



EVOLUTION OF A STATE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF AUTHOR

Noah Smithwick was born in Martin Co., N. C., on the 1st day of January 1808. He came of good old revolutionary stock, his ancestors on both sides having fought in the patriot army. The Smithwicks came from England to America early in the 18th century, procuring land in North Carolina, the original title deeds to which, bearing date of 1661, are still in the family. The family was of Scotch descent. Edward, the father of Noah Smithwick, moved to Tennessee in 1814, settling near Springfield, from which place the son drifted with the tide of emigration to Texas in 1827; remaining with the state till 1861, when he moved on to California, settling first in Tulare Co., and later at Santa Anna, Orange Co., at which place he died Oct. 21, 1899, aged 91 years, 9 months and 21 days. His wife, Thurza N. (Blakey) Smithwick (prior to her marriage to him the widow Duty), also a pioneer Texan, died in 1871. Of their five children but two survive; Edward, in Santa Anna, Cal., and the writer of this sketch, now in Texas.

PREFACE

In presenting this volume to the public, I desire, in justice to the deceased author, to explain that, though the facts it embodies were furnished by the person whose name appears on the title page, owing to impairment of vision the work of preparation was of necessity committed to an amanuensis. That the material was good, probably few will deny; therefore, whatsoever of merit the work may possess, belongs of right to the author, while the amanuensis accepts whatever of blame that may attach to the defects the reader may discover.

The work primarily begun to beguile the tedium incident to the author's loss of sight was partly published in the Galveston-Dallas News, where it seemed to attract favorable notice; in so much that we were repeatedly urged to put it in book form for preservation. The extreme age of the author, he being then 89, rendered it expedient to hasten the work. Sixty years was a wide gulf for a single memory to span, and being away in California where he had neither the benefit of old associations to refresh his memory, nor the advantages of extended historical research to assist him on doubtful points, and his death occurring before the final revision was completed, it is quite possible there may be slight errors. For these, if they exist, we beg the readers' indulgence.



Nanna Smithwick Donaldson
Austin, Texas (1900)



Above Image: Smithwick at age 91

THE EVOLUTION OF A STATE
OR
RECOLLECTIONS OF OLD TEXAS DAYS

by Noah Smithwick

From the time he first arrived in Texas in 1827 at the age of nineteen, Noah Smithwick was involved many of the events in the evolution of Texas. For the next thirty-four years before leaving for California just prior to the Civil War, he became closely acquainted with many well-known Texans, several Comanche chiefs, and a large and varied assortment of early Texas pioneers.

More importantly, Smithwick was a keen observer of these passing events. His anecdotes of many of the events are recorded in his memoirs, first published in book form in 1900 by Gammel Book Company of Austin. Since that time, *The Evolution of a State* has been

reprinted in numerous formats, and remains today as perhaps the most interesting and most accurate of all memoirs about life in early Texans.

Smithwick's lucid accounts are of equal interest to the seasoned historian and the more casual reader. For the historian, the memoirs offer perspective on important events not documented in any other source. For the more casual reader, Smithwick paints a detailed picture of daily life in the days of the Republic--what people wore, what they ate, and how they found amusement amid a sometimes hard and dangerous life. It's the next best thing to being there!

Chapter I -- Journey to the Land of Promise - first impressions; Dewitt's Colony.

Chapter II -- Trip to interior - Victoria, Gonzales, LaGrange, Columbus; Karankawa Indians; Creasing a Mustang; Encounter with malarial fever; Night adventure in Brazos bottom; Ft. Bend, Bexar; Mistake of a life time; Murder of Early; An avenging Nemesis; Eventful career of the murderer.

Chapter III -- Bell's Landing (Columbia); Josiah Bell; Other old residents; Slavery; Social events; Weddings, etc.

Chapter IV -- A smuggling trip to old Mexico; First introduction to horsemeat; San Fernando; Ancient customs and prejudices; Practicing medicine; Ampirico Indians; Trip to silver mines; Smuggling adventures; An "old Moke."

Chapter V -- San Felipe de Austin; Pen pictures; Anecdotes of Prominent men; Professional men; Social happenings; Early Colonists; Duels; Colonial Poet; Character of early colonists; How it feels to be a homicide; Banished; Left a malediction on the place.

Chapter VI -- The Redlands - general character of; San of the land; Notorious counterfeiter; Mob law; Precious metal; Brown's mine; A noted horsethief.

Chapter VII -- Return to Texas; The gathering of the clans; First flag. March to San Antonio; Battle of Conception Mission.

Chapter VIII -- Joined the ranging service; First Indian fight; Rescue of Mrs. Hibbon's child; the old Tumlinson block-house.

Chapter IX -- The Mexican Invasion; Fall of the Alamo; "The runaway scrape;" Massacre of Goliad; Battle of San Jacinto; Division of Spoils; Jim Bowie; Noted Duel; Sam Houston.

Chapter X -- Army falls back to Victoria; Peter Carr; Incidents of army life; Gen. Rusk; Disbanding of army.

Chapter XI -- Rangers return to frontier; Coleman's fort; Social event in Bastrop Co.; "The Color line;" Frontier clothing; Col. Coleman; Surprising a Comanche camp.

Chapter XII -- A return surprise; Stampeding a Caballado; anecdotes of field and chase; Cure for fistula; Old frontiersmen; Commissioner to Indians.

Chapter XIII -- Camping with Comanches; Comanche language; Social and domestic customs; Indian song; Political affairs; Amusements.

Chapter XIV -- A tight place; Conclusion of treaty; Michael Andrews; Organization of Bastrop Co.; Old seals of office.

Chapter XV -- Stone House Fight; Second attempt to treat with Comanches; Narrow escapes; Tumlinson's Rangers; Eastland's Co.; Nat Turner's insurrection.

Chapter XVI -- The San Saba Indian fight; A bad horse trade; Battle of Brushy Creek; "Flacco Colonel."

Chapter XVII -- Webber's Prairie; Old settlers; Humble heroes; First postoffice; First justice; Official record; Social features; Financial affairs; Exchange.

Chapter XVIII -- Webberville founded; Mormon Mills; Frontier hospitality; Trials and tribulations; Tonkawa scalp dance; Funeral.

Chapter XIX -- Council house fight; Victoria and Linnville sacked; Plum Creek fight; Dark days; Woll's invasion; Dawson Massacre; A ride for life; Reuben Hornsby and family.

Chapter XX -- Founding of Austin City; Early arrivals; Land grabbers. John Caldwell.

Chapter XXI -- Santa Fe, Mier, and Bexar prisoners in Mexico; Stories of their suffering and illtreatment; Murder of Mark B. Lewis; The Archive War; Cherokee War.

Chapter XXII -- Annexation; R. E. B. Baylor; Mexican war; Texans in the war; Occupation by the United States Army; Army officers; Public Debt; Removal to Brushy Creek; Wolves; Neighbors; Early emigrants to California.

Chapter XXIII -- Old Ft. Croggin; Officers in command; Early settlers; Burnet Co. organized; The town of Burnet; Mormon Mills and settlement; Character of Mormons; Schools.

Chapter XXIV -- Bear hunting; Advent of Galveston News; The agents' adventure; Old acquaintances; Social gatherings; Christening of Marble Falls; Camp meetings.

Chapter XXV -- Double Horn; Hickory Creek; Smithwick's Mill; High Water; Fight with runaway slaves; Grasshoppers; Indian trail.

Chapter XXVI -- Troublous times; Fleeing from the wrath to come; Preparation for departure; The last farewell to Texas; Off for California; Incidents enroute; Scenes along the Rio Grande; Arizona; Apache Indians; A. Sidney Johnston; First encounter with Indians; Tuscon; Mysterious murder; Down the home stretch; Ft. Yuma; Last forced march; The great Colorado desert.

EVOLUTION OF A STATE

CHAPTER I

Journey to the Land of Promise - first impressions; Dewitt's Colony.

What the discovery of gold was to California the colonization act of 1825 was to Texas. In the following year Sterling C. Robertson, who had obtained a grant for a colony, for each 100 families of which he was to receive a bonus of 23,025 acres of land, went up into Kentucky recruiting. The glowing terms in which he descanted on the advantages to be gained by emigration were well calculated to further his scheme. To every head of a family, if a farmer, was promised 177 acres of farming land - bottom land or land susceptible of irrigation, for the Mexicans considered no land arable unless irrigable - and 4,428 acres of pasture land for stock; colonists to be exempt from taxation six years from date of settlement, with the privilege of importing, duty free, everything they might desire for themselves and families; an abundance of game, wild horses, cattle, turkeys, buffalo, deer and antelope by the drove. The woods abounded in bee trees, wild grapes, plums, cherries, persimmons, hews and dewberries, while walnuts, hickorynuts and pecans were abundant along the water courses. The climate was so mild that houses were not essential; neither was a superabundance of clothing or bedding, buffalo robes and bear skins supplying all that was needed for the latter and buckskin the former. Corn in any quantity was to be had for the planting, and, in short, there the primitive curse was set at defiance. Mexican soldiers were stationed on the frontier to keep the Indians in check. Of the hardships and privations, the ever increasing danger from the growing dissatisfaction of the Indians, upon whose hunting grounds the whites were steadily encroaching, and the almost certainty of an ultimate war with Mexico, he was discreetly silent. Viewed from that distance, the prospect was certainly flattering, and it should not occasion surprise that men with large families - for families increased in geometrical ratio those days - were induced to migrate thither with the hope of securing homes for themselves and children.

