

Thirty-Four Wells Bring Comfort to Bangs Couple

Mr. & Mrs. Leander L. Childress

Condensed by Carl Langford (from Brownwood Bulletin)

A pretty good old age pension for Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Childress of Bangs, who in the twilight years sit in their happy home at ease with the world and entitled to a pause from the strenuous life they led for years. They fought droughts and hard times on farms of only average value and then as hands became worn and hair white, oil well bits brought a flow of wealth. Who live about three miles from Bangs, have not *moved* to town but continue to live in their old home, and tend to their garden of vegetables.

There are thirty-four wells on the place, which produced 100 barrels a day each during the peak In 1923 and 1924. when they were drilled in at 740 feet, very shallow production and very inexpensive drilling. Now the wells have dwindled to five barrels a day each on the average, but no tests have been made for a deeper pay. The shallow pay was a veritable gold mine. Mrs. Childress thinks that it will continue for eight or ten years.

The wells brought a great deal of money to a farm that had never been especially productive and soon the Childress* Who are known as "Ma and Pa Childress" (my great grand Pa & Ma.) to the people, were besiege by insistent persons desiring money. Each time, Mr. Childress goes to town he is asked by strangers or by people whom he doesn't know very well to lend them money.

With the discovery, Mrs. Childress divided the oil interests into eight parts, giving Mr. Childress and each of the five children an eighth and keeping an eighth for herself. The first royalty check she got was for \$1300 and the checks have continued to come in, though they are less now. Mrs. Childress raised a family of seven children on the 160-acre place now producing the oil.

Mrs. Childress first marriage was to J. Phillips, to which union was born two children and then Phillips died. The widow returned to Collin County where after a few years she became Mrs. Crites, five children being born to them, all girls. Then Mr. Crites died and the widow began the business of raising her young family on the 160 acre tract (Clear Creek), working in the fields herself. "It was tillable good farm land, "with memories of hard times, said Mrs. Childress,

Across the way was Leander L. Childress, whose wife had died, leaving four children, Mrs. Crites and Mr. Childress were married, moving to the Childress home with its flowers in the yard and an air of comfort about it. Thus they joined together to have 552 acres, which is rented out to tenants and planted to the staple crops. Mrs. Childress* land produced all the oil, tests on his land failing to reveal any commercial production.

However, it was on the Mrs. Childress land that Mr. Childress first lived when he came here, a young school teacher, adventurer and freighter, building a log cabin there to be occupied by his late friend. He split rails to fence his pre-empted 160 acres when he came to Bangs in 1874, while some of his neighbors were putting up rock fences, only to be put out of date by the barbed wire then coming on the market. Judge J. O. Woodward of Coleman was herding sheep in Coleman County then, says Mr. Childress, 77 year's old last April 23.

Childress* first house was made of pole's, had a rock chimney and a dirt floor. A rawhide or oak floor then was the symbol of success just an eight-cylinder automobile is today, one of the markings of the man who knows, what he wants. He made his side money hunting buffalo and hauled flour to points west, which he sold at \$8 a hundred after buying it here for \$4. He killed about twenty buffaloes during

his career, one of them at the site of Big Spring and once while he was grubbing up his land some Indians passed by, they later being killed by rangers.

He walked from Comanche County to his place here, batching for several years with E. C. Loveless who later went to Concho Co. and established a fine ranch. J. H. Count was their nearest neighbor. The Vaughan and the Shield families were then in the old Trickham Community on the Colorado River. Land had been high in Kentucky and him, a youth of slender means, had chosen the west as a site for his home. He brought with him some good old Kentucky tobacco and when it ran out it was a matter of going several miles for more.

Childress was the cook for the partnership of Loveless and Childress, One morning Loveless came into the house with, the remark; "there are Indians down there" and they buckled on their guns to find that the Indians were in fact white people walking with blankets on their shoulders to protect them from the cold.

Mr. Childress helped build the first jail in Brownwood, finding employment at that job when he first came to the county. He attended church in Brownwood and there met a preacher who suggested that he teach school in the community in which Mr. Childress now lives. He got \$40 a month and stayed with it one year, resigning in spite of the offers of reelection at a higher salary saying he wanted to improve his farm. The matter of securing a certificate was easy. He simply appeared before the authorities a Brownwood. They asked him a few questions and told him he could teach if anybody would give him a job.