

# BOSQUE

## LETTER

May 2011

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### **Sunny and Hot, 110 with No Chance For Rain**

or

**You don't need to be a meteorologist to predict Texas weather in July**

While Cabeza De Vaca explored Texas he found a settlement near Presidio where it had not rained in two years. The San Gabriel River dried up in 1756. In the year 1822 crops were burned up for some of the earliest Austin colonists.

1884 through 1887 brought drought to Bosque County and ten other surrounding counties. Stephens, Parker and Palo Pinto were the hardest hit. The Texas Legislature ordered a report on the conditions of this drought and from that report \$200,000.00 was set aside for aid for these counties. Bosque County Judge A.R. Barry reported to the Legislature that approximately 1000 people were destitute due to the drought conditions in Bosque County.

Commissioner Court Minutes Volume D page 323:

By virtue of authority vested in me by Article 1526 Revised Statutes of State of Texas I hereby order a call uniting of the Commissioners Court of Bosque County to convene in the town of Iredell on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of March AD 1887 for the purpose of meeting in conference with the committee of the State Legislature appointed to distribute the appropriations made for sufferers by the drought.

Given under my hand and seal this the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March AD 1887,

A.R. Barry

County Judge Bosque County (no quorum no court)

By virtue of authority vested in me by Article 1526 Revised Statutes of State of Texas, I hereby order a call uniting of the Commissioners Court of Bosque County to convene in the town of Meridian on Tuesday next the 8<sup>th</sup> day of March AD 1887 for the purpose of considering the distribution of supplies and corn to the drought sufferers of the county, the Legislative committee having appointed five hundred dollars to this county at this meeting in Iredell on the 4<sup>th</sup> into for the purchase of supplies and corn as aforesaid.

Given under my hand and seal of the office at Meridian this the 6<sup>th</sup> day of March AD 1887.

Special session was called 8<sup>th</sup> day of March. Officers present were A.R. Barry Judge, Daniel Mitchell Commissioner Precint 1, E.J.W. Ogden Commissioner Precinct 3, H.C. Cook County Clerk and J.H. Speer Sheriff. Distribution and Relief Fund-Appointed agents of the court were Daniel Mitchell, F.M. Gandy and M.B. Clark to purchase and distribute bread stuffs to the destitute under the act of Legislature. They also bought a train car full of corn, and later bought one more load for distribution.

The end of the drought came with a heavy deluge of rain; as a result the town of Iredell was completely washed away when the Bosque River rose to a record level. After the crest the swell rose at a rate of two to three inches a minute. Train service was discontinued from Iredell to Valley Mills.

One of the worst droughts occurred during the 1950s and ended finally in 1957. Elizabeth Torrence recalls helping her parents, Dick and Iva Torrence, during this time. The hay had all burned up save some cane. Soon after eating the cane the cattle began to drop. It seems the dry weather had caused prussic acid to form on the cane. Fortunately the local veterinarian gave the cattle shots and most were saved. After this experience, they cut the cane and let it dry for three days to allow the prussic acid to evaporate and then it was safe to use as feed. Mrs. Iva Torrence kept weather diaries in which she talked about how brown everything was, no grass at all, and no wild flowers. They sold all their cattle but nine head.

Some of the headlines from 1956, which was the worst year, were:

Special Credit to Aid Small Farmer - Clifton Record February 3

Bosque Recommended For Drouth Relief and Water Reserve Dangerously Low Clifton Record - July

Emergency Feed Program Includes Bosque County; Taking Applications

Rainfall Below Normal For Third Straight Year In Bosque County

Bosque County Designated Disaster Area Due to Drouth - Meridian Tribune

Once again the drought came to an end when the Bosque and the Brazos rivers flooded in the late spring of 1957.

1980 was a record breaking summer, with 42 days of over 100 degree temperatures. Rainfall for the City of Meridian in 1999 was 18.34 inches.

2004 was one of the wettest years in Texas history. However, by 2005 and 2006 Bosque County was declared a disaster area. Rain fell in 2007 for some relief; then things began to dry out again in 2009, followed by severe dry conditions in 2010. The scientists say this may be the worst drought to date because it covers such a large area, from Canada all the way to South Texas. There is very little available hay, and corn stalks are being trucked out west on a daily basis. Dr. Mark Jackson DVM is currently sending samples of sudan and Johnson grass, along with other types of grasses to Texas A&M, in hope of finding nutritional alternatives.

