

## Brown County Pioneer (McCain)

Compiled by Carl Langford

Santa Anna News Paper Archives 23 May 1924: Editor J. J. Gregg.

It was a great pleasure to the News reporter to interview *Mrs. Mollie Purvis* of Hearne, Tx. who was in Santa Anna, Mrs. Purvis is intelligent and interesting and we try to tell in this article her remembrance of her childhood days in Brown County. She is the fourth child of Abraham K. and Susan E. McClellan McCain who married 3 Aug 1848 Union Hill, Washington Co., Tx.

Mary (Mollie) Amanda McCain married Gavin A. Purvis born Glasgow, Scotland. She was born 30 Nov 1856 in Burton, Washington Co., Tx. & died 17 Nov 1978 at that place.

*Abraham "Abram" Kennedy McCain* born 1826 in Arkansas, died 1867 Brown Co, Tx. In these records, "Appointed to Sheriff of Brown County Texas 6/8/1861 to fill Jesse Sutton Harris term after Harris was killed, served until Aug 15, 1862. (Something about Brown, A History of Brown Co, TX by T R Havins, Banner Printing Co, Brownwood, TX pg 17).

"In the year of 1858, afterward Capt. McCain left his home in Washington County with his wife and five children in 1860 Census Union Hill, and came west in search of health. After looking around for a suitable location he decided to settle on the Pecan Bayou, twenty miles north of Brownwood. This country at that time was a great wilderness and there were many hardships to endure and many difficulties to overcome. Capt. McCain was engaged in the stock business as there were no farms in Brown County at that time.

Austin was the nearest town and all food supplies were brought from there in an ox wagon. Sugar was brought by the hogshead. It was a coarse brown sugar which had not been refined and had a good deal of syrup in it.

There was an abundance of wild game consisting of deer, antelope, and turkey, as well as buffalo. So the McCain home always had an abundance of meats to eat. Flour was secured from a flour mill down on the Lampasas River. Cheese was made in the home by the mother. Only one time said, Mrs. Purvis, do I remember as having any molasses. My Father planted some sorghum and grew enough molasses to last, for some time out of the cane. An ox was hitched to the mill and it was little Mollie's job to drive the ox. After the juice was extricated from the cane it was boiled in wash pots and skimmed white boiling, then it was ready for use. All the candy those children had made from this syrup.

The mother spun all the thread and wove the cloth for all the clothes these children wore. As the children grew up more settlers came and a little log school house was built. Here little Mollie attended her first school, taught by a Mr. Byrd, sitting on a seat made of a split log with bored in the ends with pegs driven in these holes for legs, little Mollie studied intently with the old Blue back speller and soon learning to spell the "baker." Setting on one of the benches with out any desk little Mollie first learn to write. She had a wooden board for a slate and a piece of charcoal for a pencil.

School children knew nothing of baseball or basketball at that time and played the old fashioned games of base and ball pen, king, king connio and club fist. Mrs. Purvis never heard of a Sunday school when she was a child and for a long time there was no preaching. Finally one day a little wired faced man came riding up to the McCain home on a small poor bob-tailed gray horse. He was received in hospitality that was given to the strangers by the early preachers, and proved to be a Methodist preacher. He preached at the little log school house and the younger McCain children heard their first sermon.

The family doctor of the McCain's was an elderly man named Windom, who lived not many miles away. He had several children, two girls one named Dicey and one Mary and the one Dicey that Mrs. Purvis remembers very clearly and would be glad to know if they are still living.

Capt. McCain was a brave man and was elected the first sheriff of Brown County. In the early 1860's the Indians became very troublesome, killing some settlers, burning their homes and carrying off their livestock. Mr. McCain organized a company of rangers and was made their Captain and on one occasion had a running fight with the Indians, which lasted two days. An Indian Chief in this fight made an attempt to kill Capt. McCain, but Capt. was too quick for him and ran his saber through the chief. Two white men were killed in the battle and the next day when a party of white men, returned to secure their bodies for burial they found the Indians had scapled them, then cut their heads off and stuck them up on some saplings.

Capt. McCain helped to chase the Indians who murdered a young lady school teacher, who was teaching school near, Gatesville, Texas, at that time. In this raid the Indians carried off a little boy and his sister from the school house. The father of the children with a party of men pursued the Indians and took the children away from them. The little girl had torn up her apron and threw strings of it along the way, as the Indians traveled and by this means the party was able to track them. Capt. McCain also helped to recover a Mullis boy who was taken by the Indians.

Mrs. McCain, mother of Mrs. Mollie Purvis, was a very brave and courageous woman. Always, when she went to visit her neighbors she carried a shot gun and a brace of pistols so as to protect her children if the Indians should attack them.

Once a party of Indians rode by the McCain home and shot the gate posts full of arrows. Another time the Indians were trying to steal some sheep from the pen and Mrs. McCain fired on them with shot gun. The McCains had two good dogs and the Indians attacked one of the dogs with a tomahawk, hitting the dog over the head, but he didn't kill it.

Early in the spring of 1867, Capt. McCain succumbed to the dreaded white plague (TB) and was buried at an old burying ground near Byrd's school house in Brown County. His parents, James McCain born 1793 in TN. And married Sarah Allen born 1801 in Ky.

In October of the same year his wife took her children and moved back to Washington, County. Later a son Stanton H. McCain returned to the west and made his home at Whon, Coleman County. This is the first time Mrs. Purvis has visited here since 1867. ( Most of the S.H. McCain family are buried in the Whon Cemetery).

Mrs. Purvis has told this story as she remembered the events when a child. She will be glad to hear from anyone who knew her father in early days of any of her schoolmates of that time. She is a niece of the late W. R. McLelland of Coleman and a cousin in some Gilland family.”

Note: The News gives credit to Moss Ollie Pearce of this city for interviewing Mrs. Purvis and preparing the above article, which we think is a real interesting article. Editor,