

[Mrs. J. A. Kemp]

Dulaney, Ethel C., Wichita Falls, [Texas?] Life History [42?]

REMINISCENSES OF MRS. J.A. KEMP

Mrs. J.A. Kemp is one of the few pioneers who are still living. [1938?] She has resided in Wichita Falls continuously since 1883. She has lived a happy and contented life, as well as a very useful one, and is beloved by all who know her. The original Ms. was written about the time that Wichita [Falls?] celebrated her "golden jubilee", (Sept 26-27-1932,) and is on file with the Historical Survey [Files?] Kemp Pullic Library. The library itself was a gift of the late J.A. Kemp and Mrs Kemp to the city of Wichita Falls.

"I was born at Clifton, Texas, January 14, 1861. Mr. Kemp and I were married there when we both were twenty-one years of age. He was in business there.— We were married in October, and before Christmas we had decided to move. One day I said to Mr. Kemp: "Well, why not take Mr. Greeley's advice and go west?" He was delighted; that was just what he wanted [?] to do, but he was afraid to suggest it to me. Mr. Sayers (his partner) bought him out. He and Mr. Kell came to Fort Worth in January, 1883, not knowing where they would locate. From Fort Worth he wired: 'Going to Wichita Falls. May locate there'. —I looked on the map—but failed to find such a town listed. When he came back I asked him for a description of the town, and he told me about the Barwise family and their big house with eight or nine rooms, and that the family were all so nice, and that they were Presbyterians. But I couldn't seem to find out much about the town. C-12. Texas

"As soon as we could get ready, March, 1883, we moved to Wichita Falls, and stayed at the Harris House, which was located east of town on what is now Lee Street. The old house has been made over, and has had wings added to it but the old room that Mr. Kemp and I stayed in that night is still there. 2 Mr. Kemp opened up a dry goods and

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grocery store on Ohio Avenue. Ward and Stanley had a store here when we came; it was a general merchandise. Mr Ward and his mother, Mrs. La Valle, lived next door to us on Indiana Avenue. His mother was Irish, a staunch Roman Catholic, and a most charming woman.

“At first this country seemed so full dull and uninteresting that I felt that I just couldn't 'stick it out'. But Mrs. Barwise was a great inspiration to me; if it had not been for her I think I could not have stayed. Another person who has a great comfort to me in the early days was Mrs. Bettie Gentry, the mother of Mrs. W.H. Downing. In all my life I have never seen a more consecrated Christian.

“After a while I learned to appreciate the beauties of nature about us, and then I became happier. [There?] was tall grass all over this country that was waist high. In the morning it was grey; at noon it was rose; and at sunset it wa was lavender. The wild cattle that roamed the country were all colors. The skies at night were beautiful; there was nothing to break the view. The climate was delightful. Of course, we had sand storms—terrible wones ones, but we had no mosquitoes, and very few flies. One thing we did have was a plenty of fleas; the abundance of prairie dogs was what made the fleas so bad. Before we had been here long Mr. Kemp bought me a pony from the Indians, and I rode all over the hills. I remember especially the road that goes out by Haven Park, the old Holliday Road. It was beautiful! I began to love this big open country; it came to seem like home to me and I was happy. 3 “The Indians and the cowboys kemp kept me alive. There was always something interesting going on. Mr Kemp did a big business with the Indians and it was very interesting to me just to go down to the store and watch them. I had long red hair / which I wore braided and wound around my head. One day Mr. Kemp's brother-in-law touched my braids and called the Indians' attention to it. One of them looked very earnest and pointed heavenward. It seemed that their idea of their god was a large man with flowing red hair. Some of the squaws came up and were feeling of my hairpins; I took

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one and gave it to her and said, 'Yours', and motioned to her to put it in her hair and she got out her knife to cut it off.

“At the back of the store Mr. Kemp had a bone yard. The Indians gathered up the dried bones of cattle, buffalo, etc, and brought them to trade for grocerie groceries and dry goods. The warriors came riding on ahead and the squaws followed on wagons withe with the bones. The Indian men sat against the house and smoked while the squaws unloaded the bones. Mr. Kemp kept the bones until he had a carload and then shipped them to the East for fertilizer, etc.

