

ERA



MR. AND MRS. HARGROVE

"Mr. and Mrs. Hargrove, Father and Mother of the girl for whom Era was named.....Era Hargrove.

Mr. Hargrove began the Post Office in a cigar box on an old fashioned bureau in his home here in Era about the year of 1877 or 1878."

Era is located in Cooke County, twelve miles southwest of Gainesville, in the center of a fine agricultural area, with a high rolling prairie and rich black heavy lime and clay subsoil. Duck Creek runs southwest of the town to Clear Creek.

The first log house built in what was later to become Era, was built on land given to Thomas Cook, an early Texas surveyor, who was killed in the service of the Republic of Texas. Upon his death, William Daniels Sr. became his sole heir. Williams Daniels' children, Virginia and William Daniels Jr. inherited the property from their father. Records show on November 15, 1871 William and Virginia Daniels sold one half interest of all their property to Wade Horton.

On August 22, 1872 records show William and Virginia Daniels and Wade Horton deeded 180 acres of land on Duck Creek to J.W. Weeks for \$480.00. J.W. Weeks sold 100 acres of land to A.H. Hargroves (1836--) for \$500.00. A.H. Hargroves built a log house on this property. Later the house was used as a mail distributing center with Frank Guist in charge. The house was destroyed by fire a number of years later.

On August 29, 1872 William Hudson sold J.M. Lindsey one half of certain unlocated balance of certified first class no 13/320 for 172/3 labors or about 3,129 and 46/100 acres of land being a balance of on the Headright cert. no 386 to Raymond Travino by the Board of Commission on the 16th day of March A.D. 1836 for one league and labor of land which balance was opened on the 30th day of December A.D. 1866 by the court of the General Land Office. Except three hundred and five

acres of said certificate which has been transferred by said Lindsey and myself out of said certificate I hereby sell transfer to J.M. Lindsey — Dated August 29, 1872.

On July 1, 1877 records show J.M. Lindsey sold D.C. Allen, T.J. Walling and A.H. Hargroves 6 acres of land for \$1.00 out of the Raymond Travino survey. It was to be used for school and church purposes for the benefit of all who may desire to use. The deed states "the consideration that moves me to make this deed is a desire to promote the education, social and religious interest in the county."

A log building was erected on the land which served as a school and church. Members of the Church of Christ, Baptist and Methodist Churches worshipped there. J.N. Guist (1827--1893) set up a store which was later operated as the "Grange" by M.A. Stamper, who also operated a small hotel. Thus the small community began to grow.

The new community needed a name and a post office. The men gathered together to select a name. While it was being discussed little Era Hargroves (1875--1880) tugged at her daddy's trouser leg, and upon getting his attention asked, "Why not name the post office for me?" The group followed the suggestion and in 1878 the settlement became "Era." The post office was subject to the approval of the Post Office Department, Washington, D.C. The name was submitted to that department.

But before the request could be granted proper information had to be acquired, a description of the location, inhabitants, etc.--

On March 27, 1879, a form was mailed to Levi F. Jones, proposed Post Master, in care of the Valley View Post Master.

Other forms were mailed from Washington October 23, 1879 and returned in March 1881 with Levi F. Jones as Post Master and Hulen as surveyor.

The location of the Era Post Office was described as being in the southwest portion of Cooke County, 12 miles from the Elm fork of the Trinity River, 7 miles east of Clear Creek and 13 miles from Gainesville. The site has been changed several times but only a few hundred yards from the original site.

The population of Era at the time of the request was 160.

Little Era Hargrove died in 1880. She was buried just east of the town. On January 10, 1881 the grief stricken family sold the 100 acres of land to J.N. Guist (1827--1893). It is not known where the Hargrove family finally settled. Mr. Guist laid out the first town.

The town began to grow. A blacksmith shop owned by Bill Higgins was the first in Era. It was later sold to John P. Bickel in 1885. A general store, larger hotel, cotton gin and three churches were added. The town had grown to the grave of Era Hargrove. Her body was moved to the new cemetery and buried on the J.N. Guist lot where it rests today.

The town was on the road from Valley View to Rosston and Montague. Wagon trains came through almost daily going west. Some liked Era so well they withdrew from the train and settled here.

In 1884 records show land was bought for a school. This land purchase became the foundation for the first large school structure in Era. The first schools had been successful but with the progressive age, necessity demanded that the school offer the community higher educational advantages than could be attained in the present school. A large two-story wooden building was constructed. The Era school had been improved by careful upgrading and a college department added. Those completing a full college course could receive an A.B. Degree. The school was chartered in 1897 to become the "Era Institute".