I was but a boy in my nineteenth year, and in for adventure. My older brothers talked of going. They, however, abandoned the project; but, it had taken complete possession of me, so early in the following year, 1827, I started out from Hopkinsville, Kentucky, with all my worldly possessions, consisting of a few dollars in money, a change of clothes, and a gun, of course, to seek my fortune in this lazy man's paradise. Incredible as it may seem to the present generation, seeing the country traversed from ocean to ocean and lakes to gulf with innumerable lines of railroad, there was not then a mile of railroad in operation in the United States; and though twenty years had elapsed since the Clermont made her triumphal trip from New York to Albany, few steamboats plied the western waters and none had ventured out to

sea. I saw the first one that went up the Cumberland river - the Rifleman, a sternwheeler. Its progress was so slow that one had to take sight by stationary objects to determine if it moved. The stage coach, being the only public overland conveyance, took me down to the mouth of the river, where I intended to take steamer for New Orleans; but the steamboat had not arrived and no one knew when it would. My impatience could not brook delay, so I took passage on a flatboat, or as they were known in river parlance, a "Mississippi broadhorn," the poor man's transfer. Out on the broad bosom of the Father of Waters these boats floated from the Ohio, the Cumberland, the Tennessee and numerous smaller tributaries, laden with the products of the vast region contiguous, to be floated down to New Orleans and thence distributed around the seaboard by sailing vessels. The flatboat having served its purpose, it was broken up and sold for lumber and fuel, while the owner pocketed his cash and wended his way home, generally on foot up through Mississippi, where he was liable to be interviewed by footpads and relieved of his money if not his life. Many were the gruesome stories of robbery and murder thus committed by old John A. Merrill and his band of freebooters. My transport was loaded with ice, artificial ice being a thing unheard of. The crew consisted of three men, whose principal duty was to look out for "sawyers," sunken trees, and to keep clear of eddies, for a boat once drawn into the swirl would go floating around indefinitely, in danger of colliding with the ever-accumulating drift and being sunk. As flatboats never returned and seldom passed each other, the slow, leisurely drifting, day after day, became intolerably monotonous. So I stopped off at Natchez and waited for a steamboat. Very poetical it was, no doubt, this dropping down with the rippling stream, but I had not started out in search of the poetical. By the time I reached New Orleans my exchequer was running low and mechanics were getting big wages, so I went to work as finisher in the old Leeds foundry. It was but a small affair, then employing only about twenty-five men. When I revisited it in 1835 it had spread over a whole block and employed over a hundred hands. It was a rough place for a boy to drift into. The men all got good wages and most of them spent their money either at the gambling table or in other disreputable resorts. When I went to work they eyed me with displeasure. I was so young to stand up beside old mechanics and do equal work; but they soon found more serious cause for dissatisfaction; I did too much work. Finally old Father Blair, the pattern maker, who took a friendly interest in me, cautioned me to go slow or I would have all the men down on me. I was "green from the states" then and felt indignant at being told that I must shirk. "Our employer pays me for my time; do I not owe him all I am capable of doing in that time?" "No," said they, "he pays for so much work. You get no more for your big day's work than we do for ours, and if you go on like this you will make trouble for the rest of us," and the words were accompanied by a look that said plainly, "No sprig of a boy must presume to set the pace for us," and so I was forced to slow down and drift with the tide. This was Labor Unionism in its incipiency.

When the sickly season came on and the men began to leave, I again took up the line of march for Texas, this time on board a coasting schooner owned by parties in New Orleans, chartered by Carlisle & Smith and laden with supplies for the Mexican army. A steam tug towed us out

to the mouth of the Mississippi as far as steamers ventured. The weather was lovely as a dream of Venice, and we rounded the Balize and sped away on the wings of the trade winds over the placid waters. We passed Galveston island in plain view. There was no sign of human habitation on it; nothing to give promise of the thriving city which now covers it. It was only noted then as having been the rendezvous of Lafitte and his pirates, and as such was pointed out to me. The trip was a delightful one and I was in fine spirits, when on the third day we threaded the Paso Caballo and ran into Matagorda bay, having made the run in a little over forty-eight hours, a remarkable record in those days. We cast anchor in the mouth of the Lavaca river, where we had calculated to find the Mexican troops, but the movements of the troops, as well as the government, were very uncertain, and there were no troops, no agent, no one authorized to receive the goods. There was not an American there. The colonization law exempted from settlement all land within twenty-five miles of the coast, so the territory was given over to the Karankawa Indians, a fierce tribe, whose hand was against every man. They lived mostly on fish and alligators, with a man for fete days when they could catch one. They were the most savage looking human beings I ever saw. Many of the bucks were six feet in height, with bows and arrows in proportion. Their ugly faces were rendered hideous by the alligator grease and dirt with which they were besmeared from head to foot as a defense against mosquitoes. They rowed outside to our vessel in their canoes, but Carlisle warned them to leave their arms on shore, enforcing the argument by the presence of a wicked looking little cannon, which was conspicuously pointed in their direction. The mate and I had made special preparations for their reception, having molded several pints of bullets with which to load the cannon, and we were eager for a chance to turn it loose among them, but they gave us no provocation. It was a dreary place for a lone stranger to land. A few Mexicans came around, but they spoke no English and I understood no Spanish. At length two men, Fulcher and McHenry, who had squatted on land six or eight miles up the river, sighted the schooner and came down in a dugout. They took me in with them and I spent my first night in Texas in their cabin. My first meal on Texas soil was dried venison sopped in honey.

After having spent some months in New Orleans, where everything of the known world was obtainable, it looked like rank starvation to me, but I was adaptive. The sea voyage had sharpened my appetite and I was possessed of a strong set of grinders, so I set to and made a meal, but I was not anxious to trespass on their hospitality, so next morning I set out on foot for Dewitt's colony, ten miles further up the Lavaca. Even at that early date there was a controversy between the government and colonists with regard to the meaning of the line of reserve, the government contending that it was ten leagues from the indentation of the gulf and bays and the colonists that it was ten leagues from the outer line of the chain of islands that extend around the coast, precisely the claim that England is now setting up in Alaska. The Texans made their claim stick; it remains to be seen how John Bull will come out. Fulcher accompanied me up to the station. The beautiful rose color that tinged my visions of Texas while viewing it through Robertson's long-distance lens paled with each succeeding step. There were herds of fine, fat deer, and antelope enough to set one wild who had never killed

anything bigger than a raccoon, but, to my astonishment and disgust, I could not kill one, though I was accounted a crack marksman; but I found it was one thing to shoot at a mark, the exact distance of which I knew, and another to hit game at an uncertain distance.

The colonists, consisting of a dozen families, were living - if such existence could be called living - huddled together for security against the Karankawas, who, though not openly hostile, were not friendly. The rude log cabins, windowless and floorless, have been so often described as the abode of the pioneer as to require no repetition here; suffice it to say that save as a partial protection against rain and sun they were absolutely devoid of comfort. Dewitt at first established his headquarters at Gonzales, and the colonists had located their land in that vicinity, but the Indians stole their horses and otherwise annoyed them so much, notwithstanding the soldiers, that they abandoned the colony and moved down on the Lavaca, where they were just simply staying. The station being in the limits of the reserve, they made no pretense of improving it, not even to the extent of planting corn, one of the first things usually attended to, for the Texan Indians, unlike their eastern brethren, scorned to till the soil, and the few Mexicans scattered through the country did so only to the extent of supplying their own wants; so when the colonists used up the breadstuff they brought with them they had to do without until they raised it. This, however, was no very difficult matter near the coast, where there were vast canebrakes all along the rivers. The soil was rich and loose from the successive crops of cane that had decayed on it. In the fall, when the cane died down, it was burned off clean. The ground was then ready for planting, which was done in a very primitive manner, a sharpened stick being all the implement necessary. With this they made holes in the moist loam and dropped in grains of corn. When the young cane began to grow they went over it with a stick, simply knocking it down; the crop was then laid by.

Game was plenty the year round, so there was no need of starving. Men talked hopefully of the future; children reveled in the novelty of the present; but the women - ah, there was where the situation bore heaviest. As one old lady remarked, Texas was "a heaven for men and dogs, but a hell for women and oxen." They - the women - talked sadly of the old homes and friends left behind, so very far behind it seemed then, of the hardships and bitter privations they were undergoing and the dangers that surrounded them. They had not even the solace of constant employment. The spinning wheel and loom had been left behind. There was, as yet, no use for them - there was nothing to spin. There was no house to keep in order; the meager fare was so simple as to require little time for its preparation. There was no poultry, no dairy, no garden, no books, or papers as nowadays - and, if there had been, many of them could not read - no schools, no churches - nothing to break the dull monotony of their lives, save an occasional wrangle among the children and dogs. The men at least had the excitement of killing game and cutting bee trees. It was July, and the heat was intense. The only water obtainable was that of the sluggish river, which crept along between low banks thickly set with tall trees, from the branches of which depended long streamers of Spanish moss swarming with mosquitoes and pregnant of malaria. Alligators, gaunt and grim - certainly the most hideous creatures God

ever made - lay in wait among the moss and drift for any unwary creature that might come down to drink. Dogs, of which every well regulated family had several, were their special weakness, and many a thirsty canine drank and never thirsted more. This was not perhaps from any partiality for dog meat; on the contrary, when the alligator went foraging under cover of night he evinced a decided preference for human flesh, particularly negroes, and many blood-curdling stories were told of alligators stealing into sleeping camps and seizing an inmate. One story, in particular, I remember as being told by an eye-witness. A company of emigrants were camped at the mouth of the Brazos waiting for teams to take them up to Austin's colony. One night they were aroused by piercing screams, and rushing to the place from whence they proceeded found a huge alligator making for the river, dragging a 14-year-old negro girl by the arm. He had crawled into a tent, where a number of persons were sleeping, and, whether from accident or choice I cannot say, seized the darky and struck a bee-line for the river, which he would have reached on time with his prey but for his inveterate foes, the aforesaid dogs, who rushed upon him and, though finding no vulnerable point of attack, swarmed around, harassing and delaying his retreat till the men pulled themselves together and came to the rescue, when, seeing the odds decidedly against him, his alligatorship relinquished his prize and sought his own safety in the river. Their bellow was just such a hideous sound as might be expected to issue from the throat of such a hideous creature, and was of itself enough to chase away sleep, unassisted by the tuneful mosquito, whose song, like the opera singer's, has a business ring in it. I had heard the bellowing nightly while in New Orleans, but heard amid the noise and lights of the city there lurked in it no suspicion of the horror it could produce when heard amid the gloom and solitude of the wilderness. Wolves and owls added their voices to the dismal serenade. I had heard them all my life, but I had yet to learn the terrible significance that might attach to the familiar howl and hoot. The whippoorwill's silvery notes filled in the interludes, but they seemed strangely out of tune amid such surroundings.

