

# Chimney Creek Ranch

*An Historical Account and  
Personal View of a  
Shackelford County Ranching Heritage*

COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

Lawrence Clayton

*with an Afterword  
by Henry B. Paup & T. Edgar Paup*

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**COMMEMORATIVE EDITION**

Published in celebration  
of the Spring 2011 meeting in Albany, Texas  
of the Advancement Board  
of Texas A&M University Press

*To the ranching culture  
that has helped shape  
Texas and Texans*



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## *Preface to the Commemorative Edition*

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Those fortunate enough to own Texas ranches know that, though the land endures, changes inevitably come to the people and man-made structures associated with them. Chimney Creek Ranch is no exception.

In the twenty years since Lawrence Clayton wrote this narrative, Chimney Creek Ranch has experienced significant changes. And so, the time seems appropriate to issue a new edition of Clayton's history, in celebration of those developments and in commemoration of the losses that they have entailed.

Sadly, there have been deaths among those mentioned in the text. Author Lawrence Clayton himself died on December 31, 2000, at the age of 62, of ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).

The owner of Chimney Creek Ranch, Mary Frances "Chan" Driscoll, died on October 8, 2007. The ranch was then inherited by her two sons, Henry B. Paup and T. Edgar Paup, and has been under their stewardship since that time.

In an Afterword to this new edition, other significant changes regarding ranch ownership and operations are detailed. In the intervening chapters, with the exception of obvious printing errors, no attempt has been made to edit or revise Lawrence Clayton's text from the original 1992 printing.

We hope that you enjoy this portrait of Chimney Creek Ranch as much as we have enjoyed being a part of it ourselves. The ranch continues to be a special place for our family. Our hope is to continue its important heritage as part of our family's future by always improving it for the next generation and always honoring its historical significance for the State of Texas.

Anne and Henry B. Paup  
Nancy and T. Edgar Paup  
Chimney Creek Ranch  
Albany, Shackelford County, Texas  
Spring, 2011





## *Acknowledgments*

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The personal help of several individuals has made this account possible. Those whose recollections have been most helpful are Mary Frances Driscoll, Watt Matthews, Robert Waller, Louie Bob Davis, and Florene Smith. The accounts prepared by Joseph E. Blanton and Joan Farmer also have been of immense help. I have come to appreciate Ted Paup for his encouragement during the preparation of this narrative.

This narrative is the founding entry of the Consortium for the Collection of Ranch Histories at Hardin-Simmons University. A copy will be placed in the Rupert N. Richardson Research Center for the Southwest in the Richardson Library on the Hardin-Simmons University campus.

I gratefully acknowledge the continuing support of the Hardin-Simmons University Academic Foundation.

L. C.



## I : *The Beginning*

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Southwest of present-day Albany the land rises on limestone hills where especially in rare wet spring seasons the rolling landscape is covered with waving grasses and flowers. Even in the more frequent dry years, rice grasses sustain wildlife and livestock. In some places, the land is choked by mesquite, prickly pear, and other thorny brush. Before the white man came, this then almost treeless plain was the range of the buffalo and the Comanche Indians, lords of the South Plains, who trailed the migrating herds and from the backs of their fleet horses took from the moving brown masses what they needed for life—food, clothing, and shelter. Legend says that one of the nearby canyons was a commonly used route over which the Indians traveled as they moved in their annual migration. It is an eerie feeling to look over these panoramic landscapes from the high ground at the junction of State Highways 351, 180, and 6 and imagine those horsemen of old riding by.

Today this is cattle country. It has been so since the great buffalo hunts in the 1870s eliminated the shaggy bison from the Plains, and in 1874 when Col. Ranald Mackenzie ended the threat of Plains Indian's hostility in the area. This was unfenced range in those days, but adventurous men came and tamed the wild cattle and dug in deep to make homes here.

Ranches in this area today are well fenced and cross-fenced. Cattle drink from carefully monitored stock tanks. Modern grazing practices and blooded cattle roam where once longhorns grazed almost as free as the buffalo had. How this land was brought under fence can be illustrated on several of the area ranches, but an excellent example is found on Chimney Creek Ranch located west of Highway 351 about fourteen miles west of Albany. Highways 180 and 6 run across the northern part of the ranch.

When this was open range, the land and its rich grasses belonged to whoever controlled it. No thought was given to ownership. As the frontier began to be settled, the feeling changed, and people began to homestead and buy property,

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still at a very low cost. The formal ownership lineage of this property on which the ranch and a Butterfield Stage Station rest is somewhat detailed and characteristic of the ownership changes. Joe Blanton's research of the records indicates that the first owners of part of the property to make up Chimney Creek Ranch were George B. and John F. Horsful. They "conveyed" it to A. W. Rhode on June 19, 1883, and he sold it to Joseph Kite less than a month later on August 15. Nearly six years later on February 28, 1889, the property was "patented" by Governor L. S. Ross to R. B. Thompson, a trustee of the estate of the late Joseph Kite. A descendent of Kite, J. M. Kite and his wife, transferred ownership of the land to Virginia A. King on January 12, 1903.

