

ALLISON/FRIENDSHIP COMMUNITY by Geraldine Heisch

The community of Allison (later called Friendship) was located on the northern banks of Willis Creek about 4 miles east from the present town of Granger, Texas. In 1847 Elihu Creswell Allison and his brother, James A. Allison, moved to Milam County and bought land from Aza Hoxey which was part of a six league Mexican Land Grant to Pedro Zarza prior to 1836¹. A contract dated 29 May 1855 shows that Elihu and James were each to receive 320 acres apiece out of the six leagues.² The part of the county where they bought land became Williamson County in 1848. This land was located in northeastern Williamson County and about 4 miles of the present town of Granger, Texas. James Francis Allison, the oldest son of Elihu C. and Margaret M. Allison, and two of his brothers, Elihu Polk and Russell J. Crawford Allison, each built large two-story houses in this Allison Community.³ (Photos of two of these homes are included-pictures A & B.) The Allisons, along with other families had large cattle interests there.⁴ They registered their cattle brands in Williamson County in the Register of Cattle Brands.^{5&6} A post office named Conel was established here with James F. Allison, postmaster (1878-1880).⁷

¹ E-Mail from Harold Grinstead (grandson of James Allison) hal@grnstd.com, January 14, 2006.

² Bonds & Oaths, Book 1, Williamson County, Texas page 217 The Chisholm Trail, Vol. 21, No. 1, Summer 2001

³ History of Texas Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee, Burleson Counties, The Lewis Press 1895

⁴ 1860 Federal Census Williamson County, Texas, Williamson County Texas Its History and Its People

⁵ No. 126 E.C. Allison, 10 May, 1879 Register of Cattle Brands in Williamson County, Texas, The Chisholm Trail, Vol. 7, No. 7, No. 1 Summer 1987

⁶ No. H-267 Hoxie & Allison, Register of Cattle Brands, Williamson County, Texas, The Chisholm Trail, Vol. 9, No. 3, Winter 1990

⁷ Polling Places Mentioned in the Williamson County 1899-1900 Voter's Registration Book, The Chisholm Trail, Vol. 8, No. 1, Summer 1988

The post office was discontinued until 1892 when Calvin G. Allison, and then Charles S. Williamson (1893) were postmasters at this same place, now called Allison. However in 1894 mail was transferred to Granger.⁸

In this community was also built a cotton gin, a store, a church, a tabernacle, and a school. The gin was built by Bill Linder and was operated at one time by Joe Cuba, Sr. and his sons. The old tabernacle was built close to the cotton gin and the store while the church and the school were built across a small branch and a bit farther to the west on the banks of Willis Creek. However, here the creek's banks were very steep and the great flood of 1921 did not destroy these two buildings.⁹

Allison school was built about 1873 near the creek.(Pictures of the school and of students are included-C & D.)It was later called "Old Friendship" school and this was southwest of the latter town of Friendship. The building was enlarged in 1902 by the Woodmen of the World who used the second floor for their lodge meetings.¹⁰ The bottom floor was used as a classroom. In this room was a large curtain made from ducking material which separated the older children from the younger ones. After the lodge ceased to exist, the top floor was used by the older children. The Allison School District 22 in Williamson County in August 1912 had the following trustees: J.H. Wentreck, J.C. Wheeler, J.E. Thompson and W.H. Robertson.¹¹ The teachers at this

⁸ Land of Good Water A Williamson County, Texas, History,page 414, Clara Stearns Scarbrough 1973 Williamson County Sun Publishers

⁹ Telephone Interview with Carrie Mae (Winningham) Robertson, (Elihu Polk Allison's granddaughter) December 3, 1987, private collection, Geraldine Tallas Heisch P.O. Box 1117, Granger, Texas 76530

¹⁰ Land of Good Water A Williamson County, Texas History,page 414, Clara Stearns Scarbrough,1973 Williamson County Sun Publishers

¹¹ County Superintendent's Records, Allison School Information, 1912

school were: Miss Frances Poole, Miss Zora Cook and Beulah Stanley. The Allison Colored District 22 had as teachers Bessie West and Bessie E. Fowler. In 1914 the trustees of Allison, District 22, of Williamson County were: J.H. Wentreck, J.C. Wheeler and J.J. Thompson and the teachers were Marvel Wilcox and Beatrice Fowler. An item in the 1950 GRANGER NEWS titled "Granger 32 Years Ago" mentions Friendship School beginning with a fairly good attendance and the teachers are to be Miss Roselle Ramsey of Granger and Miss Lola Kirkman of Thorndale.¹²

This Allison/Old Friendship School was also used for worship services in the Czech language by Rev. Jindrick Juren of Fayetteville of the Moravian Brethren Church. These services were infrequent, two or three times a year.¹³(A picture is included of a confirmation class that met here-Picture E.)

