

New Waverly, Walker County ^{Tex}
June 4, 1960

Dr Clarence Poe,
Old Times Contest,
The Progressive Farmer
Raleigh, N. C.
Dear Dr. Poe:

Herewith are the Southern
reminiscences tales you asked for.
Most of it comes from my mother's
memories as told to me in my childhood.

In addition to what I have
condensed and am sending, I have
a lot of clippings about "Old Times", and
a few small books which I will be
glad to lend you.

Several years ago I began to
accumulate material for a biography
of my mother who was a wonderful
woman. But life has been too strenuous
or I am too lazy or something anyhow
I never got beyond a rough draft. Now
I'm pretty sure I never will. I'm glad for
your book. Sincerely

Minnie Fisher Cunningham

Since you are interested in Counties:
Grandfather Fisher was born in Mecklenburg N.C.
My Mother an Abercrombie was born in Macon
County Alabama, but her Mother was a Sims from
My father ^{a Fisher} was born in Lowndes County Ala.
And I was born in Walker County Tex.

Waverly, Walker County Tex

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Westward to Texas

Sallie Comer Abercrombie was born in Macon County Alabama in 1845.

The Abercrombies were plantation owners of whom Dr. Marion Sims writes in his biography "I settled near Cubahatchee Creek and was introduced into a large practice... I was exceedingly happy in my new position".

But malaria whipped him down. Writing of the summer of 1840 in Lowndes County Ala., he says "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 before the door with servants fanning some member of the family down with malaria".

He had 17 congestive chills within the year and his wife was ill for six months without a break. This was before the quilt had been pinned on the mosquito as he says "malarial poisoning coming from the decomposition of vegetable matter in alluvial soils"! He went East and fulfilled his great destiny. But the Abercrombies went west to escape this plague.

Grandfather sold his plantation, ^{in 1850,} settled his family (wife and two children) in Mobile and rode horseback out to Texas with a number of neighbors.

He visited a family named Wood who were relatives and liking them, the land and the settlers already there he bought a plantation and rode back.

With wagons and teams and slaves he moved "lock stock and barrel". But his family he sent by boat from Mobile to Galveston. It was a small boat and frail - the very next journey it wrecked itself on the sand bar in Galveston Harbor.

But Mr. Abercrombie camped his safari on the banks of Buffalo Bayou and Mrs. Abercrombie brought the children and their nurse up the bayou to join him. and the relatives came in a carriage to take them home to visit until they built their own house.

Bad luck caught them there as cholera broke out among the Negroes. They panicked and screamed and cried for their mistress to nurse them (usual on a Southern plantation)

"Don't go! Don't go and leave us here to die mistis - Don't go!"

So the carriage went back with the children and nurse while Mr. + Mrs. A stayed until with cooler weather all were able to move

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Education in Texas

While the Abercrombies were getting settled in their new world Mr. Abercrombie worked very hard opening up the land; utilizing the trees cut down to make cabins in the quarters (as the slaves houses were called). But Mrs. Abercrombie always kept a number of house servants. Mr. Abercrombie would say "Minerva you keep enough hands in the house to raise 10 bales of cotton! But she always pointed out that all ladies wore 6 full stiff starched petticoats which had to be ~~changed~~ changed every day because they swept the floor.

It was said that many women burned to death because of cooking in open fire places and swinging their wide full skirts ~~to~~ into the chimney draft.

This group of Alabamians which had come out to Texas together was a cultured, well bred well read lot. They named their settlement 'Waverly' after Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels which were 'best sellers' of that era. Many of the men were University graduates; some of the women were

finishing School & belles. My father
and his brothers were University
of North Carolina men. My Uncle
Leonard Abercrombie was at the Un
of Virginia when "the war broke out".
He was killed in the second battle of
Bull Run and his name stands
at the top of the list of war dead
on the tall bronze tablet ^{beside} on the door
way ~~of the~~ at the University of Va now.

My grandmother was a
Philadelphia finishing school product

Books were transported to Texas
in those wagons; Sallie wanted her own
little books to come too and brought them
herself to be packed with the rest.
When Mr Abercrombie was late coming
in from ~~the~~ his spreading activities
Mrs. Abercrombie gathered her two
Alabama children beside a table
with a lamp and read aloud to them.
She also taught them to read and
encouraged them to do so.

Later the two were sent to
board in Huntsville to attend ~~a~~ the
Academies already established
there - one for boys & one for females.
Sallie was about 10 and very homesick.
She wrote home "Alas the best years of my
life are past!"

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It was not to be expected that these cultured families would rest content with no local school. So about 1855 the men passed the hat to all the people and with the money they set up the Waverly Institute and imported Profs. James, Devine Hook and Fitze. with Mrs. Hook in charge of the girls department.

One old early settler responded to the call saying "If you want money I am out, I have none. But if you will take corn I am in". They took corn and he was in. So was everybody else and they created there a really wonderful school. People from other places sent their daughters to board and attend. The Friday afternoon Concerts were community affairs of great popularity. Enclosed find the program of the first one.