The most historic portion of the property, however, was that which Conrad took control of on December 19, 1888. Included are surveys nos. 220 and 221 of the East Texas Railroad State School land in Shackelford County of Texas. Running across this part of the property is a small creek flowing from the northwest to the east and then south. The creek named Chimney Creek is thought to have been named, Farmer says, "because of the old chimney still standing from the overland Mail Station established there" (p.2). A. C. Greene in his classic *A Personal Country* ponders the reason for the name of the creek because when he visited there he found no trace of chimney or cabin.

One of the principal historical attractions on Chimney Creek Ranch is the site of Smith Station, a stop on the old Butterfield-Overland Mail Line, whose coaches once charged across the prairie. John Butterfield's Overland Mail Company began service on September 16, 1858, when the initial coach left St. Louis, Missouri, headed for San Francisco, thus linking the still sparsely settled area along the Mississippi River with the pockets of civilization on the West Coast. The line cut its way along the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel across vast stretches of territory still hostile in the threat of Indians, weather, and geography. It was indeed a bold step.

In order to accomplish the trip of 2700 miles in just over twenty days (the first trip took 23 days and 23 hours), the stage needed fresh mules at regular intervals. In the area near Chimney Creek, these were found at Fort Belknap on the Brazos River in present-day Young County near Graham. Later Franz

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Station would be built between here and Clear Fork Station on the banks of the Clear Fork of the Brazos. Then the stops were Smith Station and Fort Phantom Hill, the old military fort by this time abandoned and burned. The road then went on to Abercrombie Pass and to Fort Chadbourne and thus on to Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River and eventually to San Francisco.

Waterman L. Ormsby rode this first coach as a newspaper correspondent and describes the area of interest. At Clear Fork Station, later Stribling Station, he says, "A log hut and corral were under construction." At Smith Station twenty-three miles south, the line's employees lived in a tent, and a corral of brush was "nearly finished." He notes there was no timber nearby to use for constructing a pole corral. The chinks in the brush corral were filled with mud. For supper Mrs. Smith offered "cake cooked in the coals, clear coffee, and some dried beef cooked in [her] best style" (p. 48). Little other record of Smith Station remains. A station house was eventually constructed of the useable chunks of stone found in the area. It stood unnoticed for decades. When historians and archeologists began to search for the structure, however, no trace could be found. It was later discovered that it had fallen victim to "progress." The stone had been sold to be crushed by a contractor who used the resulting gravel to form part of the base for nearby State Highway 351. Later, removal of mesquite brush by dragging a heavy chain across the area scattered any remaining evidence. Thus the landmark is irretrievably lost, but in 1992 an archeology team from the Texas Archeological Research Library began studying the site to determine the accuracy of the location and to find any remaining artifacts.

During the late years of the 1870s or early '80s, a house was erected on the property by persons presently unknown. What is certain, however, is that the structure was adapted to the needs of the frontier setting and its potential dangers. The original structure is today part of the north side of the main house on Chimney Creek Ranch.

The original square structure built of native limestone quarried from near the site consisted of a bedroom and a living room with a fireplace on one level. Legend has it that Confederate arms were once cached here in case there was a need to fight the Yankee soldiers during the Civil War, but the probable time

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of construction, the 1870s, likely makes this account legendary rather than factual. Up about five steps was another level of the house, which included another bedroom with a screened-in porch. A separate kitchen stood away from the house, and the privy was down the slope from the kitchen. Between the house and the privy stood a springhouse, a small structure covered in the summer by trumpet vines. Naturally cooled by spring water flowing through it, the spring house had shelves on which stood stone crocks of milk, butter, buttermilk, and the like. It was a pleasant place to rest on a hot day. Nearby was a water well; later a windmill pumped water from it. The pumping device remains there today, but only as an adornment. The yard fence, steps to the back yard, and a walk at the front are built of native stone.

One of the unique features of the house is found beneath the upper level where an enclosure or basement was constructed. Since the house sits on a hillside, the ceiling of the dugout-like basement serves as the entry from the east on ground level at the front door. The door on the basement on the west opens out onto the lower level of the hill falling toward the creek. Accessible through a barn-like door, the sanctuary was used, legend has it, to protect stock, especially horses, from thievery and from violent weather. The floor was and still is dirt, and the entire area measures approximately sixteen by sixteen feet.

An important element in the history of Chimney Creek Ranch began about twenty-three miles to the north at a military post and town both known by the name Fort Griffin. In the town were several businessmen but many of them were in the business of running saloons, gambling dens, and houses of prostitution. One legitimate merchant was Frank Eben Conrad, who founded a store in the 1870s about three years after the post opened. He traded in various goods necessary to frontier life. He bought and sold buffalo hides and the supplies necessary to bring in the hides—food, clothing, lead, gun powder, rifles, knives, and the like. From a previous marriage Conrad had at least one child—Frank B. Conrad. After the death of his first wife, whose name has been lost, Conrad married Ella Matthews, a young woman whose family was prominent in the region along the Clear Fork. In fact, several families came during the early period, and it seems wise to discuss their roles in the settlement of the region.

