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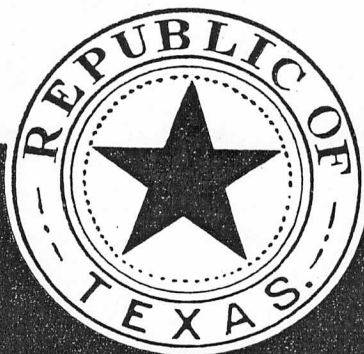
THE BATTLE OF GALVESTON

by FREDERICKA HUNTER

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WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO SPRINKLE, TEXAS?

by MARGUERITE JARRELL
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THROUGH a pastoral setting in northeast Travis County near Austin, a rutted, partially-paved road winds over rolling blackland fields clad in green foliage and around stately mesquite-covered hills.

In this quaint, picturesque countryside on the crest of a hill, an old home stands in majestic dignity surveying the scene of a by-gone era. The little community of Sprinkle, Texas—once a thriving, industrious town—can hardly be recognized as a town any longer, yet the spirit of the town, its founders, and its residents refuses to die. How was Sprinkle founded? Why was Sprinkle founded? What ever happened to Sprinkle, Texas? Here is the story.

William Sprinkle was the first of the family living in Virginia who packed his earthly belongings and set forth to seek his fortune in Texas. When Will arrived, he settled near Hornsby's Bend and became a cattle drover. He helped drive thousands of head of cattle up the old Texas Chisholm Trail. In a few years,



The Barr-Jamison house was built in 1898
 William Sprinkle began writing letters back to his uncle, Erasmus Frederick Sprinkle, in Rochelle, Virginia (which was nicknamed "Jack Shop" because of

the many Jacksons living there). William told E. F. tall tales about Texas. E. F. was pleased with what he heard and made the decision to come to Texas and join Will there.

Before the Civil War, E. F. Sprinkle had owned a harness and saddle shop in Rochelle. When the war broke out, Erasmus signed up as a volunteer in the Confederate Army. In the 1870's, Sprinkle took his widowed daughter, Mrs. Barr, who was a school teacher, and her four children—George, Ida, Braxton, and Haywood—and headed for Texas. It is not known what happened to Sprinkle's harness and saddle shop. Some seem to think that it was wiped out during the Civil War, but others say he sold it to come to Texas.

The little clan of Sprinkles and Barrs finally reached Hornsby's Bend, but soon E. F. Sprinkle bought a plot of land from Jim Maxwell in the valley of the Big Walnut Creek. This small plot became the backbone of Sprinkle, Texas.

The area in which Sprinkle established his homestead had an interesting and colorful history long before it was settled. In the Republic of Texas days, the area around Sprinkle was on the old route from Austin to East Texas. John Rice Jones, the Postmaster General of the Republic of Texas, changed the route of the mail carriers from the Sprinkle area to the river road on the north side of the Colorado River to Bastrop to prevent them from being killed by the Indians. The Indians, whose camp was near present Sprinkle, had chased his mail carriers twice. Jones also declared that all carriers wrap their mail in bear skin to prevent the letters from getting wet.

This story is only a part of it, however. The original old Texas Chisholm Trail made its way through Sprinkle. Old Aunt

Sarah Jackson, a Negro woman who had lived in Sprinkle nearly all her life and who has passed the one-hundred-years mark in age, could recall the old trail

ington, D. C., and the little town was officially christened "Sprinkle"; then the mail came direct. The building of the post office gave Sprinkle a spurt of life



Braxton Barr sold superior quality merchandise in his Sprinkle store

which she called the "Chicken Trail." The original trail went by an old log stage-coach stop near Sprinkle, which no longer stands, but can be remembered by a few. It was situated a mile east of the Barr-Jamison place. Sarah Jackson, whose father was a Choctaw Indian chief, could also remember an old Indian trail which ran northeast of a fence row from her house which is in the confines of Sprinkle. This fence row ran between Hungry Hill and Katy Track.

After buying his land, Erasmus built a little house and a store. "First it was over there in that field and then in that field," recalled Mrs. Jamison with a smile. The first Sprinkle store, however, was on the east side of the arroyo east of Sprinkle in the fork of the road going to Cameron or Manor.

When Erasmus first settled his community, the mail was brought from Manor by a Negro man who was "the best banjo player." It was not long before E. F. Sprinkle applied for a post office to be located in Sprinkle. On December 11, 1885, a permit was received from Wash-

ington, D. C., and the little town was officially christened "Sprinkle"; then the mail came direct. The building of the post office gave Sprinkle a spurt of life

and it began to poke its head up and be noticed. William Braxton Barr, Sprinkle's grandson, built a two-story house, which was well known around those parts. In 1898 he built a most beautiful Victorian home. It was not long before Sprinkle became a trading center for the surrounding countryside. The customers would buy their merchandise during the year on credit, and in the fall when crops were harvested, bills would be paid. When Barr received his payments, he—with four other men from different towns—would go to St. Louis or Chicago and would buy car loads of merchandise to be divided among them. Braxton Barr also bought from Nelson Davis. Davis once told Brack that he could not sell the superior quality merchandise in Buda that Brack sold in Sprinkle. The store began to get so large that Barr felt that he needed help. He wrote back to Rochelle, Virginia, to the Jacksons who were relatives and asked them to come to Sprinkle. At that time, there were about twenty little houses of people who helped

