traded with both the Spanish and the French. Their first home was on the Alabama River, and both the river and the state were named after them. Due to increased encroachments of white settlers, the Alabamas moved westward, but the tribe maintained neutrality and lived peacefully.

In 1840 the Congress of the Republic of Texas granted them two leagues of land. A few months later, the Indians awkardly discovered white settlers on their territory and so they drifted further, finally settling on land owned by James Barclay on Horse Pen Creek in Tyler County, Texas. In 1854, the state of Texas purchased 1,110 acres for their use as a reservation.

The Alabamas could have chosen force. Instead, they practiced patience, restraint and diplomacy. Attempts were made to move the tribe to the Lower Brazos Reserve, but in 1858, unrest and the indiscriminate shooting of Indians in that area influenced Governor Runnels to protect their transfer and establish a permanent reservation for them in East Texas. The site exists to this day in Polk County, where it has become a popular tourist site.

Coushattas

The Coushatta tribe loyally supported the colonists in 1813 as they battled the Spaniards near San Antonio. For their faithful service the Indians were repaid with nothing but broken promises.

Since 1763, the Coushattas were forced to move from place to place. Beginning near the Alabama River, they moved first to Lousiana and then into Texas, blazing a vital trail into Spanish Texas early in the 19th Century - from the Sabine River to La Bahia, known as the "Coushatta Trace."

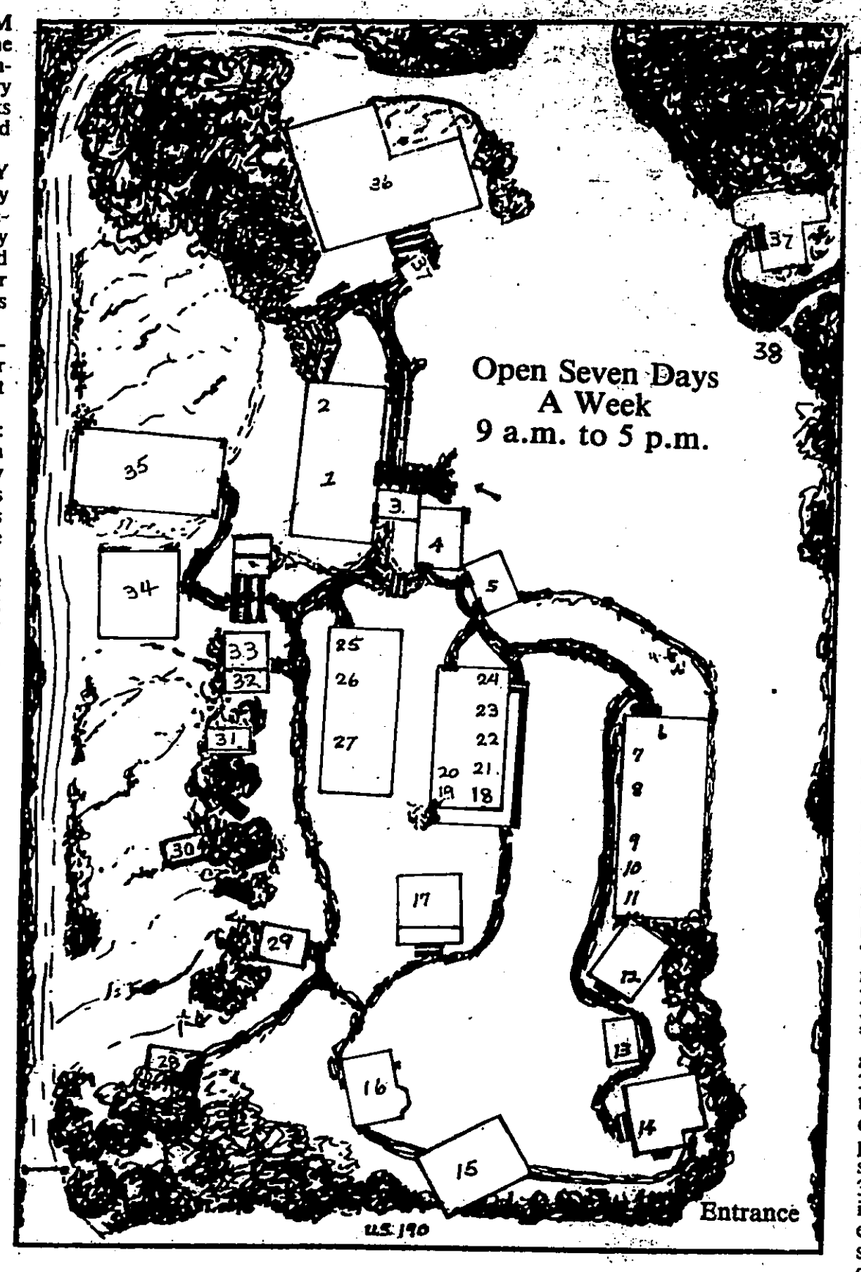
In 1830 Coushatta existence reached its peak. About 600 Indians in three independent coummunities farmed, hunted and traded with white settlers. During Texas' War For Independence, the Coushattas fed and cared for fleeing white refugees. The 1840's, however, found the tribes on the move again, as settlers attempted to claim the land. The Republic of Texas' Congress granted the Indians two leagues of land, which never materialized.

