

A Couple of Old Bell County Men

Gary found this story among some papers that had been collected by our mother, Ettie Cox Sutton in the late '70s or early '80s. Some of the adjacent papers were from the files of her sister, Ruth Cox Smith.

We know mother and Aunt Ruth did research together, including at least one trip to Comanche County.

A note on the last page indicates it was probably copied from the Killeen Herald of October 8, 1909. We do not know who wrote it, the source of the information, or who the second old man was.

A COUPLE OF OLD BELL COUNTY MEN

Something of their earlier lives, which was not altogether devoid of adventure and thrilling incidents.

James P. Sutton was born in Ark., in 1833. He attended school there having as schoolmates the Riggs' who were afterward early settlers of Bell County, and also Parson Scoggins, a familiar name in Bell County. In 184², Mr. Sutton then 9-years old, moved to Texas with his Fathers family, settling in Navaro County. In 1849, Mr. Sutton moved to Bell County, and in that very year met Sam Bishop who also moved with his Father to Bell County. He also got acquainted with Billy Blair and his brothers, who had been in the county for a year then. He knew Jeff Trotters' father in Cameron before the war and lived a neighbor to Major Rose for some time in San Saba. At one time Major Pose left Uncle Jimmy in charge of all his possessions while he went for a visit to his folks back in Missouri. The Major told Uncle Jimmy he would be gone on the visit for one year. So the Major hitched a pair of horses to a wagon and left for the journey to Missouri. The year passed and just three more days, said Uncle Jimmy, and the Major with his family drove up to his San Saba home. Major Rose built what is widely known as O'Hairs mil and Uncle Jimmy was employed as miller. Later Judge O'Hairs bought this mill & Uncle Jimmy retained his place as miller. O'Hairs mill was

a very busy place in the early 70's. It was a flour mill lumber mill with a grain attached there too. People frequently came a distance of 40 miles to have their wheat ground. Uncle Jimmy measured their wheat and weighed their flour and saw that they got what was coming to them and all parties were satisfied. Uncle Jimmy said one day Major Rose Rode up to his house, coming from Salado home. The Major told Uncle Jimmy he had business for him. The Major said to him: "I have sold my cattle in San Saba County for \$15,000. I have come to get you to go with me up there and help me carry the money to my home. I know that you will help protect me from any possible robbery." So Uncle Jimmy went along with the Major. There were no banks; it was a dangerous undertaking for two men to carry such a wild thinly settled country. So the men kept a sharp watch out for robbers. They actually saw three men step into a thicket a few hundred yards in front of them. Uncle Jimmy got their weapons ready and rode on the place where the men stepped into the thicket. The men were walking carelessly in the bushes and made no signs attempting robbery and the money in due time was put in the Major's home in Salado. Uncle Jimmy has seen much of Texas, riding over the country horse back. He has followed many Indian Trails--has hunted the wild buffalo--explored much new country--has hunted the wild bear, panther, deer, antelope and musk hog. A panther once gave him an awful scare the beast was in a hole in the cliff 25 feet above the ground where the dogs were baying it. Uncle Jimmy saw a ledge of rock up there enough for

a human foot-hold. So he got on this ledge and with cocked gun crept cautiously to the spot where the beast was in the den. When getting very near the panther, the dogs rushed into the den and bit the panther and the beast sprang out of the den onto the ledge where Uncle Jimmy was creeping.

The panther knocked him off his feet and ran away. Luckily he seized a bush with one hand and did not fall off the bluff, but his gun was knocked far away. The panther next ran up a tree and Uncle Jimmy regained his hold and got his gun and had the satisfaction of shooting the panther through the heart. Uncle Jimmy had helped to extract the Indian arrow from the flesh of white men. Captain Foss (Governor) captured Cynthia Ann Parker and while bringing her home to the whites stopped at Uncle Jimmy's home in Nolan Valley and rested in his home for two days. This suggested a name to Uncle Jimmy and the orphan girl whom he raised was named Cynthia Ann.

In 1850 Uncle Jimmy witnessed a scene of danger. He was in Georgetown, when about 80 armed men appeared in town who proceeded to take a man from jail and carry him away about half mile. Then halting they tied a rope around the mans neck and threw the other end of the rope over a limb of a tree and all the men stood by and watched him hang there. But the man could tip-toe and touch the ground and so could manage to breathe. These men seeing the man was not dying, unloosed the rope. Then they put their prisoner

on the back of a horse and again threw the rope over the tree limb and led the horse from under the man. The man fell but again he could tip-toe and touch the earth. While thus struggling between life and death a man pulled a dirk from a scabbard and cut the rope. The man said he would not stand to see a man murdered in so brutal a manner. At this juncture the mob of 80 men began fighting among themselves. The men seemed evenly divided, but when any man attempted to use his gun or knife, some one near would hold his arm to prevent the slaughter. The men used rocks, clubs, and other missiles and used their fists freely, but never cut or shot but little. The battle lasted for three hours when darkness put an end to the fight. The prisoner was let free in the scuffle. Uncle Jimmy said he saw him three days later in Belton, the man was able to walk around, but he had a red splotch around his neck.

Uncle Jimmy is very fond of children and young people ought to be kind to him in his declining years. All honor to this old Indian fighter.