Newcomers were warmly welcomed and entertained with all the hospitality at the command of the colonists. Sleeping accommodations were limited to mosquito bars, a provision not to be despised, since they were absolutely indispensable to sleep. The bill of fare, though far from epicurean, was an improvement on dried venison and honey, in that the venison was fresh and cooked, and Colonel Dewitt, my host, had bread, though some families were without. Flour was \$10 a barrel. Trading vessels came in sometimes, but few people had money to buy anything more than coffee and tobacco, which were considered absolutely indispensable. Money was as scarce as bread. There was no controversy about "sound" money then. Pelts of any kind passed current and constituted the principal medium of exchange.

Children forgot, many of them had never known, what wheaten bread was like. Old Martin Varner used to tell a good story of his little son's first experience with a biscuit. The old man had managed to get together money or pelts enough to buy a barrel of flour. Mrs. Varner made a batch of biscuits, which, considering the resources of the country, were doubtless heavy as

lead and hard as wood. When they were done Mrs. Varner set them on the table. The boy looked at them curiously, helped himself to one and made for the door with it. In a few minutes he came back for another. Doubting the child's ability to eat it so quickly, the old man followed him to see what disposition he made of the second. The ingenious youngster had conceived a novel and not altogether illogical idea of their utility. He had punched holes through the center, inserted an axle and triumphantly displayed a miniature Mexican cart. And I assure you, from my recollection of those pioneer biscuits, they were capable of sustaining a pretty heavy load; shouldn't wonder if that was the first inception of the paper car wheel. Game was the sole dependence of many families and I fixed up many an old gun that I wouldn't have picked up in the road, knowing that it was all that stood between a family and the gaunt wolf at the door, as well as the Indians. Domestic animals were so scarce that the possession of any considerable number gave notoriety and name to the possessor; thus there were "Cow" Cooper and "Hog" Mitchell. Failing to secure more choice game, there were always mustangs to fall back on. Over on the Brazos lived Jared E. Groce, a planter from South Carolina, who had over 100 slaves, with which force he set to work clearing ground and planting cotton and corn. He hired two men to kill game to feed them on, and the mustangs being the largest and easiest to kill the negroes lived on horse meat till corn came in.

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CHAPTER II

Trip to interior - Victoria, Gonzales, LaGrange, Columbus; Karankawa Indians; Creasing a Mustang; Encounter with malarial fever; Night adventure in Brazos bottom; Ft. Bend, Bexar; Mistake of a life time; Murder of Early; An avenging Nemesis; Eventful career of the murderer.

The outlook was a gloomy one to me. Colonel Dewitt having a colony to settle, was as enthusiastic in praise of the country as the most energetic real estate dealer of boom towns nowadays, but land had no attractions for me, as I had a strong aversion to tearing up God's earth, to which fact I owe what little schooling I got. Disliking the restraint of school, I was given the alternative of going to school or working on the farm. That seeming to be the least of the two evils I chose the school, which I abandoned for the gun and blacksmith trades, becoming sufficiently skilled therein to do journey-work before I was eighteen. There were plenty of old guns to work on, but no tools, and no money to pay for work. By this time the last vestige of color had faded from my landscape, and if there had been an opportunity, I think I should have turned my back on it before it assumed a more than leaden hue. About that time Elhanan Gibbs came round from the salt works at the mouth of the Brazos, where Asa Mitchell, the first settler there, had opened a salt factory, bringing a load of salt. He wanted to take a trip inland and wanted a traveling companion. Glad to avail myself of any opportunity to get away from the stagnation of the station, I promptly offered my services. Gibbs was a hardy, muscular man, and looking doubtfully at my boyish face, he said: "My son, I'm afraid your face is 'most too smooth to keep me company." My pride was up in arms at once; was I not almost twenty, and had I not stood up beside men in shops day after day and done more work than any of them? I drew myself up to my fullest height and answered with dignity: "When I give out, Mr. Gibbs, you needn't wait for me. You can go ahead and leave me." With that understanding we started out. There were no horses to be had, but we were directed to a wealthy old Mexican ranchero over on the Guadalupe who had horses galore. We struck out on foot and reached Victoria, or De Leon's town, as it was then called, without accident or incident worthy of relation.

There was but one white man in the place and with him we stopped. After supper we heard a regular series of hand-claps going on which naturally reminded us of the "Juba" dance among the negroes. "Let's go round there and see those fellows pat Juba," said Gibbs. We approached a hut from which the sound seemed to emanate; but, instead of the merry dancers we expected to find, there was a woman down on her knees before a little bed of glowing coals on which lay a piece of sheet iron on which a couple of tortillas were baking, while by a series of pats

she was preparing a third one for the griddle. There the patient creature knelt with her bowl of hulled corn beside her on one side and her metate on the other. The metate is simply two flat stones between which the softened corn is mashed into dough, after which it is rolled and patted and tossed in the oven, i. e., on the heated iron; the manipulator keeping up the milling and baking with the regularity of clock work, taking off one, turning another and putting on a third, then preparing another until there is enough for the family meal.

Martin De Leon had settled his grant with Mexicans, most of them being his peons and vaqueros. He had a large stock of both horses and cattle, and between the Comanches, who stole his horses, and the Cronks, as the Karankawas were called, who killed his cattle, he had a troublous time of it. Becoming exasperated at the constant depredations of the Cronks, he determined to take matters into his own hands. He organized his retainers into an army, and mounting a four-pounder swivel gun on a jackass, set out to annihilate the tribe. He ran them to cover, brought his artillery to bear and touched it off, but he did not take the precaution to brace up the jackass, and the recoil turned him a flying somersault, landing him on top of the gun with his feet in the air, a position from which he was unable to extricate himself. The Mexicans got around him and tried to boost him, but the jackass had had enough of that kind of fun and philosophically declined to rise until released from his burden, so they had to dismount the jackass. By that time the Indians had disappeared and if any were killed they were taken off the field.

Captain Buckner, one of the first white men in the colonies, concocted a scheme to rid the country of both Karankawas and Tonkawas. Buckner kept a trading post down on Bay prairie. The two tribes of Indians were always bickering with each other and finally agreed to meet at a certain time and place and fight it out. The Karankawas came and reported the arrangement to Buckner and said if they only had arms and ammunition they would make short work of their foes. Buckner readily furnished the munitions of war, and directly the Tonks came with the same plea for assistance. The obliging Buckner also fitted them out and when the time for the battle arrived, repaired to the designated field of conflict, field glass in hand, hoping to see both parties annihilated. The meeting place was a prairie half a mile across. The Cranks came yelling out of a belt of timber on one side, and the Tonks from a similar shelter on the other, and both opened fire before they were within striking distance, shooting away all Buckner's ammunition without drawing a drop of blood; each party retiring in good order and claiming a glorious victory.

The Karankawas seem to have disappeared with the dominion of Mexico; just how I don't know; but there was a story to the effect that Captain Dimmit was incidentally the prime factor in the problem. Dimmit had a ranch near the mouth of Lavaca at a place called Dimmit's landing. Finding a pacific policy best in dealing with the Cronks, he was in the habit of giving them beef whenever they came around. During the Texas revolution Dimmit left to aid in the struggle. The Indians, knowing nothing of the nature of the trouble, went to Dimmit's ranch and finding it deserted went out and drove in the cattle and helped themselves to a beef. While

thus engaged a party of Mexican soldiers came up and demanded to know what they were doing. "Oh," said the Indians, "it's all right; we are Captain Dimmit's friends." Upon hearing that, the Mexicans charged them, killing some and putting the rest to flight. The unlucky Cronks next met a party of Americans, and fearing another attack, shouted "Viva Mexico!" whereupon the Americans fell upon them and the remnant that escaped, either hid themselves in the canebrakes or took to their canoes and paddled out to sea. At any rate, I don't remember of ever hearing of them after the revolution.

