

TEXAN IS SURVIVOR OF CURIOUS POST-WAR MIGRATION

Freestone County Man, Whose Family Left States for Home in South America, Rather Than Live Under Yankee Government, Tells of Disaster at Sea, a Miraculous Escape, an Eventual Settlement in Foreign Land and Tug of the Heart Strings of His Family for Native Heath.

FAIRFIELD, Oct. 24.—A mile off the traveled highway, in a peaceful countryside of Freestone County, lives a man who took part in that colorful and strange emigration of the 60's, when more than 100 men from Hill, Navarro and McLennan counties, the fall of Gettysburg and the new government ranking in their hearts, turned their faces toward an alien land, and founded homes in South America rather than begin their lives anew under what they termed a "Yankee regime."

That countryside home in Freestone County, with the peaceful fields stretching away from it, and the lovely cedars lifting green plumes along the creeks, is in curious contrast to the South American country where Dave Nettles spent his youth. No birds flash through the trees with a bewildering radiance of color such as those on which Dave Nettles, then a little boy, gazed in wonder when he entered the strange South American world. No baboons now come at night to plunder the fields, and the only cry is the weird hoot of a dusky owl or a whippoorwill calling through the gloom. The wild, tropical hurricanes that he saw sweeping the seas and the ghostly shipwreck that stranded himself and other emigrants on the Cuban coast are only memories.

But to Dave Nettles it is a clear cut memory. Lying on a cot in the open hallway of his comfortable old country home he told of that voyage from his native land, of his childhood in that new country, and, smiling a little, he showed a long scar on his hand.

"I got that from a six-foot lizard. I was just a kid and that lizard was getting the better of my dog."

A six-foot lizard is enough to tax the faith of any East Texas general individual, but the integrity of Dave Nettles, the high standard of citizenship that he maintained is attested by a grand old man of the section who said a few days previously:

"When Dave Nettles tells you a thing, it's just that a-way."

Faces Turned from Home.

In 1866 a man by the name of Fred McMillan aroused the citizenship of three counties and fired them to action by his story of South America. The personal and bitter drama of the war between the states had just ended. The curtain had fallen on a people with a wound that found no healing. The old life was over. The South, as they saw it in that hour, was broken and crushed and the humiliation that they suffered caused them to turn eagerly to the haven South America offered.



It was a terrific undertaking, but these men had lived through four years of unbelievable hardships. Their wives who had helped them shoulder the burden did not shrink from the long journey before them.

Dave Nettles was 6 years old. He remembers with vivid clarity how his family prepared for the journey. His father was Bluford Nettles, a prosperous and strong man; his mother was Margaret Burleson, of a staunch pioneer family. There were four children, Dave, William, the older sister, a lovely fragile girl of 14, who was later to capture the heart of an Englishman in a romantic affair, and there was a fat baby boy who was never to leave the land where he had spent his two short years of life.

At last the journey began, a march that might have been a dramatic moment in a modern tangle picturizing the old days, for the emigrants set out in wagons, most of which were pulled by oxen. The people were light-hearted enough. They believed that prosperity and happiness lay ahead. They did not know of the dangers and hardships they were to encounter.

At the Galveston port the baby son of Bluford and Margaret Nettles died, and was buried there a little way from the sea, binding forever the hearts of the young father and mother to the shores of the homeland.

Set Sail From Galveston.

At last the ship was ready, and the tall white sails were lifted in the breeze. The hearts of the people beat high as they carried their belongings aboard the vessel. Dave Nettles recalls clearly how excited he was, how young he became at last, and how the rolling waves made most of the passengers ill, and how the first pangs of longing for the security of home touched the travelers. Then came the most

dreaded of all sea disasters, an event that Mr. Nettles says will be stamped upon his mind forever, in all of its horror and despair.

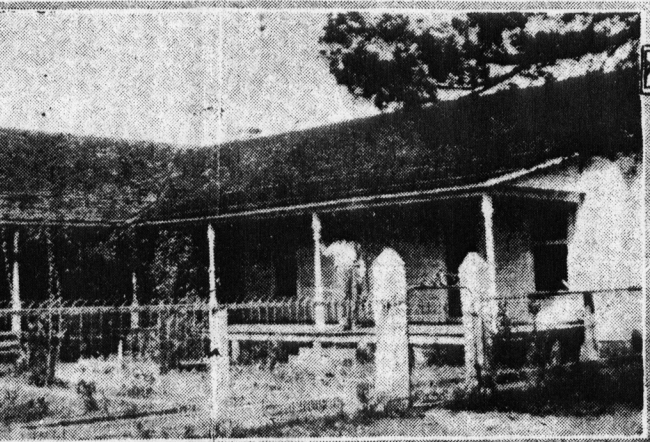
One evening at about 6 o'clock a strange darkness crept over the waters and the passengers began to cast uneasy glances at each other and whisper things that the children could not hear. The sailors hurried back and forth. The captain's face was grave. A little shudder seemed to run across the sea and the sky was shrouded in a greenish darkness. Far out on the waters the white caps began to rise to a height the travelers had not seen before. Fear was on every face and Mr. Nettles recalls that several men and women dropped to their knees and began praying.

Suddenly the tropical hurricane was upon them, with a fury that one unaccustomed to the sea would believe impossible.

"Nothing can quite describe what it was like," Mr. Nettles said. "It tore at that ship, and the waves were literally mountain high. Hope of life was gone. I learned later that there was not one who believed that rescue could come in any form."