In 1855 the Texas Legislature granted the Coushattas 640 acres of land, and again, they never saw it.

The Alabama Indians, aware of their plight, welcomed the Coushattas to their reservation in 1859. In 1928, the United States Congress increased the size of the reservation to 4,181 acres and issued the deed to the "Alabama-Coushattas."

The passage of time and the colonization of the New World has not dealt kindly with the Indian peoples. Sadly, this is also true for their natural habitat, the Thicket, for the last isolated stands of virgin pine are now found on the Alabama-Coushatta reserve. It appears these gentle tribes walk in harmony still.

Heritage Village Museum: A Unique Collection Of Early Tyler County Artifacts



1.—ENTRANCE & MUSEUM STORE: Enter the Village through the Museum Store, where you'll find an intriguing collection of unique country crafts, an outstanding selection of books dealing with the history of the area, and many unusual gift items.

2.—WHITMEYER GENEALOGY LIBRARY: Research your Tyler County roots right here at the Village. Share information through our Genealogy Register, use our microfiche and microfilm readers, browse through our growing collection of family histories and books.

3.—EXHIBITION ROOM: Monthly exhibits are shown in this room to further explain the history of Tyler County that is being preserved in the Village.

4.—KILLAM JEWELRY SHOP: Talented jewelry designer John Killam demonstrates early methods of jewelry making for visitors, while operating his custom jewelry business. Many of his designs are found exclusively in the Museum Store.

5.—JUSTICE OF THE PEACE: The JP's duties once included assaying minerals, performing marriage ceremonies and handing out punishment to criminals. Former Woodville City Magistrate and Border Patrolman T.E. Phillips offers interesting evidence of his colorful careers for Village visitors.

6.—PAWN SHOP: Old time mechanical money banks in the window invite visitors inside, where a wide variety of treasures can be found that stir memories oT days gone by.

7.—WAGON SHOP: Plans are under way for reworking this area into a wagon shop and Tack Room.

8.—TEXAS DINNER BELL FACTORY. The traditional triangle, which rang across pioneer lands both as an alarm and a chow time "come and get it", is made here for sale at the Museum Store and in specialty shops coast to coast.

9.—POST OFFICE: There really was a Pluck Post Office, and Willie Reinhardt was the last Postmaster for the little mill town near Corrigan in Polk County. Inside fixtures of our reconstruction came from the original.

10.—BARBER SHOP: If you wanted a Saturday night bath, this century old barber shop could accommodate you in the back room. The 1836 copper tub once belonged to a Jefferson, Texas, blacksmith. The century old fixtures of the shop included two chairs, which could be laid back and revolved, but not raised or lowered.

11.—SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND JAIL: Every town had one, of course. The Village's offering is a replica of the type of facilities one might have found in early Tyler County days.

12.—BLACKSMITH SHOP: In use in Colmesneil in the late 1800's, this shop is now the home of the East Texas Blacksmith Alliance. Village Blacksmiths fire up the forge whenever a touring group is expected, inviting them to share in what was once one of the most important businesses in any town.

13.—CANE GRINDER AND SYRUP MILL: Horses or mules were used to turn the grinders through which sugar cane was squeezed before the slow process of cooking the juice into a delectable syrup. In the shed beyond is an old wagon donated by the late Gov. Allan Shivers, a famous Woodville son.

14.—TOLAR CABIN: Built by Robert Tolar for his bride in 1866 and donated by his ancestors, the cabin, where family members cooked their meals over the open fire well into the 1950's, was moved intact from near Hillister. It was awarded the medallion of the Texas Historical Commission in 1964.

