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New light shed on earliest history of county

The following article was written by Harold Harton, a longtime Lampasas businessman and writer.

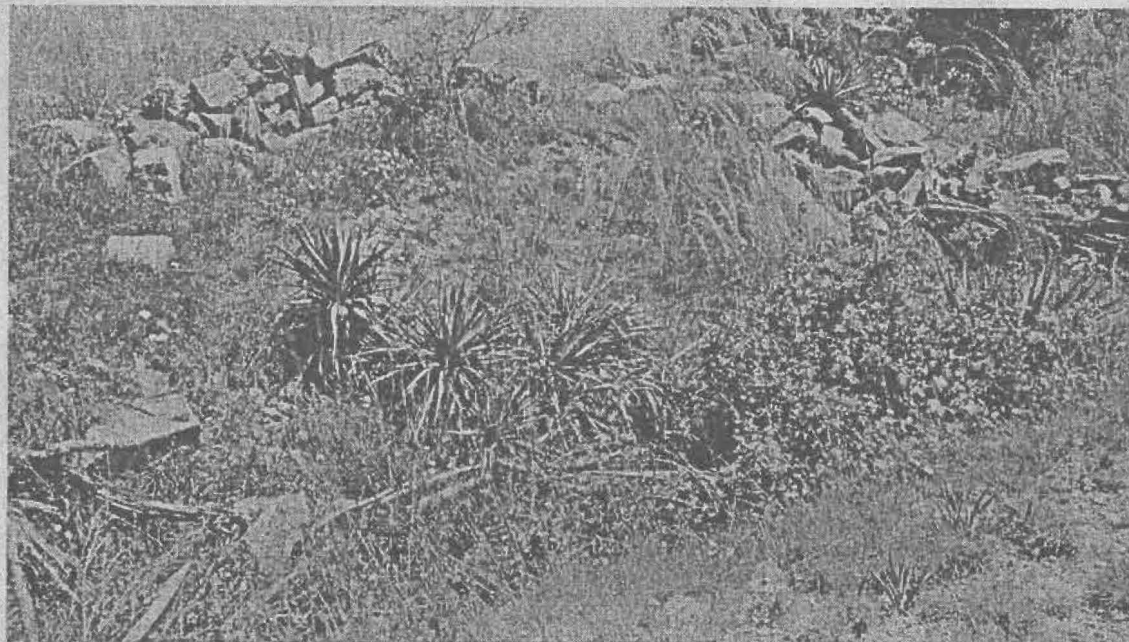
New facts have come to my attention that the place I own on County Road 3 lies in an area which contains the earliest history of Lampasas County and perhaps is the site of one of the earliest settlements in our area.

In fact, the information I received, thanks to my friend Dale Hatley, possibly pushes back the history of our area 100 years.

It was in 1756 that a priest by the name of Don Pedro de Terreros, along with a company of Spanish soldiers commanded by a Captain Basterra and including a Thomas Isaac Cox, established a fort near the confluence of Delucia (Lucy) Creek and Arroyo Cavallo, seven miles northeast of Lampasas. The fort was under constant attack by the Indians and was abandoned shortly thereafter.

One of the duties of the group was to capture wild horses for the Spanish. Cox observed wild horses by the hundreds in the area, and the tales of these numbers of horses were the reason for the following generations of Cox families to live in this area.

Following his discharge from



A semicircular area formed by native rocks could have been part of a holding pen for wild horses captured in the area and transported to the east. This photograph was taken on the John Hodges place, some 100 yards southwest of Cox Cemetery.

the Spanish army, Cox obtained permission from the government to capture the wild horses and sell them back east.

His grant gave him permission to "capture wild horses, carry on trade and occupy land surrounding the water courses of the Lampasas River, Delucia

Creek and Esquivel (School) Creek."

He set up camp at the abandoned Terreros presidio and began to capture the wild horses.

The horses were driven down the immigrant trail which ran from New Orleans to Santa Fe. The path of this trail lies near

the path of Lucy Creek. Upon arrival in New Orleans, he sold the horses to merchants there.

In New Orleans, Cox also learned of the impending war against the British (American Revolutionary War), so he returned to Philadelphia, where he entered the Army as a

captain.

Arguing to commanders that his horse-mounted cavalry had an advantage over the British foot soldiers, he proposed a horse-hunting trip back to Texas to supply the troops with horses. General Charles Lee, Washington's second in command, agreed. Cox was relieved of his command and sent back to Texas by way of New Orleans, where he again obtained permission from the Spanish to round up horses. This time he was to pay the Spanish government 25 cents per head. This fee remained the contract price for the Cox family until 1882.

Cox enlisted five nephews to help with the venture, promising he would make them rich men.