The announcement was made of the college opening in this manner: The Era Institute is beautifully located at Era, Texas, Cooke County, 14 miles southwest of Gainesville and 7 miles west of Valley View. The healthfulness of the place is excellent, the land fertile, the scenery beautiful, the people moral, enterprising, intelligent, refined, and thoroughly alive to the best interest of the school. There are no saloons, gambling halls, or low dives to infest the moral interests. In fact, many evils that beset schools in larger towns do not have to be contended with here.

Era had a number of leading citizens—the Jules Guist family, who started building the town, Dr. B.R. Thomason whose home stands on the main street of Era today, Dr. S.L. Segraves (1853-1945) who practiced in Era longer than any other doctor, Pete Cody who built the first cotton gin, C.E. Harman who played a great part in starting the Masonic Lodge in 1897. The most prominent citizen was Robert Edwing Thomason (1879-1973). A. Morton Smith describes his service to the public in this manner:

Taking office as a county attorney of Cooke County in 1903, was a young lawyer who was destined to become a member of Congress and a federal judge in later years. He was Robert Ewing Thomason, a native of Shelbyville, Tennessee, who came to Cooke County with his parents, Dr. and Mrs. B.R. Thomason, when he was one year old. The family located in Era in southwest Cooke County. He was graduated from Southwestern University at Georgetown, and the law school of the University of Texas. He served four years as county attorney of Cooke County, from 1903-1907, and moved to El Paso in 1911. He served as a member of the State Legislature from El Paso for four years, being unanimously chosen speaker of the house of the 36th Legislature. From 1927 to 1931, he was mayor of El Paso, and then was elected to Congress from the 16th district of Texas. During World War II he was second ranking member of the military committee of the House, and played an important part in the shaping of the military policy of the nation.

On April 24, 1947, Congressman Thomason was

nominated by President Truman to be judge of the federal district court for the Western Texas District. Being confirmed by the United States Senate for the post, he retired from Congress to assume the bench which he held until his death in 1973.

Era was about 5 miles east of the Butterfield Stage Line (1858-1861). John Chism Cattle Trail passed 4 miles southwest of Era. Children of early settlers looked forward to the cattle drives. Claude Fears recalls, as a lad, riding his horse alongside the trail, watching the cattle drivers move the herd northward. Mr. Fears said that when John Chism moved 10,000 to 15,000 head at a time along the trail to Kansas, it would require as many as 3 days for the animals to pass a given point.

Sam Bass, a noted outlaw, made his headquarters in Coe Hollow west of Era. It is known today as Sam Bass Cave.

An "Auto Stage Line" was started from Gainesville to Valley View in 1909. Era was later added to the route. The fare from Era to Gainesville and back was \$1.50.

Highway 51 runs through Era from northeast to southwest and Farm to Market Road 922 from east to west.

It is an active community having three churches and a functioning Community Club. Era has competed every year since 1962-1963 in the Texas Community Improvement Program. In 1972-73 Era received the award as the "Number 1 Community in Texas."

ERA'S OTHER NAME by Willie G. Brown

In the late 1890's, Era was still a young town with a main street consisting of some of the finest black dirt in the county. This street was well travelled by people headed west in search of their fortunes. They travelled by horseback or rode in wagons pulled by oxen or teams of horses, and when it rained, this fine dirt street was transformed into that which staggers the imagination.

It was the custom for the older men of the community to sit on the porch of Segraves' Store swapping yarns, discussing the weather and watching the people go by on their way west. These revered and wise old men must have presented an awesome sight, as nearly all were adorned with a long gray beard and wore a black felt hat.

One day a wagon train pulled into town. The lead wagon stopped in front of Bickel's Blacksmith shop. A man from the second wagon yelled out, "What town is this?"

The man driving the lead wagon looked around, spat a long stream of tobacco juice and answered drily, "Jerusalem."

"How do you know that?" asked the second man.

"Must be," answered the leader, "There sits all the old prophets."

For years afterwards, Era was laughingly but fondly called "Jerusalem" recalled Robert Little as he told me this story during a visit with him on July 5, 1977.

