

[William Munroe Graves]

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Life History

FOLKLORE.

Miss Effie Cowan, P. W.

McLennan County, Texas,

District 8. 2000

No. of Words

File NO. 240.

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REFERENCE.

“Interview with William unroe Munroe Graves, Ex-Confederate Soldier, Mart, Texas.

“I was born in Montgomery Alabama on the 22-nd, day of May, 1848. My parents having died when I was a child I was reared by an uncle on a plantation near the town of Montgomery. When the war between the States first started I was too young to go, but in 1864 I joined Co. E.17th Alabama. My captain was E.V. Lee and we were stationed at obile Mobile . I was on guard duty and took typhiod typhoid fever and was too ill to be in the company when they went into battle.

“I came to Texas in the year 1869 and lived in Hunt County, and lived near Dallas. I voted for the first time when Richard Coke ran for Governor. He won the election over his

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opponent Gov. E. J. Davis (the carpet-bagger governor) by 40,000 votes. That may not seem so much to you now, but you must remember that Texas was still thinly populated. Too, Texas was under mixed rule, partly civil, partly military, the military element predominating.

“Feeling towards the Federal Government was [still?] bitter and the Davis administration was very unpopular, the main reason was on account of the negro State Police. When Coke was elected Governor in Jan. 1874 I remember well the excited state of the public mind for fear that resident President Grant would uphold Davis in his contention to retain the governor's chair, but fortunately the President did not interfere and so Coke was inaugurated on the 17th day of Jan. 1874. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 There was a feeling of security since the close of the war. In his inaugural address he said, “Today for the first time since the disaster of the Civil War, Texas has a government chosen by the free vote of the people. Let the heart of the patriot throb with joy, for representative government and the ancient liberties so long lost are this day restored to the people of Texas.”

“I have wondered if the present generation know what a grand man Richard Coke was. He was re-elected in the next election and then in 1877 he was sent by the Texas vote to the United States Senate and was successfully re-elected for this office until his death in 1896.

“When I came to Texas in 1869 the country was still wild and unsettled, the business part of Dallas was just a square around the Court houses. When I went to vote for Coke I marched between rows of negro soldiers who were the military guard. I remember as we passed along between them they would tell us not to crowd up to the polls. In some parts of the state there was some trouble it seemed, but it went off quiet in the little village of Dallas, the way I remember it.

“The country was mostly ranches, there were only a few little patches for farms fenced with the old stake and rider fence. I remember when John W. Gates came to Texas to

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introduce barb wire fencing. the cattle men laughed at him and told him a steer would run thro' it. But he knew his business. He singled out Colonel Pryor, owner of large ranches of Austin and succeeded in getting him to let them have a demonstration on his ranch. He had a ten acre lot fenced in and asked the 3 cow-boys to make them brake thro' (the cattle ' , when it was proved a steer could not break thro' the fence Col. Pryor ordered a train load of wire, and soon these agents had more orders then they could fill, their fortunes were made for they had the exclusive right to sell wire in Texas.

“In those days the native grass stood knee high everywhere and in [th?] the spring and summer the landscape was covered with flowers. Every settler owned as many cattle as he could put his brand on. There were regular branding seasons and all were supposed to start at the same time if any one commenced before the season, he was looked upon as an outlaw, and was subject to the penalties of one.

“This was also the day of the cattle thieves. The criminals from other states also sought refuge here, since Texas was still in its infancy and in sections unsettled enough that thieves and criminals could easily find a hiding place. When the cattle thieves were caught those who had tracked them and caught them did not stand back on ceremony , as the saying goes. One morning I looked out from my window to a post oak tree in my view and saw seven men hanging to this tree.

“About this time I decided that Texas was just a little too wild and went back to my native state of Alabama, and lived there until 1894, but the call of the wild was in my blood and I could not be satisfied so I came back and have lived here ever since. When I came the first time in 1869, I came by boat to New Orleans from Mobile , then went up the [Missisipi?] iver River to the mouth of Red iver River and came down it to the town of Jefferson Texas : 4 From Jefferson we came by wagon train to Hunt County. There was no railroad at Dallas. The produce was sent to the market by overland wagon trains except where they could go by boat. From six to eight head of oxen or horses were hitched to a wagon. he The lumber for building was shipped by boat mostly from the mills of the

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adjoining Southern States, by way of the Red River, and from Galveston by the rivers. For the cedar lumber they sent to the Red River bottom's.