Elihu Allison's youngest child died at age 10 and Elihu buried her on the western edge of his property just south of Willis Creek. She was the first person buried there. His wife, Margaret Matilda died in 1867 and was buried there also. This Allison family cemetery later became known as the Old Friendship Cemetery.¹⁴ A.A. Young, W.B. Brookshire and E.P. Allison were trustees of this Friendship Cemetery in November 1888.¹⁵ After the Granger Dam was built, the cemetery was moved to the Granger City Cemetery and is

¹² Granger News, January 19, 1950, "Granger 32 Years Ago"

¹³ Stacy Mikulencak Labaj and Ben A. Merrick Papers, 1963-1977, 1986, 1996, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin "...3K95" Stacy's Pioneers," oral histories of Czech-Texans and other Central Texas settlers: Volume 5, So through Z... Mrs. Fannie Kopecky Sefcik

¹⁴ Harold Grinstead (grandson of James Francis Allison) E-Mail, January 14, 2006, Private Collection Geraldine Tallas Heisch P.O. Box 1117, Granger, Texas 76530

¹⁵ Williamson County Deeds and Records, Deed 51, page 250, Trustees of Friendship Church Cemetery

located at the east end of the Machu part of the Granger Cemetery. A listing of all burials is shown in the Granger Dam & Lake Cemetery Relocations Booklet.¹⁶

Sam Allison operated a store north of the Allison home. The store carried essentials such as flour, sugar, coffee, tobacco, snuff, a bit of calico, thread, needles, and school supplies of paper, pencils, pen staff and points and candy.¹⁷

Here in the Allison/ Friendship community, the tabernacle was a popular place for revival meetings, which often lasted a week. People slept beneath their wagons and their children within the wagon. People came from miles around, bringing enough feed for their horses to last a week. Good spring water was handy. Fires were always going with beans bubbling in pots and cornbread baking in the dutch ovens which hot embers surrounded. The men would cut a lot of trees and place them in rows and the lumberyard would lend them 1x12 planks to lay on them for seats.¹⁸ Some of the people living in the Allison/Friendship area at this time were: The Jim Allisons, The Crawford Allisons, The Polk Allisons, The Tom Wininghams, The Bun Martins, The Gus Wolsches, The Shine Rushings, The Sowell, The Simciks, The Ed Eliotts and others.

The Allison/Friendship community was a thriving community until the monstrous flood of September 1921 created havoc with the area. The gin, the store, and the tabernacle were destroyed. Also, about 2 ½ miles eastward on the banks of Sore Finger was a tiny community called Youngstown, which the flood almost completely destroyed. Located

¹⁶ Granger Dam & Lake Cemetery Relocations, U.S. Army Engineer District, Fort Worth, Texas, Pages 2A-5 & 2A-6, 2A-9 to 2A-29

¹⁷ Stacy Mikulencak Labaj and Ben A. Merrick Papers, 1963-1977, 1986, 1996, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin "...3K95" Stacy's Pioneers," oral histories of Czech-Texans and other Central Texas settlers: Volume 5, ... Mrs. Fannie Kopecky Sefcik... Julia Belicek Svrcek..."

¹⁸ Stacy Mikulencak Labaj and Ben A. Merrick Papers, 1963-1977, 1986, 1996, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin "...3K95" Stacy's Pioneers," oral histories of Czech-Texans and other Central Texas settlers: Volume 1, ... Mrs. Margaret Phoebe Jemeyson Bales (granddaughter of Elihu C. Allison)

here was a store run by Clarence Williams, a blacksmith shop operated by Pink Jackson, the Ed White gin, and a school for black children. The flood washed away the gin, blacksmith shop, and the contents of the store.¹⁹ The black school was built by Clarence Young on the north bank of Sore Finger Creek and was used as a school and as a church until 1952.²⁰ After the flood Mr. Williams moved his store and house north about ½ mile from Youngstown, on land he bought from Mr. Chester Cocke. This house and store later became the property of Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Lesikar. Mr. Cocke built a new blacksmith shop in this new Friendship area. Another store was added as well as a house for the teachers who would teach in the new school building, which was being built at this time. Mr. and Mrs. U.D. Young donated 5 acres of land for this new school. The Mazoch brothers from Granger built a new gin and the Baptist Church from Old Friendship was moved to this new location, which was now called New Friendship.²¹ After consolidating with two nearby community schools (Enterprise and Centerville), the new Friendship school opened in the fall of 1923.(Picture of new school-Picture F.) Enterprise, a rural school nicknamed Cocklebur, east of Friendship, was established about 1900. The nickname was due to the heavy growth of cockleburs nearby. This school consolidated with Friendship in 1922.²²(Picture G) Centerville School a rural school, 1902-1922 was northeast of Granger.²³ (Pictures H,I,&J)

¹⁹ Letter from Johnny Rozacky, August 20, 1992, private collection, Geraldine Tallas Heisch, P.O. Box 1117, Granger, Texas, 76530

²⁰ Stacy Mikulencak Labaj and Ben A. Merrick Papers, 1963-1977, 1986, 1996, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin "...3K95" Stacy's Pioneers," oral histories of Czech-Texans and other Central Texas settlers: Volume 5, ...Armelia Thompson, page 5

²¹ Letter from Johnny Rozacky, August 20, 1992, private collection, Geraldine Tallas Heisch, P.O. Box 1117, Granger, Texas, 76530

²² Land of Good Water A Williamson County, Texas, History, page 424, Clara Stearns Scarbrough 1973 Williamson County Sun Publishers

²³ *ibid*, page 420

The County Superintendent's Records show the trustees at Enterprise were: A.J. Joslin, E.S. Marquis, R.L. Jones, and J. T. Houston and the teachers were Miss Hattie Jones and L.E. Marquis. The trustees shown for 1914 were J.E. McWilliams and J.E. Jones and the teacher was Miss Ruth Wilson. This was District 60 in Williamson County.