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A number of families moved to the region to ranch or otherwise live off the land. Prominent among these were such names as Clark, Newcombe, Howsley, Gentry, Irwin, Ledbetter, and Jacobs. Several of the names are still found in descendants in the region, many of whom still own property held by their ancestors. Two of the most prominent, however, were the Reynolds and Matthews families. Both families came from the South and made temporary stops in East Texas. By 1858, however, the Matthews family had come to the Clear Fork area, and the Reynolds family followed a year later. The families persisted through the Civil War period by forting up at civilian outposts to protect themselves against the Indians who, seeing the soldiers leave, concluded that the white men were simply withdrawing and sought to press the advantage and drive the other whites out. Fort Davis on the Clear Fork in present-day Stephens County was one such fort and was the site chosen by the Reynolds family. The Matthews went to Fort Owl Head. The men continued to see after their herds of wild longhorn cattle during this trying period.

Once the war ended, the families spread out on the land, and ranching began to develop in earnest. Trail herds were started north to bring needed money to Texas, and ranching and its cowboys became well-established traditions. The great buffalo hunts ended the reign of the shaggy bison, and cattle repopulated the ranges. The Reynolds and Matthews families played their part, especially the former because men of the family drove herds literally all over the West and established ranches there.

Development of the railroad system into Texas eliminated the need for trail drives to markets. This expanding rail system brought the demise of bypassed towns and gave birth or new life to others. The situation was that way for Fort Griffin and Albany. When the fort closed, the buffalo were all killed, and the railroad passed Fort Griffin by in favor of Albany. Conrad and other citizens left the banks of the Clear Fork in search of a better life. Conrad reopened his business in Albany in early 1882. The Texas Central Railroad made Albany a far better choice for a businessman. Conrad ran a successful business. In her application to the Texas State Historical Commission for a marker for the Bud Matthews railroad pens, Joan Farmer quotes one of Conrad's advertisements

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in the *Albany News*: “We were here in Indian times, we sold goods in soldier times. We did a little business here in buffalo times. We went slow here in hard times. We handled wool here in sheep man’s times. We boomed things in booming times” (p. 2 Farmer). Indeed Conrad had seen the boom and bust of the frontier economy. Conrad sold his store in 1891 to devote full time to ranching. For unknown reasons he committed suicide on May 4, 1892, the day he turned fifty years of age. He left Ella with five children between the ages of two and ten. Following her husband’s death, Mrs. Conrad relied heavily on the advice of her brother, John A. Matthews, area rancher and prominent county judge. His son Watt Matthews can recall traveling by buggy and wagon to visit his Aunt Ella. He remembers that his father and mother sat on the front seat as his father drove the team, and the children sat in the back. They followed the rutted trail of the Butterfield-Overland Mail, which provided the most direct route across Lambshead Ranch to Smith Station on Chimney Creek Ranch.

No doubt with the encouragement of Matthews, Mrs. Conrad granted a right-of-way to the Texas Central Railroad Company to lay railroad tracks through her property to move the line toward Stamford in 1900 and then on to Rotan by 1906. On July 20, 1909, Mrs. Conrad purchased additional property from Virginia King to swell the acres of Chimney Creek to 14,006. A set of cattle pens and a loading chute to enable her and her neighbors to load cattle into railroad cars for shipment to market in the northern and eastern outlets was developed and constructed by Mr. Matthews and named “Matthews, Texas” by Mrs. Conrad. When she learned that the name “Matthews” was already used by the railroad to designate a site, she added her brother’s nickname to the designation to make it “Bud Matthews, Texas.” It was located at Texas Central Milepost No. 201.9, a number designated the distance of this point from Waco, Texas (Farmer, p. 4). Farmer notes that many ranchers are known to have used the facility over the following years. Included in these were Monroe Cattle Company, which controlled about 30,000 acres of range nearby; George W. P. Coates, whose ranch was southeast of the pens about five miles; Dawson and Company; and the Rafter Three Ranch.



## II : *G. R. Davis*

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### THE LEGACY BEGINS

In 1920 the ranch was purchased from the Ella Conrad heirs—John N., Louie B., and George Reynolds Conrad—by George Robert Davis, a member of one of several families already established in ranching east of Breckenridge. G. R. was born July 18, 1869, one of eight children to John Love Davis and Loiza Crawford Davis. The family came to Stephens County in 1890 from Kaufman, east of Dallas. These early families had an impact on the area. G. R.'s sister Alice married Breck Walker. This Breck, actually Breckenridge Walker, is regarded as the first white child born at a settlement in Stephens County and had a town named for him. Today it is an important trading center and county seat of Stephens County.