“The northern part of Texas was mostly ranches, very few acres in farming. Along the river bottom's a few plantations in [West?] Texas. The cotton was ginned the old fashioned way with a tread mill pulled by oxen, from whence the comparison to a tread mill originated. The first cotton gin that I ever saw run by steam power was at Greenville Texas, and it was a source of wonder to every one. “ The travelling man was always called the drummer,” they had their mode of travel by buggy, or with wagons. They were the champion story-tellers. Every one always had something to entertain their customers with their anecdotes. One story [?] of how the knight of the grip called the attention of the waitress at the hotels to his wants if / they happened to be out of the dining room, he would grab his six-shooter and fire several shots into the floor when the waiters would calmly put in his appearance and minister to his needs. The party who would summon them in this fashion would hold out his cup probably for more coffee, all of which would be taken as a matter of course.

“They would cover their territory about once a month, then the 5 customer would lay in his supply for the next thirty days. They would buy sugar, coffee, flour, bacon and tobacco by the wagon load, the prices were the same all the year. All the merchandise going into his territory were freighted out by wagon train. The drummer made his own collections, carried the money with him and it would have been an easy matter for a robber to relieve him of his earnings, this often happened but most of the time they were caught, all the peace officers kept blood hounds to train trail the robbers, desperadoes and criminals. The safest and surest way to deal out justice by the people was to string these law breakers up to the nearest tree.

“After I had seen this happen a number of times, I became just a little bit homesick to visit my native state of Alabama, so in 1871 I returned to this state and in 1872 I married Miss Elizabeth Lewis, and lived in Alabama until 1894 when the call of the wild again beckoned

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me and with my family I returned to Texas and settled at [Bosie?] until I moved to the Mart community. About this time the cotton sold for four and five cents a pound, We raised our living and the groceries that we had to buy were cheap. Bacon was seven cents a pound, flour sold by the fifty and seventy-five pound sacks for sixty and seventy cents. [?] Good corn meal sold in twenty-five pound sacks for twenty-five and thirty cents.

“The way they held the District Courts, there would be half a dozen or more counties in one district. The Court, the sheriff, clerk, and the attorneys for both the prosecution and the defense travelled on horse -back or in wagons from one county to another in wagons or buggies camping at night. I could name some of the most prominent lawyers, but they were pretty well scattered over the state and it would take up too much of your time. It is enough to say that there were some of the best Judges and attorneys that Texas has ever had in those days.

“Speaking of the time and means of travel in those days, I can remember how it took six days to make a trip from Dallas to Fort Concho now known as San Angelo. This was one of the finest hunting and fishing places in Texas, the game abounded here, in large quantities. There were still a few buffalo, deer and wolves by the hundreds, and some [Texas?] mustang horses. Jim Ned Creek and Pecan Bayou was the wild turkey paradise. The giant pecan trees made fine camping places along these streams and then as now fishing and hunting parties often went there for their sport.

There were plum thickets, grapes and [mulberry?] trees, as well as many others. It was no wonder that the Kiowa, the Lipan, the Wichita and the Waco's loved this hunting and camping ground. There were the boulders from which they made their arrows. and there were still at a later day traces of their villages. I must tell You about the buildings of old Fort Concho which [has?] been [kept?] very much as the soldiers left it and I understand has been given to the West Texas Historical society. As I look back over the time I first knew of the place in the days of reconstruction, there were the negro soldiers, the saloons, the honkatons / and the old Ben Butterfield stage line which ran thro' Fort

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Concho from San Antonio to California, and it was here that Gen. McKenzie [had?] his base for supplies from which he 7 conducted his campaigns which drove the Indians from their hiding places to keep from starving. When he closed in on them they fled, leaving their women and children behind them. These were taken to Fort Concho and held for ransom. " Looking to the north of old Fort Concho one can see into Coke County named for Governor Coke. The mention of this name again stirs old memories of those other days. Few of the younger generation can realize what a grand old man he was and what he accomplished for Texas in those awful days of reconstruction.

"Then there lingers in my memory the Texas cow-boy as he drove his herds to the Northern markets. Those were days of glamour to me, coming fresh from the old states, it was an experience worth the price. The cowboy had his problems, it was not an easy thing to drive a herd up the trail. The storms and lightning would sometimes kill hundreds at a time. Then there were the Indians. Even tho' they were becoming civilized and some had been placed on reservations, they would still make raids and if they met a herd of cattle and the trail boss would not give them what they wanted they would slip around and cause the herd to stampede , if they did not come out in the open and fight.

"As to the trails, there was Abilene Kansas and Abilene Texas. While I was in Texas in the 70's the barb wire had pushed the trails as far in Western Texas as Abilene, here they would pass thro' from the Southwestern part of the state, especially on their way to the market to Abilene Kansas. At Buchanan, the trails would split, the new 8 trail branching off westward to cross to the Red river at Deans crossing, and to find its way up in Kansas to Abilene, In those days it was something called the Deans trail, but now it is generally called the main Chisholm trail. It has been said by some who profess to know that the earliest Texas trail led up the Red river, originated at Lockhart, forty miles from Austin; crossed the Colorado river here, [followed?] up Salado creek in sight of where later Sam Bass was buried at ound Round Rock, on by Gerogetown and Salado to Cleburne.

