Chaudoin and Cocke Families Tidbits

Compiled by Norman Rozeff, July 2010

1909  L.G. Nichols arrives to manage the lumber yard which the South Texas Lumber Company of Houston has purchased from Hill in 1908. In the following years he will partner with Morris Chaudoin to construct farm irrigation canals.

1915  James W. Harrington arrives to take up farming. Born in Blanco County, TX in 1873, he is to marry Helen Harriet Smith who will have given him nine surviving children when he dies in April 1925. One includes Mrs. Morris Chaudoin. He is a Methodist.

In late 1910 or early 1911 Mr. C.W. Waterwall builds a two story frame house at 114 W. Monroe for Mr. August Weller. It is soon to offer a home and business venture to the Chaudoin family. Robert Chaudoin had come to the area to work with R.S. Dilworth and Winston Harwood. The R. S. Dilworth Ranch was south of the Arroyo Colorado where Dilworth Road reaches it. After some hard times, the Chaudoins moved to town. They turned the spacious building into a rooming house and also offered board for about five years. Later Huron and Lucy Verser of Riley, TN came to Harlingen with their five children. Mr. Verser came for his health and stayed to farm. The Versers purchase the structure and continue to rent rooms and offer board. Mrs. Verser's southern hospitality becomes well known, the place prospers, and it becomes a temporary home to many new Harlingenites. Son Jack is born in the house in 1916 or 1917. The Chaudoin house becomes known as the Verser House. When unoccupied in 1979, a series of fires occurred in it. Jack Verser offered the salvageable parts to the Rio Grande Valley Museum to use in the restoration of Harlingen's first hospital which had been moved to the complex. Huron Judson Verser, who first farmed where Four Corners (F and Harrison Streets) was later to be, died 4/30/50 at 81 in his Monroe Street home. This member of the First Baptist Church born in Austin, AK left behind his wife Lucie, four daughters and son Jack.

1910  Evie Chaudoin will commence teaching school this year and continue until 1917 when she takes a position at the Planters State Bank.

2/19/10  The First Methodist Church is founded by 31 charter members. At that time it is affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. With the Rev. R.L. Pyleas as its minister, the church's list of members provides an indication of whom some of Harlingen's and its nearby citizens are. They are: Mr. and Mrs. David Allen Barbee and children Lucille and Archie; Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Bullard and children A.T. and Beatrice; W.T. Campbell; Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Clift; Mr. and Mrs. R.S. Chambers; Mr. and Mrs. R.L. Chaudoin and children Eva, Mack, Barney, Morris, and Lily (later Lily Liston Cleary); Mr. and Mrs. A.W. Cunningham; Miss Mildred Davis; Mrs. Bertha Dorough; Miss Moody Dorough; Mr. Bunny Shook Dorough, J.D. Dorough; Mrs. Wil D. Darfy; Mr. and Mrs. S.P .Eaton, Sr. and S.P. Eaton, Jr.; Mrs. E.L. Fender; G.E. Goodykoontz; Mrs. Minnie G.; Miss Katie Mags; M.M. Osborn; Mrs. Nellie Osborn; Mr. and Mrs. C.F.
Perry, Mr. G.H. Pletcher; Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Posy and daughter Lola; Mr. and Mrs. L.E. Snavely and children Doris, Ed and Berta.

1911 On Easter Sunday of this year the completion of the Methodist Church sanctuary is celebrated. Among the first marriages in the Church were those of the Simmons daughters: May to Fred Downing; Ava to Frank Martin; and Eunice to Neil Madeley, Sr. A few years later Ophelia Harrington and Morris Chaudoin were married.

4/3/12 L.S. Ross, son of former Texas Governor Sul Ross who was a famous Texas Ranger, commences serving as Mayor. He was the president of the Harlingen Commercial Club, treasurer of the Rio Grande Construction Association, school board trustee and farmed. He is also president of the Harlingen State Bank in which he is provided a private office for the conduct of city business. He is authorized to purchase office furniture and provide stationery. The bank is the depository for city funds. Ross is also responsible for bringing J.F. Rodgers to "Six Shooter Junction" in 1910. After settling in the Wilson Tract area, Rodgers will enter into a partnership with Ross called Ross and Rodgers Realty. A post card photograph taken by P.C. Shockey is inscribed May 5, 1913 and the farm of L.S. Ross-Wilson Tract, Harlingen, Texas. It shows four men in white shirts, ties, and hats standing just inside a field of tall corn. Obviously it was taken to promote land sales.

Elected aldermen are A.H. Weller, J.M. Denton, M.V. Pendleton, who was formerly city clerk, H.A. Gibbs, and R.L. Chaudoin. Osco Morris becomes city marshal and F.T. Kirkman, the new city secretary. In an attempt to get Harlingen citizens out of the mud, a contract is let to William Tennant to build and install wooden platforms for street crossings.