15.—CHEROKEE CHURCH: Established in 1860 and rebuilt in 1912, Cherokee Church served the entire community northwest of Woodville for many years. The church building, which served a Baptist congregation from 1936-1986, was dismantled and rebuilt at the Village in 1990.

16.—RAILROAD DEPOT: Materials for this depot came from the 1890 station in Hillister. The loop hanging on the outside wall held the Order Stick, which the Station Master would hold out to a passing train so orders, information and outgoing mail could be picked up without the train having to slow down.

17.—COLLIER STORE: Much of the original material and furnishings are included in the reconstruction of this general store, built in Town Bluff in 1863 by Zacharia Cowart Collier.

18.—TURKEY CREEK INN: A replica of what an early hostelry looked like in Tyler County. Furnishings are being assembled to accompany the handsome upright piano donated by Phebe Armstrong and her sister, Margaret Parker.

19.—LAWYERS' OFFICE: Every so often, every one in town needed a lawyer, and it wasn't unusual to find him officing off the lobby of the local hotel.

20.—SALOON: Even a little town like Woodville once had a saloon. In fact at one time, it had several. But our Village will have only one, off the hotel lobby and behind the Apothecary.

21.—APOTHECARY SHOP: In an old time drug store, only prescriptions and home remedies were sold. The prescription counter here is from a drug store in Rockland, which was once a thriving mill town and the terminus of the railroad from Beaumont.

22.—PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE: Dr. and Mrs. Gayle Burton of Woodville are currently researching early Tyler County physicians to authenticate the refurbishing of this office.

23.—SEAMSTRESS SHOP: Recreation of an 1875-85 Shop, which in its day was a genteel way for a lady to earn a living. Joseph Gerrietts and his mother, Martha Stark, of Houston are responsible for the research and furnishings of this shop, which offers a delightful look into the world of fashion, a century ago.

24.—OPEN DEMONSTRATION AREA: Opening up the entrance to the Village, this area is used for a variety of demonstrations throughout the year, such as our white oak basket makers.

25.-TOOL SHED: The tools of the trade of a number of East Texas tradesmen, tools passed down from father to son to grandson, will be on display in this recently converted building at the head of the Village's upper level industrial area.

26.-CHAIR FACTORY. Dallas Miller operated this chair factory in Burkeville until 1964, when it was donated to the Village by his family. Besides being the best chair maker in this part of the country, Miller was also a genius in fabricating the machinery he needed to make those chairs.

27:-INDUSTRIAL AREA. Soon to be the home of the Mattress Factory, Seed Separator and other early machinery needed to keep an early Village operating.

28.-WHISKEY STILL: Once shamefully located right outside the school house, the Whiskey Still is now tucked back in the woods, where it can no longer corrupt young souls at recess.

29.-LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE: In early days, all grades were taught by one teacher, and the older students helped the younger ones with their lessons.

30.-PICNIC AREA: Nestled in the woods is a delightful picnic area, where visitors who wish to "brown bag" it can relax and enjoy.

31.-POTTERY BARN: Now the workshop of Potter Judith Haney, this log barn donated by the Dowden Family was once used as a smoke house in the Pleasant Hill Community near Spurger.

32.-SHINGLE SPLITTING: Village Volunteer Ewell Wood demonstrates the pioneer method of splitting shingles and building a sturdy cedar roof.

33.-LOG UTILITY SHED. Junior Historians, sponsored by the Tyler County Heritage Society, dismantled and reassembled this century-old structure, donated by the Tolar family of the Pleasant Hill Community.

34.-CANTILEVER LOG BARN: This 140 year old log barn came from Peach Tree Village, once the home of famed timber and oil baron, John Henry Kirby.

35.-DEMONSTRATION BARN: Since old time craft demonstrations are the life line of the Village, this open pole barn offers a perfect spot for large gatherings and workshops.

36.-PICKETT HOUSE: Country cooking is the bill of fare in this world famous eatery, housed in a turn-of-the-century school house. Open daily with an all-you-can-eat menu of fried chicken, dumplings, fresh vegetables and fruit cobblers. The antique circus posters inside are from the collection of Bubba Voss of Orange.

37.-HAMM HOUSE: Donated by the Hamm Family of Town Bluff, this ca. 1876 home is being restored as a Nature Center at the head of the Big Woods Hiking Trails.

38.-BIG WOODS HIKING TRAILS: This 11.5 acres of well-marked hiking trails offer most of the ecological treasures that can be found in the Big Thicket National Preserve, which frequently works with the Village in presenting special programs.