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MONTGOMERY COUNTY

# Historicade

OCT. 25 - 28, 1949

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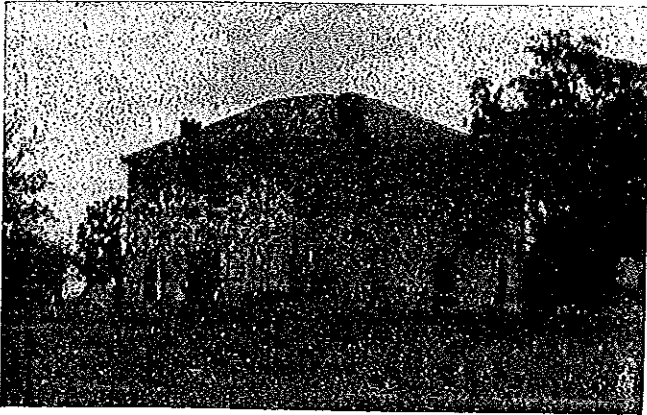
for

*The Champion Paper and Fibre Company*

# History of Montgomery County

BY ANNA DAVIS WEISINGER

From material collected by Miss Mary Davis, (deceased),  
Montgomery, Texas and numerous others.



Montgomery County's third court house  
located at Montgomery

West of the San Jacinto, Montgomery County was a part of Stephen Austin's fourth and last colony. This colony extended from the San Jacinto to the Brazos, and, on the north, to the old San Antonio Road. In his last report to the Mexican Government, Austin spoke of the Colony as "the settlements on the San Jacinto".

Already a municipality under Mexican rule, one of the twenty-five municipalities of Texas, Montgomery was the only town in the county. It is really one of the few oldest towns in Texas; but its age is usually dated from 1837, when the new town was founded.

Rome was built on seven hills, Montgomery on but one; but very early in its history Montgomery showed the vigor and initiative that perhaps Rome at a similar period lacked. In the beginning, Montgomery was founded at the foot of the hill on Town Creek, in 1830, when an Indian Trading Post was established. It was later called the "Old Town under the Hill"; but, while still an infant town, it made the top in one jump.

It was several months before the county was created that an enterprising land own-

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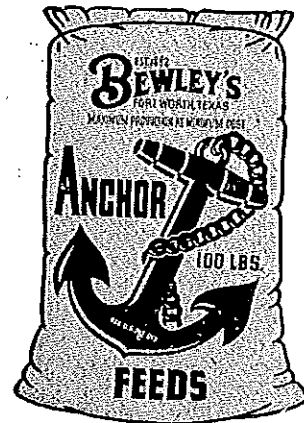
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er, William Sheppard, platted a town on the present site of Montgomery and agreed to give sixty acres of land to pay for building a courthouse and jail if Montgomery should be selected for the County seat. On December 14, 1837, the county was created and included what are now Grimes, Montgomery, Walker and Madison.

Historians say that Montgomery was named for General Richard Montgomery who was killed at the battle of Quebec in 1775. Old timers say, however, and we like to believe, that it was named for Margaret Montgomery, wife of Owen Shannon, who established the trading post. It is believed by the descendents of Margaret Montgomery that they are direct descendents of Richard. Some of the Shannons still live on part of the original land grant at Dobbin. The county naturally took its name from the town.

The first courthouse, built in 1838 was a small log cabin but it soon became inadequate and in 1842 a new two-story one was built of hand-hewn lumber. In this same year the First Methodist parsonage in Texas

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Jack Clarke

was built and furnished in Montgomery. A marker now stands there.

By 1845 Montgomery was a thriving little town. It had a live newspaper, "The Montgomery Patriot", edited and published by John Marshall Wade. A copy of this paper, now in the Sam Houston Museum at Huntsville, gives the arrival and departure of the mail. This came by stage coach once a week from Houston and by horse back from Washington once a week. It was the only postoffice between Houston and Huntsville and one of the few in Texas.

On April 5, 1845 the Montgomery Masonic Lodge No. 25 was organized but the charter had been granted in December of 1837. Sam Houston, who was already a Mason, was one of the visitors to help organize the lodge.

