

W. H. Smith Family

No list of the early settlers of Calhoun County would be complete without the name of the family of W. H. Smith, for his father, Henry Smith, settled here in 1845, just five years after the organization of the county.

Henry Smith came here from Germany in that year, landing at Indian Point, more familiarly known today as Old Town. He soon secured a homestead grant from the government-640 acres in Mason County. He held the land for some time but preferred living in Calhoun County, so finally sold it.

He made his living fishing until the Civil War broke out and at that time, ran the mail via sail boat from Indianola to Copeno Bay and then from Copeno Bay to Refugio on horseback, the round trip frequently taking less than three days.

It was during the time that the Henry Smith family lived in Indianola that W. H. Smith was born in 1858. He lived his early life on his father's ranch there. When the storm of 1886 overtook that community, W. H. Smith was in business, so in the same year he and Mr. J. B. Mahon were two of the first ones to move to Port Lavaca to establish their homes and businesses.

Having married Alice E. Rahtgens, another native of Indianola, they moved here, and Mr. Smith, with his brother-in-law founded the firm of Rahtgens and Smith Lumber Yard. Later Mr. Smith bought out his partners interest and operated it until 1912. After selling the lumber business, he formed another partnership with his son, W. H. Smith, Jr. and they owned and operated a ship chandlery until 1938.

Many interesting incidents were related by Mr. Smith regarding time he was a trail driver on the old Chisholm Trail, back in 1878 and they drove herds through strange and often hostile territory to Dodge City. These trail herds, numbering hundreds of thousands marked a definite era and change in Texas history and development.

His children are Henrietta Louisa, now Mrs. F. J. Ullrich, residing in Roswell, New Mexico, W. H. Smith Jr., Port Lavaca, Owen Smith, Port Lavaca; Allie Estelle, who was married to Grover ^{Boyd} before her death, Stanley E. Smith, Port Lavaca; Harry C. Smith, Miss Irma M., and Loretta Rae who is Mrs. C. B. Elder, all of Port Lavaca.

The first three children were born in Indianola. W. H. Jr, Owen E., and Harry C. Smith are all partners in the Smith Bros. Seafood Co. Stanley E. is in the dredging business, Harry C. also is interested in Bauer-Smith Co., is Humble Oil Agent, Miss Irma is employed at the Post office, and Mrs. C. B. Elder is deputy tax assessor.

W. H. Smith served as the first commissioner of Precinct Number One when the County seat was moved to Port Lavaca after the '86 storm. He had already served in that capacity in Indianola.

The Smith family has contributed a great deal to the social and economic development of Calhoun County. Their influence and support have always been found behind all movements and projects tending to benefit their community.

copied from Section 1, page 6 of the Calhoun County Centennial and Golden Jubilee Historical Edition of the Port Lavaca Wave, published Port Lavaca, Texas, May 16, 1940, by Mrs. J. W. Boyd, April, 1969