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Some writers have given the Texas cowboy a hard name, that he was wild and drinking. I would say that may have been the cowboy at the end of the trail when he felt that he had to give vent to his having reached the end of a long and dangerous journey, but the cowboy who was trusted with driving the herds was one who would work all day, ride hard, singing his way at night at the top of his voice to keep the herd from stampeding, and he was under the eye [of?] the trail boss and never tarried to visit the saloon while on the trail.

“The memories of the days following the war between the states that I spent as a young man seeking my fortune and adventure still linger with me, [as?] the memory of the Lost Cause was so vividly brought home to me recently in my trip to the reunion of the Blue and the Gray lingers yet. I will tell you in my next interview some of the impressions this reunion gave me, until then “I bid you good bye. 1 FOLKLORE:

Miss Effie Cowan,

McLennan County, Texas,

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REFERENCE.

“Interview NO. 2, with William Munroe Graves, White Pioneer and ex- Confederate Veteran, Mart, Texas.

“I promised in my last interview to give you some impressions and stories of the veterans of the reunion of the Blue and the Gray at Gettysburg , which I have recently attended.

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“First of all let me say that this has been a wonderful experience after seventy-five years. Most of us have found that the other side had fine fellows the same as our's, altho' each of us believed his cause to be just, so there is no bitterness in meeting at this last reunion those who were on opposite sides. Just as there is no longer bitterness in our daily contact with those who fought on the opposite side.

“Gettysburg has many lessons— that of national unity, that of economic progress, that of eventual reconciliation. But perhaps the best lesson to learn from any war is how it might have been avoided by a little more good-will, a little more compromise, & little more of a liberal attitude of the minds that see only in terms of logical conclusions, the minds to which white is white and black is black, and there is no gray. For us who have grown in wisdom with the years we can see that change is inevitable, that there must also be continuity. We will never reach any point where our national life can afford to remain static. 2 “Neither can there be any complete break with the past. Between those who see only the need for change and those who resist change, I have come to the conclusion that any nation will be torn asunder if they persist in fighting it out as in the Civil War. At this last day we can see that Gettysburg is a good illustration of irrepressible conflict which exist with those who do not have the patience and imagination to progress thro' compromise.

“When the President stood under the 40 foot shaft of Alabama Limestone topped by a light supposed to glow eternal and two of the aging heroes who fought here three centuries ago, one in blue, the other in the gray [?] enveiled the monument to "eace Peace Eternal", then as the hood of bronze was lifted from the top of the tower at twilight, an electric device turned on the gas jet to burn as the symbol of good fellowship that succeeded the end of strife.

“Shining from the top of Oak Ridge, the second highest elevation on the battlefield, the light shining for twenty or thirty miles casts a glow all over the country where its rays penetrate, just as the old story of “Peace on earth, good will to men” casts its light around the world. This beacon was erected at a cost of \$60.000 and was contributed by seven

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states, Pennsylvania, New York, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Virginia and Tennessee. On the side of the monument are these inscriptions:

“With firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, An enduring light to guide as in unity and good fellowship.”³ “Up and down the wooded hill where the Union Regiment lost 232 of its 275 men in one of the bloodiest skirmishes of the battle-ground, a sound system carried the words of the President and other speakers doing honor to both sides of the veterans of that other day, seventy-five years ago.

“Old memories puffed like smoke of the battlefield at Gettysburg, when the veterans of the North and the South met again on the hills that one shook with the thunder of the canon three centuries ago. Men in Blue along the cemetery wall where Meades troops once lay in the grass; Gray jacketed veterans in the woods of Seminary Ridge, from which once came Picketts Brigade, and a mixture of the “Blue and the Gray” across the rolling farmlands marked this final re-union of the “Grand Army of the Republic” and “the United Confederate Veterans of America”, on the 75th anniversary of the battle.

“For three days, almost two thousand veterans from the North, East, South and West, gathered for this anniversary in the tent cities as guests of “Uncle Sam”, (or our present government). They mingled and talked of that day now so far in the past. I will try to tell you some of the story as told by veterans who took part in the battle, and who, from in memories store, re-told it at the reunion.

