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HAMILTON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

8

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW WITH

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PAT ROSS

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1 (INTRODUCTION)

2 MR. EIDSON: Good morning. My name is
3 Jim Eidson. I'm chairman of the Hamilton County, Texas,
4 Historical Commission. Today we are here with Pat Ross,
5 who is -- has a lifetime connection to Hamilton County,
6 and it's our pleasure hosting her today. In the room
7 with us, we have Jason, the videographer, Jamie, the
8 court reporter, Andy McMullen, and, of course, Pat Ross
9 as well. One of the things about history is that when
10 we look in the history books, we -- we find, I guess,
11 the analysis of professional historians about the events
12 that have happened in the past. One of the
13 opportunities we have with oral histories is to actually
14 interview people who experienced those historic events
15 or learned firsthand through family stories about the
16 early settlement of Hamilton County. The resource that
17 we have in Hamilton County residents is tremendous in
18 terms of what we can learn from them. So it's our
19 pleasure today, June the 14th, 2018 -- 2018, to have Pat
20 with us, and we're looking forward to hearing from her.

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1 (INTERVIEW)

2 MR. EIDSON: Pat, it's such a pleasure to
3 have you today, and thank you so much for coming in and
4 bearing with us in getting this scheduled. Pat, my
5 understanding is that you have a lifelong association
6 with Hamilton County, that your family had settled in
7 the area back in the 19th century. Tell us something
8 about yourself and your own history and also your
9 family's history.

10 MS. ROSS: Well, I have lived in Hico
11 since 1949. I was raised in Clairette, Texas, and we
12 had lost our high school. After finishing 8th grade, I
13 transferred to Hico.

14 MR. EIDSON: And Clairette is --

15 MS. ROSS: Clairette, Texas.

16 MR. EIDSON: -- is not far from Hico, is
17 it?

18 MS. ROSS: Seven miles.

19 MR. EIDSON: Okay. And that's in Erath
20 County?

21 MS. ROSS: That's in Erath, the age of
22 Erath. And my family bought a business in Hico in '49,
23 and that's when we moved to Hico, and that business
24 was -- was in operation for 55 years.

25 MR. EIDSON: And that was a clothing

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1 store; is that --

2 MS. ROSS: It was a clothing -- family
3 clothing, yes. And -- but my connection to -- and I
4 live in Hico at the present time. My connection to Old
5 Hico is through a great grand- -- a great, great
6 grandfather, who was one of the first settlers of Old
7 Hico.

8 MR. EIDSON: And what -- what was his
9 name?

10 MS. ROSS: Captain Rufus Stinnett.

11 MR. EIDSON: And how did he end up in this
12 part of the world?

13 MS. ROSS: Well, he -- he was in Milam
14 County at the time, and he was the sheriff in Milam
15 County, but he came from Kentucky originally.

16 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

17 MS. ROSS: And just -- and they were on
18 their way to West Texas, and in that day and time, there
19 was no roads. You know, you just traveled by wagon, and
20 so they came up on Hico and liked it and just settled
21 there in Old Hico on the -- on the Bosque River.

22 MR. EIDSON: How about that. And so this
23 was right after the Civil War --

24 MS. ROSS: Yes.

25 MR. EIDSON: -- is that -- okay.

5

1 MS. ROSS: Yes, right after the Civil War.

2 MR. EIDSON: The 1860s?

3 MS. ROSS: Yes. Yes. The 1860s.

4 MR. EIDSON: So in terms of his service to
5 the Confederacy, do you know anything about where he
6 served or with whom he served?

7 MS. ROSS: I don't know that.

8 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

9 MS. ROSS: I don't have that information.
10 He is buried in the Hico cemetery, but other than that,
11 I don't know.

12 MR. EIDSON: So when he came to Hico, it
13 wasn't Hico yet, right?

14 MS. ROSS: It was called Old Hico. It
15 really didn't have a name. They -- they called it the
16 Honey Creek Trading Post.

17 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

18 MS. ROSS: And that was down on the Bosque
19 River. It would be south of where Hico is now, about --
20 about three miles.

21 MR. EIDSON: So Honey Creek Trading Post.
22 And that was established back in the '50s, 1850s, or --

23 MS. ROSS: About 1860s.

24 MR. EIDSON: About 18- --

25 MS. ROSS: Uh-huh.

6

1 MR. EIDSON: -- early 1860s.

2 MS. ROSS: And that was when the very
3 first settlers came and -- and started the settlement.

4 MR. EIDSON: Well, according to your --
5 your family stories, what -- what was that like? What
6 did they deal with? Did they have depredations from the
7 Comanches? Were they --

8 MS. ROSS: Oh, yes, there was Indians.

9 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

10 MS. ROSS: And so -- but they said that
11 the -- the grass -- it was just a wonderful place. It
12 was just a prairie. You know, the grass was belly high
13 to a cow, and it was just really good soil and a good
14 place to settle.

15 MR. EIDSON: That's wonderful. That's
16 wonderful. Well, tell us -- tell us your stories.
17 You've brought lots of information with you.

