

## HISTORY OF CAMERON

(Taken from a tape, owned by Mabel Earnest.)

Program for the Senior Citizen's Club, July 26, 1985 given by  
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I think most of you know me. I have a long ancestry of people back of me. My grandfather came down this country in 1830 and his father was a Presbyterian minister. And they had a little discussion in the Presbyterian Church about who took communion. My grandfather believed they should take communion, any professing Christian, when they passed out the host, and they would partake of it. So with that note of dissention, the two brothers came down to this country. Jacob Mathews and William Mathews and settled down, if you look down as you go up Denver hill, way down there to the last bottom. They settled down there. Now I am the youngest grandchild of my grandfather. My mother was 43 years old when I was born. A lot of these things I had to hear.

Now we get into the history of Cameron, these people I am talking about, the Mathews, the Howards, a lot of these people were here before there was a city of Cameron. In 1902 I had an uncle that sold his tailor business. In 1909, before I was born, I had a uncle that moved from here and went to Oregon. He was a jeweler. My grandfather was, of course, a farmer, lived on a farm, and I live on the farm where my father and grandfather both did. And I am stupid enough to be living in the same house I was born in.

Now there was a fellow by the name of Himes who was the first settler in this country. He came in here about 1788, that is the first you read about in recorded history. There were Indians still around in those days. There were two of those brothers. One of them was named Christopher and he, being of an adventuresome nature decided to go up in a bee tree to get some honey out. It was a large poplar tree and while he was up there he got way out on the limb and just about fell out. He caught himself on the way down. Poplar trees were tall in those days and it looked like he was doing down for a sure death. Two or three other fellows with him said, "Now is the time to pray." He replied, "Now you fellows rid those rocks and stones down there where I am going to land and get that ready, and you forget about the praying." So that is what they did. They rid out a soft place for him to land. Back in those days the dirt over these hills was 15 inches thick.

When my grandfather came to the country into Denver and started moving, they had the same practice they used in the trionics. They cleared a piece of ground and farmed it to death. Farming didn't do any good. In the meantime they were cutting off some more trees in the next piece of ground that they were going to farm. They wanted to plant stuff in the new ground because it grew almost instantly. With this in mind, the people kept moving, and moving on.

Now we have the first settler really in this area was at the John McCracken place, it's where Ralph McCracken lives now. And they had a little school house up there. That was the first school house. A fellow by the name of Teagarden was the teacher. That was the beginning of schools around Cameron.

When you go out into a strange country, in the pioneer days, the first

thing that occurred to you was what do you need the most? Water. Well water was one of the principal things. Now on my grandfather's farm, where my brother owns now, there were five different houses had springs. This is before Cameron's time. There was the Raw Quigley springs, there was the Ash spring, there was the Iams spring, there was a John Woodby spring and there was a Quigley spring. They were all log cabins on that 200 acres of ground. There is not even a trace where the cabins were because the cabins were all covered over with split shingles made out of white oak. I don't know if any of you ever saw that being made. If you are down around Williamsburg, you can see how they split the shingles out of white oak logs. There were regular tinder boxes. First thing you knew the old chimney caught on fire and down she went.

What has this got to do with Cameron? Cameron as it comes along the way, we find the thing that started Cameron was the railroad. That was back in the fifties. Now before that there was a doctor by the name of Stidger. I remember hearing talk about this Dr. Stidger. He was one of the fundamentals. He owned the place up where the old George Yoho place, where Oakie owns now, upon the ridge. That is where Dr. Stidger lived. They had a fair in those days and that fair actually made money. It paid for itself, paid for the bills and things.

We go on to the history of this town and we find the railroad was built along secondary roads in about 1852. You can read this in your history books. To build the railroad they didn't have Chinese. What did they bring in? They brought in Irishmen because of the potato famine in Ireland, they had to get out of Ireland because they depended upon potatoes, and when the potato crop failed they had to starve or get out. So they used that cheap labor. If you go over on the Broadtree Tunnel, above it, back there, there is a cemetery and it is filled with the Irishmen that dug that tunnel who didn't make it. You wouldn't believe the number there. They have markers, a lot of Irishmen.

