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"HOME"

at Homecoming  
Grace Overstreet  
Stamm

Ansley was founded in 1902 by families who came from South Arkansas.

Davis Brothers had owned and operated a mill in Arkansas, but seeking more timbered land they came to a new frontier and built a town on the Rock Island Railroad. Among those coming to this pioneer town were the Rogers, Caldwells, Mayes, Edwards, Youngs, Lane's, Overstreets, Normans, LaGrones, Parkers, Burdines, Penningtons, Smiths, Baldocks, Burts and of course, the Davis families.

With these eager young people, full of excitement in establishing new homes, there was sure to be some new babies. So this called for a doctor. One of the grandest persons who ever lived responded to the call. He was none other than Dr. J. S. McBride. He walked and rode horse-back to answer every call. Some time the pay was nothing, and some time potatoes, onions or syrup, but whatever it was didn't matter. The important thing was that some one was sick and his services were needed. He not only took care of our physical ailments, but was also concerned with the soul. I'm sure none of us will ever forget the Adult Sunday School Class he taught for many, many years and his lengthy, but sincere prayers. His pockets were always filled with candy for the colored, as well as the white children, and in later years, when he drove the T-Model Ford, the children gathered around him for their share. His life was a busy one with raising a large family of his own and taking care of all the Ansley people. His love for "Dotie" his beloved wife, was outstanding and she was a wonderful help to him in his service to all the families in town and those in the country around. He not only brought us into the world, but was there to hand out high school diplomas and bring our babies their first breath of life. His little drug store and prescriptions held a cure for many ills. The modern clinic he had in his home for many years was a big addition to our town, from pulling a tooth or taking out an appendix, was an everyday occurrence. At one time a medical meeting of doctors throughout the area met here. His life was an inspiration to all who knew him.

A new community meant a new school and church. Our first school was the Dixie Young old house. When the town grew in number, a new two-story school was built. This was quite an addition to the little town and was built of good "Davis Brothers Lumber". Then, when we outgrew this school and pupils were ready for high school, another larger two-story building was built, and many teachers added. Mr. Armstrong was the principal. The boys had an agriculture teacher who taught them many new ideas about garden and farm work and the girls had domestic science--where some of us made our first dresses and cupcakes. The high school brought new people into town. Students from Clay, Wesley Chapel, and Friendship came in to high school by the way of the "school wagon". Which was a covered wagon drawn by four horses. Some of the boys rode horseback or walked. The school not only taught us reading, writing, and arithmetic, but we got our first chance of stage acting. There was a literary society and every Friday afternoon each pupil was given a chance to sing, recite or debate.

The closing of school was a big affair with operettas, Maypole dances, and marches. Mothers worked for days on pretty crepe-paper dresses. It was a colorful display, but many a paper dress was torn and hanging by the last of the Maypole dance. The last day of school we had a picnic on the school grounds. People baked for days and I remember Mama always packed our food in an old trunk. It was a wonderful aroma when the lid was raised, and were we ever hungry! Never was a town so blessed with good cooks, as Ansley.

The home life then was not watching TV or working on hot-rods, for each family had cows to milk, chickens and hogs to feed and wood to cut. The spring gardens of each home showed that no lazy people lived there; and weren't those first new potatoes and peas good?

Most of the summer months were spent in canning and farm work, or picking the extra fruit and vegetables not needed at home and peddling the surplus into town. The wild blackberries and mayhaws brought us in quite a little spending money, although we scratched for weeks from the red-bug bites. It was all great fun and in winter the jam and jelly on hot biscuits made it all worthwhile.

Now, do you remember ??? The Lamkins' surrey with the "fringe on top". I tell you it was a carriage to be proud of--and I think all the horses must have stopped and bowed as it went past.

How about that first car of Mr. V. M. Davis' had, with the crooked stick for a steering wheel? I can remember when we were in the wagon and saw it coming up the road, Papa would have to get down and hold tight to the horses bridle. I really don't know if it excited the horses, or us, the most.

Can you remember back far enough to the "old black wash pot" and hog killing time? Never was anything so good as those crispy cracklings from making lard; and the wonderful hickory smoked stuffed sausage along with slabs of bacon and hams cured in our smoke houses.

This story couldn't be written without mention of our colored friends. They brought so much joy and happiness into our homes as they came to help out with the chores. Aunt Jenny was such a happy, singing soul and it was she who taught many of us to sing our first song, "Ten Little Indians". Tempie, Nora, Donnie, Ophila and Modie were just a part of many families.