G. R. married Hattie Collins (born January 19, 1870), remembered by her granddaughter Mary Frances “Chan” Driscoll as “a delicate, sensitive, pretty school teacher.” G. R. himself she recalls as a hard-working, intelligent, personable, honest rancher who soon became the village druggist as well. Davis sold ranch property east of Breckenridge to pay on the Chimney Creek property. The family then moved to Chimney Creek and enlarged the original house by adding first a dining room and a makeshift kitchen. Later Mr. Davis bought a house and moved it to the site. There he joined all the units together to form a single dwelling. This latter section provided room for a spacious kitchen pantry and allowed the old kitchen to become a dining room. In the 1920s he arranged construction of a rock wall around the yard, and, north of the house, a small bunkhouse for the cowboys. A large barn constructed of sheet iron on wooden framework stands to the northeast of the house. Built around the turn of the century, it has been strengthened and modernized, but it still has the flavor of an old ranch barn. It serves to store feed and shelter animals and wagons. South of the house stood a carriage house that sheltered the Davis's car until

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the structure was torn down because of damage by termites and habitation by skunks.

Mr. Davis granted an easement to the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company and agreed to construct “stock pens and cattle concentration yards” (Farmer, p. 5). From there cattle continued to be shipped, especially by the Davis Family, to pastures operated by Glen Hawthorne of Eureka, Kansas. There the stock was pastured and then shipped to market in Kansas City or to feedlots. Later shipments went to Fort Worth by rail and truck. The MKT agreed to an annual payment of \$9.65 for a period of fifteen years and further agreed to negotiate the contract on an annual basis for as long as the agreement was beneficial to both parties. Farmer notes that these new pens served as enlargements to the existing pens at Bud Matthews switch. The MKT evidently used the existing rails for access because only one set of tracks has ever crossed the ranch. The agreement terminated at an unknown later date, and the rails have since been removed.

G. R. Davis ran the ranch for many years between its purchase in 1920 and his death on December 31, 1955. The operation produced quality Hereford cattle along with horses trained for cattle work, not for the show ring or race track. During many of these years he was aided by the efforts of his son, Louie.

Louie’s role in running the ranch as G. R. grew older was significant, especially during the middle fifties when a terrible drought gripped the area. Frugal by nature, Louie kept a tight grip on the operation and saw it through the trials of time when many operators went broke and gave up. The ranch was his life, and he was uncomfortable any time he was away from it. He was both a good cowboy and a good rancher/businessman, and he devoted his life to this operation.

On days when the ranch conducted its annual roundups and shippings, the work began early. Cowboys from other ranches had risen extremely early, saddled their horses, and ridden in to help with the work. No trailers were available to haul horses in those days. Pastures were large and required many riders to spread the dragnet to assure gathering all the cattle, a chore which usually required until nearly noon to accomplish.

The lunch of chuckwagon food typically included roast beef, pinto beans,

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cole slaw, sliced tomatoes, light bread, and coffee. Peach pickles or homemade pies served as dessert. Mrs. Davis herself prepared this food and had it ready for the crew when the appropriate time came.

After the men had lunch, they separated the stock into desired groupings, and those animals to be shipped were loaded aboard rail cars and started on the long journey to Kansas City, Fort Worth, or some other distant market. One of the problems that regularly caused difficulty around railroad shipping corrals was an apparent requirement that the train crew had to sound the whistle on the train at given times. This whistle blowing often interfered with the gathering of the cattle. Unaccustomed to this sound, cattle were extremely frightened and tended to bolt wildly into stampede when the whistle surprised them. More than one crew of cowboys had to repeat the roundup of the cattle after the engineer had seen fit to sound his whistle.

After many years of living on the ranch, the Davis family moved to Abilene to a house built for the family at 718 Victoria Street. Mrs. Davis had longed for a prairie mansion in town, and Mr. Davis built a fine one, with three floors, a basement, and servants' quarters over a two-car garage. After years of heavy labor, Mrs. Davis had a maid to help with the heavy work, and the family assumed the lifestyle of cattle baron alongside other ranching families in Abilene such as Guitar, Caldwell, and others. He also purchased other ranches: the Throckmorton County Ranch, part of which now is called Comanche Crest, and earlier known as Box Springs, purchased in the late 1930s from Reynolds Cattle Company. In the 1940s, Mr. Davis purchased a ranch located on FM 1492 between Crane and Odessa in Upton County. He knew the land was of little use in ranching but that its potential for mineral income would later be important to the family. The portion of the Box Springs Ranch inherited by Mary Frances Driscoll has been named by the family as Comanche Crest. Her portion of the Upton County ranch is known by the name Buffalo Basin.

It was also during this period that oil was discovered on Davis property. Near Chimney Creek Ranch, on a draw southwest of the headquarters, a large power station was constructed in the 1930s to help pump some of the oil wells in the area. Referred to by the family members as "The Power," it was a device

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featuring a large wheel to which several cables were attached. These cables provided the power to pump jacks of six to eight oil wells in the vicinity. The cables ran exposed across the top of the ground, but were kept out of the dirt by working through holes or “eyes” cut in pipe set upright in the ground. The unit was powered, Louie Bob Davis remembers, by a very noisy pumping unit, likely fueled by natural gas from the well. The device was certainly an awesome sight on the rolling prairies of Shackelford County.