Senor De Leon was the very essence of hospitality, as, indeed, I found the Mexicans everywhere to be. He had his caballada driven in for us to choose from. The vaqueros rode in among them, carajoining and swinging their lariats, the horses reared and snorted, and we concluded walking would be pleasant pastime compared to riding such steeds, so we continued our journey on foot. The weather was so hot that we were obliged to lay up a good part of the day, and so were nine days going from Victoria to Gonzales, and it rained every day. The streams were all swollen, and as Gibbs could not swim, I had to raft him across when the water was too deep to wade. We trudged through black mud, wading and swimming streams, sleeping on wet grass, killing and broiling our meat, our only care being to keep our powder dry. Gonzales consisted of two block houses and the inhabitants of two men, John W. Smith and ---- Porter, the families having all gone down to DeWitt's station. Finding nothing to tempt us to further explorations, and still unable to procure horses, we struck out for the Colorado. There were droves of handsome, sleek mustangs all around, and Gibbs concluded to catch one. It was said that a shot through a certain place in the top of the neck, called "creasing," would stun a horse and cause it to fall, when if one would be quick about it he could get a rope on it before it could recover. Gibbs killed a wild cow, braided a lariat of the hide and watched for a favorable opportunity to "crease" a mustang. By and by a drove came down to drink, and selecting a fine specimen, he fired. The horse fell and lay quivering. Gibbs dropped his gun, grabbed his lariat, ran up to the prostrate courser, slipped a noose over his head, and taking a turn around a tree, braced himself and waited for his prize to recover; but the horse never even kicked. He had broken its neck.

We reached the Colorado at Burnham's station, a few miles below where LaGrange now stands, then the highest settlement on the river. There Gibbs procured a horse and returned to the mouth of the Brazos, where he soon after died. Things looked more promising there than any place I had seen. The settlers were doing some farming and all had milk cows, poultry, etc. Corn was in "roasting ear" and the people feasting. They boiled it and fried it and roasted it, either by standing the husked ears on end before the fire and turning them till browned all around or buried them husk and all in hot ashes, the sweetest way green corn was ever cooked. When the corn began to harden they made graters of old tinware, coffee pots being most in vogue. They were ripped open and spread flat on a board and punched full of ragged holes. They were then bent into an oval and the straight edges nailed to a hoard. The corn was of the large, soft, white Mexican variety and grated easily, and the bread was very rich and sweet, if

a bit heavy. Next came the mortar and sweep. A good, sound tree was cut off some three or four feet above the ground, and the stump was hollowed out by alternate burning and scraping till it would hold sometimes a peck of shelled corn. Then a long pole, to the butt end of which a pestle was attached, was swung into the fork of an adjacent tree and the corn pounded into meal, which, often without sifting or salt, was mixed with water and baked, not a very tempting dish from an epicurean standpoint, but to people who had not tasted bread for months it was a delicious change. When cold weather came on there were huge kettles of "lye hominy." Captain Jesse Burnham had a nice family, one only of whom is at present living. He was anxious to have a school and when he found that I had mastered the rudiments of the three "R's" he offered me a situation as teacher. But I had no predilection for pedagogy. Upon inquiry I learned that there was a shop down at Judge Cummin's station, some miles below on the Colorado, so I went down there. The judge had two daughters and there were the two Miss Beasons, all nice, agreeable girls, and altogether it was not a bad place to stop, so I went to work. Here too I first met Captain Jim Ross and Colonel John H. Moore, who later married the Misses Cummins. But the unaccustomed exposure incidental to my jaunt brought on fever and I was bedridden for weeks. There was no doctor, but the judge was equal to the occasion. He nursed me as tenderly as if I had been his son. By the time I was able to get around any last cent was gone and I had even sold part of my clothes and I was the most homesick boy that ever left a comfortable home and loving, indulgent parents in search of adventure. In that condition Colonel Little, a man who had known my father in the old north state, found me. He had been over into Mexico for a drove of mules, which he was taking back. Shocked to find me so far from home amid such surroundings, he offered to take me home, an offer which I was all too glad to accept. I was very weak, but the thought of getting home buoyed me up to make the attempt. Colonel Little fitted me out with a nice easy-gaited horse and I started but I had miscalculated my strength and by the time we reached San Felipe I was exhausted. Colonel Little, loth to leave me, waited for me to rest up and I made another start, but only got across the Brazos, where I was again prostrated and my friend was obliged to leave me.

I found asylum in the family of Churchill Fulshear, who took me in and with the rude hospitality which ever characterizes frontier people, did all in their power to alleviate my suffering, but, living, as they did, without any of the conveniences even of those times, it was impossible to do more than supply actual necessities. As I lay there day after day, burning with fever, tormented with gnats and mosquitoes, and loathing the coarse and unpalatable food which was all those good Samaritans had to offer, I would have given the whole territory of Texas had it been mine, to feel myself once more at home in a comfortable bed, with mother's loving face beside me. So thoroughly homesick was I that I was determined to resume my journey as soon as I got able, even if I had to walk. I thought if I could only get down to the mouth of the Brazos, where vessels came in, I could get back to New Orleans, where I had friends who would help me home. As soon as I felt able to undertake the jaunt I thanked my kind entertainers - I had nothing else to give - and started out to walk by easy stages. I skirted the river timber for several miles till I struck a trail leading through the bottom to Fort Bend

(Richmond), where White & Knight had a trading post and ferry. My weakness prevented me from making good time and night overtook me while I was still some miles short of my destination. It was not an enviable situation. Weak, unarmed, not even a pocket knife - I had parted with everything except the clothes I had on - alone in a dense forest inhabited by Mexican lions, panthers, leopards and numerous smaller members of the feline race, all more or less inimical to man. There was no moon, and the tall timber made a darkness so intense that I had to feel rather than see my way along the narrow trail. I confess I felt rather uncomfortable, and every time a twig snapped I looked and listened for some nocturnal beast of prey. Now and then there was a rustle of leaves as some small animal scurried away in the darkness. With every sense alert and strained, I at length descried a moving object in the trail a short distance ahead of me. Concentrating all my powers of vision upon it, I made out that it was traveling leisurely in the same direction as myself, apparently unconscious of my presence. I walked on, unintentionally gaining on it, when, to my horror, it suddenly stopped and seemed to swell to double its former size. I could see that it was mottled light and dark, and at once jumped to the conclusion that it was a leopard. Knowing that it was a characteristic of all the cat family to turn their hair the wrong way when displeased, I felt my hair raise, for I thought he was about to spring upon me. Presently he started on and, it being out of the question to turn back, and not caring to remain in the woods, I had no alternative but to follow. Not daring to lose sight of him, lest he lie in wait for me, I kept along at a respectful distance behind. His pace was exasperatingly slow, and again and again when I got a little too near to suit him he stopped, and every time he seemed to take on greater dimensions. This process of doubling had by this time brought him up to the size of an ordinary dog, and feeling that it would be extremely hazardous to permit any further increase in his proportions, I desperately resolved to bring matters to a crisis. I stooped, still keeping my eye on the enemy, and felt around for a good sized club. Trying it on the ground to test its soundness, I took it in my left hand and felt for another, resolved to make the best fight possible. Thus armed, I started on. Again the animal halted and I felt that the time for decisive action had arrived. I raised my chunk and with a strength born of desperation, hurled it at him and grabbed the missile from my left hand to be ready in case he should resent my familiarity. But there was no need. My shot struck him square and landed him some distance ahead, and then - well, then he didn't look any bigger than a polecat. With the release from excitement came the reaction; my overtaxed strength gave way and I wouldn't swear that I didn't cry. Anyway I had to sit down and rest before I could proceed.

Waiting till the smoke - or rather scent - of battle cleared a little, I went on and soon saw the welcome gleam of light that betokened a human habitation, and never was the sight more welcome. Hungry and worn out, I reached the cabin, where Captain White received me and ministered to my needs. In return I recounted my adventure, the denouement of which elicited roars of laughter, in which I could then afford to join. The next morning I crossed the river and went my way. Before I was out of the timber I met a panther face to face. We both stopped, one as much surprised as the other. I yelled at him, but he didn't budge. I suppose he wanted to

see what manner of beast or bird I was, probably never having seen a white man before. He made no hostile demonstration, so I yelled again, when, apparently satisfied with his observations, he turned and went his way. He was a big fellow, but he didn't look half so formidable as the polecat. I have faced death many times since, when bullets and arrows flew thick around me, but I never afterwards felt the sickening horror that seized me every time that wretched little skunk stopped and threw up his brush.

The next settlement I struck was Josiah Bell's, where Columbia now stands. There I learned that Johnny McNeal, out on the gulf prairie, was in need of a blacksmith. There were quite a family of the McNeals. They had raised a crop of cotton and were building a gin. They had a shop and tools, and so I went out and in the intervals between relapses of the fever I made the gin irons. Iron was a scarce article, but we found an ample supply in the wreck of an old vessel that lay high and dry in a belt of timber at least five miles back from the gulf. The timbers were all rotted away; the knotted hearts of two pine trees that had once been the masts alone remaining. The irons though deeply encrusted with rust, were in a fair state of preservation. There was nothing to give a clue to its age or nationality. It had evidently been there many a long year, probably driven ashore by a tidal wave, or one of those fierce tornadoes which sometimes drive the water far out over the prairie. It may have been one of La Salle's vessels.