1913 R.L. Chaudoin opens his real estate office above the Harlingen State Bank at Jackson and A Streets. Later as president of the Rio Valley Land Co., he will hire D.W. Swartz as vice-president and sales manager. While R.L. Chaudoin came to Harlingen in 1910 he had been in the Valley since 1908. He was born in Caldwell County 2/14/59 and attended common schools as public schools were then called. He marries Lily Polly on 10/27/82. Of Hugenot descent, his father was a medical doctor and classmate of Robert E. Lee; his mother a descendent of Robert Morris of Philadelphia. In Harlingen he will serve as city recorder, City Commissioner (4/12-4/19), and justice of the peace. He was a member of the Woodmen of the World and the Methodist Church. In 1930 he is located at 613 N.1st Street.

4/22/14 C. Block and Morris Chaudoin are appointed as Harlingen's first policemen.

5/14 The first graduating class (then 11 grades) of the Harlingen High School is compose of Roberta Chaudoin (later Mrs. I.E (Renus) Snavely), Murl and Gladys Snavely, and Fred Osborn.

Having been here in 1912, 1918 is the year W.T Liston returns from Elysian Fields, TX for good with his son William Osie (W.O.) Liston. Of Scotch-Irish descent he was born in Panola County 10/19/70 and married to Annie Davidson of Robstown in 9/15. She is
1919 Leonard S. Fronnfelter begins farming in the Harlingen area, and then later Spanish Acres. He will retire in 1925 and die at age 71 in December 1931. This First Methodist member will leave behind four sons and three daughters.

Two cotton gins operating within the town are the C.S. Reynold Cotton Gin west of the railroad tracks along North Commerce, and the Gregory Gin Company on Washington Street near Commerce. **Mackey and Morris Chaudoin** have adjacent farms on what will later become Grimes Street.

It is in the 1920 US Census that we learn more about the **Robert L. Chaudoin** family. He, now 60 years old, was born around 1860 in Texas, but his father had been born in Tennessee and his mother in Virginia. At this time he is a city commissioner. His wife **Elizabeth M.** is 57. Still at their family owned home are **Bonnie E.**, 35, and assistant cashier at a bank; **Robert M.**, 29, and a farmer; **Barney A.**, 27, a clerk in a government office; **Lillie M.**, 23, school teacher; **Roberta R.**, 21; and **Joseph C.**, 19.

1920 When he is about 23 years old **L(ouis). Mackey Chaudoin** comes from Gonzales to Harlingen, where family members already reside,. The 1920 census lists him at age 33 and born about 1887 as a farmer. His wife **May** born c.1889 is 31. With them are children **Winston, 5; Elizabeth, 4; and Lois, 2.** Later Mackey enters the law enforcement field. On 8/10/35 tragedy is to befall him. After pursuing a stolen vehicle, he is shot by George Dunlap, one of its occupants. While Dunlap is killed in an exchange of gunfire, Mackey is seriously wounded and will die 2/19/36 in Dallas where he has been taken for treatment. The well-liked forty-nine year old Mackey will leave behind a wife, **May,** and **four children.**

In the 1930 census **Robert L.** is still alive at age 71 and is noted to be a city judge. His wife **Elizabeth M.** is now 68. At home is **Roberta R.** 28 and a public school teacher. They reside in a home on N.1st Street. The **Louis Mackey Chaudoin** family live at their owned home at 301 E. Polk Avenue. **Mackey** at 43 is a city policeman, **May** is now 42, **Winston 15, Elizabeth 14, Lois 12,** and born in 1921 is 9 year old **Doyle.**

1/1/31 E.W. Anglin returns to the position of Chief of Police, a name changed in 1926 from City Marshal. Serving in the department at the time are W.H. McMinn (Uncle...
Mack), Wes Fonville, L.M. "Mackie" Chaudoin (who by 1933 will be a lieutenant), Cage Johnson, and Julian Villareal. All would be deceased by April 1960. Later Anglin will be replaced by a succession of men who will each serve two terms.

8/11/35 Police officer Mackey Chaudoin is wounded by George Dunlap before the latter is killed. Chaudoin will later die of his injuries.

10/23/32 Joan Chaudoin is born in Harlingen to Joseph Clinton and Dallas Hardin Davenport Chaudoin. On 11/27/54 she is to marry William Hill Cocke, Jr. in Harlingen where they will live and raise four children. In 1954 she was the first Algodon Club queen while attending UT at the time. For 17 years she was an active member of the Junior Service League serving as its president 1967-68, volunteer for the Family Crisis Center, United Way, and other civic endeavors. Dying at age 61 on 5/10/94 she is to leave her mother, husband, three daughters and a son behind.