18 MS. ROSS: Yes. And I do have when the
19 first settlement started, if you'd like to hear that.

20 MR. EIDSON: Please.

21 MS. ROSS: A settlement known as the Honey
22 Creek Trading Post arose on the banks of Honey Creek
23 about two and a half miles southeast of present day Hico
24 just off of Farm to Market Road 1602. That's the ferry

25 road from Hico. In 1960 [sic], newlyweds J.R. and

7

1 Martha Malone -- I would hate to have been the bride --

2 offered -- moved into the community from Freestone

3 County with a stock of dry goods and opened a store.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: Would that be 1960 or 1860?

5 MS. ROSS: I'm sorry. Did I --

6 MR. EIDSON: 1860.

7 MS. ROSS: 1860.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: 1860. Okay.

9 MR. EIDSON: We do that.

10 MS. ROSS: See, that's what I mean. I

11 hope you can --

12 MR. EIDSON: Don't worry about it.

13 MR. MCMULLEN: We're with you and enjoying

14 every minute of it.

15 MS. ROSS: They had a stock of dry goods

16 and opened a store. A weekly mail route passed near the

17 trading post. Horseback deliveries were made from

18 Meridian. Since it had no post office, the riding

19 bypassed the trading post. To improve their situation,

20 the settlers offered to petition the appropriate

21 authorities in Washington, D.C., for a post office. A

22 name had to be submitted with the petition, and the

23 post -- and the postmaster to be offered chose Hico, the

24 name of his hometown in Kentucky. The petition was

25 approved, and the post office opened for business on

8

1 October 4, 1860. Together Hico and Hampton -- Hampton
2 post offices served the counties's 489 residents.
3 Hampton was renamed Hamilton in 1874 and also was but a
4 small village of about 100 -- 100 inhabitants at the
5 time its post office opened. Now -- and this is from
6 18- -- after that already settled. A great many Indians
7 were still in the county, and it was dangerous for
8 people to travel alone as those Indians would kill at
9 any opportunity. Besides the constant danger of losing
10 their lives, the settlers had the risk of the Indians
11 making raids, burning their homes, and killing off their
12 stock.

13 That was right after that, now, that my --
14 my great, great granddaddy, Rufus Stinnett, moved in.
15 And I have a article about that written by his son, Tom
16 Stinnett. (As read) "My father, Captain Rufus Stinnett,
17 moved to Hamilton County in 1870, leaving Milam County
18 on New Year's Day. We had two wagons and a hack in
19 which we made the trip. I was ten years old, and road
20 horseback, with three dogs following me. We were about
21 ten days on the road. In those days there were no roads
22 to speak of, and we just traveled in the general
23 direction of Hamilton until we got to Clifton, and from
24 there a road led to Old Hico and Hamilton County. My

25 husband" -- "my father bought 200 acres of land on the

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1 Bosque River just below the junction of Honey Creek,
2 about one mile east of Old Hico, and we located there.
3 But little farming was carried on in that county at the
4 time, the settlers cultivating all" -- "only small
5 patches of ground. The big problem was fencing the
6 land. We had to go into the timber and cut the rails
7 and haul them in and build fences. The houses were log
8 cabins with dirt floors" -- or, no, "board floors or
9 without floors. Our furniture was very scant and of the
10 crudest kind. The settlers did not have wells for
11 water, but they built their cabins near a creek or
12 spring, and some of them carried water for a long
13 distance from the creek. Cooking was done on an open
14 fireplace. Corn bread, jerky beef, and coffee was the
15 main diet of the settlers. They could get corn ground
16 at Iredell, ten miles down the Bosque River. The
17 nearest flour mill was at Clifton.

18 There were two small stores at Old Hico
19 when we arrived there, which carried a few supplies.
20 Uncle Ike Malone and Faggard & Day owned the stores. A
21 man named Clemens owned a saloon, and 'Rocky' Martin
22 kept a hotel. The hotel consisted of one big log room,
23 with a shed room across the back, and a cabin in the
24 backyard for a dining room and kitchen. Many were the

25 travelers who stopped at this pioneer inn, for it was on

10

1 the main trail leading to West Texas, and at this time

2 there were many people from the East going West.

3 The names of the few of the early settlers

4 were the Faggards, John Barbee, Mrs. Taylor, Uncle

5 Boykin, the Medfords, the Andersons, the Malones, Bill

6 Oats, the Deatons, the Fulchers, the Fullers, the

7 Fergesons, Martins, Days, Montgomerys, Reeds, and John

8 Alford, and about two years later the Haile and Morrison

9 families came in. There may be some other names that I

10 do not remember now. Most of these people settled there

11 before the Civil War and made this little settlement.

12 The Indians gave them considerable trouble until 19--

13 "1869. One raid occurred after we were there, but the

14 redskins passed west of our place and did not get our

15 mules.

16 We got our mail at Iredell. My job was to

17 go every Thursday, on horseback, after the mail. Our

18 newspapers were the Galveston News, the Waco Examiner,

19 and a Cameron paper, and we certainly enjoyed those

20 papers when they came. Waco, 65 miles distant, was the

21 nearest railroad post, and we had to go there for most

22 of our supplies. My father went twice a year and

23 brought back enough to last six months.