Sam Houston was a frequent visitor to the town, often spending the night at the old hotel. Sometimes Mrs. Houston would accompany him on his trips. He had many friends in Montgomery and would visit them for bear hunting at Bear Bend out toward the San Jacinto. It was a favorite spot for this sport being a U-shaped bend in Atkin's

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Creek, into which the bears were driven. This locality is still called Bear Bend.

By 1848 Montgomery was large enough to be incorporated and Judge Nat Hart Davis was made first Mayor of the town. Montgomery had become one of the most important trading centers in Texas, their chief products being lumber and cotton.

One of the earliest potteries was on a farm just a short distance from Montgomery. Several years ago the remains of the old kiln and a few broken pieces of pottery still marked the location. The stream that furnished water for it is to this day called Juggery Creek.

An early settler who took a very prominent part in the early politics of Montgomery was Dr. C. B. Stewart. He was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence and also designed the Texas Flag. Some of his descendents still live near the town on part of his original land grant.

Montgomery was at its best about 1854, there was a building boom on. A number of fine homes were built, some of which still stand. The old Methodist Church, Baptist Church, The Price Hotel, and the first

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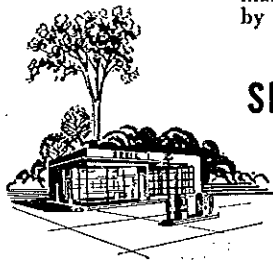
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school, "Montgomery Academy" were built. And a fine new court house was started, the old one having been judged unsafe for court.

The new court house was finished the following year and was the scene of many "grand balls", for Montgomery was the center of all social life in the county. Carriages came from as far as thirty miles for by this time there were villages being established all over the county, some of them being Plantersville, Anderson, Old Waverly and Danville.

Danville had been established about 1848, and at one time supported around fourteen business houses. But it was short lived, for in less than thirty years the town had been established and faded from existence. Not a thing remained to mark the spot where once were busy streets.

Old Waverly was inhabited in 1851. The settlers had hopes that some day it would be a great city with tall buildings, fine schools and handsome churches—a town of culture and intellect. In the early 70's the railroad wanted to build a line thru the town and while the citizens did want outsiders

(Continued On Pages Following Programs)

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CONROE'S FIRST CITY HALL



Reading from left to right: J. E. West, councilman, Emmett Darby, Mayor, R. H. Weatherly, Judge W. B. Browder, Sam Turner, E. C. Wooldridge, councilman, O. L. Alexander, councilman, L. W. Allen, councilman, Claude Stewart, county clerk, Geo. W. Strake, H. H. Mahaffey, E. A. Oualline, councilman, E. I. Conroe and J. M. Coleman, publisher of Montgomery County News.

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EPISODE I — THIS — OUR LAND

Life in a typical Indian Village before the coming of the White Men . . . The arrival of the Spanish Explorers, the first White Men to visit Our Land.

EPISODE II — ACROSS THE PLAINS

A day on the Trail with a covered wagon train, a party of pioneers on their way to a new land and a new life.

EPISODE III

THE OLD TRADING POST — 1827

Town Creek was founded in the year of 1827, and was first a trading post. Later the name was changed to Montgomery. The town was named, it is believed, after Margaret Montgomery, the wife of Owen Shannon, who maintained the trading post. Here we show you life as lived at the trading post, on one of its busiest days.

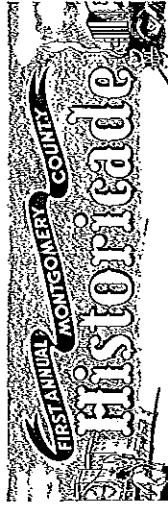
EPISODE IV

MONTGOMERY COUNTY — 1837-1853

Montgomery County was founded in 1837. The first court house was a log cabin 20 feet by 20 feet. The second court house, a frame two-story building, was built in 1842, and the third built in 1853 was really an improvement and cost \$3000.

This third court house was used not only for judiciary purposes but also served as a place to stage social gatherings and theatricals.

We show the local dramatic society presenting a play for the edification of the townspeople.



*Committees For Montgomery County Historiads*

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for all the visitors. Our scene will depict such a party.