Once the family had moved to town, G. R. regularly came to the ranch to supervise its operation. Louie had primary responsibility for much of this work and had the help of a man whose efforts at Chimney Creek and other Davis ranches came to be appreciated by the family.

Grady Smith began working for the Davises in the spring of 1924, first on a ranch near Chimney Creek formerly owned by the Cauble family. Later Smith moved to Chimney Creek living and working as a foreman on the ranch for several years. The Smith family moved into the main ranch house, and two of the Smith’s children were born while the family was living there. Florene, one of the Smith’s daughters, recalls sleeping on screened-in porches during the warm months. She has very fond recollections of playing outdoors around the back of the house during the summer when the weather was simply splendid. She also remembers sleeping in the north bedroom during the wintertime. Her principal recollection of the large room underneath the house is that on more than one occasion her parents heard rattlesnakes there. Since these snakes have long been a problem in this part of the country, it was not unusual to find them in such a setting. She does recall that her father killed snakes in the room.

She also recalls that her father left a loaded Colt .45 caliber pistol for her mother to use in guarding against snakes when he was gone. On one occasion Florene remembers that her mother saw a snake not far from where the girls were playing. After she had moved them safely into the house, she emptied the gun into the snake and literally shot it to pieces.

Florene’s recollections also include going to Albany to go to school. She remembers that on the neighboring Buck Nail Ranch, a family named Meadows had a daughter who joined her on the school bus. Also on an adjacent

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ranch was a family named Harris, who also made the bus ride from the ranch country into Albany to school.

Smith's routine work on the ranch ran as did that of most other cowboys—seven days a week. He spent many hours riding horseback checking cattle in the pastures. Florene recalls that he rode five days a week, usually Monday through Friday, and then spent his time on Saturdays and Sundays building or repairing fences or performing other tasks required to keep the place going during these depression years when everyone was strapped financially and had to carry the load regardless of the imposition.

Of the people who visited the ranch, Florene's recollections are strong regarding people from the Swenson Ranches, one of which she recalls was located near Lueders. In addition to Eric Swenson, one of the family members was a man whose reputation continues to be strong, "Scandalous" John Selmon, who figured prominently in Swenson Ranch history for many years and whose role in the Texas Cowboy Reunion at Stamford is fondly remembered by those who attended for the many years in which he was active.

Smith's role with the Bud Matthews' pens is also noteworthy. Around 1930 Smith undertook the task of rebuilding the pens. He made a deal with Parker Sears, who ran a lumber yard in Albany, to purchase pine lumber for the project. The lumber, as Florene recalls, was beautiful pine that did not warp when left out in the sun and was free of knots; certainly a remarkable condition considering the inferior quality of contemporary pine lumber. The posts, though of poor quality because the bottom ends were so much larger than the tops, were purchased by Louie Davis and Mr. Smith in Palo Pinto, a community in a cedar-growing area between Albany and Forth Worth. Smith hauled the lumber from Albany to the site in a new 1929 Ford truck which, characteristic of motor vehicles of the day, could not carry much weight but finally accomplished the task. During the depression years, payment for the lumber was supplemented by a number of swine raised on the ranch. Sears took the hogs in trade and sent them to East Texas, where members of his family had a great deal of corn available to feed the hogs. For many years thereafter, Sears humorously reminded Smith of the trade and recalled how disastrous it proved for him

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because he ended up selling the hogs for less than he had allowed Smith on the trade. His effort, however, kept the pens from falling into complete disrepair for many years.

One of the amusing incidents related to the use of the pens involves the time when persons whose identity Florene cannot recall drove a herd of buffalo into the pens with the intention of shipping the animals out by rail. Buffalo are very difficult to manage, but the cowboys finally succeeded in penning them in the corrals, which held up to their battering. Once the rail cars were in place, the men began loading the buffalo into the rail car, but the buffalo, distressed at being confined, began bursting boards off the sides of the rail cars. The conductor, a man who had some ranch experience himself, encouraged the men, "You men need to get these animals loaded and gone before they tear up those cars." Florene recalls that the project succeeded, but barely, and only because of the strength of the lumber used in the construction of the cars.

An amusing anecdote from the story involves Eric Swenson who, like many a cowboy, had a desire to rope one of the buffalo bulls. Grady Smith wisely declined the opportunity, but when Eric said, "If I head him, will you heel him?" Grady responded in the affirmative but, Florene recalls, was relieved when Eric changed his mind and decided not to rope the bison.

Later Smith was moved to Goodwyn Ranch adjacent to the Cauble when the Davises bought it in 1937. In all, he worked for the Davis family for nineteen years. He left ranch work in 1945 because he had not fully recovered from an injury sustained earlier when, as he stepped up onto a horse, his foot slipped and he pulled the horse over on him. Smith felt he could no longer contribute to the work load on the ranch as he had before. He purchased a store in Hamby between the ranch and Abilene and operated it for many years. The Davises were good customers. He died December 16, 1986.