Ship Driven to Doom.

The wind was driving the ship mercilessly toward her doom. It seemed certain that she would either go to pieces at sea or be crushed against the rocks of some island shore. Deliverance came strangely and unexpectedly. When the ship struck land, it struck the Cuban coast, and was grounded in the soft sand. Even then escape did not seem likely, for the ship was washed over on one side by a wave, righted herself, and then was knocked over by a succeeding wave. In some miraculous fashion the sailors, waiting for the moment when the boat should be swept over on its side, lowered the passengers one by one to the sands. It was, Mr. Nettles says, a game with the death, the howling wind and the



1. Dave Nettles, of Freestone County, surviving participant in a curious and colorful incident following the war between the states.
2. Dave Nettles' peaceful home in Freestone County, a quiet spot in strange contrast to other scenes in which he escaped death at sea to find a new home in South America with his parents, who believed that the defeat of the Confederacy meant unhappiness under a Yankee regime.
3. Dave Nettles, shortly after his return to the United States, many years ago.
4. Bluford Nettles, father of Dave Nettles, who, rather than live under a Yankee government at the close of the war between the states, joined 100 other East Texans to make a new home in another land.
5. Margaret Burleson Nettles, Dave's mother, who suffered disaster at sea and pioneer hardships, that her family might be established in another country under what they conceived to be a happier existence.

one Doctor Marsellos, sheltered many of the emigrants in the spacious rooms of his beautiful home. A month passed and the emigrants formed a definite course of action. The shock of the hurricane was gone, and they were ready to take up their journey anew. But no ships sailed from Cuba to South America nor to Galveston. They must sail from Cuba to New York, and thence to South America. After a number of days the emigrants reached Havana, and took ship for New York.

Stop Made at Norfolk.

The long voyage with the strain of the hurricane, and the grief over the baby left in the little grave at Galveston were too much for the young mother, who fell seriously ill. The ship bearing the emigrants touched at Norfolk, Va., and here the Nettles family remained until the mother was well and could travel to New York.

The family reached South America a year behind the other emigrants, but they never joined the colony. The emigrants founded there, and where some of them live now. The father fell ill with smallpox at Rio de Janeiro. After his recovery, the family moved inland to a prosperous little town, where they bought land at a very low price.

Allen Land to Parents.

"It was a rich and beautiful country," he said, "and I loved it, although my father and mother never did. Their hearts were too deeply rooted 'back home' and they never really learned the language. With us, the children, it was different. We picked up the language from the native children with whom we played. We never went to the native schools, however. Our parents taught us at home. I never went to a public school in my life."

An Unpleasant Memory.

Mr. Nettles killed a baboon once, too, but he doesn't like to think about that even yet. The baboons destroyed the crops. They uttered sounds which were weird and unpleasant to hear at night. Often they came in great droves to rob the fields.

"One night," said Mr. Nettles, "a negro workman warned us that a large drove of baboons were in one of the fields. The chattering mob came swarming through the trees to join that; on the ground, where we were, but it never bothered me. My English-speaking families were me, but it never bothered me. My first friends were the



Swinging through the trees by their tails they looked twice their size.

Suddenly the negro whispered and pointed. A great howl had swung himself a little circle of the others and was clearly outlined against the moon. He made an excellent target. I knew that if I killed one, the others would flee and our fields would be safe for many days.

"I raised my gun. The great baboon never moved. I fired. There was a blinding flash from the old gun, a report that echoed through all that jungle world, but above it all, a ringing after the sound of the gun had died away there arose a long, wild, despairing cry, so human in its anguish that I shall never be able to blot it from my memory. I came back through the moonlight with a resolution in my heart. I have kept it. I have never killed another member of the monkey tribe."

Then there was the story of the native boy he had horsewhipped because the native lad had teased him.

"Well, I had my revenge and the result was that a strong friendship developed between me and that boy," Mr. Nettles said. "There was no young man in all of South America that I hated to leave as I homeland of my people."

Mr. Nettles' oldest sister Mary

meanwhile had developed into a charming young woman. More than one young Englishman wooed her. The successful suitor was young Nevill Edenborough from London. His best friend was Frederico Mecer, who specialized in photography at Curitiba, capital city of the province of Parana. Mecer made his best pictures of Mary, one of which is still in possession of the Nettles family.

Nevill Edenborough married

Mary Nettles and built for her a magnificent home with 35 rooms, beautifully furnished. The estate was called "Shakker."

Old Folks Yearn for Home.

Two children had been born to Bluford and Margaret Nettles in this new country. One daughter had married and established her own household. The children had grown up and spoke the language of the people of this land, but the hearts of the father and mother were yearning for the homeland. Thirteen years after they had landed in the South American port, the mother and her daughter boarded a ship for Galveston. The son remained to settle business affairs.

"I was restless for a long time

after I returned," Mr. Nettles said. "I went out to the Pacific Coast. Then I returned to Texas and fell in love."

Mr. Nettles smiled.

"And my parents didn't want me to marry him because they said he roamed around too much. But he never roamed again after we married. They were as large as dogs even years now."

Mr. Nettles is a well informed, prosperous farmer. His name stands for much in this section. Mr. Nettles settled himself more comfortably and fingered the pair of old scissors his mother had taken to South America with her and brought back with her again. "No, I've never roamed any more. I tell you where I'd like to go, though I'd like to see South America again. Sometimes I've got to admit I'm a little homesick."