On Sept. 16, 1780, the six men and 18 horses began the long trip to Texas. They were slowed by fall rains, high water, poor grazing and Indians, as well as other problems. In what is now Oklahoma, they ran into some unfriendly Kiowas. They were attacked Dec. 19, 1780, just north of the Red River and escaped only by hiding in a ravine. The next day a "blue norther" hit with sleet and snow, which again delayed them.

They finally arrived at

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Story sheds some light on Lampasas County's history

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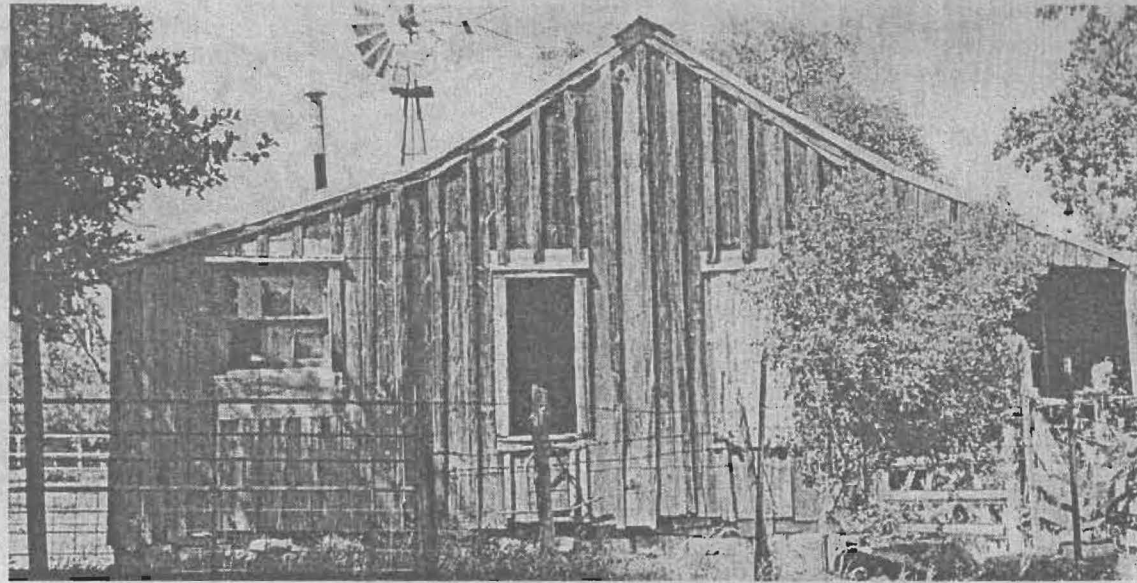
Terroros presidio and were amazed at the wild horses, wild cattle and buffalo on the hills surrounding the area. It took them 46 days to complete the horse trap and holding pens. Their trap was baited with grain and salt, which led the horses to water and the trap.

The first night, a stallion led 40 mares and colts into the trap. This continued, and on the 96th day camp was broken, and the trip back to Pennsylvania began with 330 horses and 68 colts.

Horses were tied together with horsehair ropes, which allowed each man to lead 100 horses. Eighty-one days later they arrived in Pennsylvania with 316 horses and 48 colts.

Cox reportedly sold 304 horses to the Army and received \$33 per head. He also is said to have paid each nephew \$1,000, fulfilling his promise to make them rich.

The group was asked to return to Texas for more horses, the story goes. Cox's nephews were anxious to enhance their wealth, thus a new expedition was soon under way. This time two more men were added to the group — Nate Brown, a cousin of Cox's wife, and Cull Owens, Cox's brother-in-law. A new load of grain and salt was obtained, and the group was off to Texas for more wild horses.



The Pleasant Cox house on the Harold Harton ranch later was used as a barn.

This time, Cox decided it was wise to make friends with the Kiowas, which he did. The party camped with the Kiowas for a prolonged time. Owens became a bit too friendly, falling in love with one of the Kiowa maidens. After this, he was given the nickname "Kiowa" Owens.

The expedition continued to Texas, where it found plenty of horses. The group returned to Pennsylvania with 366 horses and 109 colts. The Army paid Cox

handsomely.

A side note: On the return trip, Kiowa Owens decided to stay in the Indian camp with his maiden. And for the next 50 to 60 years, he traveled back and forth to his family in Pennsylvania, keeping two families.

Owens fathered many children in both camps. He also became an expert horseman and deadly rifleman, and he could track like an Indian. The Cox family later rejected him.

He did, however, visit Pleasant Cox, and his wife, Martha Jane, when he was about 80 years old, at their place on Lucy Creek. After Kiowa dismounted, Martha Jane said it was obvious he had not bathed in several months. She said he "stunk like an old grizzly bear." Several of his Indian sons reportedly became successful ranchers in southwest Texas.