24 Old Hico was like all frontier towns, and

25 at times things got rather rough. Several men were

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1 killed while we were living there. Father served as
2 justice of the peace from 1872 until he died in 1894.
3 W.H. Fuller was the first deputy sheriff appoint at Old
4 Hico, and he and my father were 'the law' for a good
5 many years. Father was also county commissioner for
6 several years, in those days a man being allowed to hold
7 two offices. He was commissioner when the present
8 Hamilton County courthouse was built. Most of those
9 pioneer people were law-abiding, honest, and
10 hard-working, and they all owned cattle and horses.
11 That was the cowman's paradise in those days. Grass was
12 knee-high to a many anywhere on the prior, and" -- "and
13 curly mesquite grass covered the valleys. Great herds
14 of cattle were driven out every year. The young men of
15 the settlement went up the trail with cattle every
16 spring and got back home by fall.

17 The schools we attended were pay schools,
18 usually running about three months in the summertime.
19 The schoolhouse was a log cabin, without windows, and we
20 sat on hinged log benches, for desks were unknown. We
21 had but a few books. Some of the early teachers I
22 remember was Miss Molly, Mr. Avery, and Mr. Thomas.
23 They were good teachers and tried to do their duty by
24 the pupils.

1 nice little village, quite a lot of people had moved
2 into the county, and several more stores were
3 established, including a cotton gin, a new schoolhouse.
4 Everybody was doing well. But in 19-- -- I mean, "1880
5 the Texas Central Railroad built a line through Hamilton
6 County and missed the town by three miles, and of course
7 the town moved to the railroad where the town of Hico
8 now stands. So the little village" -- "the little
9 frontier village of Old Hico is now only a memory. All
10 that is left of the once thriving little village is an
11 old rock gin house on the banks of Honey Creek, where it
12 stands as a landmark to remind future generations that
13 here once stood a remind" -- "that once stood a frontier
14 village that was founded by brave pioneers who helped
15 make Texas what she is today."

16 MR. EIDSON: What a wonderful story.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: What a -- just wonderful.

18 MS. ROSS: Yes. And the things he could
19 remember from ten years old.

20 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

21 MS. ROSS: And, of course, this was after
22 he -- and this -- now, this is my great granddaddy that
23 wrote this, Tom Stinnett, and he later moved to
24 Stephenville and was the tax collector up there, but

25 he -- then in later years, he moved to Menard, Texas --

13

1 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

2 MS. ROSS: -- and he was a tax collector
3 out there and passed away out there at an old age.

4 MR. EIDSON: Well, you have some very,
5 very deep roots in Hamilton County.

6 MS. ROSS: Yes, I do.

7 MR. EIDSON: Yes, you do.

8 MS. ROSS: I do.

9 Now, I can give you a little information
10 on -- about Hico when they moved to the railroad side.

11 MR. EIDSON: Yes, please.

12 MR. MCMULLEN: Lovely.

13 MS. ROSS: This is the beginning of the
14 present day Hico. On November the 11th, 1880, a tent
15 was set up. Maps were posted and gambling tables were
16 laid out as the TC began a four- to five-hour long
17 auction of the lots in the new town site. Forty-six
18 lots were sold, bringing a total of \$3,600. The first
19 lot -- now, this is at the northwest corner of Pecan and
20 First Street -- was sold for \$155 to J.C. Hutchinson and
21 brothers. Captain Hutchinson, at times referred to as
22 the father of Hico, built and opened the first store in
23 New Hico and served on the school board, on the City
24 Council, and two terms as mayor. In addition to all his

25 civic and business contributions, perhaps the fact --

14

1 and his new wife raised their own eight children as well

2 as 17 orphans --

3 MR. EIDSON: Whoa.

4 MS. ROSS: -- contributed to his fatherly

5 image. Others followed Hutchinson's lead, and the town

6 began taking shape. Within -- within the year, the

7 population had grown to 500. So...

8 MR. EIDSON: Good heavens.

9 MS. ROSS: I have a little information on

10 the first churches. In 1881 -- I'm Methodist. Y'all

11 are probably Baptist -- the Baptist and the Methodists

12 organized congregations in Hico. An elder, L.B.

13 Hickman, a Methodist, mentioned in the next account and

14 Deacon John C. Hutchinson, a Baptist, brother of Captain

15 Hutchinson, helped begin the respective works.

16 Initially, both congregations met in the old wood frame

17 schoolhouse east of Walnut Street somewhere between

18 First and Second Streets. In 1884, the Baptists began

19 constructing a sanctuary on the property where their

20 current building stands. It blew over before

21 construction was completed and another more secured

22 attempt was made in 1886. To accommodate special

23 services conducted by Evangelist R.R. Raymond during the

24 summer of 1885, the Methodists constructed a brush

25 arbor. Then in 1887, they built a sanctuary just east

15

1 of where their current structure is located. Do you

2 know what a brush arbor is?