THOMASON WRITES ERA FRIENDS
ABOUT EARLY DAYS THERE

Texas Congressman
Could Not Attend School Dedication

Congressman R. Ewing Thomason, of El Paso, who was reared at Era, in Cooke County, was expected to be one of the honored guests at the dedication of the new Era school plant last Friday, but was unable to be present because of his duties in Congress. He addressed a letter to C.K. McClendon, Era superintendent, which was read during the homecoming exercises at the school. Because of the historic interest of the letter, it was secured for reproduction in The Register, as follows:

Dear Mr. McClendon:

This is in response to your letter of March 14th addressed to me at El Paso concerning the dedication of your new High School building.

I very much appreciate your kind invitation to attend the ceremonies on April 12th and regret that my duties here will not permit my being with you.

I have many old friends at Era and a host of happy memories of my life there. Please accept my congratulations on the erection of this new school building.

Your invitation makes me reminiscent. My father was a doctor in Gainesville and when I was a small boy, we moved to Era. The famous old "wire farm" and one store compromised the town which was named for the beautiful young daughter of the storekeeper. There was talk of a railroad from Gainesville to Decatur and my father thought it gave promise of being quite a place. With the exception of the farm mentioned it was an open prairie country. My father acquired land and built the second store, in the rear of which he had his doctor's office, which I understand is now the post office. He built the present residence not far from the store and where I lived most of my boyhood.

Most of the town was built during my days there and I saw the community become thickly populated with prosperous and law abiding farmers in the best natural farming country that I know anywhere. It was the days before good roads, automobiles and radios. My father built the first telephone line to Valley View which gave us a connection with Gainesville and was also active in the construction of the first paved highway to Valley View. He boasted of the finest horses in that section and was the typical oldtime country doctor

who ministered to the sick for miles around and never refused a call until his last illness.

He was a member of the board that built the first school building and where I attended school until I went away to college. In those days they had double desks and Sam F. Bottoms and I sat together. Senator Joseph W. Bailey, then the young congressman from Gainesville appointed Sam Frank to West Point. He was the envy of all the boys and the delight of all the girls when he returned in the uniform of an army officer. Bottoms distinguished himself in the army and retired recently as a colonel and now resides in San Francisco.

In those days the great sporting event was the annual baseball game between Era and Valley View. We did not like them anyway for they were "stuck-up" because they lived on the railroad. I was an inferior first baseman and the star of the Valley View team was Marvin Jones, who has been a prominent member of Congress for many years from the Amarillo district.

The credit is due my Era friends for any success I have had in politics. Shortly after my return from the university I became a candidate for county attorney and lost only three votes at that box, which was responsible for my election.

Please convey to my friends my good wishes and assure them they will always have a big place in my heart. I hope to visit you sometime this summer or fall when I want to inspect your beautiful new building.

Sincerely yours,
EWING THOMASON

THE POST OFFICE

Era's first application to obtain a post office was March 1879. If the proposed site was not on a railroad route, the signature of the neighboring postmaster was to be obtained that the contractor would be supplied without expense to the post office department, because of poor financial conditions at that time.

The Era Post Office was established on April 4, 1879 with Levi F. Jones as first postmaster.

The postmaster was required to furnish suitable quarters and equipment for the office without expense to the department.

The post office was located in several different buildings, usually in with some other business in the early days.

The first building that was built for the post office was a brick building in April 1967.

Names of former postmasters and the dates they held office:

- Levi F. Jones 1879-1881
- Samuel V. Gist. 1881-1889

Martin A. Stamper	1889-1896
Elizabeth L. Stamper	1896-1901
L. Berry Allen	1901-1902
German B. Clack	1902-1903
May M. Floyd	1903-1904
Stella Alexander	1904-1910
Mrs. Clyde Tomlinson	1910-1912
Mack Perry	1912-1915
Flake Turner	1915-1918
Clifford E. Weseman	1918-1920
Olive Odom	1920-1923
Dave Sherrill	1923-1924
Elizabeth Maddox	1924-1940
Mabel Wylie	1940-1959
Ruby Hudspeth	1959-

Postal History - Copy to National Archives, Washington, D.C.

RURAL MAIL SERVICE TO ERA

The first Rural Route in Era was established in 1905. There were no gravel roads at this time. The mail was carried by buggy or on horseback. Sometimes the carrier would walk the route.

The rural carriers were:

Daniel Hardy Cross	1905-1914
John Barlow	1914-1920
Mary Gregory	1920-1943
J.E. Jones	1943-1957

In 1957 the Era Rural Route was consolidated with Route 4 Gainesville.