Other cowboys who helped run the ranch over the years included Clarence Holt and Lewis Burfiend as well as Duncan Leech. Leech lived on Chimney Creek Ranch when G. R. Davis passed away.

### III : *The Children of G. R. Davis*

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ROBBIE DAVIS JOHNSON, LOUIE G. DAVIS,  
AND OMA “PET” DAVIS

**T**he family of G. R. Davis consisted of three children—Louie, Robbie and Oma Frances, whose nickname was Pet. Louie and Oma remained at home and took care of their parents until late in the lives of these children.

On July 18, 1921, on Chimney Creek Ranch, the second child, Robbie, married T. Edgar Johnson, a lawyer trained at the University of Texas and Oxford University. The ceremony was held under the large pecan tree in the backyard of the main house. He practiced in Breckenridge, but in those depression days his clients were unable to pay for services rendered. With the help of his father-in-law, Johnson purchased a Ford automobile agency in Vernon. Also added to the business was a Ford tractor distributorship and other outlets for not only Ford products, but for Lincoln and Mercury as well. Mr. Johnson came to bill himself as the oldest car dealer in North Texas.

Louie married Ouida Beavers in 1938, and they had one son, Louie Bob. Louie died on March 29, 1966, and his wife died on June 24, 1987. Oma married Claude Touchstone. She died tragically in an automobile accident near Merkel while still a young woman in the summer of 1941, on her way to visit the infant Louie Bob Davis.

On April 20, 1922, Robbie gave birth to Mary Frances. Because of Robbie’s many physical problems, Mary Frances spent a great deal of time on Chimney Creek Ranch with her grandparents and grew to love it. She spent every summer there in her early years. She recalls the bobwhite quail and other game, but especially clear are her recollections of her Uncle Louie using string to harness

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two large grasshoppers to an empty matchbox for a make-believe stage coach to go along with the stories of the Butterfield Stage Stop on the ranch.

Mary Frances also recalls in these early days that the regular meat choice for Sunday lunch was chicken. She can still recall seeing her grandmother wring the chicken's neck. The flock of chickens from which this Sunday lunch regularly came had to be penned up at night to keep predators from killing them.

Other memories are strong. Like many families in similar situations, she recalls that they made lye soap in the wash pot with lye leached from the ashes of the fireplace and cooking fires. There was also an outhouse with a half moon cut in the door. It featured facilities for two people, thus being called a two-holer, complete with the Montgomery Ward catalog. There was no electricity, so lighting came from kerosene lamps. Butter was churned from cream of the milk from a cow kept for the purpose, and canning provided vegetables during the winter. There was a smokehouse in which pork was cured. Mary Frances also remembers that her grandmother taught her to cook and sew, and "Mamaw," as she was called by her only granddaughter, patiently pieced quilts to provide colorful coverings for the family bedding. This kind of life was normal for many families of this period. The cattle and horse operation continued in much the same fashion with shipping still done from the Bud Matthews Switch.

Upon the death of G. R. Davis on December 31, 1955, Robbie Davis Johnson inherited Chimney Creek Ranch from her father. Mrs. Johnson knew that she would be unable to operate it. On July 1, 1957, Mrs. Johnson leased the ranch to C. B. "Charlie" and Robert and Ruby Waller operating as Waller Cattle Company. Thus began the period of absentee landlords on Chimney Creek Ranch.

The operation of Waller Cattle Company has been productive. Charlie, along with his wife Ella, ran the ranch in partnership with their son, Robert. When Charlie died December 28, 1973, Robert continued operating the ranch and then formed a partnership with his son, Robert C. As a graduate in Agriculture Education from Texas A&M University, Robert has worked to improve the ranch in various ways. When he and his father first took over the ranch,



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the fourteen-thousand acre spread was still in very large pastures. One pasture contained eleven sections. Ever since he has taken over, however, he has been cutting the pastures up into smaller, more manageable sizes. For example, on the southwest corner was a four-section pasture, which has now been cut into four single-section pastures. Fencing on the ranch was early done with barbed wire and cedar posts, but in more recent times has been with the use of five-wire construction on steel posts with four-inch pipe corners set with braces. Now about two-thirds of the ranch is fenced in this more contemporary and longer-lasting fashion.

Water for the cattle comes from surface tanks supplemented by water pumped from a well not far from the house into twenty-two knee tubs scattered across the ranch. These were originally metal tubs, but as the metal began to deteriorate, cement linings were placed in the tubs. The water is pumped by a one and one-half horsepower submersible pump in the well. In addition to keeping the tanks full, the well also provides water for the house. The pipeline is of plastic pipe, either glued together in sections or soft-laid plastic pipe.

Only five or six geldings trained for working cattle are still kept on the ranch by the Wallers. When new horses are needed, the Wallers buy desirable animals rather than raise their own. Mr. Waller indicated that ranchers raising their own horses have trouble getting the animals broken to ride and trained to work and then face the dangers inherent in riding unpredictable young horses.