As the old adage says, If you don't like the weather in Texas just wait a minute.

I join with all of you in praying that rain comes soon.



Photograph courtesy of Meridian Tribune

Lake Whitney at the dam Wednesday August 3, 2011. Lake level is down 14 feet.



# Strange Storm at Kopperl

By Nelan McMichael, Collection volunteer.

Tuesday evening on June 14, 1960 appeared to promise a comfortable night in Kopperl with the possibility of open windows at night to cool off the house. The only fly in the buttermilk was the strange thunderhead that appeared to be brewing. The short-lived lightning show produced some weird but entertaining displays. Hopefully this would not produce another tornado.

By ten o'clock that evening the clouds seemed to melt away and a hot wind picked up. Soon a scorching, hurricane-force wind blasted from the sky. Trees and limbs were broken and roofs were blown off as the hot downward-thrusting winds reached in excess of 80 miles an hour and temperatures soared to near 140 degrees. Many people fled to tornado shelters while others wrapped in wet sheets or towels for relief from the heat as power was lost and coolers failed. Store windows exploded from the heat, and car radiators boiled over. Crops, shrubbery, and trees wilted and the leaves burned to a crisp.

By 3:00 a.m. the winds died down but the stifling heat remained until morning when people began to emerge to assess the damage. The destruction caused by the wind and heat was unbelievable. At this point the residents were unaware that this phenomenon had only occurred in the Kopperl and Lakeside Village area.

The event was documented only by photographer Floyd Bright from KXAS Television in Fort Worth, and a brief mention on the inside pages of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. It was later written up by Harold Taft and Ron Godbey in a book called "Texas Weather", and in an article written by Dean Glase that appeared in the Dallas Times-Herald Westward Magazine.

## A Brief History of the Clifton Guard

By Carroll J. Pierce

"The Clifton Unit has had a proud history, beginning with its organization on June 22, 1922, under the command of Emerald E. Schow as Headquarters Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 141<sup>st</sup> Infantry, 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The company was transferred to the 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry in 1923, and was activated into federal service on November 25, 1940 under the command of CPT Elmore C. Canuteson, to serve with distinction in North Africa and Europe during World War II.

On January 20, 1949, the unit was reorganized as Heavy Mortar Company, 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, under CPT Wade E. Knudson, and on March 16, 1959 it became Company C of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle Group of the 143<sup>rd</sup> Infantry under CPT Douglas A. Railsback. The unit was reorganized again as the 1<sup>st</sup> Rifle and Weapons Platoon of Company A on March 1, 1963 under 1 LT Carroll J. Pierson, and then transferred to Company C in April of the next year.