INDIAN RAIDS

Isaac Gregory enlisted in February, 1862, in the Confederate Army, joining Company C of Colonel McCord's regiment of Texas Rangers. Indian raids upon the settlement made it necessary for the troops to remain on the frontier. He participated in several combats with the hostile Indians.

We were stationed at Red River at the mouth of Salt Creek. On December 23, 1863, word reached our port that a band of Indians were crossing the river into Texas. Captain Rowland detailed thirty men to follow the Indians. I was one of them. We went up to the Old Spanish Fort, as that was the way the Indians were headed. Just as we came in sight of the fort, we noticed smoke going skyward. Eighteen men, women and children had been killed and the fort burned. We dragged out the bodies the best we could. Mr. Campbell, a young man, was helping us remove the bodies and he recognized one of the scalped women as his sister. We followed the Indians all night and overtook them the next morning. They formed a crescent on their horses

and waited for us. After a short skirmish we quickly retreated losing only two or three men.

SAVED A LIFE

On this occasion I had the distinction of having saved a man's life. He was I.D. Pollard and a fine man who reared a fine family. If all I accomplished in my pioneer days was to save one life I feel that it was worth it. Pollard was riding several hundred yards ahead of me when I saw a redskin headed for Pollard with an upraised lance to which was attached a six-foot cane. I shot my rifle, missed the Indian but he fled. When I looked to my left, I saw an Indian hiding behind a log with his arrow pointed toward me. My horse was going full speed. I knew they always aimed a little ahead of the running horse, so I pulled upon my horse and the arrow went through the horse's ear. The Indians rounded up all the horses they could and went back to Oklahoma without offering to fight. They always outnumbered us.

Again on January 8, 1865, a band of Indians on Dove Creek in Tom Green County was attacked by McCord's Rangers, resulting in one of the hottest engagements in frontier annals. The Indians were coming at us. I jerked up on my horse and shot point blank at one. Then the Indian turned and went in the other direction. I had to get off my horse and reload my gun as he would not stand still. My horse took off after some other horses. I finally managed to catch my horse and mount him. We got back to the main camp. We lost eighteen men. We moved over the hill and camped without anything to eat.

The cook told us there was about a pint of meal left in the sack and that he would get it and make some gruel for the wounded men, but someone had stolen it. That night the biggest snow came that I ever saw. We stayed there the next day and made two litters for the wounded men. A litter is made by lacing two poles together and making a bed the best we could with anything available. The sick were put on that carried by two horses which go very slowly. I helped carry Lieutenant Gideon. We still had nothing to eat. Tuesday morning we headed east for the Chisam trail at the mouth of the Concho. We traveled all day without food. The snow had melted in places and the horses could eat some. That night we killed and ate seven Indian ponies that followed us out of the fight. The meat was hard to eat as it was half cooked and we had no salt. Miles Bond was with us and he neighed and nickered like a horse. He added amusement to the march and helped cheer us up. The next day was hard on hungry men and horses, but some better than the day before. That night some of the boys went on a forging party and came back with nine head of cattle. We had a feast of half raw meat without salt. The next morning we separated and every squad went its own way. I accompanied Captain Waide to the Chisam Trail with Captain Gideon. On the ninth day he died. I went into the room where he was early that morning and found

him weak but conscious and Captain Waide was writing his will for him. He was a member of the Baptist Church. He had a wife and three small sons. I watched him as he passed away. He was a good man and a gentleman. We went across the Concho from the ranch and dug a grave on the point of a bluff that projected out over the river. It was a nice grave and we were careful to dig it well. The vault was made but we had no coffin as we laid him on the vault and carefully covered the vault with stones so no dirt would get at his body that we sadly buried and left.

In the spring I heard they needed help badly to harvest the grain so I got a ten day furlough. When I got home the wheat was not ripe so I visted for a few days, then word came that the war had ended and we were free to stay at home.

ANOTHER EPISODE

In October 1868 I was plowing out east of my home south of Era with a team of oxen, but always kept a horse nearby in case I needed him. A neighbor rode over the hill to warn us of the danger. I turned my oxen loose and joined my neighbors north of Clear Creek. We saw a boy driving an ox wagon loaded with grain in the direction of the Indians. Dab Brumly, a negro, talked the boy into getting up behind him and riding to safety. Later I took the boy to his boss and explained what happened. I stood good for the horse and the boy returned to his home in Louisiana. Although we never heard from the boy, I bet he never went near another Indian. Later we found the oxen killed and the wagon overturned. The boys said an Indian shot a horse out from under George McCormick and he outran the Indians on their ponies. Gregory said the Indians were led by a Frenchman who settled among them and made himself their leader. The Frenchman's daughter shot and killed a Texas Ranger.