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with the store, and there were eight clerks employed in the store. Mrs. Jamison, W. O. Barr's daughter, can remember an incident that occurred in her father's store when she was about five. "One day I was in the store and it was always crowded. I was looking at a man with a funny cap on his head, and about that time my father saw me staring at him and he stooped over and said, 'You know that man is the Hornsby that was scalped by the Indians.' I'll never forget that." Mrs. Jamison can recall many interesting and important people who at one time or another had been in Sprinkle. Sprinkle was beginning to grow into a good-sized town. It had stores, a blacksmith shop, a saddle shop, two gins, and a post office. The first postmaster in Sprinkle was Robert E. Jarmen; others were: Eugene G. Giles, Jesse A. McWilliams, Milton H. Elliott, James E. Smith, Lelia M. Sites, William C. McClentock, and Otto G. Kielman.

There was never a saloon in Sprinkle, because Barr would never go into one. There was a saloon across the creek, however, owned by Cy Foster. He finally had to close it because he received almost little or no business.

The citizens of Sprinkle, especially the Barrs, attended big parties given over the countryside. There were no dances, however, until later, because the religion in the community was extremely strict. Brack and Tillie Barr would come to Austin to the Hancock Opera House (now the Capitol Theater).

The cotton industry was a chief source of income to many people living in and around Sprinkle. The first gin was situated on the Big Walnut Creek. It burned, however, and was rebuilt by Lynn Hunter. The cotton was hauled to Austin cotton yards. The long journey to Austin proved to be quite burdensome for all concerned.

The roads leading from Sprinkle to Austin were hardly what one could call passable, and the sticky black dirt would collect on the wheels and make travel impossible. Barr was disturbed with this situation and began to take major steps

in getting a railroad to come through Sprinkle. One day Braxton Barr took his wife, Tillie, on the porch and said, "Tillie, I'm going to get my railroad and I want to show you where it's going to be." With his finger he pointed out the route. There were at least four different surveys in building the railroad, but Barr's original route was finally chosen. Braxton Barr worked to get his railroad through Sprinkle and a year before it was finished, he died at the age of thirty-eight. In September, 1903, the final stake was driven and the sounds of the train whistle reverberated throughout the peaceful countryside.

The death of Barr was an overwhelming shock to the people of Sprinkle, and those over many miles who knew him as a fine, upstanding, and capable man. Perhaps in a few years he will be forgotten, but a small phrase will be everlasting, "His words were kindness, his deeds were love, his spirit humble, he rests above." Barr's death did not stop the pendulum of the clock in Sprinkle, and the wheels of progress kept spinning with even greater momentum.

The depot was built shortly after the railroad directly down from the Barr-Jamison House, and Eugene Giles was appointed the first stationmaster. A cotton platform, which was one-eighth of a mile long, was built near the railroad. The mail was then delivered to Sprinkle by rail. It was deposited on big hooks.

Since Sprinkle was becoming a town of noticeable size, the citizens gathered together to talk about getting a school house. In 1902 a school was moved from Burdett to Sprinkle. It was a frame building which housed students from elementary to high school age. During a county-wide consolidation movement, the school was moved farther away and consolidated with Manor. The one school building served many purposes in its later life. Every Sunday church was held in the school building. Because Sprinkle did not have a minister of its own, one would come from Manor. Several revival meetings were held during the year in either the school building in the bottomlands by

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the creek. Every Christmas the school decorated a huge community Christmas tree and the citizens of Sprinkle and people from miles around collected around it to sing. There were other occasions which brought clans to the school to sing. This was a popular interest in the young days of Sprinkle.

Times seemed to be going well for Sprinkle. It was a town which could boast a blacksmith shop, saddle shop, depot, telegraph, two gins, express office, post office, several stores, a school, and even a doctor. In fact there have been four doctors in the life of Sprinkle.

Sprinkle and surrounding communities established a 'possum hunt. This hunt became the most popular entertainment for young and old alike. The participants gathered on Herman Kruger's ranch. Festivities preceded the hunt. Picnic suppers were brought and spread out on the grounds. There was always music to add to the lively atmosphere, and guests were invited to speak. About 10:00 P.M. the light went out and the 'possum hunt began. When the 'possums were caught they were released for the next hunter. The actual hunt ended about midnight. At one time the crowd was estimated at 1,500. Of that number, many were residents of Austin.