3 MR. EIDSON: Yes, ma'am.

4 MS. ROSS: Okay.

5 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, tell us for the --

6 for the students --

7 MR. EIDSON: Explain, please.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: -- who will be watching.

9 MS. ROSS: Well, back in that day, it was

10 just -- now, some of them would have a regular roof on

11 it but some it was bush arbors. It just had -- well,

12 like, if you go to a park in a picnic area, it has a

13 pillow on each corner -- four corners, and it was all

14 open, and they just had benches, you know, for -- to

15 accommodate the audience. That's all I have today.

16 MR. EIDSON: Do you know if the -- if the

17 preachers were circuit riders or were they permanent- --

18 permanently installed?

19 MS. ROSS: I don't know for sure, but I

20 know there were circuit riders back in that -- in that

21 day.

22 MR. EIDSON: In that time? Right.

23 MS. ROSS: Uh-huh. And it could be, you

24 know. I just don't know for sure --

25 MR. EIDSON: Interesting.

16

1 MS. ROSS: -- about that information.

2 MR. EIDSON: That's -- that's wonderful.

3 That's an -- what influence do you think that having
4 churches -- toward the end of the 19th century, what do
5 you think that brought to Hico?

6 MS. ROSS: Well, I'm -- I'm very -- I love
7 my church. I love my god. I think it was very
8 comforting to a lot of people to have a place to go to
9 together as a community and worship together.

10 MR. EIDSON: I've often heard that -- that
11 churches were kind of the vanguard of civilization
12 and -- and civility in towns, and once you had a church
13 and a school, you were well on your way to becoming an
14 established -- established community.

15 MS. ROSS: Yes. And, you know, back then,
16 a lot of the -- before they had churches, they met in
17 homes -- they met in homes. We had a -- also, we had a
18 college in Hico at one time.

19 MR. EIDSON: Tell us about that.

20 MS. ROSS: I just have a short article
21 about it. In 1892, a two-story brick college building
22 was constructed. The first year, there was enrollment
23 of 369. It was a two-year teacher training offering
24 business courses teaching scientific surveying and

25 classical courses, and that's all I know about it.

17

1 MR. EIDSON: That's 369 enrollees?

2 MS. ROSS: Yes. Yes. I couldn't believe

3 the enrollment the first year.

4 MR. EIDSON: Wow. That kind of shows

5 the -- the need for the opportunity --

6 MS. ROSS: Yes.

7 MR. EIDSON: -- for higher education.

8 That's wonderful.

9 MS. ROSS: And back then, that's

10 remarkable.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, I wonder where had

12 been -- where was it located?

13 MS. ROSS: Well, I had a few comment on

14 that. We thought it was outside on Highway 6 going out

15 toward Iredell, out that way, but I don't know. I never

16 could find a -- any literature on it. Also, we had an

17 orphanage there. A Mr. Grubs way back. -- he was one

18 of the first settlers. He donated a lot of land. He

19 donated land for the high school, and there was -- and

20 he donated some land to build an orphanage, and I have

21 an article at home where he advertised in the Dallas

22 paper, and it was the ad that he had in the Dallas paper

23 wanting a woman that was qualified to come to Hico and

24 that her lodging and meals and everything would be paid

25 for if she would come.

18

1 MR. EIDSON: My goodness. Do you know
2 where the orphanage was?

3 MS. ROSS: I think -- see, there's a
4 street in Hico named Grub Street, and I think it was on
5 the corner of that street.

6 MR. EIDSON: My goodness.

7 MS. ROSS: But I didn't bring that. Like,
8 I -- you know, I would be here all day if I brought all
9 I had.

10 MR. EIDSON: Well, as we said, we might
11 have to do Volume 2.

12 A quick question for you. Old Hico, is
13 there historical markers?

14 MS. ROSS: Yes, there is.

15 MR. EIDSON: Okay. Good. I wasn't sure.

16 MS. ROSS: On 1602 on the Fairy -- going
17 out toward Fairy, and it's just before you get to Honey
18 Creek.

19 MR. EIDSON: Good.

20 MS. ROSS: And it's on the right-hand --
21 if you know where the county club is --

22 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

23 MS. ROSS: -- it's a little past there
24 just before you cross the bridge on the right-hand side.

25 MR. EIDSON: That's great.

19

1 MS. ROSS: There's a -- yes. I'll tell
2 you a little bit about the cotton.

3 MR. MCMULLEN: Wonderful.

4 MR. EIDSON: Please do.

5 MS. ROSS: It's something I've told you a
6 little bit ago. And this was in 1907. Hico was a
7 national center for cotton shipping and sales.
8 According to 1907 reports, more cotton was bought right
9 off wagons on Hico's main street than any other town its
10 size in the world. In 1908, records show Hico receiving
11 25,000 to 40,000 bales of cotton a year and shipped
12 42,000 bales of cotton. Hico also bought and shipped
13 more grain than all of the other towns on the Texas
14 central railroad combined. So...

15 MR. EIDSON: My goodness.

16 MS. ROSS: And at that time, the
17 population -- that was -- the largest population we've
18 had was 3,000.

19 MR. EIDSON: About 3,000 people?

20 MS. ROSS: Uh-huh.

21 MR. EIDSON: So the -- the history of
22 cotton, what was it that brought cotton to an end in
23 Hamilton County?

24 MS. ROSS: Well, the boll weevil, that was

25 the end of it. They came in.