Now there was an Irishman came into this country by the name of McConaughy. Don't know how he ever got attracted to this country. But the first thing that was here, the first man in this town itself, was a fellow by the name of Rush. Of all things he was a blacksmith. As we said earlier, the important thing in establishing a dwelling, was to find a spring. Both of these houses were built by the springs. But to get along we had to have a blacksmith. Mr. Rush had his blacksmith shop right down here by where the old bank of Cameron is, right there across the street. Now he also had church services, Methodist church services in his house at that time. The first really church services were not here in town but out at Clouston.

When we had the fire in Cameron a lot of the records were obliterated. There was a lodge of Masons here in 1815. It was founded before West Virginia became a state; it was a part of the state of Virginia. All these things are a part of history, but the railroad coming really started people building houses. There were several of the houses were built before the anticipation of the railroad coming. Now you will never believe how many houses were here, and of course, it kept on growing and growing until the 1890's. In a book I read, it told of how much livestock was shipped out of Cameron. Now this I know for a fact because my father in one month shipped 40 carloads of livestock from Cameron. You would have to hustle now to find 40 carloads of

livestock in Marshall County now. But he would buy back as far as the German settlement, and in fact one time before they started using the railroad as a shipping point, he drove cattle to Pittsburgh. He would go over the same route that I go when I go to Pittsburgh, up through Prosperity and Old Concord. They would drive them in there, stay all night. There is a Race farm, you notice where there is a bunch of cattle, that's where they would stay all night. My mother went along and took my brother William. They drove a horse and buggy, driving it to Washington, Pa. and from there they went to Pittsburgh on a streetcar. The streetcar ran from Pittsburgh to Little Washington in those days.

Now back into Cameron, this is all background music. Why I should know, they asked Paul when he was talking to the different people why he had become a Christian, he said I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I was raised up in all the strict traditions of the Jewish people. I was raised up with the knowledge of all these things that we hear. Back in the days of my youth I went all over this town peddling beans, apples, things we raised on the farm, so I came to know about these people.

Now when you get back to the list of businesses that were operating before the fire, I have pictures of the town before the fire, and after the fire. This was the fire that happened in June of 1895. Now there were several different businesses, of course, just naturally went out of business. They were all rebuilt. My uncle John's jewelry store was right across the street from my business now - quite a coincidence. My uncle Will built the little building back where Frances Ford is in. That was where his tailor shop was. It's a long story, if you have patience with me. His wife got started with cuttings of geraniums. The first winter she made cutting of geraniums; she made \$20.00. In those days \$20.00 was a good sum of money. Then they built up where Mrs. Grimm house is, they lived in that house and they built a little greenhouse on the side and done real well. So Uncle Will forgot about the tailoring business and went up where the new high school is and up there built a greenhouse. That greenhouse was watered by the spring that comes down over by Marling's house there. Clark's built the house but this Marling lives there. There was a reservoir up there and that spring made enough water to run a greenhouse. This has been a wonderful area for water. It is one thing that we have.

The town really started to boom when we had the gas. The first thing was the Goshorn field out there. Rockefeller, Mike Benedum and all these people you hear of that has so much money were concerned with this gas field out there. How much do you suppose gas was a thousand? Three cents. It first started out as 3¢ a thousand. When that came on they had five glass houses started. They had a pottery here, it wasn't the Eljer pottery but turned into the Eljer pottery. It developed into the largest sanitary pottery in the world. We had another pottery that was successful. I worked at it. Now that is getting up to modern times. This Mr. Monroe started into the Cameron Tool and Supply business. It was started way back in those days. It started out in a very small way, kept growing until it is quite a business today.

The schools that we had started in this town was established by a fellow by the name of Port Willard who was on the Board of Education. They built this new building in which most of us went to school in that building. But it has passed away. But these things that we have, that come to our minds are things that we all have. We say what is the use

of remembering the past because we have oft times, we repeat things that have happened before.

Now these Himes brothers, we go clear back to them again. They were back in the Indian times. These Himes brothers, I thought it was an interesting thing I read this, so it makes it official. They had a block house for protection against the Indians. They were still enough Indians passing by in 1788. There were a bunch of Indians coming along and they had a bunch of fat hogs. And the Indians wanted one of those hogs. The Himes brothers said they would just give them one. So they dressed the hog and helped the Indians and the Indians took the hog on. The Himes brothers were never bothered with the Indians after that. The Indians did make an attack on Fort McHenry in the battle of the Revolutionary war in Wheeling.

