

Stephens Creek Community

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I grew up in the small community of Stephens Creek, San Jacinto County. The social life centered around the churches and schools. There were box suppers, pie suppers, Christmas parties, Easter egg hunts and dances. The greatest of all were the end of school plays with the unforgettable actor, Henry Harrell.

The first churches were arbors, one of which was a landmark. This arbor had a permanent top of river boards. It stood just a few hundred feet west of the old iron bridge that used to span Stephens Creek. Many people passing through used it for shelter as there was water to water their team. It was here that I learned my first church hymns.

The first post office in Stephens Creek was established by Mr. Emanuel Buchachscher. It stood on the hill near the present home of Joe and Margarite Hilzendagger. Later it was run by Sarah Agnes Harrell. Prior to 1924 a post office was built on the hill where the Julius R. Hopkins' lived and it was run by him and his wife, Mary. It was here that I saw my first telephone. The first old post office was used for a store. It was the first store in the community of Stephens Creek and was run by my father, James Thomas Harrell (Jimmy), and his sister, Agnes Harrell Hoot. My father would order his supplies for the store from Henke and Pillot. It was here that I first saw a tobacco cutter and a cheese cutter. The last post office was built near the house of Mr. Johnnie Johnson and he and his wife, Fannie ran it.

During winter months we attended church in the two room school house that stood on the hill where county Judge K. P. Bryant now owns a home. It was here after church that families stood around and discussed their plans for the week, such as helping a neighbor get a cow out of a bog. It was here in this school house where I started to school under Miss Stella D'Olive. I thought she was the prettiest person on earth.

About 1923 another school was built where now stands a beautiful brick home owned by Cecil and Sarah Blanks.

We lived on a farm where my father worked and raised cotton, corn, sweet potatoes, ribbon cane, peanuts and nearly all the food we needed. He had hogs, cattle and goats. Around here were wild blackberries, black haws, huckleberries, mulberries, dewberries, Spanish mulberries, persimmons, wild plums and crabapples. There were hickory nuts, black walnuts and pecans. There were stretch-berries to put in sweet-gum to make bubble gum. The birds would eat the wild cherries and they would ferment and they would fall to the ground drunk.

In the fall we hurried home from school to come by the sugar cane mill to get some sugar cane juice to drink. Then there was the favorite persimmon tree at the foot of Parker Hill. And at Christmas time there was a program and a tree that touched the ceiling.