Sterling McNeal was something of a doctor and he treated me so successfully that I soon began to mend. The members of the family were the embodiment of kindness. By this time the weather was growing cool and I went bear hunting with the boys, and my homesickness melted away. I shot away many pounds of lead in vain attempts to kill a deer, but the balls invariably struck the ground many yards short of the intended victim. At last old Johnny McNeal told me not to fire till I could see the eyes. Acting on the suggestion, I went out one day alone and brought in a deer on my back, as proud and happy as a boy with his first pantaloons. The boys saw me coming and raised a shout: "Run here everybody; Smithwick's killed a deer." They lifted me and the deer on their shoulders and bore us in triumph to the house. After that it was no trouble for me to kill deer. The Mexican garrison at San Antonio was in need of an armorer and Stephen F. Austin procured me the appointment. I was quite elated with the prospect, but when I got to San Antonio I found everything so different to anything I had ever before encountered that I was thoroughly disgusted. There were but few Americans there, and but one American family. Captain Dimmit, with whom I stopped, had a Mexican wife and was, for all practical purposes, a Mexican. I had to do all business through an interpreter. The upper crust of society took no notice of me and the under crust was, to my mind, much lower than the negro slaves, and I couldn't think of coming down to their level. Old Gasper Flores was land commissioner and had almost unlimited power in the way of land grants. He offered me any quantity of land, accompanied by the hand of his daughter, a little squatty girl, dark, almost, as an Indian. I was young then and disposed to be rather fastidious in such matters, and so declined the honor of the alliance, thus throwing away the chance of a lifetime.

The tools they offered me to work with were at least a century old in design. The anvil was simply a square block of iron; the bellows, two cylinders into which were fitted valvular pistons, worked by hand; the operator standing behind and working them alternately. And such hammers! They baffle description. The Comandante offered to send to New Orleans and get an outfit if I would make out a list, but I was not to be tempted by even such flattering deference to my judgment, so after a ten days' sojourn, I foolishly threw up my commission and, in company with ---- Duncan and "Mustang" Brown, set out on my return to San Felipe. At the Salado we met a couple of men, with one of whom (Parker) I was slightly acquainted. Upon learning my destination he handed me \$6 in silver and an old brass pistol with the request that I deliver them to Cooper & Cheaves, who had a store in San Felipe. At Gonzales we stopped with Joe McCoy; Joe was a famous mustang catcher and had just made a catch. Among the lot was a nice looking black mare which proved to be perfectly gentle, she took my fancy and I traded my horse for her. Arriving at San Felipe I went straight to the store of Cooper & Cheaves to deliver the goods committed to my care by Parker. Cooper - commonly called "Sawmill Cooper," from having been engaged in the business of manufacturing lumber - was at once attracted by the mare. He walked around her, looked at the brand and asked me where I got her. I told him. "H'm," said he, "it's a little curious." "Why?" I asked, somewhat nettled by his air of incredulity. "Why, that's the very mare we sold to Early, who left here about two weeks ago with Parker to go over to Mexico to buy mules." "I met Parker," I replied, "but the only man I saw with him was Tomlinson." Several persons had gathered around, and there appearing to be something peculiar about it, I called on my two traveling companions to verify my statement and relieve me from an awkward position. Early was a comparative stranger, having lately come in from Kentucky with quite a sum of money, which he proposed investing in Spanish mules, they being in demand for farming purposes in the cotton states. Being unacquainted with the country and language, he wanted some one to go with him, for which service Parker was engaged. Being flat broke, Parker borrowed from Cooper \$6 and a pistol, which some strange motive prompted him to return by me. There was certainly something suspicious about it, but San Antonio was 300 miles away and the only means of communication was by chance travelers, but as time passed on and Early did not return, Ned Cullen, an old acquaintance of his, became uneasy and began to make inquiries, which revealed the fact that Parker was in San Antonio spending money freely, but nothing had been seen of Early. At this juncture Parker, ignorant of the turn affairs had taken, returned to San Felipe. On being questioned he said that Early had gone on to Mexico, but upon being confronted with the facts in possession of Cullen and others, he betrayed such evident confusion that he was at once placed under arrest pending investigation. There was no jail, so I was called on to put him in irons, the first time I had ever performed such an office, but I put them on to stay until the affair was cleared up, for, as you may readily suppose, I felt resentful for the suspicion he had laid me under. A searching party was made up, and at Plum creek, where the mare was found, they discovered the remains of Early, together with his saddle, bridle, blankets and saddlebags, all sunk in a hole in the creek. They had been deposited there when the creek was flush and were well hidden till the fall of the water exposed them. The

mare had been turned loose with the mustangs, which an avenging Nemesis delivered into the hands of Joe McCoy.

Texas and Coahuila then constituted one state, with the seat of government at Saltillo, and in all Texas there was no tribunal for the trial of murder cases. The custom was to take down the evidence and send it to Saltillo. While this was being done it transpired that Parker was not his true name, which, for the sake of an honest family, I withhold. Under circumstances similar to the present he had murdered a man in his native state, of which his father was at the time governor. The evidence was so conclusive that all efforts to save him were futile, though the trial was obstructed in every way possible and his father well nigh impoverished himself trying to defeat the ends of justice. Parker lay in jail nearly two years and at length in a fit of despair attempted to cut his throat, but either his strength failed him or his courage, and he only succeeded in severing the windpipe, which would have answered every purpose but for the interposition of the physician, who inserted a silver tube to secure his breathing. Failing to secure his release, after exhausting every other means, the heart-broken father - a father still, even to the extent of sacrificing his honor - exercised his executive prerogative to save his guilty son from the gallows and immediately resigned his office. The murderer fled from the fury of an indignant populace and sought safety in that land of refuge - Texas - only to continue his career of crime. The facts in the Early murder case were taken before the alcalde and dispatched to Saltillo, but, before there was any return made, Parker was taken sick; there was no physician near, and he was left to the care of old Jimmy Whiteside, who finally announced that he was dead and, assisted by his negro man, forthwith proceeded to prepare the body for burial, accounting for the haste on the ground that, having died of fever and the weather being very warm, decomposition at once ensued. There was no coroner, and, when the few whom curiosity led thither arrived at Whiteside's cabin, the body was already nailed top in a rough box, from which a sickening odor emanated. Everybody was satisfied, and the incident was almost forgotten when a citizen of San Felipe, having business in Mobile, Ala., met and talked with Parker in the flesh. On returning to San Felipe he reported the meeting; the coffin was exhumed and found to contain only a cottonwood chunk, which, when green, was about the weight of a man. The artful scoundrel had worked on Whiteside's sympathies with a pitiful story of persecution, from which he was trying to escape to Mexico, of a quarrel with Early whom he was forced to kill in self defense, and thus prevailed on his kind-hearted jailor to assist him to escape. Well, he was gone and not at all likely to trouble that community again, so Uncle Jimmy Whiteside was not brought to time for his breach of the law.

An article published in the Louisville Courier Journal since the above was written, furnishes the clue to an interesting sequel thereto. The statement was to the effect that the late Minister Willis, who represented the United States in Hawaii during Cleveland's last administration, discovered in the person of a native Hawaiian missionary a son of the quondam Parker by a native woman; Parker having resumed his family name, which, being a peculiar one, led to his identification by Minister Willis, who, being a native of the same state with Parker, was

familiar with all the circumstances of his first crime. When and by what means the double-dyed murderer who had twice almost miraculously escaped the gallows effected his retreat to those then savage, far away islands, and how many more victims paved his way thereto, will never be known; but could the story be revealed it would doubtless make an interesting chapter.

EVOLUTION OF A STATE

CHAPTER III

Bell's Landing (Columbia); Josiah Bell; Other old residents; Slavery; Social events; Weddings, etc.

"Young man, you have thrown away an independent fortune," was Col. Austin's impatient comment when informed of my hasty rejection of the position tendered me by the government. And he was no doubt correct, but I still had a good trade to fall back on and this I forthwith prepared to do, purchasing the outfit of San Felipe's pioneer blacksmith, David Carpenter, and establishing myself in business at Bell's Landing where the proprietor of the premises, Col. Josiah Bell, was laboring to bring into being the town of Columbia.

A fine specimen of the old Kentucky gentleman was Col. Bell, who was among the first of Austin's colonists, both chronologically and socially. As a proof of the high esteem in which he held Col. Bell, Austin, when compelled to go on to Mexico in 1822, in order to get his father's grant confirmed, committed the affairs of the colony into the former's hands during his absence.

Of Col. Bell's children who were then quite small, I remember distinctly only James H., who later distinguished himself in the legal profession, attaining therein the honorable prefix by which he was long designated. It was not in that character, however, that Judge Bell first introduced himself to my special notice.

During a visit to the home of Col. Bell, my head covering a fur cap which I had deposited on the floor beside my chair having attracted the attention of the embryo jurist, he crept softly up in my rear and laid his hand cautiously upon it. This mode of examination, though apparently establishing the general character of the material of the cap, failed to reveal the specific character. But the incipient lawyer showed forth in his determination to get at the bottom facts. Looking earnestly up into my face, he gravely inquired, "Is this a wool-'kin or a bear-'kin?"

Bell's Landing was the depot for all the supplies for the settlements above. Here Davis and John R. Harris, the founders of Harrisburg, had opened a store; they also owned a small trading schooner which plied between Columbia and New Orleans. I think they had a store at Harrisburg, but it may have been at a later date.