“There was Maj.- Gen. O.R. Gillette who was in Davis Brigade, Heaths Division, the Army of Northern Virginia. The burden of ninety three years has not bent his shoulders, his eyes are bright and the words came fast from his lips. He remembered how the canon belched forth and the gun wheels pressed the yellow wheat into the dirt of the valley. He told of how, where the Blue Ridge foot-hills fade into the rolling farmlands the Army of Northern Virginia rolled northward behind “Stuart's cavalry to strike at

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Harrisburg and Philadelphia to find shoes for the rebel soldiers bare feet , and food to till the knapsacks which were almost empty of parched corn rations.

“He remembered how Lee's war-tired men came out of the valley of the Shenandoah to meet Meads's army of the Potomac as it reached out alo along the roads that centered like the spokes of a wheel at ettysburg Gettysburg , and how they met and fought and forgot they ever needed shoes. e He told how he carried Jackson from the field at hancellorsville Chancellersville and supported Picketts left , and when he charged their company went too. How , he can still remember the peaches on the trees across the field. and the corn being knee high, and how hot it was the day they fought.

“He told of how the boys in Gray opened the battle out there, with his hand pointing towards the fields, and spoke of how the town had changed, all but two building's which he recognized. Told how it was said that Lincoln stopped in one to finish a speech. “It was eynolds Reynolds who opposed us first, said Gillette, “We drove them back after Reynolds was killed and chased them thro' the town. We lost a lot of men on that day”.

“That was the day that Lee might have won the battle of Gettysburg and gone on to make some other field the site of these statues and the scenes of pilgrimages. But the rebel yells died out with the sun, and while they rested Meades men were making ready to meet the attack. 5 “ There were many others who remembered this battle and told stories of what they did. There was Charles D. Clarke, of Austin, Texas, who lay among the Confederates watching the artillery , a mile away across the valley; and still another was Robert C. Blair age 94, of Los Angeles Cal. who rode with the sixteenth ennsylvania Pennsylvania Cavalry thro' the woods beyond Spanglers Spring and listened to the defiant yell of Stuarts horse men.

“Our job, Blair said with a chuckle, “ was looking for J.E.B.Stuart , and trying to keep him from turning Meade's flank. “ They didn't turn Meade's flank ,” he finished. Gillette remembered the last day best of all he said. “It was the final test — a thrust at Picketts

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Pickett's Brigade at the Union center after attacks on both flanks had failed. We were supporting Pickett's left, and the heavy artillery fire come from both sides, the field in front of us looked like plowed ground where the shells hit”.

“Not far away, said Gillette, “ sat ee Lee on his horse , ” Traveller, “ a big white horse on the hillside where their [statue?] stands today, while a mile away behind a little clump of bushes it is said that Meade's horse moved restlessly while the guns began to boom. The orders had been given. the artillery [smoke?] began to rise and out of the woods came Pickett Pickett's men on Seminary Ridge and then the cannon found its range. “

“They went down like blackbirds “Gillette remembered. “When Pickett charged we went too. The corn was knee high. We carried the flag. We [went?] up the hill but we could'n't stay there. They've got markers now right on the spot where we went. It was a hot day, and we fought. “ 6 There was Allen McClue 88 years old, of Santa onica Monica Calif. who carried water to the Union men stretched along the ridge , and served as orderly during the three days Battle of Gettysburg, said that he was nearly arrested on the last day because he bad put on the uniform of a Southern soldier while his was drying and was mistaken for a rebel. “

“John C. Smith of Meridian Miss, whose 46th Georgia Regiment charged towards the rocky slopes of Little ound Round Top Hill, just behind the Union troops, urgently summoned to guard that slope to the battle ground. Somewhere in that furious charge across the valley a spent bullet hit him [?] in the mouth, and he spit it out into his hand and went on to fight across the hilltop and finally to give up to the Union reinforcements.

“Time has not been entirely unkind to us veterans of the Lost Cause and the Union, for back yonder [and?] still farther back yonder in the grim realities of war, the comrades of our youth paid the great price. As each year [has?] taken the toll of human lives, so too, it has [softened?] the memory until the haze that always comes with autumn, clothes our memories in the dimnes of time. Yet we cannot forget our experience, or the sacrifice

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or our ideals , for which, in all ages [past?] [?] [have?] fought [and?] died, and then we remember the fact that after all we are [Americans?]. 7 Theyve They've sommoned all the veterans / from the North, East, South and West, They're coming back from near and far away. n An army strong, but not equipped for implements of war. Thy're going back — these boys in Blue and Gray! They're “tenting tonight on the old camp ground, these [veterans?] of old. They're reminiscing of a bygone day. The waving fields of yellow grain mark where their comrades fell, Another army of the Blue and Gray. nd And now they meet on common ground, these boys from North and South, East and West, Their guns and swords have all been laid away, They're clasping hands across the years, the past is blotted out, They're buddies [now?], these boys in Blue and Gray!”