20

1 MR. EIDSON: And then it moved off to the
2 high planes after that?

3 MS. ROSS: Uh-huh.

4 MR. EIDSON: Right. Yeah, that was --
5 that was a blow.

6 MS. ROSS: Oh, yes, it was.

7 MR. EIDSON: When do you think cotton
8 finally -- although, it's never gone away entirely,
9 but --

10 MS. ROSS: No.

11 MR. EIDSON: -- when do you think the
12 cotton boom ends -- ended? If you were to guess, is it
13 the 1930s, early '30s or --

14 MS. ROSS: I would think '30s probably or
15 '40s.

16 MR. EIDSON: One thing I've noticed -- you
17 may know something about this -- is that we had
18 proliferation of bridge building in Hamilton County at
19 the turn of the century, a little -- little later
20 19-teens, 1920s. Do you think that that was to
21 accommodate cotton transport?

22 MS. ROSS: I would think so because that
23 made for easier traveling and, you know, getting it to
24 the railroad. I would certainly think so.

25 MR. EIDSON: So that was a big -- a big

21

1 driver in transportation?

2 MS. ROSS: Well, yeah, the railroad, I
3 think, would be, you know, when the -- when it came in.
4 That was one of the main things that helped with the
5 cotton.

6 MR. EIDSON: A big difference.

7 MS. ROSS: Yes, it did.

8 MR. EIDSON: Do you think -- pardon me,
9 Andy. Go ahead.

10 MR. MCMULLEN: Do you -- do you have -- I
11 think maybe that's a wonderful transition to the
12 railroad and how significant it was to Hico.

13 MS. ROSS: Oh, yes.

14 MR. EIDSON: And you have some pictures,
15 too.

16 MS. ROSS: Yes, and I have -- I have more
17 pictures at home, but they're on my computer, of the
18 floods and -- you know, I don't know --

19 MR. EIDSON: Wonderful.

20 MS. ROSS: I don't have, you know, like
21 this (indicating), but -- and I was telling you about
22 the fire --

23 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, tell us about those
24 two pictures that you have --

25 MS. ROSS: Okay.

22

1 MR. MCMULLEN: -- please.

2 MS. ROSS: Okay. Guard them with your
3 life.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: No. I'm just going to --
5 if you'll -- ask to -- to tell us today --

6 MS. ROSS: Oh.

7 MR. MCMULLEN: -- about these two pictures
8 and --

9 MS. ROSS: Oh.

10 MR. MCMULLEN: -- what they are.

11 MR. EIDSON: Would you like to show them
12 to the camera there?

13 MS. ROSS: When the railroad came through
14 Hico, eventually they had a passenger train. When they
15 first started out, it was mostly, you know, freight
16 trains and -- for shipping, but -- and this was through
17 the Katy railroad, but we called this the Doodle Bug.
18 It was a small passenger train, and it passed through
19 Hico and started in Waco and went as far as Stanford,
20 Texas, and turned around all in one day and made its
21 trip back to Waco.

22 MR. EIDSON: What year would that have
23 been in operation?

24 MS. ROSS: Now, I don't know. This

25 picture was probably the late 1930s.

23

1 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

2 MS. ROSS: I don't know exactly when this
3 first started coming through.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: Is that a picture of
5 your --

6 MS. ROSS: This is --

7 MR. MCMULLEN: -- of your ancestor?

8 MS. ROSS: This is my dad. It -- it
9 brought mail and also passengers. These -- and this is
10 my dad. He's putting out the mail. The train would
11 hook -- had a hook that would take this canvass bag off
12 of this stand. However, if they had a passenger, they
13 would stop, and there's a lady here in the -- the bottom
14 right-hand side standing by her car, and -- but if there
15 was no passengers, they just hooked the -- the canvass
16 bag, and they threw a canvass bag for the mail to be
17 opened there at the local post office.

18 MR. EIDSON: So the photo of your dad
19 setting up the bag, that would have been in the 1930s?

20 MS. ROSS: Uh-huh.

21 MR. EIDSON: Okay.

22 MS. ROSS: In the 1930s.

23 MR. MCMULLEN: And they had already moved
24 from Clairette to Hico at that point?

25 MS. ROSS: No. No. No. We didn't go to

24

1 Hico until '49 --

2 MR. MCMULLEN: All right. Okay.

3 MS. ROSS: -- '49 when we opened our
4 business.

5 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, was this at
6 Clairette?

7 MS. ROSS: These are Clairette, but this
8 train passed through Hico, and I'm sure it did the same
9 through probably all of the mail and -- and all, but...

10 MR. MCMULLEN: And the -- the impact that
11 the train made on Hico, when -- when did it come and how
12 did it -- how did it change Hico?

