

**Brazos County Natural History:
Plants, Animals, Weather, Geology and Related Topics**

1870-1874

compiled by Bill Page

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1870: “Annual Home Coming at Steep Hollow is Held Sunday; Many Children of Pioneers Attend,” Bryan Weekly Eagle, 1 June 1932, pp.1, 3. “He told of the time in 1870 when ‘a band of rugged pioneers met under the same trees that surround the Steep Hollow church and school house there.’ How, on a later date, these men met again, bringing with them their axes, broad axes, cross-cut saws, and other necessary tools to make the beginning ... ‘If I remember right,’ said Mr. Buchanan, ‘Isaac Cook was named foreman of the work, and the men were divided into squads, some going to the creek bottoms to cut board trees, saw the timbers and rive the boards; others to the woods to hew out the sills and floor sleepers, and others with ox wagons went to the railroad station, now Bryan, to buy and haul other supplies. Soon the house was builded, and when completed was 21 by 36 feet in size.’”

1870+

“Early Days of Cattle Business in Brazos County Related by S.W. Buchanan, Pioneer,” Bryan Daily Eagle, 24 April 1939, pp.1, 6. “Mr. Buchanan stated that he arrived in Brazos County at the age of 10 years on Dec.24, 1869, and that he had been an observer of the ups and downs in the cattle business here since 1870 ... The cattle of that day were longhorns and were of practically every color, with the brindles predominating, and they were just as wild as the buffalo and the deer, the speaker said. He gave a glowing description of the range in Brazos County of that day, saying it was a veritable cowman’s paradise. The country was open, with a fringe of cottonwoods along the streams, and a few large scattered trees on the prairie, with the blue stem sage grass growing saddle skirt high as far as the eye could see. The country was so open at that time that one could see the Little Brazos from the western part of the present city and upon going a short distance east would get a clear view of the Navasota River. Deer, wild turkey, prairie chicken, and pheasant were here in great profusion, deer being seen sometimes by the hundreds in a single day. This paradise began to fade very rapidly, Mr. Buchanan said, with the coming of barbed wire along about 1875 or ’76, when the county began to be settled up. The settlers began at once to plow up the grass and put the best lands into cotton and then proceeded to overgraze the remaining pasture land”

1870+

“Herds of wild cattle and many wild horses roamed the uplands of the county as late as the seventies. The animals belonged to anyone who could put a brand on them.” (Marshall, Elmer G., History of Brazos County, Texas, masters thesis, University of Texas, 1937, p.104, citing an interview with S.W. Buchanan, Bryan, 12 July 1932)

“The rapid growth of Bryan created a demand for bricks while the fairly good clay in the vicinity furnished the material with which to make them. Between the years 1870 and

1875 four kilns were put in operation. The men owning these kilns were T.R. Dean, W.D. Morse, and J.B. Conway.” (Marshall, Elmer G., History of Brazos County, Texas, masters thesis, University of Texas, 1937, p.102, citing an interview with H.O. Boatright, Bryan, 1 July 1931)

Bryan. We clip the following from the *Brazos Eagle*: The worm has made its appearance in several places in this neighborhood, but as yet has done little or no damage. In most sections the crop is so far advanced that the worm can do but little harm anyhow. The prisoners in the Bryan jail notify the authorities that if they don't fix up the jail so that the hogs and sheep can't get in they will be blowed if they stay there much longer. Houston Daily Union, 26 August 1870, page 2

The *Bryan Appeal* says: The mast in this county is excellent this year. The pin oak mast is especially fine. A larger crop of hogs is being raised this season than is usual, and we, therefore, suppose bacon will be cheap. Flake's Bulletin (Galveston), 26 October 1870, page 7

We learn that the down passenger train yesterday morning ran off the track at the quarry, near Millican. All the cars off. Two hurt. A freight train is also off, which will delay the arrival of the up passenger train until some time Friday evening. Galveston Daily News, 23 December 1870, p.3

“Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas,” Galveston Daily News, 23 July 1871. “Some two thousand acres are prairie and the remainder wooded, chiefly post-oak land. Along the ravines and valleys, elm, hackberry, persimmon, water and pin-oak and grape grow. The soil is all good, some excellent, of the quality known as ‘black sandy prairie,’ with post-oak ‘openings’, partly of like quality, but more sandy. On the Rector farm about thirty acres of corn is now maturing that will yield some forty bushels of corn per acre, without any special cultivation. The field is on the highest summit and thinnest soil of the tract. The charge that it is poor land is unjust and unfounded. The whole tract is what is called rolling land, neither level nor hilly, and no waste land on it ... There are no perennial streams of water on the land, nor would it have been easy to secure such, without a loss of some one of the great advantages possessed by this central locality. Pools, which abound in this vicinity and are easily constructed, and cisterns must supply all the water needed. A careful examination has proven that the great wish of the Commissioners may be accomplished, and the buildings erected of stone. Two kinds are found, the white and gray sand stone, in many localities within three to ten miles, and the red sand stone or ferruginous brown sand rock, within five to fifteen miles, and both near to the railroad. Brick has been made of pretty good quality, on the lands, within half a mile of the College site, but I am not ready to recommend it. At about two and a half miles southeast there is ample brick earth of the best quality”

Fifty Years Ago – *Galveston News*, Aug. 12, 1871 ... Bryan ... The City Council is preparing to bore an artesian well to furnish the city with water ... Dallas Morning News, 12 August 1921, p.12

[Leaving Hearne] ...the weather being cold, rainy and gloomy, I did not feel that the ride was very enjoyable. As bad, however, as the day's trip was, it might have been worse if I had not luckily reached Bryan, just in time to house myself and animals from a severe Norther, and still heavier rain than I encountered in the morning ... I was surprised when I awoke in the morning, to find the sun shining brightly. I started for Welborn Station, or rather, I should say, for Minter Springs, a mile below. I could not help observing what a fearful havoc the demands of the Central have made on the time, and if it goes on at the rate I am told they are using fuel, 5000 cords monthly, they will soon have to seek some other mode of making steam than wood fires. The past and present generations have been destroying the timber; the next generation will have to plant, and plant very extensively, or fuel in certain localities will be very scarce. A word to the wise should be sufficient. It seems to me that many a proprietor, at a small expense, at present, could leave substantial benefits to his children, if he would commence now, and plant groves of quick growing trees. Austin Statesman, 15 February 1872, p.1

1872: April – “Bryan Forty-Five Years Ago as Told by an Old Paper,” (weekly) Bryan Eagle, 26 April 1917, p.4. About Weekly Bryan Appeal, 26 April 1872. “War was being made on the dogs by the city authorities, the alarm having been excited by a ‘few cases of hydrophobia’ ...”

Millican, August 9. The severe drouth still continues, and in our neighborhood the cotton is suffering very much. The bottom lands are showing the effects of the drouth to a great extent, and unless we get immediate rain, there will be a light crop. The cotton on the hills and in the sandy soil is nearly burned dead; half of the cotton is already picked on the hills; the bolls opened before they were full grown, and the later bolls dried up and are falling off; some of them are nearly bare. It leaves plenty of hands to pick the crops. There has been no rain here for many weeks. B.D.P. Galveston Daily News, 10 August 1872, p.2

Millican ... Cotton crops are cut short at least one-half from the drouth, which still continues. We had a light shower yesterday, but to no affect. The upland crops will all be gathered in three weeks. Your merchants may look for short receipts from this section. The county will go for Greeley. Galveston Daily News, 31 August 1872, p.1

The noted well borer W.B. Eaves, of Bryan, has "struck oil." The Appeal says, that in boring for water on the premises of J.F. Soven, in Burleson County, at the depth of 75 feet he struck oil similar to crude petroleum. The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 8 November 1872, page 8

The Bryan Appeal says ... We regret very much to be called upon to chronicle the sad and untimely death of Mr. Fernand Freche, brother-in-law of our esteemed citizen M. Bonneville. Mr. Freche was hunting, in company with some friends, about three miles from the city on last Wednesday, when he met his sad fate. It appears that he was riding with his gun cocked, and had taken it from his shoulder for the purpose of examining it, when it went off, the contest passing through his head from the right temple. He died immediately. We understand that Mr. Freche was a native of Louisiana, a young man of

sober and industrious habits, and gave fair promise to make a useful member of society. His sorrowful relations and friends have our sincere sympathy. Galveston Daily News, 17 November 1872, "Sunday Supplement," p.1, col.5