Centerville was District 73 in Williamson County and in 1912 the trustees were: Gus Wolsch, A.A. Ferrill, R.H. Ellis, J.B. Holcomb and J.A. Jackson while the teachers were: Miss Lula Smith and Miss Ava McAlister. Then in 1914 Miss Viola Wallace was the teacher and the trustees were: A.A. Ferrell, J.A. Jackson and J.I. Cargill.²⁴ This Friendship Community grew quite a bit in the years following 1925. Many new people moved in and rented land from the Youngs, Brookshires, Allison's, Haires and others. It became a community of mixed ethnic origin. People became close neighbors and all helped one another. Friendship was exactly what the name implied.²⁵ The school and the Baptist Church were the main gathering places. There were revival meetings at the church and Box Suppers at the church and at the school. The men of the community did the repairs and maintenance of the school building and grounds. Even the first school bus for the Friendship School was built by Johnny Rozacky's father, Henry Rozacky. He converted a Chevrolet cattle truck into a bus.²⁶(Pictures K & L included)

Some of the social events in the community were wiener roasts, parties, picnics and fishing trips. The big event was the Friendship Fair, which lasted three days. People came

²⁴County Superintendent's Records for Enterprise and Centerville Schools, 1912 & 1914

²⁵Letter from Johnny Rozacky, August 20, 1992, private collection, Geraldine Tallas Heisch, P.O. Box 1117, Granger, Texas, 76530

²⁶ibid

from far and near to attend the fair and to enter many exhibits. It was amazing to see the cooperation of every one and the hard work they did to make the fair a success.²⁷

(Pictures M & N included).

The Friendship Grange, No. 1414 was established and included is a picture showing the group of April 25, 1935. (Picture O)

In the school census records in 1925, there are 256 children enrolled in the Friendship Schools (includes the black school, also); in 1936 there are 250 pupils (209 white and 41 colored); and in 1941 there are 198 students in the Friendship Consolidated Schools (174 white and 24 colored).²⁸(Pictures of school and student groups are included-Pictures P, Q, & R.) A new gymnasium was erected in 1936 by Charlie Horak and Louis Kopecky. It was considered the finest gym for miles around. (Pictures S & T)

The blacksmith shop in this new community was run for many years by Joe Zezulka.

The service station had several owners during the years with the Clarence Lucky Family being the last owners. They sold it to the Zik Safariks who moved the building to a lot they bought from Chester Cocke located south of Jerry Lesikar's store. They remodeled the building and turned it into a tavern, which they owned for 2 years and later sold to the Emil Mohels. (Pictures U, V, & W included)

The Mozach Gin at Friendship later became the Friendship Co-op Gin with Henry Rozacky as the manager. Throughout the years some of the people who served on the gin

²⁷ Letter from Maureen Ray Rozacky(a teacher at Friendship) July 30, 1992, private collection, Geraldine Tallas Heisch, P.O. Box 1117, Granger, Texas 76530

²⁸ County Superintendent's School Census Records of Williamson County, Years 1925,1936,1941

board were: John Adamek, Rudolph Cadan, Jake Wade, Willie Davidson, Anton Cadan, Tom Tallas, R.H. Brookshire, Louis Shirocky, Ted Krueger, Joe Stefek and Ed Wentreck. The gin was a busy place. From “Friendship Facts” in the Granger News we note that in August 1951, 244 bales had already been baled. The crew that year included: Henry Rozacky Sr., manager; Buck Spinn; Lawrence Rozacky; Ralph Brookshire; Johnnie Janak; Mrs. R.H. Brookshire, bookkeeper and Doc Sharp (hauled bales to Granger).²⁹ (Pictures X, Y, & Z included)

A most notable lady from the Friendship Community was Stacy Mikulencak Labaj, 1903-1977. Stacy spent many years on the Williamson County Historical Commission. Her oral histories include many early residents of this community. Some of these tapes are at the Center for American Histories at the University of Texas and some of her material is at the Institute of Texan Culture in San Antonio.³⁰

The Friendship Community, beginning on the banks of Willis Creek and continuing on to the new Friendship located on higher elevation was indeed a busy, prosperous and congenial farming community with a variety of crops raised by the hard-working local farmers who hated to see their lands taken away by the Granger Dam. (Pictures “aa”-“nn” are included.) This community is remembered with very fond memories as is evidenced each third Saturday of October when the Friendship Exes gather for a reunion to reminisce about their beloved community.

²⁹ Granger News, Friendship Facts, Mrs. Henry Labaj, August 9 & August 23, 1951

³⁰ Stacy Labaj Remembered, The Granger News, February 24, 1977