Among others that I recall as residents of the incipient town were my host and hostess, Mr. and Mrs. Farr, the latter a daughter of Capt. Brit Bailey (Mrs. Farr subsequently married David

Milburn, at one time alcalde of San Felipe); Joseph H. Polley, also a son-in-law of Capt. Bailey's; (Capt. Bailey lived on a farm in the vicinity); Oliver Jones, who later represented Texas in the congress of Coahuila and Texas; Thomas Westall, whose daughter married Brown Austin and after his death Zeno Philips - both gentlemen residents of Brazoria municipality; Alexander - or, as he was generally known, Sandy - Calvit; Mrs. Jane Long, widow of General James Long and sister to Mrs. Calvit; Mrs. Pamela Pickett, also a widow, with her son John and a daughter; Dr. Samuel Angier, who subsequently married Mrs. Pickett; Martin Varner, Jesse Thompson, the Alsburys, Alleys, Dr. Wells, John H. Moore, the McNeals - the last four on San Bernard - and many more whose names have slipped my memory, lived in the vicinity.

I had also many patrons in Ft. Bend municipality, among them William Morton, Jesse Cartwright, Horatio Chriesman, Mills M. Battles, alcalde, Thomas Barnet, later "Big Alcalde," i. e., president of the ayuntamiento, Joseph San Pierre - French; Churchill Fulshear, the widow McNutt, Moses Shipman, Martin Allen, Elijah Alcorn and a host of others; for in these two districts, Ft. Bend and Brazoria, were located the majority of Austin's colonists; and here, too, was concentrated the greater portion of the wealth in the colony.

Most of the men I have mentioned were men of means, many of them having slaves with which they had already opened up quite respectable plantations.

Of these old pioneers, Churchill Fulshear occupies the largest space in my memory, because of the generosity extended to me when I was left to his care, sick and a stranger, as previously related. He was a small man, somewhat lame, with very homely features, but a warm true heart. The old man had been for years a follower of the sea, at which trade he had accumulated some money. This fact becoming known, there were frequent calls for loans. If the applicant were a man that he wished to oblige, Fulshear would remark that he had "little or none," but would see what he could do, and drawing a purse from his pocket, manage to scrape up the required amount. In other cases he would solemnly declare that he "hadn't a dollar in the world," and draw out an empty purse to prove it. Having been present in both cases, I probably betrayed some surprise when, after having heard him assert that he "hadn't a dollar in the world," he turned right about and loaned 50 or 100 dollars to another party.

"You doubtless think me lying when I say 'I haven't a dollar in the world,'" said he, in explanation, "but I'll show you that I am not. This," said he, drawing the empty purse from his pocket, "I call 'the world' and you can see for yourself that there isn't a dollar in it. And this," exhibiting one containing money, "I call 'little or none.'"

Capt. Horatio Chriesman, head surveyor for Austin's colony, was the soul of generosity. It was told of him that he loaned a friend a league of land to assist him in the consummation of a trade and it was further told that the loan was never repaid, but a league of land those days was of less consequence than a horse.

Jesse Thompson, living on the San Bernard though possessed of a number of slaves, devoted his attention mostly to stock. There was much dissatisfaction over the uncertainty of legislation on the slavery question and Thompson, among others, was at one time on the point of returning to the United States with his slaves, and it was probably due to this uncertainty that he had neglected farming interests. One of his slaves, Mose, impatient for the promised freedom, ran away to Mexico to obtain it, but he soon wearied of "husks," and, returning voluntarily, surrendered himself to his old master, preferring slavery under Thompson's lenient rule to freedom in Mexico.

The negroes soon became aware of the legal status of slavery in Mexican territory, and it was probably owing to their ignorance of the language and country that more of them did not leave. Jim, one of McNeal's slaves, openly announced his determination to leave, and, acting on the impulse, threw down his hoe and started away. Pleasant McNeal, to whom he communicated his intention, ordered him to return to work, but Jim went on, whereupon Pleasant raised his rifle.

"Jim," said he "if you don't come back I'll shoot you!" Jim, however, kept on and true to his threat McNeal shot him dead.

Another type of the old colonists, but one that played a no less important part in the development of the country, was Thomas B. Bell, who lived up on the San Bernard above McNeal's. He came several times to my shop during my stay at McNeal's, and he being an intelligent, well-bred man, I took quite a fancy to him and gladly accepted an invitation to visit him. I found him domiciled in a little pole-cabin in the midst of a small clearing upon which was a crop of corn. His wife, every inch a lady, welcomed me with as much cordiality as if she were mistress of a mansion. There were two young children and they, too, showed in their every manner the effects of gentle training. The whole family were dressed in buckskin, and when supper was announced, we sat on stools around a clapboard table, upon which were arranged wooden platters. Beside each platter lay a fork made of a joint of cane. The knives were of various patterns, ranging from butcher knives to pocketknives. And for cups, we had little wild cymplings, scraped and scoured until they looked as white and clean as earthenware, and the milk with which the cups were filled was as pure and sweet as mortal ever tasted. The repast was of the simplest, but served with as much grace as if it had been a feast, which, indeed, it became, seasoned with the kindly manners and pleasant conversation of those two entertainers. Not a word of apology was uttered during my stay of a day and night, and when I left them I did so with a hearty invitation to repeat my visit. It so happened that I never was at their place again, but was told that in the course of time the pole cabin gave place to a handsome brick house and that the rude furnishings were replaced by the best the country boasted, but I'll venture to say that the host and hostess still retained their old hospitality unchanged by change of fortune.

They were a social people these old Three Hundred, though no one seems to have noted the evidence of it. There were a number of weddings and other social gatherings during my sojourn in that section, the most notable one perhaps being the marriage of Nicholas McNutt to Miss Cartwright. There was a large number of invited guests, both the families occupying prominent social positions. Jesse Cartwright, father of the bride, was a man in comfortable circumstances and himself and family people of good breeding. They were among the very first of Austin's colonists, Cartwright being a member of the first ayuntamiento organized in Texas. The bridegroom was a son of the widow McNutt, also among the early arrivals. The family, consisting of mother, two sons and three young daughters, came from Louisiana, where they had been very wealthy, but having suffered reverses they came to Texas to recoup their fortunes. Bred up in luxury, as they evidently had been, it was a rough road to fortune they chose, but they adapted themselves to the situation and made the best of it. Mrs. McNutt had three brothers, the Welches, living on Bayou Rapids, La., whom I afterwards knew; she also had a sister, Mrs. Dr. Peebles living with her husband in San Felipe. Dr. Wells later married a Miss McNutt, and Porter another. But to get back to the wedding. Miss Mary Allen, daughter of Martin Allen, a very pretty girl and a great belle by the way, was bridesmaid, and John McNutt, brother of the bridegroom, was groomsman. There being no priest in the vicinity, Thomas Dukes, the "big" alcalde, was summoned from San Felipe. The alcalde tied the nuptial knot in good American style, but the contracting parties had in addition to sign a bond to avail themselves of the priest's services to legalize the marriage at the earliest opportunity.

Among the guests present I remember Mrs. Long and her daughter Ann, Miss Alcorn, daughter of Elijah Alcorn, Miss Mary, daughter of Moses Shipman, Mrs. McNutt and daughters, none of the latter then grown, Capt. Martin, Elliot and John Alcorn.

The first and most important number on the program being duly carried out, the next thing in order was the wedding supper, which was the best the market afforded. That being disposed of, the floor was cleared for dancing. It mattered not that the floor was made of puncheons. When young folks danced those days, they danced; they didn't glide around; they "shuffled" and "double shuffled," "wired" and "cut the pigeon's wing," making the splinters fly. There were some of the boys, however, who were not provided with shoes, and moccasins were not adapted to that kind of dancing floor, and moreover they couldn't make noise enough, but their more fortunate brethren were not at all selfish or disposed to put on airs, so, when they had danced a turn, they generously exchanged footgear with the moccasined contingent and gave them the ring, and we just literally kicked every splinter off that floor before morning. The fiddle, manipulated by Jesse Thompson's man Mose, being rather too weak to make itself heard above the din of clattering feet, we had in another fellow with a clevis and pin to strengthen the orchestra, and we had a most enjoyable time.

One other wedding to which I was bidden was that of Dr. Angler and Mrs. Pickett, Mills M. Battles, I think, officiating. The wedding, which took place at Captain Bailey's, was a very quiet affair, no dancing or other amusements being indulged in.

Another dancing party in which I participated was at Martin Varner's, near Columbia. When we were all assembled and ready to begin business it was found that Mose, the only fiddler around, had failed to come to time, so we called in an old darky belonging to Colonel Zeno Philips, who performed on a clevis as an accompaniment to his singing, while another negro scraped on a cotton hoe with a case knife. The favorite chorus was:

"O git up gals in de mawnin',

git up gals in de mawnin',

O git up gals in de mawnin',

Jes at de break ob day,"

at the conclusion of which the performer gave an extra blow to the clevis while the dancers responded with a series of dexterous rat-tat-tats with heel and toe.

Ah, those old memories, how they throng around me, bringing up forms and faces long since hidden 'neath the sod. So long ago the events herein narrated occurred that I question if there is now another person living who participated in or even has heard of them.

Other weddings among the Old Three Hundred in that vicinity to which I was not fortunate enough to get an invitation were the daughters of Wm. Moreton of Fort Bend, one of whom married Stephen Richardson, at one time partner with Thomas Davis in a store at San Felipe, and the other, William, son of George Huff, on San Bernard; Samuel Chance and Miss San Pierre, daughter of Joseph San Pierre. They have probably all passed away, but to their descendants, for such I take it there are, I extend the greeting of their father's friend; may they prove worthy of such parentage.

My associations with those worthy people were pleasant, and, had I been content to remain with them, much of the remainder of this book might never have been written. But the spirit of adventure was still the dominating influence and, falling in with a lot of congenial spirits, I forsook the ways of civilization for a time, returning no more to those peaceful shades.