EPISODE VIII — BALLET OF THE LAND

The forces of nature at play in a symbolic dance depicting the wealth and natural abundance available to all in Montgomery County.

EPISODE IX — THE STAGE COACH ERA

The Stage Coach from Houston brought both passengers and mail, making three trips a week. You can well understand that the arrival of the stage coach was the most exciting event of the day.

EPISODE X — "A HUSKING-BEE"

Let us go back in time to an early era to the time of greater physical effort — a time of super-human feats of accomplishment — a time of hard work and hard play.

Our scene will present a time when hardworking men relaxed in sport and in play at a "husking-bee".

PRESENTED BY  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
HISTORICADE COMMITTEE

MARY PAT ROBINSON  
PAGEANT MASTER  
WILLIAM HURLEY  
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

EPISODE XI

CONROE BECOMES COUNTY SEAT

The town of Conroe had its beginning in 1881. Mr. Conroe established a lumber mill and did much to develop the entire area. Conroe grew in size and population. Stores and businesses were established, many professional men had founded practices in the thriving community. In 1889 J. K. Ayres and 200 other citizens petitioned the court to hold an election to change the county seat from Montgomery to Conroe. The combined votes of Conroe, Willis and the mill population carried the election.

EPISODE XII — THE GAY 90'S

All over America a New Era was dawning. The rigors of frontier life were vanishing for most of the country. A new distribution of luxuries and comfort giving necessities raised the standard of living. Music, The Dance, Styles and Art changed with the spirit of the times. Lillian Russell, P. T. Barnum and Diamond Jim Brady were symbols of the Decade. The time was truly well named the Gay Nineties.

EPISODE XIII

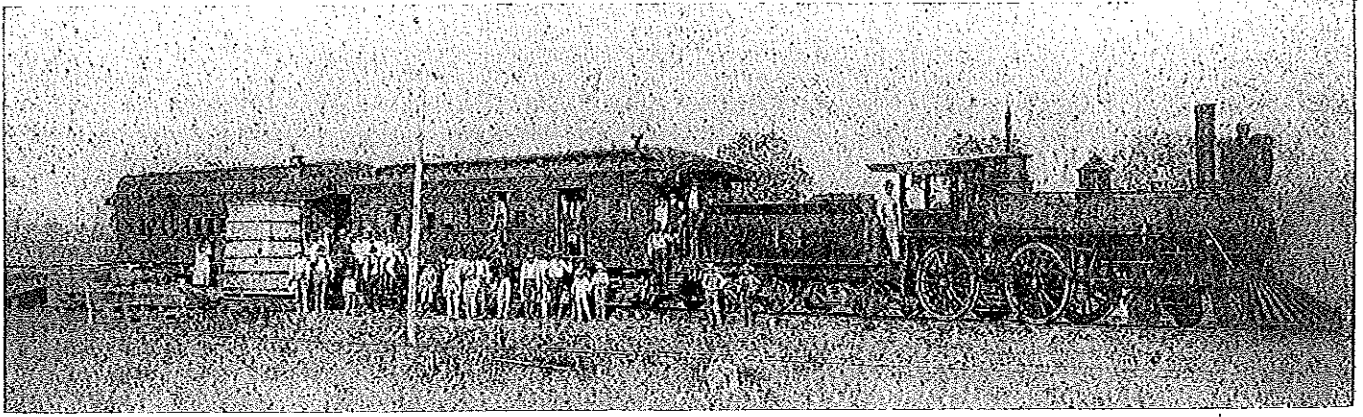
PRIDE OF THE LONE STAR STATE

We recall the glories of the past history of this area lived dramatically and excitingly under the flags of Spain, France, Mexico, the flag of the Republic of Texas, Flag of the Union, Flag of the Confederacy and again under the Stars and Stripes of the United States.

EPISODE XIV

GRAND SYMBOLIC SPECTACLE

Here we show the Spirit of Montgomery County with "All Shoulders to the Wheel" as we forge ahead with complete confidence in this our Lone Star State and these United States of America.



The first railroad in Montgomery County was the Montgomery Central which ran from Navasota to Montgomery completed in 1885.