The cattle operation includes about five hundred mother cows, a hundred and fifty replacement heifers, and about forty bulls. The ranch continues the commercial cow-calf operation begun by the Davises. Originally the ranch stocked Hereford cattle, but by 1973 Waller was using Black Angus bulls on his first-calf heifers and kept these cross-bred offsprings as replacement heifers. Gradually the Herefords were phased out in favor of the Angus crosses. Still later, looking for additional new blood to cross-breed with, Waller selected Chianina bulls and some black Maine Anjou bulls. These latter are black with some white showing up sometimes in the form of white stockings on the legs. He has also used some Charolais and Limousin bulls. He does not raise his own bulls, though he keeps a hundred registered Angus cows on the ranch. He buys

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the Angus bulls from RJ Ranch at Briggs, and the Chianina from Black Champ at Waxahachie. The Maine Anjou bulls he buys from Billy Dillard and Herman Boone.

Shipping on the ranch is still done from the Bud Matthews pens. From the beginning of their tenure on the ranch until the early 1970s, the Wallers shipped on the railroad. In the early '70s, however, the tracks were torn up, and Waller began shipping on trucks. On a typical shipping day around the first of June, he will hire nine to ten day workers to help. The cattle are shipped out on large cattle vans provided by the contract buyer. Waller will congregate the cattle in one or two pastures close to the pens, and then on shipping day push them into the pens for separating and shipping. The pens have recently been restored and the original sign, rescued years ago by Watt Matthews and kept safely for the occasion, was returned to the site. Waller can remember during his tenure of shipping on the railroad that such ranches as Bluff Creek, Cook, Dawson Conway, and McComas also shipped out of the pens. He thinks more cattle are shipped from the Bud Matthews pens than from the rail shipping point in Albany.

The cattle shipped from this area typically go on pasture, often wheat fields, in such states as Kansas and Nebraska to condition and toughen before going into the feed lot. Waller indicates that the calves coming off the cows are “juicy” with a low tolerance for disease. The animals need time on pasture to be ready for the feed lot.

One exception from this pattern occurred during the early 1970s when a government program caused large numbers of dairy cattle to be put on the slaughter beef market. The buyer contracted for that year declined to take the cattle, and Waller put them in a feed lot. It was not a good experience because the calves were easy victims to disease and other ailments and just did not grow off well. The government program helped dairy farmers but proved harmful to those raising beef cattle.

The ranches bordering Chimney Creek include the Newell Ranch across part of the east and then the Merrick Davis Ranch on the south. About four miles is shared with the Ackers Ranch and the Buck Nail. Schkade Brothers,

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Pete Baker, and Dawson Conway touch the ranch on the west and part of the northwest. Bluff Creek Ranch covers the north boundary. About 1,700 acres of the ranch is north of U.S. Highway 180 and State Highway 6.

The lease of hunting rights of deer and quail on the ranch is handled by the owners. There are two hunter's cabins—a trailer house on the southern part of the ranch and a hunter's house on the northern part.

When Watt Matthews had the Buck Nail Ranch leased, he transplanted nineteen antelope onto the ranch. These later migrated to Chimney Creek Ranch. Rather than prospering, these have shrunk to a small herd of six or eight antelope. Coyotes and poachers take too many of the animals, and Waller has noticed that if any big bucks grow up in the herd, they soon disappear, probably the work of poachers. He indicated that recently no buck had been with the does on the ranch until a great range fire in 1988 destroyed the net wire fencing and burned about 3,000 acres of the property. Then a buck that was on the Ackers Ranch came over. The net wire had been an effective barrier against the antelope because their tendency is to crawl under fences rather than to jump them, as deer do.

Waller and his son, Robert C., are still running a prospering ranching operation and offering an opportunity for the children of Robert C. and Carolyn—Rob and Will—to grow up in a ranching context. Carolyn is a librarian in the Albany school system, and she and Robert C. live in town rather than on the ranch. This is a more convenient arrangement since children tend to be involved in school activities and unnecessary amounts of travel are required to get children to and from the ranch, especially since some of this must be done at night.

## IV : *The Next Generation*

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### MARY FRANCES “CHAN” DRISCOLL AND LOUIE BOB DAVIS

In 1973 the ownership of Chimney Creek Ranch went to Mary Frances “Chan” Driscoll, the only surviving child of Robbie and T. Edgar Johnson. Robbie Lou, Mary Frances’ sister, had died in infancy. The ranch is currently held in trust by a Fort Worth bank.

Mary Frances recalls clearly many of her adventures on the ranch, but one of those still in her mind is her abortive career as a horsewoman. Her grandfather bought her a Shetland pony and proudly outfitted it with a black saddle trimmed in white and silver mountings. On her first ride, the cantankerous horse pitched her off and stepped on her stomach, a tactic that required X-rays to determine that no serious damage had been done to her. From then on, she rode only in front of her grandfather on his horse, if she rode at all. He enjoyed her company as he rode the pastures on Chimney Creek checking stock, grass, and water. She never became an avid horsewoman and discovered later that she is allergic to horses. She still recalls that at summer girls’ camps, especially the Glen Rose Girl Scout Camp, she was always expected to be an expert horsewoman because she was “a ranch girl.” She never lived up to that expectation and came to accept her non-equestrian preferences.