GAINESVILLE THREATENED

I arrived at Gainesville one afternoon and found the inhabitants of the town assembled in the square. A band of three hundred Indians were camped on the west side of Big Elm. The citizens of Gainesville thought they would be wiped out, and would have if the Indians had charged, but the Indians moved on. It was a pitiful sight to see women and children so frightened. Children were clinging to their mothers and crying. One young man went toward the Indian camp and never returned. The Frenchman was still their leader.

THE LAST FIGHT

Gregory was present at the last Indian raid in this section of the country. Four men, all Texas Rangers, were killed. They were Shriner, Severe Fortenberry, West and McKinney. After killing them the Indians set fire to the

grass and burned them almost beyond recognition. While leaving the state they murdered the Jones family near Gainesville and went on to Oklahoma. This was in 1868.

Gregory said he could have killed many Indians but always saved his shot. We used the old time muzzle loaders and it took some time to reload. We bluffed as long as we could but when we shot we rarely ever missed our mark.

This information was taken from: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest Edited by Capt. B.B. Paddock and newspaper clippings from The Gainesville Signal in 1925 when A. Morton Smith interviewed Isaac Gregory.



ERA CEMETERY

The first one-half acre of land was deeded to the Era Cemetery by J.W. Blanton and the first marked grave is that of Anna L. Allen. There are other graves marked prior to 1885 when it was named the Era Cemetery. It has been added to since and now contains 4.79 acres.

The cemetery record book was destroyed by fire in 1910 and a complete record of early graves is not available.

In April 1913, the Mother's Club of Era had a meeting for the purpose of electing trustees for the cemetery. J.A. Clack was elected chairman, Lester Segraves - secretary treasurer, J.B. Pace, R.L. Henley, W.S. Turner and J.B. Darden.

A cemetery association was organized in 1915 and trustees for the care of the cemetery have been elected over the years.

The ladies of the community served in the care of the cemetery. In 1921, the board of trustees was as follows: Lester Segraves - chairman and treasurer, G.W. Baker secretary, Mrs. J.P. Bickel assistant secretary, C.E. Harmon, J.A. Wylie, Mrs. Sallie McKinney and Mrs. Mima Thomason.

In 1915, a fund was started to fence the cemetery. A number of fund raising projects contributed to this fund. In 1915, the ladies had a dinner and raised \$52.40. In 1919, a play netted \$67.00 at Era and an additional \$10.00 at the Bermuda School. In October 1920 the boys

of the community sold rat tails at five cents each and donated \$18.20 to the fence fund.

In 1924, the Masonic Lodge installed gates and archways at the two roads entering the cemetery. The arches bare the dates 1885-1915 and the name - Era Cemetery. The Eastern Star Emblem was on one archway and the Masonic Emblem on the other. In 1938, new letters had to be installed to replace the damaged letters. The Eastern Star emblem remains but the Masonic emblem does not.

Funds for the upkeep of the cemetery have come from various sources. For a number of years, families were contacted for donations. Mrs. Ivy Segraves did this for many years. Free will donations and special money raising projects were held. In 1947, a football game netted \$72.00. In 1951, the Happy Twelve Club had a bake sale which netted \$83.80. The Era Coon Hunters donated \$15.00 in 1954.

The Era Community Improvement Club and trustees of the Era Cemetery are in the process of setting up a perpetual care fund.

It was interesting to note in the financial records, the part the ladies took in Red Cross work. In 1919, two sewing machines at the cost of \$30.00 each, plus materials was donated by the Red Cross to volunteers to sew on Red Cross projects.

THE FIRST GUARANTY STATE BANK, ERA, TEXAS

On February 13, 1918 a charter was issued by the State Department of Banking for a bank to be known as the First Guaranty State Bank, Era, Texas. The bank was opened for business on April 16, 1918 with a capital of \$10,000, operated upon the guaranty fund plan. The sum was divided into 100 shares and each director was required to own at least 5 shares. The Directors were L.L. Segraves, President, W.M. Thompson, J.E. Darden, R.A. Grundy, D.W. Brumbaugh, W.C. Wright, and Ed Williams. The cashier was Carl Ragsdale. He was later replaced by Dick Ready with John Shepherd assisting. Ike McLaughlin worked in the bank some when he was not busy farming.