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## *History of Montgomery County*

they did not want the element they thought the railroad would bring. Upon refusing to let the line come through, the railroad builders warned them that Waverly would surely die. It missed the town by twelve miles, and Old Waverly became a lost city because it was a city that might have been.

Life was very pleasant for the settlers the next few years, they had overcome most of their hardships and there was much wealth in the town. Bad fortune soon frowned on the little village, for in 1857 there was a Yellow Fever epidemic and panic prevailed. Many people moved, many died, and some went through it. Misfortune hit again in a few years when the war broke out in 1861. With the ending of the war the happiness and prosperity seem to end—a new era had dawned on the old town.

The reconstruction days were hard on Montgomery. Late in 1869 Wm. McGrew, Esq., county attorney for the last two years, and his two half-brothers, John and Bob Oliver, and a Charles Brown (alias Tex Brown) were shot to death by the people in necessary self defense. They were lawless desperados. McGrew was found to be a K K K at night, a Republican Appointee by day, and a horse thief in between. The Oliver boys would ride their horses into the stores, shoot off their guns, generally terrifying the inhabitants, robbing and stealing. "Tex", or Charles Brown, was a desperado of more renown. All four bodies were dumped on Mrs. Olivers porch. They were the first ones buried in the new cemetery because they were refused burial in the Methodist Grave Yard that being a church yard.

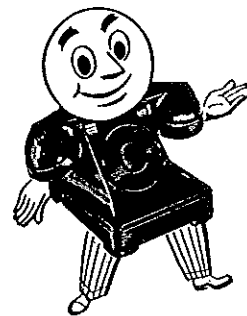
By 1870 Willis was started, and in just a few years became one of the leading towns in the county; the I & G N had completed a line to Willis in '72, which was the first railroad in the county. Most of the business houses from Danville and many residents moved to the new town near the railroad. Others from Montgomery and Old Waverly also located in the new town.

In 1874 an agitation to move the county seat to Willis was started; and in September of that year an election was held. It was voted to move it. After six years of very heated arguments, however, another election was held and the results were that the county seat remained in Montgomery. Several years later Willis attracted much



*Striving to keep  
in step with a*

Progressive Montgomery  
County



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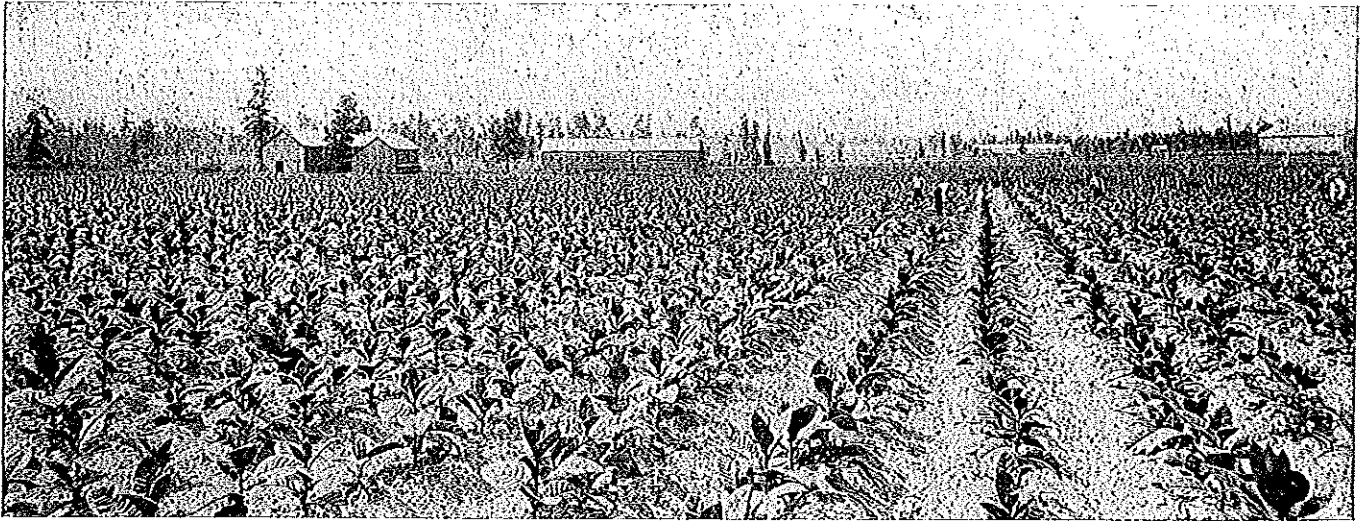
T. A. BERRY