I'll tell you another little insight how people lived back in those days. To buy anything you had to go to Wheeling. Now the houses in Wheeling, on the Ohio river have been there longer than Cameron.

This area was nice country to visit but nobody lived here. This goes back, and it touches me because back in those days they butchered the hogs, my grandfather's people, and hung them on what people call the Howard's place over on Laurel point. I don't know if you ever heard Laurel point called that but it is where Joe Shepherd lives now. Why they took them way over there and hung them, I don't know. But the next morning they got up real early, about 4 o'clock and took them on to Wheeling. In one of these trips, somehow or other, the ancestor, my grandmother's people name were Sampsons. There were Samsons in this town before anyone else. There are Sampsons still here. Anyway, when they got in there my great grandfather in his generosity said here is something to get your lunch. And he gave her a dime. Believe it or not a kid could get a pretty good little snack for a dime. Instead of her getting something to eat she bought her a little mug which we still have and my dad used it as a shaving mug for years. This was for 10¢.

Now things like that, to me, bring history home to me. Something you remember. You look at that mug and think of the long drive to Wheeling and back in a horse and buggy. I suppose they went down Grave Creek for part ways, then out the ridge some way, but they got there, and after they got there they stood market. They had to be there early enough to stand market all day and then drove home. Anything you wanted like nails, an ax or a tool, iron or any kind you had to go to Wheeling. So that is why a blacksmith was important. Horses had to be shod.

Now this is another thing about the history of Cameron, which you may not think is revelant but my dad used to have about 5 teams of horses. You would bring the horses into the blacksmith to get shod. How much do you suppose a blacksmith in those days got for making the shoe? They got a flat shoe and they had to have the back end of the shoe heated and turned down and make corks on it. They took on the other end of the shoe and made a toe on that shoe. Then they nailed it on the horse. How much do you suppose that would cost? They used to make the shoe, nailed it on and even rasp around the foot and shave this foot - 10¢. You don't want to go back to the old days. Same thing about sharpening a mattock. To get a mattock sharpened, I don't know where they do it up at the machine shop anymore, but it cost a

quarter. If you sharpen a mattock like they do, you take a piece of iron and heated the mattock, then welded a piece on it and usually they had a horseshoe rasp, or some piece harder steel than what was in the ordinary mattock and then they had to temper that mattock in such a way that as they dug into a rock with it, it didn't bend over. You had to be able to cut rock with it. I think they paid him about 10¢ for doing the job and 15¢ for knowing how to temper it.

Now we have the Irishmen come in this town of Cameron which really didn't have a name. The first postmaster was Mr. McConaughy and he was the ancestor. He built this brick building over here in the Y before he got into some other things. It was one of the buildings that survived the Cameron fire. The right of way agent was named Cameron and he was a friend of the McConaughys. Somehow McConaughy got the privilege of naming the town and he named it after this Cameron. This Cameron, was the right of way agent. If you go out through the west, along the railroad, there are a lot of Cameron's. There is a Cameron, Ohio, there is even a Cameron, Missouri; there is a Cameron, Texas. Don't know how many Cameron's there are but he traveled along the right of ways of the B & O Railroad. Mr. Cameron died and he is buried over in Romney, WV.

Now the McConaughy had the first grocery store in Cameron. This was something we needed to have, groceries, and these groceries were brought from Wheeling. They hauled them in wagons from Wheeling. Now you think these things that come in big tractor trailers, and block the streets are bad. How would you like to have to bring them in by the wagon loads?

Now this town went along until about 1879 before they ever had a mayor. A fellow by the name of Obadiah Moore, was the first mayor of Cameron. He was elected. They had a committee more or less. The city of Cameron had a charter before the Civil War. About the time the charter was given, they didn't go ahead with it and didn't put it into effect. The charter was finally adopted in 1884. So the town of Cameron has more or less existed haphazardly until they got the charter.