“One day in warm weather I was at the store when the squaws came in very hot and worn out from unloading bones. They always wore those big heavy shawls no matter how hot it got. I pointed to them and said, 'Hot', then I picked up a piece of red table cloth and put it around my own shoulders and said, 'Cool'. I pinned it on with safety pins. They had their blankets pinned on with mesquite thorns. Then I started selling red tablecloth. 4 We sold all we had and Ward and Stanley sold all they had ! You never had to tell more than one; they passed the word around. They were delighted with the safety pins; they had never seen any before. They didn't know how to count money; about all [?] they could say was, 'two-bats', meaning two-bits, or 25¢.

“They would sell you a big fish for a quarter, or a turkey weighing twelve or fifteen pounds for the same amount.

“Mr. Kemp also opened up a store at Harrold, Texas, which was the terminus for the Fort Worth and Denver for a long time. [Oen?] time I went up to Harrold with Mr. Kemp— Quanah Parker was there with two of his wives and some of his children. I took a little pink chambray dress of my [?] baby's and dressed his baby up in it. He was delighted; he asked my baby's name and when I told him, 'Syble', he pointed to his baby and said, 'Syble'. He named his baby after mine (Mrs. Newton Mayer). My brother, Arch Anderson,

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and Quanah Parker were very good friends. "uanah Parker had one son that was a preacher. He was here a few years ago and put on a war dance at the Womans' Forum.

"We lived for a long time in the Nine Hundred Block on Indiana Ave . We had a five-room cottage wit with a porch. The stock yards were out west [?] of town at that time. The cowboys always had to 'paint the town red' when they came in. One night John Samuels, who was a half brother of Jesse James, and two other boys, amused themselves by riding their horses across our front porch, as a part of their celebration. John Samuels' brother-in-law, Mr. Allen Palmer, found out about it, and told John that he had to go to Mr . [?] Kemp and apologize, that he had disturbed and frightened 5 me, etc. So John went down next day and apologized profusely to Mr Kemp, and bought a bill of goods from him, giving him as security a pistol that had belonged to Jesse James. I kept that pistol and used it for a paper weight at night when I was keeping books for the store. I kept these books at the house and had to stay alone many nights. I learned how to shoot for my own protection.

"In tose those days all denominations worshipped in the court house, as there were no churches. The court house was a four-room house. There were only three denominations in the earliest days—the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. Mrs. Barwise always cooked a good dinner and invited strangers to her house for dinner the first Sunday they wer were here. Mr. Kemp and I were two who accepted this hospitality.

"Mr. Kemp's first venture in land was when he traded his wholesale mercantile buisness to C.C. White for some Cherokee county School Land. This included land where the country club now is, and where the Asylum stands, and many acres more. He later went back into the wholesale mercantile business, but he always owned lots of land. One farm he owned three times, and the last time he had it he made enought enough wheat on it in one year to pay for the farm and have \$1 an acre left. It was the McIntyre place on the old Lake Road/.

"———I will never forger how Mr. Kemp came to build this Wichita Lake. He always said that we could'nt have a good town 6 until we got more water. He would tell people about

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it and they would say, 'Yes', but they did nothing about it. One day he was riding out in the country after a heavy rain, and saw the valley of old Holliday creek filled with water—acres and acres all under water. He came home so excited he could hardly eat. He said; 'My vision is complete. I have seen that valley full of water. I know where to get water for our city.' The next Sunday afternoon he took me out to see it. Of course, the water had gone down by that time, and couldn't seem to get his vision. It seemed to me that Holliday Creek was so small for such a project. He said, 'Maybe you can't see it, but I see it. It is a perfect vision.' He got an engineer to come to look at it, and he said: 'Yes, you have it right.' Many people did not believe in the plan, and said, 'Kemp is crazy!' But it did not discourage him. They built the dam, and at the first big rain ninety feet of it went out; but still he was not discouraged. He said that just showed that the water and the power were there. We had Col. Nettleton with us; he was the father of irrigation in Colorado and other places. He and Mrs. Nettleton stayed about two weeks with us. We also had an engineer of the Katy railroad to come and look the proposition over. I have made more hot biscuits and fried more steaks for civil engineers than for any other group. Finally, Lake Wichita was completed and successful, and was the making of Wichita Falls , and the surrounding country.

“I have the first piano ever shipped to Wichita Falls. My grandmother gave me [?] the money to buy it, and I got it for Christmas, 1883. It is a grand piano of the Chickering make, and we 7 bought it from the Thomas-Hoggan Company of Galveston. I still it in my home, in a room with other old-time things. “