13 MS. ROSS: You know, I wasn't there,
14 but -- and I don't have that much information, but I
15 know to this day, right there by the -- of course the
16 tracks are no longer there now, but right -- there was a
17 saloon -- some saloons right across the street from --
18 from where the train stopped, and we used to have a
19 depot. The depot burned, and I wish we still had that,
20 but they said a lot of salesmen came by train, and I
21 have an article about a hotel we had there at that time
22 where the salesmen stayed, you know, and they said it
23 was one of the best hotels they had stayed in, you know,
24 up and down the line. But, anyway --

25 MR. EIDSON: Was that the Midland or was

25

1 that --

2 MS. ROSS: No. It was a different side.

3 It was across from our post office where that rental --

4 a two-story across from the post office --

5 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

6 MS. ROSS: -- on the corner.

7 MR. MCMULLEN: It used to be -- and then

8 they built railings or something like that. Is --

9 MS. ROSS: Well, that's right across from

10 the post office.

11 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

12 MS. ROSS: I'm talking about the side of

13 the post office.

14 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

15 MS. ROSS: This apartment house.

16 That's -- it was at that site.

17 MR. EIDSON: So -- right. So it no

18 longer --

19 MS. ROSS: No. No. No.

20 MR. EIDSON: -- no longer stands?

21 MS. ROSS: No. Now, I live in a house

22 that was built in 1907, and -- so it was pretty close to

23 one of the first ones in Hico.

24 MR. EIDSON: So you said you had an

1 MS. ROSS: Yes, but --

2 MR. EIDSON: Do you have that --

3 MS. ROSS: -- I don't have it with me.

4 MR. EIDSON: Well, I appreciate --

5 appreciate you sharing your recollection of that.

6 MS. ROSS: And I have -- you know, I

7 didn't know whether you wanted things -- things like

8 that. You know, I didn't know how much time you wanted

9 to spend.

10 MR. MCMULLEN: That's right. Well, what's

11 next on your agenda? We'll just go on.

12 MS. ROSS: I don't know whether I have --

13 I have...

14 MR. MCMULLEN: As far as what you bought

15 with you today.

16 MS. ROSS: This is all I had today.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: All right.

18 MR. EIDSON: That's great. I do -- I have

19 a question for you. I -- I recall that one -- oh,

20 during the Civil War, that there were frontier defense

21 organizations that Captain -- or Major Erath designated

22 the frontier defense organizations in each of the little

23 towns. My understanding was that Hico was one of the

24 first ones to be organized. Do you have any --

25 MS. ROSS: You know, I didn't know what

27

1 they were called, but I have some articles on that.

2 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

3 MS. ROSS: And that -- oh, they said Hico
4 was pretty rough, and, you know, that sometimes when
5 some officials came in, that they had to be escorted out
6 by the -- by the police -- no. They didn't call it the
7 police then, but, anyway, I'll look and see what I have
8 on that. And like I said, a lot of this, I have posted
9 on Facebook.

10 MR. EIDSON: Uh-huh.

11 MS. ROSS: And I still have some of it on
12 my timeline on my computer.

13 MR. EIDSON: Well, I hope you'll be our
14 friend.

15 MS. ROSS: So I will -- I will look --
16 well, I could -- I could send it to you.

17 MR. EIDSON: Great. That's wonderful.

18 MS. ROSS: Or I could, you know, get a
19 copy of it. Back then, they had the -- you know, they
20 brought sheep in, and the cattlemen didn't like that at
21 all, and they had wars over that.

22 MR. MCMULLEN: Oh, did they?

23 MS. ROSS: Yes.

24 MR. MCMULLEN: And can you tell us

25 something about that?

28

1 MS. ROSS: I didn't -- I have that at

2 home.

3 MR. MCMULLEN: That's good. That's good.

4 Well, we're mapping out where we're going in the future.

5 MS. ROSS: Well -- and, you know, the Blue

6 Hole? Have you ever heard of the Blue Hole?

7 MR. MCMULLEN: No.

8 MS. ROSS: No. That's down on Honey Creek

9 where there was -- you know, that was back when Old

10 Hico -- and there was some people who drowned there. I

11 mean, I have articles like -- something on that.

12 MR. EIDSON: Was that a swimming hole?

13 MS. ROSS: It's a deep, deep hole, and

14 it's still there.

15 MR. EIDSON: I'll be --

16 MS. ROSS: And you can't see the bottom --

17 I mean, they -- they say they've never touched the

18 bottom. I don't know.

19 MR. EIDSON: My goodness.

20 MR. MCMULLEN: And it was in the Honey

21 Creek --

22 MS. ROSS: Yes, in that area, down in

23 there, and I've been out there, but it's been a long

24 time. And there was -- it was a father and a daughter

25 in their wagon going home, you know, after going in to

29

1 buy, you know, groceries and all for the -- for a month
2 or so, supplies, and they disappeared when they went
3 through the river, and later they found the -- well,
4 they found the horses in the -- the Blue Hole, and
5 they -- but they said they knew -- the father knew about
6 that deep hole, so they don't know what happened. And
7 there's been another drowning in recent years in that.
8 But, anyway -- I mean, I have tales like that.

9 MR. MCMULLEN: Yeah. Well, could you --
10 tell us about the growth of Hico and how Hico has --
11 just in your own recollection and oral history that
12 you've heard about how Hico developed.