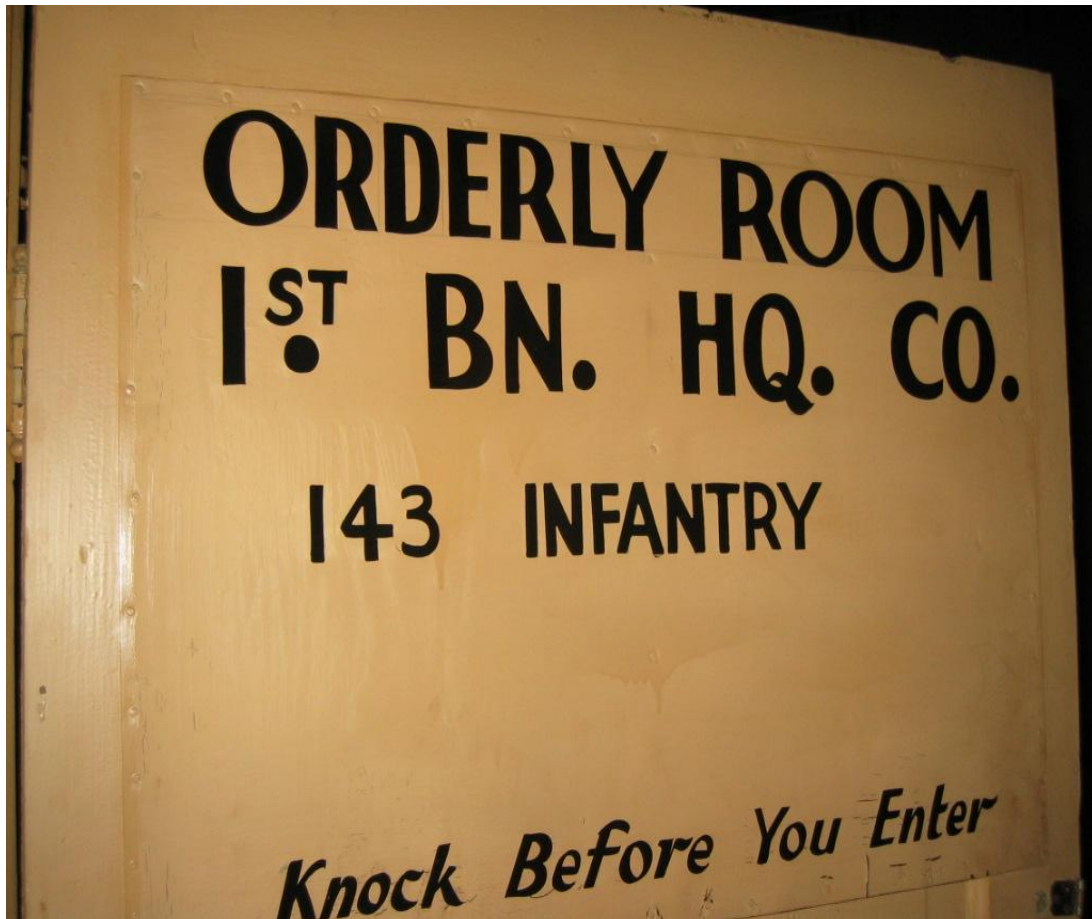
On January 15, 1968, the unit became part of the 71<sup>st</sup> Airborne Brigade under 1 LT Darrel W. Vinson, and then, while under the command of 2 LT Curtis B. Admins, it was reorganized as Detachment 1, Company B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Airborne. On November 1, 1973, under the control of 2 LT Gregory D. Gillenwater, the Clifton unit was organized as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron of the 124<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 49<sup>th</sup>

Armored Division. While under the command of 1 LT Daniel R. Hill, the detachment was reorganized September 1, 1987 as one tank platoon and one scout platoon.

The unit was again reorganized on June 1, 1988 as A Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 112<sup>th</sup> Armor, 36<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 50<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, under the command of 1 LT Daniel R. Hill.”

The National and State Guard units that served in Clifton were a vital part of the history of the county. Young men were allowed the opportunity to serve their country without long separations from family and community; however, the unit was called for regular deployments during WWII and at other times. It was extra income and training, with benefits. The units were made of friends and neighbors, and sometimes family, so they became very tight-knit. The Guard was also a benefit to the community.

Before the Armory was built, the Guard met in what was once Reeder Hall, located on the second floor of the Paulson Gallery on Ave. D. The Paulsons were kind enough to allow me to take this shot.



When the flood waters of December 1991 finally receded the damage was assessed on the Armory. It was extensive and budget cuts were in place so the decision to close the Armory was made. To the men who served it was a sad day, with the lowering of the flag and the bugler sounding retreat. The property was purchased by the city of Clifton and the Armory was used for community activities.

Thank you to Carroll J. Pierson for donating this history and several trophies and certificates that were salvaged.

## **Louis Arthur Beecherl, Jr.**

Bosque County lost a valuable friend in July. Louis Beecherl, owner of the Flat Top Ranch in Walnut Springs died in Dallas July 6, 2011. He was born in Dallas February 10, 1926. After he bought the original ranch from Charles Pettit, he began to build the ranch up to the present total of 18,000 acres. He used progressive pasture management techniques, re-introduced to Bosque County elk and mule deer and antelope and built fine fishing lakes throughout the ranch. He and his family spent many happy hours on the ranch whenever their schedules would allow. Mrs. Julia Tutt Beecherl's family were early settlers of the Kimball Bend area.