Never has there been a more sacred place than the Ansley Union Church. If saints grew on this earth, Ansley church was blessed with them. Many wondered how Methodists and Baptists could worship in the same church and be happy, but we all know this was true. Never was there any confusion. It didn't matter who was preaching, Baptist or Methodist, all took part and when people like Uncle Bill Mayes, Mr. Lanes, Dr. McBride, and Uncle Scott prayed, I'M sure heaven opened wide its doors. I will never forget the rattle of Aunt Hattie Whitesides' petticoat as she came so gracefully down the church isle, and Miss Lottie's lovely

French creations and wide brimmed hats. The choir in Salt Lake City had nothing on the music in our church. People sang from the heart and soul, it may have been a little loud, but Oh! so joyous and thrilling.

Our revival meetings meant a time of really getting close to God and trying to bring the Kingdom in. The Spirit of God really worked in those revival services and if Aunt Fanny wanted to shout, she shouted, and all was blessed.

When we had time from work our thoughts were turned to fishing in Kepler, or Cypress Creeks. Many a good catfish was caught on a trot line and to set out hooks and pull them up in the morning with a big bass or catfish was an exciting experience.

On hot summer days no place was as popular as "Snells Pond" for swimming. Oh! to be sure the bottom was muddy, and sometimes a crawfish would bite your toe, but that made it all the more fun.

Ansley was always known for its ballgames and good ballplayers. Even on Sunday when the colored people would play, we would gather in the mill shed and watch them. Of course, some were opposed to Sunday ballgames, but it wasn't so bad, was it?

Now, we really were getting places when Mr. and Mrs. Spell bought the self-playing piano. Although the days were hot and to peddle took a lot of muscle, <sup>but</sup> we all gathered around and sang our hearts out. Somehow, just to peddle and have such sonderful music come out seemed to make us think we were creating it by ourselves. Nothing is better for the soul than a good song fest, and Ansley folks loved to sing. We must give credit to the Crow Family, for its leadership and adding so much to our music talents.

When it came to parties, we had our share. The "Jump Josies", "Candy Pulls", and the making of popcorn balls was great fun. Most of our music was a harmonica of Jew's harp, but we kept good time with it. Our favorite game at parties was "spinning the pan" and getting a walk around the house with your best beau was the high light of the party.

Remember the movies in the old school house? It was there that many of us saw our first movie, but Oh! my! wasn't it awful when the machine broke down and we had to wait another week to see how the story came out?

Sunday mornings there was always church and Sunday School and we knew if we didn't go to Sunday School we couldn't go any other place that day. On Sunday afternoon walking was the main pasttime. We would walk to Clay or Quitman and pay ten cents to ride back on the train. With all our modern means of travel now, walking three miles would be a big effort but in our day it was lots of fun and pleasure. After the train ride home, no place was as important as the post office for mail call. The post office building not only housed the mail, but also was the home of Maud and Jack. Now we all know that Maud and Jack had no children of their own, but they had an interest in all the boys and girls, and I'm sure we all told them our secrets and heartaches. Maud's candy was also of interest to make a stop at the post office.

One big occasion was our church Annual Christmas Tree. No tree could grace our church except a holly with red berries. Sometimes these trees were spotted a year in advance for next year's party. We had no fancy lights or ornaments, but the gifts made the decorations. It was a beautiful sight to see. Towels, handkerchiefs, ties, ribbons, dolls and red wagons, and there was a gift for every one. One gift which repeated itself each year, was a broom for Cousin Lennie. It was always a little embarrassing to her, but she and the congregation would have been disappointed if it hadn't been there. Each child has some part in the program. No child was forgotten, and the big boxes of apples and oranges were of interest to all, for each child under twelve got an apple and orange.

The town grew in number and in 1914 a new hardwood mill was built. And, a new addition to our town, "The Tin Top Quarters". With the mill came new families, the McCoys, the Starlings, the Sparks and others.

1917 found our Country in a world war and our young men were answering to their country's call. Many homes were sad, but all kept up a good spirit. No town was more patriotic than Ansley. Our service flag hung in our church and everyone

respected the wheatless, meatless and sweetless days.

1930 brought depression to all the country and times were not as good as they had been. But the goodness of Davis Brothers' saw that none went hungry. 1941 found us again in a World War, and the sons of World War I were enlisting to serve our country.

This story could go on and on, but all good things have to come to an end. Never will the memories of good people and good times die. We that are here live them over and over, and I'm sure, the inspiration we all found in this church has been a blessing to God and His world.

With now so many gone on to higher reward, no spot of ground is so sacred as our cemetery.

How much Riley and I would like to be with you today, but maybe next year. Our family still continues to grow--we now have "one dozen" grandchildren. This makes us very thankful.

Have a wonderful day and may God pour out his blessing on each and every one.