Bryan, August 1 – Cotton is growing very fast. On account of the excessive rains the caterpillars on nearly all bottom plantations will now web up ... Galveston Daily News, 2 August 1873, p.2, col.5

Bryan, August 8 ... Cotton prospects are good. The worms have appeared in the lower Brazos bottoms but have not done much damage yet. None are seen in the upper lands. No rain for several weeks ... Galveston Daily News, 9 August 1873, p.2, col.3

From Millican ... Crops in this section are considerably damaged by the worm. Farmers are picking it as fast as possible. Some little cotton is coming into town. One bale sold Monday for 14 cents per pound... Galveston Daily News, 18 September 1873, p.2

We have received the following P.S. from Mr. J. Lamour, from Bryan, Texas, viz.: We have the Agricultural and Mechanical College all nicely started with about forty-five hands at work making brick, laying foundations and (unless blockaded by railroad) will have eighty hands at work in less than two weeks ... Austin Daily Journal, 20 September 1873

Bryan, Oct. 20 ... A little frost this morning, and it is thought that it [yellow fever] will be confined to a certain limit ... Galveston Daily News, 21 October 1873, p.2.

Bryan ... The weather prognosticators talk of all manner of inclemencies, some even hinting of sleet or snow. A fire is comfortable and necessary ... Galveston Daily News, 25 October 1873, p.2

Bryan, Nov.3 – We have had a heavy rain here all day yesterday. The weather is now cool, the wind from the north, and frost is expected. Galveston Daily News, 4 November 1873, p.2

From Bryan, on January 5th, we hear the ground is covered with one inch of snow, and it was still snowing ... Waco Daily Examiner, 8 January 1874, p.2, col.1

"The Agricultural College at Bryan," (Austin) Daily Democratic Statesman, 17 February 1874, p.2, col.1. "It is mostly a black loamy prairie. Though the college is not located near any running stream, water is easily obtained at a depth of thirty or forty feet below the surface of the earth. The wells are very profuse in their supply of water. It is therefore very reasonable to suppose that with an artesian well of proper depth a sufficient quantity of water could be easily obtained for every purpose which might be required."

"Fifty Years Ago – From the *Galveston News* of July 14, 1874 ... Bryan – Mr. Barnett's boys, while bathing in the Brazos River on Charley Davis' place, found the tooth of an

animal weighing twenty-two and one-half pounds. Further search found other remains of the animal. Seven feet of horn were dug out without finding the balance, which went still deeper into the earth, under the river” Dallas Morning News, 14 July 1924, sect.2, p.10

Bryan ... A tremendous wind, accompanied by a slight shower, passed over our city this evening. The roof of Russel’s photograph gallery was blown entirely to atoms, and his pictures and stocks badly damaged. Galveston Daily News, 15 August 1874, p.1

A correspondent from Millican to the *Galveston News*, says that the bollworm has made its appearance on many farms and is playing havoc with the young bolls. Also that the caterpillar is working rapidly, notwithstanding the hot, dry weather. Weekly Dallas Herald, 22 August 1874, p.2

Bryan, August 21 – Several slight rains during the week, which were of great benefit to the upland crops. Bottom crops doing well, and but few worms. As yet, no damage of any consequence has been done by them. Weekly Dallas Herald, 29 August 1874, p.1

Bryan, Sept.11, 1874. It has been raining here constantly since the 6th, and still continues. Crops are considerably damaged, and farmers are detained in picking their cotton, causing the staple to be somewhat injured. Galveston Daily News, 12 September 1874, p.1

Bryan, Texas, Sept.14, 1874. Mr. John W. Chatham, living five miles north of this place, has just finished a well, which is sixty feet deep, and is constantly running over. The water is cold and clear as crystal. A small stream is invariably running out. The water rose to the top of the well in one hour after they struck the vein. Quite a number of citizens have been out to look at the well. Galveston Daily News, 15 September 1874, p.1, col. 4.

In Dallas and State, Sept. 22, 1874, Fifty-Five Years Ago – From the files of the *Dallas Herald* ... A party of seven men from Bryan killed fifty-seven deer and a large quantity of small game on the Navasota River. Dallas Morning News, 22 September 1929, “local News Section,” p.1