13 MS. ROSS: Well, like I said, I started
14 high school there in '47 as a freshman, and I had come
15 from a country school of one row of about -- six desks
16 in a row was first grade. The other one was second
17 grade, and -- this was Clairette -- third and fourth all
18 in one room. I went to Hico a freshman of 40 students.
19 I was scared to death. And then we went into business
20 in '49. I was a junior, and we purchased a home in
21 Hico. At that time, the population is about the same as
22 today. I don't think they ever changed that sign, but
23 I -- you know, Hico, the city limits sign is too far in.
24 You know, it's right at the edge of town. It should

25 have been further out, because we have a lot of

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1 surrounding area, you know, that attend school and that
2 were customers of ours, and when I read -- I'm on the
3 City Council. This is my -- well, I was on it for six
4 years in the past, then I decided to run again. Well,
5 all my friends are in the country. They can't vote, you
6 know. They all -- but, anyway, I don't know how to
7 describe how it's changed. We -- most of the old
8 businesses -- we are just an antique town now. You
9 know, we were clothing. We were family clothing. I
10 mean, from foot to -- from foot to head, everything, and
11 there were three -- let's see. There were three grocery
12 stores on Main Street at that time. This was in the
13 '40s -- late '40s and '50s. The bank was on the
14 opposite corner from where it's at, and we just had one
15 bank then. We have two now. We had little restaurants,
16 you know, little family restaurants, a couple of them on
17 Main Street there. We also had another clothing store
18 on the -- on the corner of -- down from us. City Hall
19 has always been where it's at. We had a drugstore -- we
20 no longer have a drugstore -- back then. We had a
21 confectionary store, if you've ever heard of a
22 confectionary store. We had a theater, a movie theater.
23 We had a shoe repair shop. No longer there. So -- and
24 the grocery stores are no longer -- none of this that

25 I'm commenting on is there any longer. It's really --

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1 MR. MCMULLEN: Yet, it --

2 MS. ROSS: -- changed. It's really

3 changed.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: But, yet, it is a dynamic

5 little place.

6 MS. ROSS: We -- yes. We -- we have --

7 you know, we have quite a few events, the State

8 Cook-off. I mean, that is -- if you've ever been, I

9 can't believe the crowds. The paper reported 9,000.

10 That's not right. There was probably -- maybe 4- or

11 5,000, but I didn't think there was as many this year as

12 last year. But, anyway, there's just been a lot of

13 changes in my lifetime. The renovation of the hotel,

14 though, has really been a plus for us.

15 MR. EIDSON: That's a beautiful --

16 MS. ROSS: It's beautiful --

17 MR. EIDSON: -- building.

18 MS. ROSS: -- if you've been in it.

19 MR. EIDSON: Yeah.

20 MS. ROSS: It is beautiful. And we're

21 fighting to keep it open. It's for sale, but, you know,

22 after so much money he spent on renovating it, I don't

23 know -- but we do have a new manager now, and it's

24 looking up right now.

25 MR. EIDSON: Good.

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1 MS. ROSS: So hopefully.

2 MR. EIDSON: I think Hico has done such a
3 great job in marketing its history.

4 MS. ROSS: We have. I think we have, too.

5 MR. EIDSON: Yeah.

6 MS. ROSS: We really have.

7 MR. EIDSON: The preservation of the
8 buildings, the restoration of buildings --

9 MS. ROSS: Oh, yes.

10 MR. EIDSON: -- the restoration of the
11 signage, all the old signage that's been brought back on
12 the sides of the buildings. It's -- it's great.

13 MS. ROSS: Yeah, Blue Star is -- if you've
14 been in that building --

15 MR. EIDSON: Yes.

16 MS. ROSS: -- that is beautiful, and
17 there's pictures upstairs, if you've ever been up there,
18 and I donated some of those pictures --

19 MR. EIDSON: Wonderful.

20 MS. ROSS: -- up there.

21 MR. EIDSON: Wonderful.

22 MS. ROSS: And quite -- and quite a few
23 people did. I -- and then the homestead, which was our
24 opera house -- we did have an opera house in Hico at one

25 time, and that's where the homestead is -- is located

33

1 now.

2 MR. EIDSON: Well, that is a wonderful
3 place, and you're a perfect person to tell its story.

4 MS. ROSS: Really?

5 MR. MCMULLEN: Yes, you are. You are.

6 MR. EIDSON: Yes. We'd love to have you
7 back.

8 MS. ROSS: Well, like I said, I just
9 brought what I thought may be the beginning of Hico, and
10 I didn't know whether you wanted all this other stuff,
11 you know.

12 MR. MCMULLEN: What -- let's see. Do you
13 have a recollection of -- of World War II?

14 MS. ROSS: Yes.

15 MR. MCMULLEN: Were you old enough to have
16 a recollection?

17 MS. ROSS: My dad was in World War II.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: Oh. What's --

19 MS. ROSS: I was in -- living, of course,
20 in Clairette, and he -- he was 30 years old at the time.
21 They called him in, and a week later, they lowered the
22 age, because he was considered pretty old, you know, but
23 they needed men, and he was -- he was drafted, and he --
24 since he was an older man, he was mostly in Germany and

25 England, and he more or less just drove the -- the

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1 generals and all -- to the front line. I mean, he
2 didn't actually fight. He said there was a few bullets
3 that went by him, but, you know, they weren't in -- he
4 didn't fight -- do the -- any of the fighting, but he
5 loved it because he likes routine things, you know,
6 everything -- he said if it hadn't been for his family,
7 he could have stayed -- stayed in. My son was -- he was
8 in the Air Force for ten years, and I had a grandson in
9 the Air Force. So...