Mr. Beecherl served as head of Texas Oil & Gas LLC, and on the advisory board of Episcopal Foundation of Dallas, and the Board of Regents of the University of Texas. He was extremely helpful with the renovation of the Bosque Collection. He was a huge supporter of the Boy Scouts, and allowed them to use the Taylor Springs area for their annual Scout-a-Rama.

## **Bosque County Courthouse Turns 125 in 2011**



**1935-2003**

Once again the courthouse was in bad need of repair, so with a loan from the Public Works Administration and a \$13,000.00 grant, another renovation for the old girl began in April 1935. The first work was the removal of the clock tower and roof. O.K. Johnson received the contract with a bid of \$44,113.00. Corner walls were determined to be weak and it was decided that the weight of the clock tower and turrets was too much, so they were removed. The flat roof left many citizens dismayed, feeling the courthouse just didn't look right. An addition was added to the west entrance,

new sidewalks were constructed, and the lawn was sown with grass seed and landscaped. The fountain was removed and stored. However, in 1996 the fountain was found and re-dedicated by the Meridian Study Club and placed at the south entrance.

By the late 1970's the courthouse was again showing signs of age from years of minor facelifts. The Commissioners Court began to look for grants or other resources to help with the major renovations that were needed. They also were faced with the deterioration of the jail, which had been built in 1896. A small grant was obtained, and by the 1990's new windows, a handicap ramp, air-conditioning, remodeling of the jury room and restrooms were in place, and the outside had been sandblasted. However, the commissioners and judge knew this was only the beginning, so much more needed to be done. The courthouse was still wired with original cloth wiring, the roof was leaking, plaster needed repairing and the list went on. The tax office had been moved across the street, which did open up some badly needed space.

In 2000 the state of Texas started a courthouse restoration program, offering grant money in order to save our beautiful old courthouses that were in danger of vanishing. The requirements were very stringent: it must be an original building and approved as historical by THC, and deemed by historical architects as worthy of the money.

In 2002 Judge Bobby Joe Conrad appointed a committee to write a grant, which was rejected on the grounds that the 1935 addition, which was the office of the Department of Public Safety and Justice of the Peace, was not original to the courthouse. Judge Conrad didn't give up, however, and asked that another grant application be submitted. While waiting for that decision, Phase One of the restoration was begun in late 2002 and was finished in 2003, with a rainy day fund that had been saved by the Commissioners Court. Phase One involved new electrical wiring and mechanics, roof repair, and the installation of an elevator.

Judge Bobby Joe Conrad retired after two terms. His determination and dedication to the courthouse restoration and his leadership were invaluable.

2003-Cole Word was sworn in as judge, and adopted the overseeing of the restoration. He often could be seen pacing the square, watching and waiting like an expectant father.

Good news! In 2004 a grant was awarded and the fun was about to begin! County offices were moved from the courthouse to various offices around the square; interior demolition began; a construction site fence was put up, which diverted traffic away from danger.

2005-The original bell was discovered on the roof; repairs and bracing were done to the roof; asbestos was removed; and interior work continued.

2006 - Meridian 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and her students began a letter writing campaign to the Texas Historical Commission to save the Courthouse Christmas tree.

The clock tower frame was installed on the roof; inside demolition and reconstruction work was carried out. A horrible discovery was made! The corner walls were deteriorated...again! The Commissioners Court had to come up with \$125,000 more to get the walls repaired with massive amounts of steel bracing and concrete. It was quite a sight seeing the extra tall crane lifting the shuts for all that concrete.

Turrets were hauled by four flat bed trucks that took up the entire highway for 267 miles. A huge celebration was held on Turret Day. Folks came from all over, school children were bused in just to watch the huge cranes lift those 16 ton turrets up to the roof and set them in place.

2007 - The bell tower was raised. Finishing touches to the outside were completed. Lady Justice was properly clothed and the Eagle flew proudly over the whole scene. Old vault doors were beautifully restored due to generous contributions from the public and especially descendents of the Lowry Scrutchfield and Jacob DeCordova.

September 22, 2007 was the re-dedication ceremony, complete with parade and dignitaries, speeches and the ribbon cutting. The Bosque County Courthouse has been featured in several publications by the Texas Historical Commission as well as winning several awards.

***The Lumpkin Building has been the home to the Collection ten years, 2001 to 2011! Our mission is still ongoing and thanks to all our members for their continued support!***