In 1793, Cox organized another horse-hunting trip to Texas. Some of the original nephews had

married and settled down, and they declined to make the trip. Other nephews, including a 16-year-old named James Bybee, and his brother, William, were anxious for the trip. For the more experienced hands, Cox took along Brown and Owens.

This trip was a tragic one. Upon arrival at Terroros presidio, the party of 27 men found a lot of Indian signs. They anticipated trouble, yet despite their precautions, a group was caught away from the presidio by a band of Comanches.

In the attack, James Bybee took an arrow in the chest. It was so deep the arrow had to be broken off and pulled out through his back. He died at dawn on July 4, 1793, his 17th birthday, and was buried at Terroros presidio. It is thought that Bybee was the first English-speaking person to be buried in Texas, and certainly in what is now Lampasas County.

Upon returning to Pennsylvania, the horse-hunting group found that, with the war now over, there was no market for their horses. The trip had been a failure from the start.

But the horse hunting was not over. In 1803, Cox got the job of furnishing horses for the upcoming Lewis and Clark

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Jim Rutland,
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RUTLAND'S

511 E. Third
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Cakes & Lace

County's history recalled

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expedition. With his brothers and sons, Cox made several trips to Terreros presidio for more wild horses. On one of these trips another young man was killed, dragged to death by a wild horse. He was buried next to Bybee at the presidio.

In 1820, one of Cox's sons, Soloman, is said to have received a contract to furnish 500 horses to William Henry Ashley to use in his fur-trading business. He received an advance of \$1,000 in gold to finance the party.

In 1834, another of Cox's sons, Ben, headed an expedition to Terreros presidio. Included in the party was Pleasant C. Cox, a 14-year-old nephew. Upon arrival, they found a great many people who wanted to fight the Mexicans for independence.

The Cox family members had gotten along with the Mexican government down through the years and were not about to get involved in the ill feelings toward the Mexicans. They decided to follow the immigrant trail on to Santa Fe and Taos, living as hunters, trappers and



A small marker notes the grave of Joseph Cox, who was born Aug. 6, 1867, and died Nov. 28, 1872.

mountain men.

In 1837, Pleasant Cox returned to Texas with his great-uncle, Kiowa Owens. From there, he made his way to New Orleans, where he found work as a keel-boat hand, a cobbler, rail splitter, hunter and trapper.

In 1842, he made his way back to his family, who had moved to Missouri. There he married his cousin, Martha Jane Bybee, and set up shop as a cobbler. In 1846, he visited Terreros presidio on Lucy Creek and decided to move there.

They arrived in the latter part of 1851 to homestead the site of Terreros presidio. Martha Jane died in 1912, and was buried in



Thomas Isaac Cox reportedly captured wild horses for the Spanish and for Gen. Charles Lee, Washington's second in command, in the Arroyo Cavallo, or horse draw. This photograph was taken on the John Hodges place, which adjoins Harold Harton's ranch on the west side.

the same place her uncle, James Bybee, was buried. Some 22 Cox family members and 15 others are buried there.

A John Thomas Cox later became a Texas ranger. He once remarked that those graves contained men who died in several different countries. Bybee died in "New Spain," Trey Dodd died in Mexico, James Cox in the Republic of Texas, and his mother, Martha Jane, was buried in the United States -- all in the same cemetery.

Somewhere near this cemetery, Charlie Boyd and "Stumpy" Watson got into a gunfight. Both were severely wounded and were taken to the home of Martha Jane and Pleasant Cox, where Martha Jane cared for them.

On the morning of Dec. 22, 1874, Charlie died. When she told Stumpy that Charlie had died, he said, "Good, now I can die in peace." Then he died. It is assumed that they, too, are buried at Terreros presidio.

Area offers activities for visitors

The Headwaters Region of the Colorado River Trail includes Lampasas, Blanco, San Saba, Buchanan Dam/Inks Lake, Johnson City, Burnet, Kingsland/Lake LBJ, Llano and Marble Falls.

Chambers of commerce in the region offer a calendar which lists monthly activities in each city for participation.

Some of the year-round attractions include the Llano County Museum; Hamilton Creek Walkway & Picnic Area, Burnet; Vanishing Texas River Cruise, Lake Buchanan; Fall Creek Vineyards, Tow; Archeological Center, Kingsland; Confederate Air Force Museum, Burnet; Mill Pond Park & County Museum, San Saba; Fort Croghan, Burnet; LBJ Visitor Center, Johnson City; Longhorn Caverns, Inks Lake; Enchanted Rock, Llano; Colorado Bend State Park and Keystone Square Museum, Lampasas; and Inks Lake/State Park.

Golf courses open in the Headwaters Region are at San Saba, Buchanan Dam/Inks Lake, Burnet, Kingsland, Llano, Lampasas and two in Marble Falls.