



**THE GENTRY HOME** — This beautiful home, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Flavius Gentry during a part of their lives in Port Lavaca, was located on the waterfront on Commerce St. Before moving into their waterfront home, the Gentry Lived in the home now occupied by Mrs. Mable McConico on 219 S. Guadalupe. Gentry was Port Lavaca's first mayor. (Photo courtesy—Mrs. Dick Thayer.)

**"Looking Back"**

**Story of Flavius Gentry**

By Paul Freier

In a codicil to the will of Flavius V. Gentry recorded in the records of Calhoun County, Port Lavaca's first mayor described his mode of burial to his executor:

"First: My body shall not be washed."  
 Second: my face shall not be shaved  
 Third: I want as cheap a coffin as it is possible to buy. The "The Alice E." will take by body to the Gulf and see it interred. Owen Smith shall make the sliding board with weights and, etc. Signed: F.V. Gentry; Witnesses, W.H. Smith, H. Warrach."

The usual cash gifts for relatives and for his housekeeper, Mrs. Jessie Logan, appeared in a separate codicil. His niece, Mrs. Fanny Dudley, was "to have the diamond ring I wear." His nephew, Richard Dudley, of El Paso, was named executor for the Gentry estate which was valued at \$42,000 on the death of Mrs. Emma Gentry Feb. 7, 1905.

F.V. Gentry's death was recorded on an obituary notice which appeared in the Port Lavaca "Wave." Mrs. Louis Wasserman, the former Meade Gaines of Victoria, had noted in pencil that uncle had died at 11 o'clock Saturday night, Nov. 7th, 1914.

Gentry's property in 1914 consisted of nine acres of farm land, eight lots in the city including his beautiful home facing Commerce street on the present site of "Marie's Pizza Palace," an oyster house, wharf, shell pile, horses, mules, wagons, harness, furniture, jewelry, table silver, pails and tubs at the oyster house, trunks, books, a gold watch, a Victrola phonograph, and \$510.00 in the bank.

Dr. Grace claimed the Victrola as payment on a doctor bill. A total \$10,500 was due Gentry on twelve personal notes judged "of questionable value" by the appraisers of his estate, and notes of hundreds of dollars were declared of "no value whatsoever." As so often happens, his liabilities caught up with his assets. This was the story of the life of F.V. Gentry.

Famous in the Southwest, his biography was printed in numerous publications during the first decades of the 20th century, but F.V. Gentry appeared doomed for disappointment in his work and in his friends in Port Lavaca. Dying broke, his last bequest to be buried at sea went unheeded as he was laid beside his wife in an expensive coffin in Victoria the day following his death Nov. 8, 1914.

Flavius V. Gentry was born in Adair county, Kentucky, Feb. 12, 1840, the son of John Gentry, a Kentucky pioneer. Other children in the family were Richard, a physician in Morgan's command during the civil war and killed; Mary, (Mrs. T.P. Dudley) of Richmond, Kentucky; Napoleon Bonaparte Gentry who enlisted in the Confederacy and then transferred to the Union army as a Federal officer; and John B. who served in the Confederacy and was killed in Louisiana.

Flavius was educated in the schools of New Castle, Kentucky. While clerking in a store he joined the 6th Kentucky Infantry in the Confederacy, and served under Bragg in the Army of the Tennessee, and under Kirby Smith. He became a prisoner of War, and was held at Louisville until the close of the Civil war, when he emigrated for Cuba.

Thus occurred Gentry's first disappointment: he joined the South; it lost the War; so he left the country. His brother, Napoleon B. Gentry, the Union officer, went to San Francisco and became rich in city property, which was all destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. Napoleon Gentry then came to Texas, and conducted a fish and oyster plant in Rockport in the interest of his brother Flavius.

In 1869 Flavius Gentry arrived in Indianola aboard a cattle boat from Cuba. For two years he engaged in the wool and hide business before moving his operations to Victoria and conducting the business successfully during this time the south Texas had become a major wool producing center.

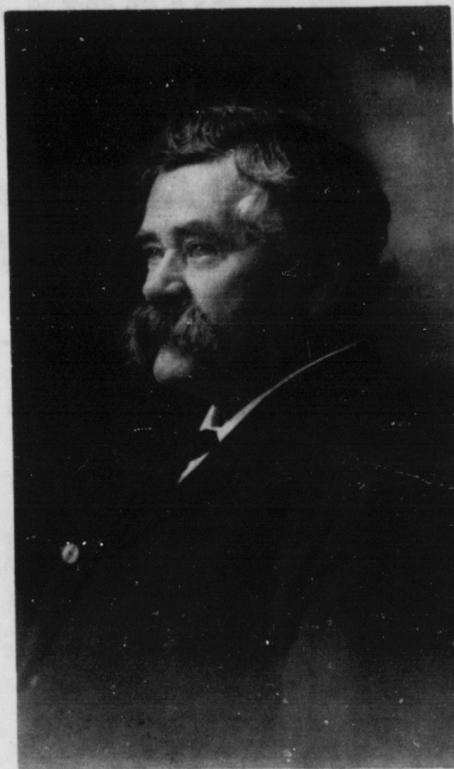
In 1873 Gentry married Miss Emma Hall, only daughter of Addison Hall, carpenter, contractor, and hotel keeper in Victoria. Flavius and Emma Gentry were destined to have no children, another disappointment for Gentry who had great affection for young people. His Sundays in Port Lavaca were devoted to taking young people on bay cruises to Alamo or Indianola beach or to the Navidad aboard his sail-boat, the "Silver Cloud." Fifteen young ladies in Port Lavaca received their college education through the kindness of genial Uncle Gentry who thereby express his "father heart," according to the Port Lavaca "Wave."

In 1890 F.V. and Emma Gentry moved to Port Lavaca. They lived in the home now occupied by Mrs. Mable McConico at 219 South Guadalupe before the beautiful Gentry home was built on the bay front, according to Mrs. McConico.

F.V. Gentry entered into the fish and oyster business on a small scale with four boats, which added to his hide and wool business. After 1890 the wool production center of Texas had become the areas north and west of San Antonio. Gentry also engaged in buying and selling game and wildfowl furnished by the commercial hunters on the bays.

History reveals that people engaged in the pursuit of the extractive, or primary, industries like farming, hunting, fishing, mining, or ranching are limited to a subsistence level of existence. The true wealth of any area, its natural resources, are depleted inexchange for money or other good, while the "big money" in fabricating, processing, or trade is made by others. As resources are depleted the subsistence level and declines and people move elsewhere.

This business cycle was descriptive of Calhoun county before the Alcoa and Carbide industries located who have utilized, processed, and fabricated the county resources, providing employment and a balanced economic growth.



**CITY'S FIRST MAYOR** — Flavius V. Gentry, who was Port Lavaca's first mayor, is shown in the photo above during his career in Calhoun County. Born in 1840, he died here in 1914 at the age of 74. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Dick Thayer)

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