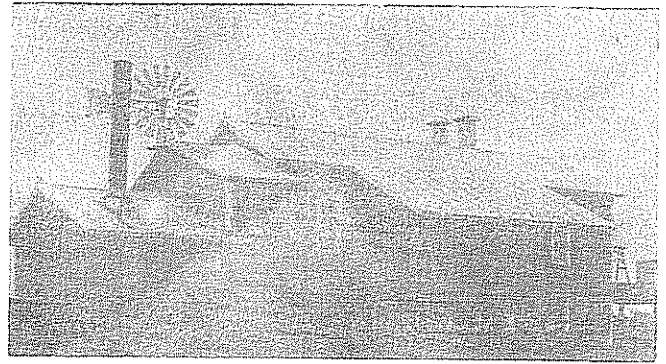
The building used as a bank was the lower floor of the now Masonic Building. It was turned to face the road and the brick and mortar vault is still standing.

The bank ceased doing business on December 24, 1925, and its assets liquidated.

ERA GINS

In the early 1870's, settlers in southwest Cooke County found cotton grew and produced well on their black land. Since the nearest gin was in Gainesville, getting their cotton ginned was a problem.

On April 26, 1872, P.P. (Pete) Cady and L.C. Hulett came from Grayson County to Cooke County and bought 135 acres of land from S.E. Doss. This land was part of a



land grant to E.C. Perry dated February 9, 1860. The land was located in the southern part of Era. Pete Cady built the first cotton gin on this land. It was located back of where the Jack House home now stands. Parts of it are still there. It is thought this gin was powered by oxen or horses at first and later converted to steam.

The second gin was built by R.W. (Rollie) Williams' father and was located a mile east of Era in the southwest corner of Mrs. Fischer's farm. This gin was steam powered. In the early 1900's, Rollie Williams moved to Era and built a house and gin. Part of gin foundation can still be seen behind Steve's TV Shop.

In the early 1880's, B.M. Williams who owned 1000 acres northwest of Era, built a gin on the northwest end of his land. There were five families living on this land. The gin was built for their private use and was never a public gin.

In 1909, the old Pete Cady gin burned. The property was bought by Bob Henley and Jack Owens. A new gin was built and operated by Henley and Owens.

Around 1917 a company was formed known as Era Gin Company. It was composed of Joe Pettit, Charley Johnson, Claude Fears, Bob Henley and J.E. Darden. They bought the Williams' gin and Henley gin. The Henley gin was moved to Gainesville and the "old red gin" was sold to George Canaday in 1920 and he operated it until 1930. The Era Gin Company was disbanded in 1918.

A Mr. Hollingsworth and Mr. Gailliard built a gin north of Era in 1924. In the mid 1930's, Charley Johnson and George Canaday bought the gin from them. The "old red gin" was moved. Johnson and Canaday operated the gin until 1945. It burned in 1946.

Sterling and Darrel McCool bought the gin lot in 1946 and rebuilt the gin using parts from the old Myra gin and a gin in Muenster. They operated it until the mid 1960's. Since that time, Era has been without a gin.

Some of the men employed by the Canaday gin include George Wilson, Dallas Ballard, Mr. Fellers and son Dave, Buck Hawton and the ginner, Mr. Dutton.

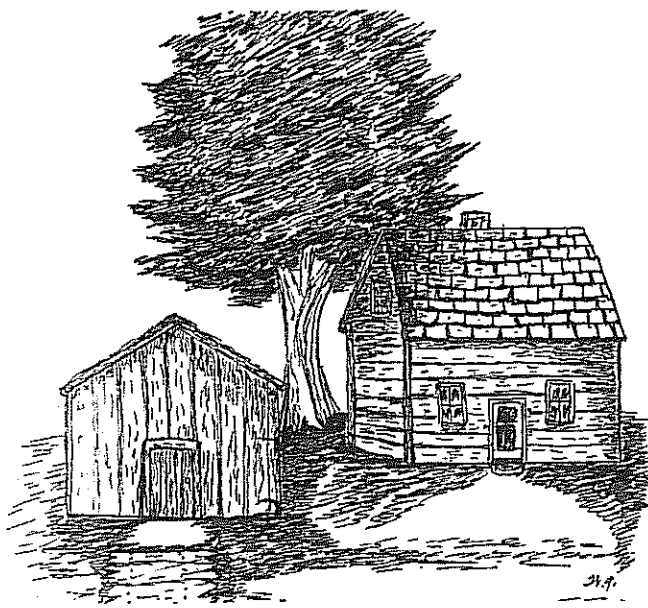
These gins were powered by steam at first. Later, the gin north of Era was powered by diesel. There was no electricity in Era at that time. Mr. Canaday sent George Wilson to West Texas to get a steam turbine generator to generate electricity for lights. They had been using

lanterns. As many as 18 were lit and hung around the gin for light. When the generator was installed and lights strung around the gin, people from Era and the surrounding area came to see the bright lights.