See "Tony" Schmitt for information on your business investments, stocks and bonds  
on his regular weekly visit to Conroe or call

CApitol 9767  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

822 First National  
Bank Building



Field of young tobacco growing at Willis around 1895

attention in the tobacco industry, at one time having boasted seven cigar factories.

Elmwood, a Texas Mansion, and one of the few frame houses built in this section of the state was built near Willis, by General Lewis. It was erected by slaves brought over from Virginia. Two years were required to build the house and lumber from twenty sawmills, sawed by hand, of native

timber. The bricks used in the house were from Holland and the house was put together with wooden pegs. The house was well over a hundred years old and occupied in 1940, but that year it was torn down and the lumber used for a new and modern home.

It was about 1879 through constant changes thru the years that the present

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## HISTORICAIDE



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boundary lines of Montgomery County were set.

Old timers say there was not much known about Conroe until 1885 when the Santa Fe extended its line to the town. The Central and Montgomery Railroad had constructed the line from Navasota to Montgomery in 1880, at which time a big barbecue was given. Pictures were taken with the townspeople beside it. At the time the road was extended to Conroe the Railroad men wanted to take the line through Willis but not getting any support from the business men they were asked to bring the line through Conroe. In 1881 Isaac Conroe for whom the town was later named, moved his small sawmill from Haltom to the present site of Conroe. By 1889 Conroe had grown to be a town of probably some 250 or 300 people. While most of the population was still west of the San Jacinto, the citizens petitioned the court to hold an election for moving the county seat to Conroe. On May 6 the election was held. The combined vote of Conroe, Willis and the mill population at Leonidas, near Conroe, won the election, the results being 1161 for Conroe and 1099 for Montgomery. It was just seven days later that Conroe profiting by Willis' experience designated a temporary building to be used as a court house.

First known as Minks Prairie, Magnolia was settled sometime in the late forties and was just a community. It was in 1902, when the railroad was built, that it was moved to its present site. At that time it was called Melton for J. W. Melton, who promoted the town site. Mr. Melton left in 1904 and because there was conflict with a town already existing in Texas by the name of Milton, Melton was changed to Magnolia. The name Magnolia was given because of a plan to set out Magnolia trees. Many were set out but never did well in that community. Later Magnolia became the home of one of the largest sawmills in the county.

Fostoria, formerly known as Clinesburg, was a milltown named for the owner of the mill. In 1901 the mill was sold to the Foster Lumber Co. and in 1903 the name was changed to Fostoria. It is also the home of one of the large sawmills in the county.

After many years of exploration, oil was discovered in 1931 with Geo. Strake, now of Houston, bringing in the first well. With the added wealth from petroleum and natural gas Montgomery County is regarded

# First National Bank

CONROE, TEXAS

ASSETS . . . . . \$7,000,000.00



We are justly proud of having been the principal source of financial assistance to the

*Wings of Progress*

in Montgomery County for over thirty-five years.