10 MR. EIDSON: That's a real military
11 family.

12 MR. MCMULLEN: And what about the
13 Depression? You probably aren't old enough to remember
14 it, but you've heard stories about it and how it
15 affected Hico.

16 MS. ROSS: I was in Clarette then.

17 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, how it affected
18 Clairette.

19 MS. ROSS: You know, I don't -- I don't
20 remember a lot about the Depression. I remember the
21 war -- about rationing, you know.

22 MR. MCMULLEN: And tell us about that.

23 MS. ROSS: Well, you had -- you had
24 stamps, rationing stamps. You could just buy so much

25 sugar and so much gas, and -- and I don't remember all

35

1 the articles that, you know, were rationed because of
2 the war. I -- I don't remember how many different items
3 was rationed. It seemed like some clothing, shoes or --
4 I think, but I'm -- I'm not really sure, but I know --
5 well, this may be the Depression area. We owned just a
6 regular general merchandise store in Clairette, and a
7 lot of the country people didn't have the money to pay
8 when they'd come in to buy. So we were paid a lot of
9 times in milk and eggs, and then at -- on the weekend,
10 we would take them either into Hico or Stephenville to
11 a -- a poultry house that took care of -- you know, that
12 bought things like that to get some money. So I -- that
13 probably was some of the Depression because, you know,
14 this -- they just had farms and they just didn't have
15 the money.

16 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, Pat, we -- we really
17 appreciate the information you've given us. May we have
18 the permission to talk to you some more about other
19 specific areas? And if you have an opportunity to think
20 about another era of Hico or another aspect of Hico that
21 you think is important to the history of Hico, would you
22 please contact us so we can call you back?

23 MS. ROSS: Okay. The only thing is what
24 I've told you. Maybe something on the floods and --

1 MR. MCMULLEN: And it would have been the
2 Bosque that flooded?

3 MS. ROSS: Yes. It went up to the
4 railroad back in that day. Of course, then they built
5 the little dams up above to help with the flooding. You
6 know, Greens Creek at Clairette runs -- and it's a
7 pretty -- at least at Clairette, and it runs into the
8 Bosque. So it flooded all -- so up above Greens Creek
9 and I think Bosque, they built, you know, small dams
10 to -- but one summer not too long ago down at the park,
11 our City park, I had never seen it -- there was no water
12 at all in that Bosque River, and I think it's hurt them.
13 I mean, you know, you can't fish in the rivers anymore,
14 I mean, or eat the fish. They say it's -- you know,
15 it's not clean. You know, I used to fish all the time
16 when I was a kid and go home and clean them and eat them
17 right then.

18 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, thank you very much,
19 and --

20 MR. EIDSON: It's our pleasure.

21 MR. MCMULLEN: -- and we do want to have
22 some more talks with you.

23 MS. ROSS: Well, I will -- I'll see what
24 all I have if you -- if you think it will be beneficial

25 for you.

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1 MR. MCMULLEN: Thank you.

2 MR. EIDSON: Thank you.

3 MR. MCMULLEN: Thank you so much.

4 MS. ROSS: And I -- I probably stuttered

5 through some of this.

6 MR. MCMULLEN: No. You've done very well.

7 MR. EIDSON: It was wonderful.

8 MR. MCMULLEN: You've done very well. And

9 future generations of students will look at you and say

10 what they've learned from you.

11 MS. ROSS: Well, you know, I used to not

12 care anything about history when I was in school, and

13 since I've gotten older -- well, after I retired, you

14 know, sold our business and all, you know, I just

15 started -- I got interested in it. So I just look up

16 anything and everything I come -- run across. So,

17 anyway. I have some Old Hico newspapers, too, that --

18 like I said, that printed up a lot of this. So I'll

19 look back in that and see what all I have in that.

20 MR. EIDSON: Well, we'd love -- love to

21 have you --

22 MR. MCMULLEN: And we appreciate your

23 participation. Would you be willing to be a member of

24 the Hamilton County Historical Commission?

25 MS. ROSS: Well, what do you do?

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1 MR. MCMULLEN: Well, we -- we do this. We
2 do this, but we'll talk to you about that later.

3 MS. ROSS: Okay. I'll think about it.

4 MR. MCMULLEN: All right. Thank you so
5 much.

6 MS. ROSS: Oh, you're welcome.

7 MR. MCMULLEN: And I guess we're ready to
8 go off the record.

9 (INTERVIEW CONCLUDED)

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

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3 I, Jamie Cooley, Certified Shorthand

4 Reporter for the State of Texas, do hereby certify that

5 the above and foregoing interview contains a true and

6 correct transcription of all portions of the

7 proceedings, all of which were reported by me.

8 IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness my hand on

9 this the 22nd day of March, 2019.

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