

THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: Reading from clipping from newspaper
regarding Kress, Texas

DATE: July 2, 1989

PLACE: Pampa, Texas

INTERVIEWER: Bill Gregg

BG: We are still in the town of Pampa, the plains of North Texas, the Panhandle, June .. June 2, 1989. This is Bill Gregg. One of the local ladies stopped in with some newspaper clippings. Mrs. Joyce Walberg. The excerpts that I am about to read are from the Tulia, T-u-l-i-a, Herald about the town of Kress, a small town not far from Pampa. The first one concerns the naming of the town of Kress. These are from interviews of Mrs. Walberg's mother, so the interview starts:

"I have been asked to tell why my grandfather, F.T. Skipworth, did not want the town of Kress named after him. F.T. Skipworth was notified to meet on the town, now Kress, to sign his name to the prepared documents so the town would be officially Skipworth. When the train arrived, he went on board and walked to the table, told the officials 'No.' As the conductor was walking through the train, 'name it after the conductor.' The conductor was willing and sat down on a chair and signed his signature, George H. Kress, on the prepared documents for F.T. Skipworth. That is why an "early settler" is written on the document. When F.T. arrived home,

BG: he looked at his wife and shook his head "no." The family was disappointed but understood. A few months earlier, a gospel revival meeting was held in the Methodist Church at Old Wright. It was located about two miles northeast of now Kress. People came in wagons, buggies, and horseback as there were no cars. The wagons had pallets made of quilts for the children to sleep on.

One night, some boys exchanged babies from the Bill Atkins' wagon and the John James' wagon. When the meeting was over, everyone seemed happy and filled with the Holy Spirit. They left for home. The Atkins and the James lived several miles apart. As they arrived near their homes, the babies aroused from their sleep, scared and screaming. The other children began to cry. The men looked down at their passengers and recognized them. What they said was anyone's guess as they now turned their horses around and headed the other way. The families met about halfways and exchanged babies. It was the talk of the town for a while and then it was quiet, so it seemed. A boy told who the boys were and a Skipworth boy was named. My grandfather was a good man and a praying man. I loved him very much. F.T. Skipworth was so embarrassed, he exclaimed, "I would never have a town named after me with a kid in the pen."

And then again, the town of Kress grew fast in three years, shipping yard, bank, hotel, barber shop, drugstore, two grocery stores, hardware and a blacksmith. There was a bronc busting and steer riding every Saturday morning. It

BG: was located on the ground where the elementary school is and extended to Main on the north. I grew up thinking it was bronc busting and steer riding, then it became known as rodeo. My father helped to organize the first rodeo in Swisher County.

On Saturday evening, everyone came to town to visit, buy groceries or whatever. If they had any grievance toward anyone, they settled it. Men would settle their difference by meeting in the middle of the street, have a big fist fight. Other men watched and when they thought they had had enough, they would rush in and separate them. One Saturday eve, two women met that had their differences. One had a boy named Bud and the other a boy named Bill. Bud and Bill had a fight one evening after school. Bud and his parents lived in a half-dugout. It was located where the shopping and four homes, excuse me, Shoeffing and Fore homes are now located. Bud got the last punch on Bill and ran down the steps of the half-dugout. Bill was mad and he throwed his brand new lunch pail. Bill's dad had told him to take care of that lunch pail as it was expensive. Bill stood there wondering what to do. So he decided to run down the steps and pick it up. When he reached the bottom, Bud's mother reached out and grabbed him. She gave him a spanking he didn't forget. Bill's mother was real mad at Bud's mother for spanking him. They met in Lynn and Bott's store which sold all items, including buggy whips. The buggy whips were hanging on the wall. Each woman grabbed a whip and began to whip each other. Some men rushed

BG: in and separated them. I don't know if the men were stung but they stopped the fight."

And one more: "The Santa Fe Railroad came through Kress in 1906 and the train came through in 1907. The town grew so fast. In 1909, a bank was organized. Farmers State Bank was located where Main and Nicholson are now. F.T.Skipworth was President and Fred Rouser was Vice-President. The cashiers were D.M.Wood and McDozier. F.T.Skipworth was president of the Farmers State Bank from 1909 until 1922. He died of cancer on February 4, 1922. When the bank was low on funds, he would mortgage his cattle and put funds into the bank. After he died, the bank started having trouble. In 1926 until '33, the Farmers State Bank was re-organized. C.A.Burchard was named President, Will Rouser was Vice-President and W.T.Bangor was Cashier. Directors were J.C.McClain and I.S.Scott. Jusley built bricks on the west side of the tracks and after they were finished, Farmers State Bank was moved and located on the north side.

The Post Office was on the west end of the same building. One morning in 1933, I don't remember the day, people went after their mail and a crowd of people were gathered outside the Post Office. The question was asked, What's wrong? The bank was robbed last night, came the reply. The vault or safe was moved out of the west side of the building. It was rumored that someone stated the vault or safe was found over in the sandhills near Sudan. It had been blown with explosives and had no money or papers

BG: left in it. The robbers had taken everything. If the law investigated the burglary, it was very quiet. That was the last of Farmers State Bank."

Here's another short one we just ran across. It's still about the town of Kress: "Years ago, the children did not have the transportation to school by car or bus so everyone walked. If you lived in the rural district, walk, ride a horse, or ride a buggy pulled by a horse. My parents lived 5 miles from the school so my two brothers and I had to walk or ride a horse. My dad had only one saddle so my older brother Crutch and I had a tug-of-war every morning getting the saddle and the horse. My younger brother Taylor did not like to ride a horse. If Crutch won the horse and saddle, then I would ride in the buggy or vice versa. One day it was bitter cold and my dad put us in the buggy and wrapped our feet with a blanket. We made it to school fine. In the afternoon, the weather turned warmer so after school, we started home. When we were about a hundred yards more or less from our house, Crutch decided he wanted to ride the buggy wheel. He was growing up and learning to curse. Our parents did not know that. Crutch stopped the horse and handed me the reins. He pulled his coat off and put it in the buggy then took his cap and made a pad for his head to rest on the buggy wheel. Then he caught a spoke with each hand, placed his feet in the wheel. We started the horse at a slow walk. He wanted to stop in a little ways so Taylor and I decided we would try it. When they finished riding,

BG: Crutch decided he wanted to ride again. We were only a little ways from the house and the horse was getting anxious for a drink of water. Crutch was set on the wheel and the horse started off in a trot. Crutch started yelling and cursing and threatening for us to stop the horse. We thought it was only a little ways to the yard. We stopped the horse and threw the reins down around to our mother. It was a while before Crutch could get his equilibrium started right. My mother couldn't believe her children would do such a thing. When our dad came home and gave us our lecture, Taylor and I felt so guilty and my brother Crutch was looking like a king because we were getting the worst of the lecture. Taylor and I looked at each other and didn't tell that Crutch cursed. When we were kids, we didn't have things to do like kids do now, but we got into trouble just the same."