EVOLUTION OF A STATE

CHAPTER IV

A smuggling trip to old Mexico; First introduction to horsemeat; San Fernando; Ancient customs and prejudices; Practicing medicine; Ampirico Indians; Trip to silver mines; Smuggling adventures; An "old Moke."

Under the colonization act the Texas colonists were permitted to import, duty free, everything they desired for their own use; but, in order to carry merchandise into Mexico, they were required then, as now, to pay a heavy import duty. Coffee and tobacco were contraband - the government reserving to itself the sole right to deal in those commodities. Citizens were even restricted in the cultivation of tobacco, the government, it is said, having passed an act prohibiting any one person from planting more than an almnd (one-sixth of a bushel) of tobacco seed. Traders, even in illegitimate lines, had to pay a heavy duty to get their goods into market, and a still heavier duty to get their money out; so smuggling was largely resorted to, notwithstanding the strict patrol maintained along the border. The official optic, however, was not proof against the dazzle of coin. Therefore there was little to fear from that source; the principal risk lay in the cupidity of the Mexican soldiery.

Life in the colonies becoming stale and not so profitable as I could wish, I sold out my shop down at Bell's Landing (Columbia), invested the proceeds in tobacco, and, in company with Joe McCoy, Jack Cryor, and John F. Webber, set out for Mexico on a smuggling trip.

Altogether we had about 1,000 pounds of leaf tobacco, done up in bales of 100 pounds each, which we packed on mules. The first town we struck on the Rio Grande was Laredo. Finding that some other trader had got in ahead of us and stocked the market, we proceeded on up the river to find fresh territory. On the way up one of those interminable Texas rains set in, and we were compelled to strike camp and cover up our tobacco. We ran out of food, and, there being

no settlements near and no game but wild horses, the very thought of eating which sickened me, there was a prospective famine, at least for me. The other boys had been in Texas long enough to get rid of any fastidious notions about clean and unclean beasts, so when provisions ran out they killed a mustang and were provisioned for a siege. I turned from the horse-meat diet with disgust, vowing I would starve before I would eat it. I fasted two days, and still the rain god, as if enjoying the situation, continued to pour out his moist blessing with no sign of cessation. On the third day of my fast I sat hungry and disconsolate by the camp fire, while Webber was frying out some horse fat with which to grease our packs and lariats. At length, when the fat was all fried out, Webber lifted out the "cracklings," brown, light and crisp, laying them on a rock to the windward of me. I sniffed the air hungrily, and finally, when I thought the action unperceived, reached over and possessed myself of a crackling. I bit off a piece and found that it had no bad taste; on the contrary, it seemed to me no meat ever tasted better. My prejudice took wings, and I went for a horse steak which I could scarcely wait to cook, so famished was I. The boys said I was "broke in," and I ate horse meat with the rest of them; still I can't say I should do so of choice.

The weather finally cleared, and we went on up to Presidio del Norte, but the rains had raised the river and there were no boats except rawhide ones, which were not very safe, with the river a quarter of a mile wide and running with a swift current. We hid our tobacco out in the chaparral and laid around watching for some chance to cross the river.

Over opposite our camp was a goat ranch. Under pretense of getting milk, Cryor and myself swam our horses over and reconnoitered the situation, seeing which the Mexican soldiers concluded to emulate our example and investigate us. Their ponies were not strong enough to breast the current and were carried down to a point where the bank was so steep they could not effect a landing. One soldier was drowned, and the others, after drifting down lower, scrambled out. They found our tobacco and helped themselves to as much as they could conceal, making no attempt to arrest us, as their duty required. To have done so would have necessitated the surrender of the goods, which they had no intention of doing. Surmising that they proposed returning for the bulk of our cargo at their convenience, we removed it. We then paid another visit to the goat ranch and by a little tangible persuasion succeeded in getting possession of a rawhide boat, which we took across the river after dark, swimming and towing it. In the same manner we ferried the tobacco over and had it safely hidden before morning. There was more tobacco than could be disposed of advantageously in one little town, so we divided it, Webber and I taking our part up to San Fernando, Cryor and McCoy got in with the alcalde, but the custom house officers got wind of the affair and arrested the alcalde. He succeeded in giving the boys warning and they skipped out, leaving their tobacco buried in the sand.

Webber and I had better luck. Arriving at San Fernando in safety, we hunted up the only white man in the place, John Villars, and made him our confederate. Villars had been in the place several years, having gone out there during the Mexican war of independence with one Boone,

who was a gunsmith, and was appointed armorer for the Mexican army. Boone dying, Villars succeeded to the position, marrying the widow, who in turn died, and was succeeded by a Mexican woman. Through the assistance of Villars we found safe hiding for our wares with an old Mexican woman, Dona Petra, who enjoyed the distinction of being the widow of a white man (one John Smith), and consequently the steadfast friend of all Americans, considering it an honor to have them make her house their home. Therefore our being domiciled there was quite a matter of course, occasioning no suspicion. We had to dispose of the tobacco in small parcels, which took time.

In order to avert any suspicion that an apparently aimless sojourn might arouse, Villars suggested that one of us should be "doctor," American doctors being in demand among the Mexicans, who had no regular physicians. I caught at the idea at once but I was so boyish looking that we feared the natives might distrust my skill, so we decided Webber must shoulder the responsibility.

Villars had a store which was the principal advertising medium in the vicinity. Its facilities were ample, and "Dr." Webber's services were soon in requisition. It was summer time, and bilious disorders prevalent. We had taken out a lot of simple medicines for our own needs, consisting for the most part of calomel, quinine, and tartar emetic. As I spoke better Spanish than the "doctor," I accompanied him on his professional visits, ostensibly as interpreter, really to see the fun and help him out if he got into deep water. With an air of importance that would have done credit to a professional, Webber noted the symptoms, shaking his head, knitting his brows, and otherwise impressing the patient with the seriousness of his condition.

Tartar emetic was the doctor's favorite prescription, and his doses were liberal. I looked on the Mexicans as scarce more than apes and could with difficulty restrain my enjoyment at the situation when the medicine got in its work, seemingly turning the poor devils inside out, they meanwhile swearing and praying alternately. And I felt no twinge of remorse for the monstrous imposition we were practicing upon them when they finally emerged from the doctor's heroic treatment looking as dry and shrunken as so many pods of chili colorado (their favorite article of diet), and loaded him with thanks for his ministrations. I managed to keep down my risibles while in attendance on the patients, but I gave full vent to them when I got back to Villars' store and rehearsed the performance for his benefit. The doctor's fame went abroad and he soon had a large practice, just the same as impostors of the present day. Occasionally he varied his treatment by bleeding, though between the red pepper with which the natives plied the inner man, and the hot summer sun beating on the thinly clad outer surface, blood-letting seemed something of a paradox. The only case we ever had which baffled Dr. Webber's skill was that of an old Mexican woman, fat as only a Mexican woman can get. The doctor decided she needed depletion, so he corded her arm, but here he encountered a difficulty for which his practice furnished no precedent: the vein was too deeply imbedded in the fat to be discernible to the eye, and his knowledge of anatomy did not enable him to otherwise locate it with any degree of accuracy; therefore the only resource was to

prospect for it. He jabbed the lancet in several times, but either from failure to get his bearings right, a miscalculation of the capacity of his lancet, or the thickness of the stratum of fat, it had no more effect than if he had stuck it into a fat porker, and he had to fall back on tartar emetic.

When not "professionally" engaged I divided my time between the study of the Spanish language and tinkering at my trade. Villars gave me the freedom of his smithy, but his outfit was so meager and ancient that it was almost like learning the trade anew.

Every kind of work was done in the most primitive manner. Their plows were counterparts of the one Romulus used in laying out the city of Rome, being simply forked sticks, one prong of which served for share, another for handle, and the third for a tongue, which was tied on to a straight stick, the latter in turn lashed to the horns of a pair of oxen. Carts with great, clumsy, solid wooden wheels were the only vehicles they had there; there were not even dugouts, their only boats being made of cow hides sewed together and stretched over a framework of poles, the whole thing put together with rawhide thongs.

Rawhide entered into the construction of pretty much everything they used. When they slept, it was on a rawhide bedstead; when they sat, it was on a rawhide; and when they ate, a rawhide laid on the ground did duty for a table - around this the family squatted, eating with their fingers, like Indians, their only table service consisting of rude pottery and gourds.

The women ground their corn on the metate, after first hulling it like hominy, and baked their tortillas on flat stones, or at best on a sheet of iron. Their spinning and weaving would have made even a lazy man tired. Such things as cards, wheels and looms were unknown. Wool was colored and then picked open by hand. For spinning, they used a kind of top, attaching a bit of wool to the peg or spindle, then giving it a dexterous twirl between the thumb and finger and dropping it into a bowl, drawing out the thread while it spun round. It took weeks and weeks of this kind of patient work to spin thread enough for the warp of a blanket, and then came the weaving, which took months. The warp was stretched upon a frame and the filling of unspun wool worked in and out with the fingers and driven up with a board which was passed over and under the threads and stood on edge while the filling was being placed, then turned flat and the filling driven up close, after which the board was taken out and changed for the next layer. I presume they are still working the same way in some portions of Mexico. Their blankets were beautiful, and much more durable than might be supposed.

Old Dona Petra had a wheel that her deceased husband had made. It was a grotesque looking affair, but an improvement on the top. The old lady was also the proud possessor of several chairs, the handiwork of the lamented John Smith. The houses had no chimneys, the little fire necessary being kindled in the center of the room, like in an Indian wigwam. The one only luxury they enjoyed was an abundance of pure, clear spring water, brought through a cement aqueduct from a large spring some miles distant.

