

Choat, Gabriel

In the early days, Gabriel Chote came to this part of Llano County and settled about five miles northwest of Valley Springs. He split logs and built his house of picket logs, standing them on end and nailing them to a log at top and bottom with spike nails. Chote himself split the logs of which he also made the puncheon floor.

The Chote house was built near a creek which became known as Chote Branch.

One bright, moonlight night, some Indians came to the Chote house and made an attempt to get his horse out of the stall. The door was locked and before they could get it open, Mrs. Chote was awakened. She then awakened her husband and told him the Indians were trying to steal the horse.

At first, Gabe did not hear any unusual noise. But sometime later his wife awakened him again and told him she was certain the Indians were there. This time he too heard a noise and took down his shot gun, eased to the door, opened it and shot the Indian.

The Indian was able to get on his horse and get away. But Chote got on his horse and notified neighbors and together they all took the trail of the Indians, following them to a high point about four miles east where the Indian had been buried. The Indians always bury their dead on a high place.

The remaining Indians were trailed for several miles but were never caught up with. There is a place on the Kate Gray ranch still known as Indian Pass.

At one time the Indians had camp grounds at all of the old springs in this part of the country. It is not understood by some people why the Indian mounds were burned. It is believed the Indians slept on these mounds after preparing the mound in this way. They piled logs in a round pile and set them afire and burned them into coals. Then they piled rocks on the coals, and when the rocks were red hot they would pile dirt on top of the rocks. Then, after putting up poles over which buffalo hides were stretched, they had

a nice warm bed in which to sleep. The dirt bed was probably covered with the waist-high sage grass or with buffalo hides. The water could not run under their tents, either.

The early settlers also built huge pens covered several acres of land. The cattle from miles around were driven into those pens. In order to know whom a certain calf belonged to, they waited until it went to its mother, then it was roped and branded by its owner. This rule was followed until each calf had its correct brand.

My father told me of how the Indians came to those pens and let the fence down. The cattle nawled and began to drift off. Some of the boys wanted to get on their horses and try to get the stock back into the pens. My father, Uncle Billy Phillips, told them not to and explained that the Indians had let the stock out, expecting the men to come to the stock pens where the Indians would be hiding. They waited until the next morning when they found Indian foot prints behind trees and stumps. I do not know just where those pens were located, probably below Valley Springs.

I am not certain whether the Wyckoff boy was killed by the Indians about this time, but he probably was as they were gathering cattle to put in the pens when some of the boys said they had located some ripe mulberries on Johnson Creek, and the Wyckoff boy decided he would get some. The others tried to keep him from going and warned him of Indians, but he went anyway. When he did not return, the others went to hunt. They found him where the Indians had left him, killed with a bow and arrow.

GABRIEL CHOAT

ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING VETERANS OF THE MEXICAN WAR, AND POSSIBLY THE OLDEST RESIDENT IN LLANO COUNTY, AT THE ADVANCED AGE OF, NOT QUITE NINETY-SEVEN YEARS PASSED AWAY.

GABRIEL CHOAT OF FIELD CREEK, TEXAS, WAS BORN IN TENNESSEE, AUGUST 14, 1826. DIED JULY 14, 1923. WAS MARRIED TO MISS MARY RAINBOLT AT GEORGETOWN, TEXAS IN 1848, SHE HAVING DIED A FEW YEARS AGO. TO THEM WERE BORN EIGHT CHILDREN, VIZ: MRS. ADELINE SHARP, GOLDTHWAITE, TEXAS; AUSTIN AND DAN OF OKLAHOMA, JASPER AND GABRIEL OF TOMBSTONE, ARIZONA; DAVE WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN; EPH AND JOHN HAVING DIED YEARS AGO. THE ELDEST OF THESE CHILDREN BEING ABOUT 76 YEARS OF AGE AND THE YOUNGEST ABOUT 45 YEARS.

BESIDES THESE HE LEAVES TWO AGED SISTERS, MRS. C. DRAPER OF FIELD CREEK, AND SOPHIA FARIS OF LOHN, TEXAS, AND A HOST OF OTHER RELATIVES AND FRIENDS. HE DIED AT THE HOME OF HIS NEPHEW, E. A. DRAPER, WHERE HE MADE HIS HOME.

EVERY KINDNESS AND COMFORT THAT WAS POSSIBLE TO EXTEND, WAS GIVEN TO HIM, BUT A SLOW GANGRENOUS POISONING HAD BEEN SAPPING AT HIS STRENGTH FOR SEVERAL MONTHS PAST, AND FINALLY RESULTED IN HIS DEATH.

UNCLE GABE, AS HE WAS KNOWN TO A LARGE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS--OF THIS AND ADJOINING COUNTIES, CAME FROM ALABAMA TO TEXAS IN 1845. HE ENTERED THE MEXICAN WAR IN 1846, IN CAPTAIN GILLETT'S COMPANY, TEXAS MOUNTED VOLUNTEERS, WHERE HE SERVED FOR ABOUT THREE YEARS, STATIONED THE GREATER PORTION OF THIS TIME ALONG THE WEST BANK OF THE RIO GRANDE RIVER.

AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR, HE THEN A YOUNG MAN, ENLISTED AS A PRIVATE SOLDIER, BUT IT IS NOT KNOWN IN WHOSE COMMAND. AND IN THAT FOUR YEARS OF UNEQUAL CONTEST, WHERE MIGHT AT LAST PREVAILED, THIS BOY IN GRAY BECAME A HERO. NOT SUCH AN ONE AS A PARTIAL PRESS WOULD RECOGNIZE, BUT IN THAT GREAT STRUGGLE WHERE BLUE AND GRAY ALIKE DID NOBLE DEEDS.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1865 WHEN THE DARK DAYS OF RECONSTRUCTION BEGAN, HE STOOD WITH OTHER CONFEDERATES LIKE HIM, TO REDEEM THE SOUTHLAND FROM MISRULE AND PLACE IT IN THE WAY OF PROGRESS, AND TO HIM AND THEM IS DUE ITS PRESENT WONDERFUL PROSPERITY.

CHILDREN OF THE COMMUNITY ALSO DELIGHTED IN STANDING AT HIS KNEE TO HEAR HIM RECOUNT THE THRILLING ADVENTURES WITH THE INDIANS IN THE EARLY DAYS OF TEXAS, TO HOLD HIS SINEWY OLD HANDS, WHICH BORE LASTING SIGNS OF THEIR MARKSMANSHIP WITH THE ARROW.

REV. R. T. HOWELL OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST OF WHICH BODY HE HAD BEEN A MEMBER FOR MANY YEARS, SPOKE A BRIEF TRIBUTE AT HIS GRAVE, AFTER WHICH THE MOUND WAS COVERED WITH FLOWERS.

LOOKING AT HIS QUIET, PEACEFUL RESTING PLACE AND THINKING OF THE STRUGGLES HE HAD HAD IN LIFE, THE BATTLE HE FOUGHT, THE DANGERS PAST, THE WOUNDS UPON HIS BODY AND HIS COMRADES GONE BEFORE, THAT COULD HE HAVE SPOKEN, HE WOULD HAVE SAID, "FAREWELL AND GOOD CHEER TO YOU AND ALL THE BOYS, I'LL MEET YOU AT THE RIVER IN THE MORNING WHEN THE LAST REVEILLE SHALL SOUND."

A FRIEND