If you read the history of Cameron, a rather amusing thing to me, in light of what has happened today. Well the big todos they had, my mother told me, at one time there were 27 active, live, redblooded saloons in Cameron. And at that time it was in the oil boom days and you could buy anything you wanted if you had the money to pay for it. And the mud from the horses as they came down the street splashed the second story windows of the buildings. The first paved road, actually paved road in West Virginia was from Cameron to Loudenville. We think we are back in the sticks, we are a backward little town but we had a lot of first things, and that was one of them. I know as you have ridden down that road you have wondered about it but that is part of the brick road down there. Heaven knows, but there it went. Now North Avenue, it was a long time before it was paved. There was a slaughter house up where the swimming pool was. I don't know if there is anything there left.

These things are all we see and are all relevant to our time. Anybody that has any comment, or questions they would like to ask, I am not very proficient about these things, but it is hard to talk that long about things. I could go into details about how many doctors. There were 7 doctors in this town at one time. How many of you can remember Mr. Sinco? I can remember Mike Sinco, his son because we made a bobsled.

We took it up to the top of Jones hill and Mike Sinco rode that thing down there. A girl fell off and got her arm broke. That stonned the sleigh riding on the bobsled down the hill. This bobsled, eight could ride on it and it really moved coming down there. It came down the hill and went clear across the railroad before it would stop. So alot of these things are personal recollections.

There were alot of hotels. There were 5 hotels at one time. How many of you can remember the old Cameron Hotel? There was a Creed Hotel, a Crawford Hotel and different other hotels. There was alot of business here. (Question: Was it the Creed Hotel that burned in 1938? Answer: Yes!) There were 5 glass houses, they just gradually faded out.

How many of you can remember when they had the electric plant which was built up here by the glass house and they generated electric there. John Burley and another fellow ran the thing. It was something. I can remember when they first, I can remember well it was 1928, this is getting back a little bit. In 1928 we needed electric and they said we could run the electric off the new power line instead of having to start the generator. The school over there had a generator down in the basement that was run by a gas engine, that went nutt-nutt-putt and ran the generator for lights in the old grade school. We were wanting to put on a play in the auditorium on the third floor and they let us run the electric into it and it came my time to cut it off, so they could take the wire. I took a pair of pliers and cut the electric wire off. It made a hole in the pliers about the size of my thumb. I never did that again.

This is more reminiscing for me. I don't think Sylvia dreamed of me talking about these things like this, and she is just an outsider. She just came into this country a little over 50 years ago. (Question: I wonder how many remember how we used to like to go down to the glass house? Remember that we would go down where the nottery is, to the glass house and we would stand up on the road and watch them blow glass.) Turn to this matter of blowing glass. Now blowing window glass is a tremendous thing to hand blow it. They blew it in a great big long thing, and the men that blew that glass, it hung down in a pit. When it was red hot and hanging down in the pit, they had this blower. It was so heavy they had to have a harness to hold that blow pipe. And they blew that great big long bulb like this and as it cooled down a little bit, they took a diamond and went down like this and then heated it and it split that crack and that is how you got your window glass. Nowadays it is done in a continuous process.

Now the old tumblers that they used to make up at the glass house, they blew them on the end of a pipe. They would take that off and after it cooled a little bit, they would take that off the pipe and they would set that on a platform. Then they would turn that and had a little diamond and would make a little scratch on it. Then they would put a little flame down over it, the top would pop off, and it would be perfectly straight and level. Then they heated the top, and melt it, a little and run it down through a layer which had to do with tempering it. For if you just take glass, after it is first made, it is very fragile and brittle, so it has to be tempered in an oven. Of course, we worked for a long time at the nottery, five years in fact.

As I have said I have had a little bit of association with Cameron all

my life from the time I was a very small boy peddling groceries here. My dad had three orchards. We sold apples here in Cameron in great quantities. I remember one year we sold 1500 quarts of strawberries. My dad, just like me, didn't always get his plans carried out but he said, the reason farmers fail today is they don't have anything to sell. They want to raise all milk, they want to raise all corn, they want to raise all wheat, they want to raise all this. Everyone of these farmers out here that didn't have their thrashing of grain, or wheat and oats to feed your livestock you were just sort of trashy. They would all go around and thrash. Every place there were thrashers, there was a big event in the women's lives. For when they had that bunch of about 3500 thrashers to feed, it took a little bit of kitchen help too.

So these are all things we reminisce about. I am glad you put up with me. I think I have talked long enough. I got that note that Sylvia sent me, but I didn't pay any attention to it. The note had K.I.S.S. on it -- KEEP IT SHORT STUPID.