

Westward to Texas

Sallie Comer Abercrombie was born in Macon county, Alabama in 1845. The Abercrombies were plantation owners of whom Dr. Marion Sims write in his autobiography ... " I settled near Cubahatchee Creek and was introduced into a large practise I was exceedingly happy in my new position."

But malaria whipped him down. Writing of the summer of 1840 in Lowndes County Alabama, he said ... " every cabin we passed had sick people in it. Everybody looked malarially poisoned. I went by no house where there was not one or more beds stretched out in front of the door with servants fanning some member of the family down with malaria.

He reports that he had 17 congestive chills within the year.... and that his wife never knew a well day for six months. This was before the guilt had been fastened on the mosquito so he says " Malarial poisoning coming from the decomposition of vegetable matter in alluvial soils ... " To escape he went East and fulfilled his great destiny. But the Abercrombies went west to escape this plague.

Mr. John C. Abercrombie sold his Alabama plantation; and in 1850 settled his family (wife ,two children and servants) in Mobile and rode out to Texas with a number of other prospecting men. He visited a family named Wood who were relatives living in Montgomery county (which included what are now Grimes, Montgomery, Walker, and Madison counties). Liking the people, the land and the neighborhood he bought a plantation in the are which is now Walker county and rode back.

With wagons and teams and slaves, household goods and furnishings he moved across two states to the new home. But his family he sent by boat from Mobile to Galveston. It was a small boat and frail. The very next journey it was wrecked on the sand bar in Galveston; but the family was safe in galveston and from there went up Buffalo Bayou to meet the land trippers who had arrived and were camped on the Bayou banks.

The Wood relatives came with carriage and horses to take the family home to visit until their own house was built. Texas hospitality was like that then. But bad luck caught them just there. Cholera broke out in the camp and the Negroes fell into a panic at the idea of being left. They screamed and cried aloud " Dont leave us here to die". So the children and nurse were sent along in the carriage and Mrs. Abercrombie took charge of the nursing as was the Southern plantation custom. A great leather backed book named Dr. Massey's Plantation Practise, was next to the Bible itself in the respect of sick people and nurses. Cool weather finally saw the last of the epidemic.

Mr. Abercrombie worked very hard getting settled into a new plantation --- opening up fields,utilizing the logs to set up slaves quarters. But Mrs. Abercrombie always insisted on plenty of house servants. He would say " Minerva you keep enough hands in the house to raise ten bales of cotton". And she would say "John you know that a lady wears six petticoats that have to be fresh every day because they sweep the floor! It was said that many women burned to death cooking in open fireplaces and letting their great full skirts get caught in the chimney draft.

The group which had come to Texas together was a cultured well bred well read lot. They named their settlement Waverly after Sir Walter Scott's Waverly Novels -- best seller of that era. Many of the men were University graduates -- chiefly University of N.C. or Virginia. / where Leonard Abercrombie name heads the bronze tablet product. She taught her first two children to read and write, but about 1855 they were sent to board in Huntsville and attend the acadimies there. Sallie was very home sick and wrote " Alas!!!" "The best years of my life are past !"

These families did not rest content without a local school so about 1855 the men passed the hat and with the money set up The Waverly Institute. One old settler said " If you want money I are out. I got none. If you will take corn I are in, I got plenty of that". They took the corn.

The Waverly Institute imported an impressive faculty from the East, Profs. James, Devine Hook and Fitze with Mrs. Hook in charge of the female department - tho the girls came in for a special classes. Every Friday the two departments were assemble/for a program together. Herewith is the program of the first "concert".