1923 Hill Cocke comes to the Valley. He begins his Valley career first in citrus in the Mission area then he finds employment as a brick salesman for Guenter Weiske's Mission Brick Company in Madero. In 1941 he is to found the Valley Ready Mix Company which is to have the first concrete factory in the Valley. It will grow into Varmicon.

1932 The first Lower Rio Grande Valley Men's Amateur (golf) tournament is held and won by Hill Cocke. Three years later the first Lower Rio Grande Valley Lady's Tournament will be held and won by Mrs. A.E. McClendon.

10/41 Hill Cocke is appointed chairman of a committee to investigate the burial of the 13th Street canal, a project estimated to cost $80,000.

8/51 This year the city welcomes a new facility. The Lon C. Hill Memorial Library (now city administrative offices) opens at 502. E. Tyler. The air-conditioned facility with its 51,000 square feet is built incrementally at a total cost of $107,052. The building fund was first started as a project of the Rotary Club, of which Hill Cocke is president, as a war memorial and was later enhanced by the city's $35,000 contribution. These were supplemented by individual donations of $5,000 each by H.E. Butt, Hill Cocke, and J. Lewis Boggus, and $20,000 by Lon C. Hill, Jr. and family.

6/53 James R. "Jimmy" Cocke commences working for his father, Hill Cocke's firm, Valley Ready Mix Concrete Company. In March 1967 at age 36 Jimmy will become president of the company.

1954 St. Alban's Church commences building a new larger sanctuary on 5 ½ acres purchased from C.W. Clift, Sr. It is a part of his forty acre farm which he is to subdivide. Building committee chairman Harvey Lee Richards oversees Valley architect William C. Baxter who does the design. Land, architect's fees, and construction total $122,000. On 9/5/54 the first service is conducted in the new church. Over time additional school and
other buildings are added such as the A.O.C. Dent Building, named after the Sunday School Superintendent, and the Marian Cocke Buildings.

2/71 Palm Valley Estates is going up on 383 acres. The clubhouse for its 150 acres golf course was completed last year. Van C. Snell leads the Harlingen Development Co. (HDC) group. On its steering committee are Newton Liddell, James Alexander, Hill Cocke, Sr., Fred Flynn, Karl Gibbons, Evan Hurst, and Frank Parker. The company was formed to develop, improve, and sell the balance of 233 acres for cottages, homes, town houses and other facilities. It already has 23 two-bedroom cottages plus 12 larger homes. Ninety of 200 home sites included in the first three units have been sold and a fourth with about 100 lots is being prepared. All have underground utilities.

11/70 The W. Edgar Johnston firm on W. Tyler specializing in agricultural pipe and canvas sells the canvas part to Hill Cocke, Jr., who names his company Hilco. He and his wife Joan initially incorporated 12/69 and operated their firm in the old fire station of the HAFB. On 5/4/81 Hilco opens a new fabric manufacturing facility of 15,000 sq. ft. at 2102 Fair Park Blvd. It also has a 10,000 sq. ft. facility in Houston to where it expanded in 1975.

6/10/71 The C of C establishes a Harlingen Historical Hall of Fame to recognize distinguished Harlingenites. Twenty individuals are honored at an affair where 450 attend. The honorees are:

Lon C. Hill                      John B. Challes                        Ned Sondock
Albert L. Benoist               J. Lewis Boggus                         Elam Clay (E.C.) Breedlove
John W. McKelvey                Howard E. Butt                         Eustacia Hill Caul
**Hill Cocke, Sr.**              Frank E. Davis                         Harry Day
D. B. "Bus" Dunkin              Fred L. Flynn                           L.C. "Mose" Hill
McHenry Tichenor                Hugh Ramsey                            R.L. Hill
Harvey L. Richards              Mrs. Gerald (Verna) McKenna

6/15/84 **Jimmy and Joy Cocke**, who had acquired majority stock control in 1979, and minority stockholders of Varmicon, the Valley's largest concrete (and also diversified enterprises) company sell the Harlingen-based firm to Barrett Industries of San Antonio for $22 million. The company's name had been changed from Valley Ready Mix Concrete Company to Varmicon in the mid-1970s.

April 2010 The Harlingen Rotary Club honors two of the Cocke family by installing tiles for them in the Walk of Fame at the entrance to the Harlingen Municipal Auditorium 100 influential citizens were recognized in Harlingen's Centennial Year. In an accompanying booklet the statements for them are:

**William Hill Cocke** William moved to Harlingen in 1920 and was instrumental in raising $1,000,000 to relocate Valley Baptist Hospital and was very involved in the establishment of the Marine Military Academy.
James Robert Cocke  Business leader and major donor to many local community causes as well as St. Albans Episcopal Church. Jimmy served on Harlingen City Commission and other community boards.