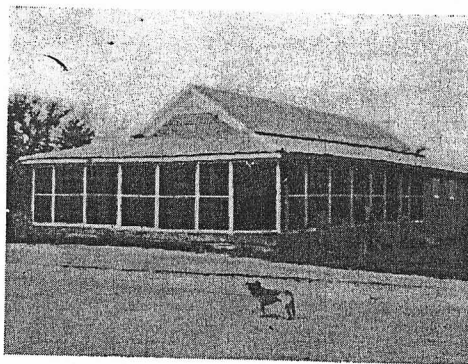
The picture of Sprinkle as being the perfect Utopia, however, was not a true one. In the midst of its prosperity, the first dagger of death was being planted firmly in its heart. After Barr's death, the store was rented, but the family was not receiving enough income to keep it up. There was no man big enough or strong enough to handle the credit business which he encountered frequently. The work and the worry were too large a task for the Barr family. Consequently the store was torn down and the lumber was either sold or stored in a barn which later burned. There were other stores in Sprinkle to take its place, such as the Otto G. Kielman store and the Jackson and Giles store. The residents of Sprinkle bought their merchandise at one of the local stores, because the roads were too

bad to travel where there was a greater selection.

In 1906 Erasmus Frederick Sprinkle, the founder of the town, died at the age of ninety-three, and was buried in the Gregg cemetery by the side of his grandson, W. B. Barr. To add to the grief of the town, in 1909 the Barr gin burned. It was at this point that fate began to turn its hand.

In the 1930's, hard-surfaced roads were being built. This made it possible for the residents of Sprinkle to climb into their cars and travel to Austin to do their shopping instead of patronizing local merchants. Many incidents began to make the people think twice about living in a small town. The population packed its bags and headed to Austin in hopes of striking it rich in a big town. The demand for cars was so great that the passenger travel on the trains was next to nothing. This hit the railroad companies severely. The trains no longer stopped in Sprinkle, and the depot was torn down. In 1910 the population of Sprinkle was fifty.

The typhoid fever epidemic which was caused by contaminated water wells claimed the lives of many people and influenced others to leave.



The Kielman store in Sprinkle was converted into a residence

The young people of Sprinkle lost interest in cultivating their ancestors' fields in cotton, for the prices were too low. The older residents began to sing, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm . . .," but soon gave up and went with their children.

Sprinkle was further cut off from society when the road which originally went from Austin to Manor was rebuilt, bypassing Sprinkle entirely.



The final fatal blow which dug Sprinkle's grave was the soil erosion. The rain washed away the rich blackland, and the cotton boll weevil came behind it to kill Sprinkle's cotton industry. Mesquite began to grow over what had once been fertile fields.

In the following years, Sprinkle led a quiet existence. On December 13, 1922, Otto G. Kielman was appointed postmaster, the last Sprinkle was to have. In 1940 the population of Sprinkle was recorded at ten. There was only one store left standing across from the Barr-Jamison House, which was later converted into a residence.

The actual history of Sprinkle stops at this point. It has been said that "A town is not a town until it has a post office, and if it loses it, it has lost its life." Nothing can be done to stop the corrosion and decay which is digesting Sprinkle. Little by little the town is falling back to dust and being forgotten. The old folks are the only ones who remember Sprinkle as it once was—a town of hope and promise. Time is the never-ending element which will squeeze the final weak breaths from a community unwilling to die—Sprinkle, Texas.

* * *

FRANCISCO ZARATE GONZALEZ ROGUE OR PATRIOT?

[Continued from page 15]

ber 1, 1933. On the back of the card the following message was written: "So that you can remember your country where parks like this exist; where one can breathe pure air."

In 1935 Gonzalez was transferred to Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. There he was put in charge of collecting and keeping the records for the national lottery

around that area. When Gonzalez was transferred to Reynosa, he again took up residence in Mission. Every morning he would drive out from Mission en route to Reynosa. In the evening he would return to spend a quiet evening at home. Because at times he collected thousands of pesos, Gonzalez always kept armed guards outside his office. In 1937 he resigned from his job in Reynosa and took up residence in Edinburg.

Gonzalez worked as a bookkeeper for Joe Estapa, who owned a restaurant located at 724 East Harriman Street. From 1937 until 1960, Gonzalez lived in Edinburg with wife. At the age of seventy-one Gonzalez moved to San Antonio. One year later, in 1961, Gonzalez became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. That same year he went into retirement, receiving a pension from the United States government.

At the age of seventy-five, Gonzalez lives at 519½ Marshall Street in San Antonio. He spends most of his time reading, relaxing, and sharing a peaceful life with his wife. Few people know of his colorful and exciting life. There are still some old-timers around San Manuel and Linn who recall the times when Gonzalez and his "Julia" would travel the distance between Falfurrias and Rio Grande City providing efficient service for the people. In Mexico there are still some who recall "El Pagador de Mexico," Francisco Zarate Gonzalez.

Gonzalez is only one of the many men who have crossed the Rio Grande, but there has seldom been another with a more adventurous life than his. He has been a soldier, a treasurer of a military division, an embezzler, and a businessman. His bus was a predecessor of the transportation system which now exists in the Rio Grande Valley. Through all this he has had his sorrows, misfortunes, and rewards. Today he can truthfully say that he has contributed to the prosperity and progress of a great nation, and as long as men like him continue to push progress this nation will never perish from the earth.