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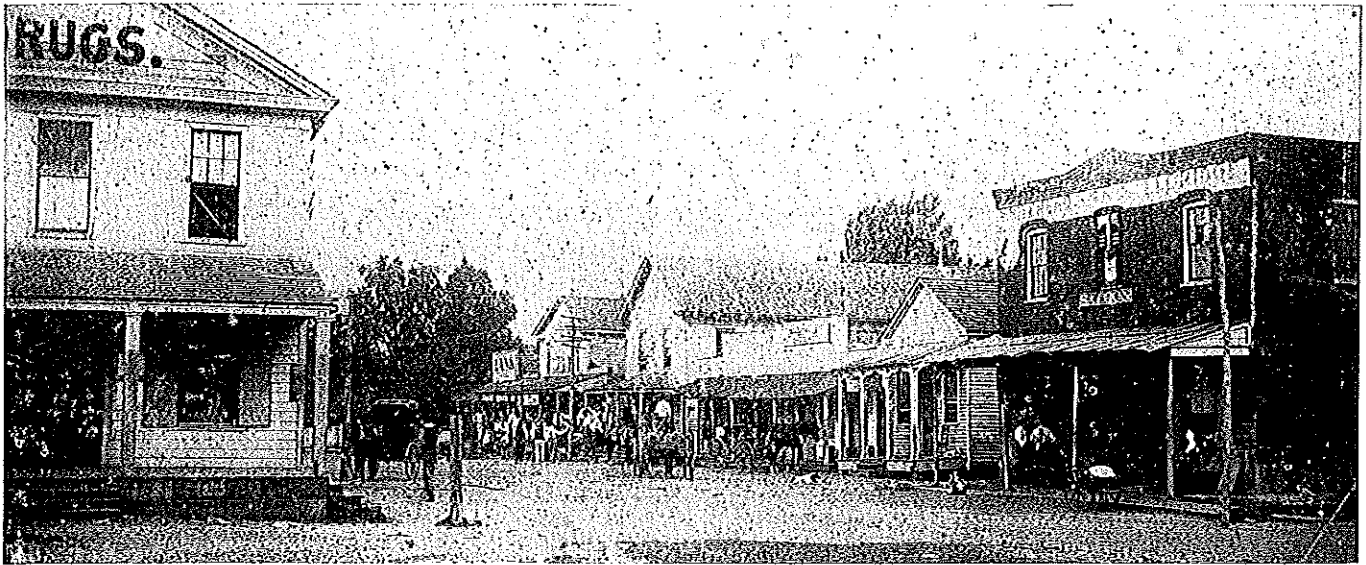
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An early day street scene in Montgomery

as one of the wealthiest counties in Texas. Combining both petroleum and timber it does seem that the God of the universe has benignly smiled on our good land in the matter of its natural resources. The addition of petroleum to the economy of Montgomery County resulted in rapid development throughout.

While oil has played a big part in the wealth of the county in recent years, timber has for a hundred or more years been the county's chief product. As far back as the early 50's, long teams of oxen, drawing lumber would plod their slow way to Houston, there becoming entangled with many other teams on Main Street, so that pedestrians

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*Jimmies*

COFFEE SHOP



217 N. Main

MR. AND MRS. JIMMIE WILLIAMS

Proprietors

complained bitterly of the danger of crossing the street with twelve-yoke teams of oxen floundering along in both directions.

Today as in the olden days on most any highway or country lane you can still see logs being hauled to some near-by sawmill or the finished lumber on its way to market. There is hardly a community in the county that does not have at least one sawmill--some have several. Lumber is still the chief product of our county and will be for many years to come.

Today this history is only tradition, living in the memories of a few persons to whom it was told by those who lived it. Many of the brave, gay figures who once made the colorful pattern of the community's and county's life have left not a trace behind them, except here and there a name in faded legal records. In the old cemeteries, the nameless graves are level with the earth. But to those of us who realize the continuity of ideals, the permanence of the intangible values of the past, these forgotten ones are a "choir invisible" whose music has not wholly died away.

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## *Autographs*



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The "Piney Woods" of East Texas supply the Champion Mill on the Houston Ship Channel with the necessary raw materials from which Champion paper is made. Pictured above is part of the Company's stock-pile of 5-foot pine logs.

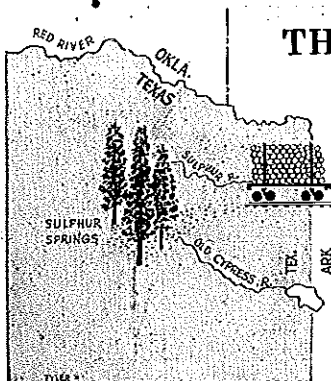
These logs are cut from trees harvested under a selective cutting program in conjunction with the Texas Forestry Service. A stand of timber is never completely cut, only thinned, with seed trees left in each acre from which mature trees are taken. In this way, the Forestry division of The Champion Paper and Fibre Company is able to conserve this valuable natural resource. By constantly planting seedlings in open pastures, the company insures future timber.

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