The bales of cotton had to be moved around by manpower since there was no electricity. Farmers brought their cotton in by wagon and team. They had the seed put back into the wagon to take home where it was used for feed during the winter months and seed for planting the following year. They also hauled the bale of cotton home. Some had a shelter to store it in. Others put posts or old cross ties down and rolled the bale of cotton on this to keep it off the ground so it would not rot.

Cotton was big business for Era farmers from the early 1900's until the past four years. In the peak season, the gin was run 24 hours a day. The chug-chug of the powerful motors could be heard for miles. The closest gin at present is located in Pilot Point.

Thanks to Fred Knight who was a bookkeeper for the gin and George Wilson for the information used in this story.



ERA GRIST MILL
by Willie G. Brown

Believe it or not, Era at one time had a grist mill. It was not the old time water wheel powered grist mill we find so often in the South, but those that remember it will tell you the corn meal was mighty tasty in a big pan of cornbread.

The mill was operated by Wallie S. Hakes (Sidney Hicks) and his mother. In 1907 the Hicks family, Sidney, Mrs. Hicks, a daughter Neva, and Mrs. Hicks' mother, Grandma Sheppard, came to Era in a covered wagon from Muschagee, Oklahoma.

The family bought several acres of land from Rollie Williams, located ½ mile east of Era. With the help of the townspeople, a shed was built and a gas powered mill

was assembled. Sidney ground cornmeal, chicken feed and feed for livestock. The family raised goats for milk and rabbits for food.

The town dogs gave Sidney a bad time. They chased his goats and barked at his rabbits. When Sidney threw rocks at them, they crawled under the floor of the mill shed. There was a loose board in the floor which Sidney raised up to scare them out. One dog got his tail caught in the board and Sidney being quite angry pulled out his knife and cut the dog's tail off. The next day, he found out the dog belonged to a man he admired very much. The man never knew how his dog lost his tail.

Sidney did odd jobs, worked on farms during harvest to help support the family. He was not an able-bodied man but would try any job and do his best.

Grandma Sheppard was blind, Neva was an invalid and Sidney was a devoted son. When his mother became too ill to walk, he pulled her to the Era store in a red wagon. After she died, Sidney moved to the Poor Farm in Gainesville which was operated by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Little. It closed several years later and Mr. Little was able to get Sidney in the Home for the Aged in Gunter, Texas, a Church of Christ supported home where he lived until his death.

There are a lot of us who remember shelling a flour sack full of corn and taking it to Sidney's mill to be ground into cornmeal. The price for grinding was \$.03 to \$.15 depending on how much corn you had. If you were short of cash, Sidney took a small portion of the meal, chicken feed or what was being ground at the time.

Sidney's father died before they left Muschagee, Oklahoma, and is buried there. The other members of the family are buried in the Era Cemetery.

Our thanks to Mr. Robert Little and Mr. George Wilson for the information of the Hicks family.

INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS

Era I.O.O.F. Lodge No. 517 was instituted on March 11, 1901 by George D. Streeter, Grand Master of The Grand Lodge of Texas. There were 27 members listed on the Roster for the December, 1901 report to The Grand Lodge.

The Charter Members were as follows:

W.E. Payne, W.E. Jordan, J.B. James, W.M. Spraggins, J.A. Felly, N.F. Alexander, S.B. Long, B.M. Wilson, L.G. Ehrle, R.E. Thomason, J.W. Blankton, M.A. Stamper, H.H. Pickens, S.W. Strader, J.S. Franks, J.P. Parks, J.H. Johnson.

The names of the members who were initiated were:

S.B. Long, B.M. Wilson, L.G. Ehrle, R.E. Thomason, J.W. Blankton, M.A. Stamper, H.H. Pickens, S.W. Strader, J.G. Franks, J.P. Parks, J.H. Johnson.