There was an old grist mill in the outskirts of the town which had fallen into disuse for want of patronage, presumably. We went out and took a look at it with a view to its rehabilitation, but it would have required more capital than we were possessed of to put it into running order.

To illustrate how ignorant even the best of the inhabitants were, I will relate a couple of incidents that came under my observation during my sojourn in San Fernando. A rumor had reached them that Bradburn and Staples had applied for a charter to run a steamboat up the Rio Grande. As not one of them, not even Villars, had ever seen a steamboat, they sent out for Webber and myself to attend a meeting of the council and explain its workings to them. I, being spokesman, spread myself, expatiating on the speed, carrying capacity, etc., but I overshot the mark. The very point that I had depended on to recommend it proved its condemnation. After listening to my glowing eulogies, they consulted together, gravely shook their heads, and announced their decision: that "it would never do; it would throw all the cartmen and packmen out of employment." The same argument used by the Mississippi flatboatmen.

At another time there was an excitement about the landing of the French army at Vera Cruz. Having no idea where Vera Cruz was, they again sent for me to help them. There was an old atlas among Villar's possessions, and with its aid I succeeded in allaying all fears of an immediate attack on San Fernando.

And, speaking of the French invasion, reminds me of another story. There was a band of Empirico Indians in town, one of whom had a horse that I very much coveted. It was a mountain mustang, in color a strawberry roan, as beautiful a piece of horseflesh as I ever laid eyes on. I was determined to have the roan, and on making overtures for him was struck dumb with astonishment and delight when told that if I would make twenty silver buckles with which to bedeck the Indian's long braid of hair, I could take the horse. I accepted the offer with alacrity, and at once set about fulfilling my part of the contract. I took twenty old Spanish hammered dollars, worth 75 cents on the dollar, and worked industriously to convert them into buckles, in a fever of anxiety lest the Indian go back on his agreement. I had almost completed the job when news came that the French had been repulsed, whereupon the Mexicans got up a grand parade to celebrate the event. The Indians mounted their horses and took part in the demonstration. The horse that I had bargained for, being frightened by the blare of trumpets, became unmanageable and ran over another horseman, throwing his rider and falling on him. The Indian never regained consciousness and lived but a short time. Then, notwithstanding the whole band of Indians knew of the bargain I had made, they would not give the horse up. They held that inasmuch as he had not been delivered to me, he was still the property of the dead brave, and as such must be killed so as to accompany his master to the happy hunting ground. In vain I offered them twice and even thrice the sum agreed upon. It was an Indian law, and they were determined their unlucky comrade should make a good appearance when he rode into the happy hunting grounds. I experienced no regret for the untimely taking off of the Indian, but it did sore grieve me to see that noble animal sacrificed to a blind superstition.

Decked out in all the glory of warpaint, the doomed steed was led away beside the remains of his dead master, followed by the chief mourners with shorn heads and blackened faces, giving vent to their sorrow in loud, blood-curdling shrieks and howls. Wrapped in his buffalo robes, with his bow and arrows beside him, the departed brave was laid to rest in a shallow grave. His saddle and bridle were placed at his feet, and the grave filled in and tramped down hard. The horse was then led up beside the grave and shot, the remains being cremated. There were twenty silver buckles for sale and no buyers, as not one of the tribe would take them. Villars gave me back my \$20 and took the buckles off my hands.

About that time I got a letter from Dr. Long, who had invested in some old silver mines in the Le Juana Mountains, which he thought very rich, offering me a liberal share in the investment. I started at once, going out on the Saltillo road to La Punte, a considerable town at the foot of the mountains, where we left the road. The arrival of an American being an unusual event, the news spread quickly, and at once brought forth the only white man the place contained. He was very friendly, and, having to present my passport to the alcalde, I asked him to go with me. As he informed me he had been some time in Mexico, I supposed he had learned to speak the language fluently, and asked him to interpret for me. When we came into the alcalde's presence, Blerton commenced to explain the object of our visit in a mixture of English and Spanish unintelligible to any one. The alcalde listened politely, and when Blerton had finished turned to me with a puzzled expression. "Alba uste Spanola, senior, said he. "Poquito," I replied. "Then," said he, "I wish you would try and do your own talking; I can't understand this man." Poor Blerton was terribly crestfallen, but he did not in the least abate his friendliness. He accompanied me up to the mines.

Dr. Long's mines lay some thirty miles back in the mountains. When I reached the place I was disgusted to find only a few of the lowest class of Mexicans there, pecking out a few grains of silver, enough to purchase the bare necessities of life, instead of the lively camp I expected to find. The hills were honeycombed with old tunnels and there were huge piles of cinders, showing that much ore had been taken out, but there were no smelting works and no way of getting supplies except by pack trains, so I took no stock in it. Long was dead broke, and having his family up there with him, I divided what money I had with him, which would enable him to get lock to Montevideo, where he had left a good practice, and myself returned to San Fernando. Americans were held in high esteem in Mexico at that time, and I could have traveled through the length and breadth of the land without spending a dollar.

In spite of the abject poverty of the Mexican peons, they extracted a good deal of enjoyment from life. The men worked out in the hot sun all the week, with only thin cotton trousers on, and on Saturday night donned a shirt and went to the fandango perfectly happy if they had a few cents with which to buy a cup of mescal and a cigarette. On Sunday morning they all attended mass and got their sins wiped out, the afternoon being devoted to horse racing, chicken fighting, and kindred amusements, the padre making a full hand.

When I reached San Fernando I found Webber had disposed of all our tobacco, also his stock of medicine, so we at once set out on our return to Texas. At Presidio we learned that the old alcalde was still in jail for his intrigue with Cryor and McCoy, and we asked permission to visit him. He was taking his incarceration quite philosophically; said his "time would soon be out."

We had sold our tobacco for a good price, getting as high as \$2 a pound for some of it, but with what the soldiers stole and the money we necessarily spent, we hadn't more than the law allowed us to take out duty free, so we had no difficulty in leaving the state. Traders who did a large business, though, found the export duty rather onerous, and resorted to many devices to evade it.

Some time later the McNeal boys went out with a load of general merchandise, which they disposed of to advantage, the proceeds amounting to several hundred dollars, which being all in silver, was quite bulky. However, they managed to conceal the greater portion of it, only paying export on a small part. After they had gone the officials became suspicious and sent a detachment of soldiers after them. Finding they were pursued, the boys dropped their money, which was put up in stout bags, into one of those dry-weather crevices which are so frequently met with on the mesquite prairies. Marking the spot, they rode on, allowing the soldiers to overtake and search them. Allen, waiting till the coast was clear, they returned for their money, but the cleft was so deep and the ground so hard they could not dig it out without picks and spades, which they could not obtain without returning to the colonies, several hundred miles away, and before they got in the rain came on, obliterating their landmarks, and if anybody wants to search for buried treasure there is his chance, if it hasn't gone through to the other side of the world.

Billy Eaton used to tell a good story on himself that clearly illustrates the ruses the soldiers resorted to cheat the government. Billy and a confederate were endeavoring to land a load of tobacco in Laredo during the night when they were surprised by a squad of soldiers. The other fellow got away, but they captured Billy and the tobacco. Disarming Billy, they placed him between two soldiers, while a third led his horse with a slender rope. Billy said when they got within sight of the town he began to think about the calaboose, and he didn't relish the prospect of a sojourn therein. It was quite dark, and he got out his pocketknife, opened it, and cut the rope around his horse's neck; then, snatching his water gourd, which hung by a strap to his saddle, and was a large one almost full of water, he struck the soldier on his right over the head with it, smashing the gourd to flinders and knocking the Mexican from his horse. He then dashed the spurs to his horse, and before the soldiers could unsling their carbines was out of range. They gave chase, "carajoining" and firing their carbines; but it was an for effect. They soon relinquished the pursuit and Billy said he heard them laughing hilariously over the escapade. Had they taken him in they would have been obliged to produce the contraband.

We reached the Rio Frio without incident worthy of mention. Camping for the night, we hopped some of our horses and turned the others loose. There were no resident Indians in that section, and we had seen no sign of any roving band, nor of mustangs either, and so felt quite secure. In the night, however, we heard a commotion among our horses, and then heard them running away. Our first thought was Indians, so we kept still till day broke. Then, eating a hasty breakfast, we took our guns and a little grub and started on their trail, which was easily followed, my saddle horse being shod. About 10 a. m., we came in hearing of them across a little rise. Stealing cautiously to the top of the ridge we saw a mustang stallion trying to whip my horse out of the band, which he was driving away. My horse was fighting him, and so much absorbed were they in the combat that they didn't perceive us. We knew that the only chance of recovering our horses lay in killing the stallion, so we crept up in range, and, both taking aim at him, fired, both shots taking fatal effect. After waiting till our horses recovered from their fright consequent on the killing of their captor, I went out toward them. My horse immediately recognized me and came to me. You may imagine our relief. It wasn't a pleasant predicament to be left afoot several hundred miles from anywhere. Those old mustang stallions, after lording it over their bands for years, would finally get whipped out by some younger aspirant. They were termed then "old mokes" by the Spaniards, and would leave the band, roving round in search of another, trying to take possession of any drove they came across. So desperate and vicious they often became that it was not safe to interfere with them.

Without further trouble we in due course of time reached San Felipe de Austin, no richer than when we left, but we were a little wiser, and had had "heaps of fun."