Under Mary Frances’ ownership, Waller Cattle Company has continued to operate under a lease agreement. She maintained a small home on the ranch, a building constructed in the early 1980s just south of the main house on the site of the old smokehouse and the chicken coop, but built a very nice, modern, rural retreat or weekend cottage. It has a two-car carport on the north side and a stone fence around the yard. The decor features old wagon wheels as well as area of pitching horseshoes, playing baseball, croquet, and badminton, as

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well as target shooting. No all-night guard lights interrupt the serenity of the nights on Chimney Creek Ranch. Care is taken to watch for rattlesnakes, many of which have been found and killed in the house area. Mary Frances often remarked, “This is my heaven on earth. Chimney Creek Ranch is a peaceful spot.”

## V : *Conclusion*

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Today Chimney Creek Ranch remains a working operation under the careful management of Robert and Robert C. Waller. In many ways it is unchanged. The waving grasses have flourished in the wet years of the early 1990s, and in the spring and summer sleek cattle and horses graze on the hillsides where the buffalo and Indians once roamed at will. The winter winds still whip across the land in the cold months, and the wild game flourishes. Admittedly contemporary life has made its impressions on the ranch in the form of improvements in watering facilities, fencing, brush and cacti control programs, and structures. But the land still stands in mute testimony to its original condition with its nourishing forage on the limestone enriched soil and the historical context and figures stemming from the Butterfield Overland Mail and the other historical figures that have traveled the area—Waterman, Ormsby, Robert E. Lee, and others.

The historical markers on the ranch witness as well to the part played by the shipping pens at Bud Matthews Switch and by the Butterfield Overland Mail. The perseverances of the descendents of G. R. Davis are a credit to themselves for reserving for the rest of us these remnants of a past that comprises our hold on the future.

## *Afterword*

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Since 1992 several operational changes and developments have taken place at Chimney Creek Ranch.

After “Chan” Driscoll’s death on October 8, 2007, the ranch was inherited by her two sons, Henry B. Paup and T. Edgar Paup, and has been under their watch since then.

Robert B. Waller continues to lease the ranch for grazing. In July 2007, we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Waller family’s relationship with Chimney Creek. Two years later, Waller’s wife, Ruby, passed away; but Robert C. Waller, their son, continues to assist his father in the management of the ranch.

The cattle operation remains much the same, as well as the wildlife development program. Oil and gas are still difficult to find. Wind energy has become a prominent factor, with several wind farms and electric transmission lines appearing in the area. We continue our efforts to maintain the land in an environmentally responsible way.

In 2006, the new ranch house was expanded to accommodate future growth of family members. Chan’s Lake was built on the southeast side of the property in 2008, and the creek at the west-side hunting cabin was cleaned out, deepened, and substantially enlarged in 2009.

With assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Albany, a riparian buffer program was established at the ranch in 2009. We hope to revitalize the native grasses along Chimney Creek, on the east side of the ranch, and to replenish the water aquifers that sustained the land long ago.

We have begun efforts to rebuild the rock corral that existed from 1858 to 1861 at Smith’s Station, on the Butterfield Trail, and we celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Butterfield Trail itself in 2008. Historical plaques are being

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planned to honor G. R. Davis, the Atlas Missile Hard-Line Communication Pit, and the 1935 Antique Oil Field.

The Chimney Creek Ranch has now been in our family for 91 years. We all look forward to a focused celebration of the family's centennial year at Chimney Creek in 2020.

H. B. P.

T. E. P.



## *Appendix*

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Two historical markers have been erected on the ranch property. The first is for Smith Station, erected in 1982. It reads as follows:

### SMITH'S STATION

From 1858 until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, a station of the Butterfield Overland Mail Route was located here. Despite a brief existence, it was an important stop on the early stage line that reached from Missouri to California. Stages made the trip in under 25 days, a marked improvement on earlier communication links with the rapidly developing West. Located on Chimney Creek between stage stops at Clear Fork (26 MI. NE) and Fort Phantom Hill (12 MI. SW), Smith's Station was the only Butterfield stop located in present Shackelford County.

The second is for Bud Matthews Switch, erected in 1993. It reads as follows:

### BUD MATTHEWS SWITCH OF THE TEXAS CENTRAL RAILWAY

In 1900 the Texas Central Railway extended a line Northwest from Albany across this portion of Rose Ella (Matthews) Conrad's cattle ranch. Ella and her brother John A. "Bud" Matthews, for whom this site is named, promptly constructed cattle pens and a loading chute at this location. Surrounding ranchers soon were shipping their cattle from this switch to markets in Fort Worth. As many as 105,000 head of cattle were shipped annually until the railroad ceased operations in 1967. Since that year local ranchers have continued to load cattle onto trucks from this site.



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