The 1906 Annual report listed the following 28 members:

Alinsworth, R.L., Anderson, A.C., Campbell, D.G., Clack, H.P., Campbell, W.L., Ford, E.W., Fears, Henry, Franks, C.C., Franks, J.S., Griffith, J.J.,

Harrold, P.H., Henley, R.L., Holland, W.F., Hire, Sam, Johnson, J.H., McKinney, W.B., Pickens, H.H., Parks, J.H., Pettit, L.S., Roberson, J.W., Strader, E.R., Scott, S.G., Segraves, S.L., Strader, S.W., Trimmer, M.M., Williams, E.D., Wiles, J.D., Wilson, B.M.

Era Lodge No. 517 was consolidated with Valley View Lodge No. 395 in April of 1925.

Note: It is understood this group met in a building on the North Side of the Era downtown area.

THE ERA MASONIC LODGE

The Era Masonic Lodge had its beginning on November 19, 1896 when a group of Brethren from Era met with the Valley View Lodge and presented a petition to be sent to the Grand Lodge of Texas at Houston, requesting a charter for a Lodge to be started at Era. This petition was approved by the Valley View Lodge and the request was sent on to The Grand Lodge at Houston. This petition was signed by the following brethren from Era:

J.W. Alexander, W.H. Freeman, S.B. Long, W.R. McKinney, W.G. Brown, G.L. Wren, S.M. Stansbury, S.V. Gist, B.R. Thomason, D.J. Wilson, D.P. Clack, S.L. Segraves, R.S. Wilson, J.D. Walker, D.W. Pace, I.D. Pollard, C. Dillon, E.P. Fears, E.M. Kelly, C.J. Swafford, D.T. Wallen, T.J. Hendricks, H.S. Chaudoin, John Watkins, Al Watkins.

On December 3, 1896 a charter was granted by the Grand Lodge of Texas and the Era Lodge # 796 was about to be a reality.

At a called meeting of Institution on December 17, 1896, the Right Worshipful District Deputy Grand Master H.K. Jones acting as Worshipful Master, James Riley as Senior Warden, T.R. Brown as Junior Warden, D.J. Wilson as Treasurer, S.V. Gist as Secretary, J.H. Wilhite as Senior Deacon, I.W. Stephens as Junior Deacon, W.R. McKinney as Tiler, J.H. Knos as Chaplain, presided over the organizational meeting, and the following officers were elected to serve the newly formed Era Masonic Lodge #796 for the following year:

J.W. Alexander, Worshipful Master; W.H. Freeman, Senior Warden; S.B. Long, Junior Warden; C. Dillon, Treasurer; S.V. Gist, Secretary; D.J. Wilson, Senior Deacon; D.P. Clark, Junior Deacon; W.R. McKinney, Tiler; R.S. Wilson, Chaplain.

The Lodge met in the upper story of the School house that was located somewhere near where the Baptist Church now stands. In November of 1913, the Era school board sold the school house and a parcel of land to the Lodge for \$1,000.00. This land was divided into ten lots, 6 of which were to be sold as business lots, 3 were to be sold for residences and one 84 foot by 180 foot lot was to be retained for the purpose of moving the Lodge hall to the new lot. In 1913 the Lodge was moved to its new location facing North on the Valley View road. This is the

same lot that it now stands on.

During World War I the Lodge was active in Red Cross work and bought Liberty bonds. Several of the local members served their country in the armed forces.

In the early twenties the cemetery fence being in need of repair, there was at this time a movement started to build a new fence. In 1924 the Lodge wishing to participate in this affair bought 2 gates and donated them to the cemetery. In 1926 the Lodge added a Masonic Emblem to the South gate and an Eastern Star Emblem to the North gate.

During the Depression years, the Lodge experienced difficulties financially and the membership was greatly depleted. The Lodge was kept going by a few faithful brethren who refused to let it be demised.

In the early 1940's, the Lodge began to grow again and continued to grow through the war years.

On March 12, 1952, the members voted to turn the Lodge building that faced North toward the East in Order to make room for Farm Highway 922 running from Valley View to Forestburg. In order to do this, one side wall was cut around the old bank vault, and the building pulled back and turned to the East and that is where the building now stands.

Today our Lodge is still growing and has a total membership of 50 brethren.



Dr. S.L. Segraves

DOCTORS AT ERA

In early days, doctors played an important part in the settlement of small towns. Era, like other small towns, had its share of doctors. Some came and stayed while others stayed for a short time before moving to larger towns.