

1965

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dorothy:

Here is a brief description
of the President's birthday
gifts. Attached is a copy
of the second item on the list.

Lynne

GIVEN TO WIRES FOR RELEASE AFTER 9:00 P.M. FRIDAY.

Gifts for the President from Mrs. Johnson: (Primarily, it is family mementoes)

Framed plaque of the story of the Lewis Place

A condensed story of the LBJ Ranch from the Rachel Means tract to the Present in leather bound portfolio. The story traces life on the Pedernales from 1845 to the present.

Early Fredericksburg news accounts of Sam E. Johnson's visit to Fredericksburg; copy of an act (January 13, 1905) concerning the purchase of Alamo property which Sam E. Johnson was one of the co-authors, bound in cowhide portfolio. }

A gag gift -- a litter can decorated with "beautification pictures of Mrs. Johnson planting flowers" -- to be put on the boat.

Lynda will give the President an album of pictures made by herself and friends on her Western trip this past summer.

Luci's gift undetermined.

Mrs. Johnson will have a small (16) group of longtime friends for dinner at the ranch late Friday night.

There will be a cake which says "You can have your cake and eat it too." It is decorated with mementoes illustrating legislative programs.

*copy filed in
St. Johnson
folder.*

The Story of the LBJ Ranch and Home

In the beginning, the hill country was land that challenged men and aged women. Surprisingly, the first owner of the LBJ ranch country was a spunky Georgia woman--Rachael Means--a young widow who had brought her determination, dreams, and three children to settle in the Sabine District of Texas in 1832.

In 1845, on April 30th, six months before Texas was annexed to the Union, Mrs. Means was granted Survey Tract No. 6 on the Pedernales--some 4,605 acres--in a patent signed by Anson Jones, President of the Republic of Texas, and Thomas Ward, Commissioner of the General Land Office.

Whether Mrs. Means ever came to the land she had waited for through uprisings, revolution and red tape in the frustrating capital of Coahuila, Texas, is not known.

Two surveys were made: on September 14th, 1838, by William Force, whose field notes were cancelled; on October 29, 1849, by John B. Hayes, whose survey gave her legal claim to the land.

What brought Mrs. Means and her son to Texas from the relatively civilized settlements of Georgia is not known. Perhaps the placards which sprinkled the South with lures of land grants to the head of any family. The migrants who came by wagon, horseback, and foot were a mixture of romanticists, adventurers, and those wishing a new start.

Courage was her major resource. She could neither read nor write. In applying for a headright, as head of a family, she was declared of "moral character" and given permission to sign her name with an "x" and to give her son, William, power of attorney.

In the Sabine District, the Means settled long enough to be recorded in the First Census of Texas (1829-1836), which listed William Means, 25, wife, Francis, 22, and two children, B. F., age 3, and Margaret E., age 1. Long enough, too, for William to serve in the Army of the Republic and guard the baggage at the camp opposite Harrisburg during the Battle of Jacinto. For this, he was issued Bounty Certificate No. 736 for 320 acres on December 3, 1850, for service in the army from January 21 - April 21, 1836. He was further rewarded with a donation certificate No. 240 for 640 acres of land, December 3, 1850, for the special detail with General Houston. Both he sold in 1857 for \$100 each, a common practice to a hard-pressed republic veteran.

Despite his financial difficulties, he must have been an able man, as attested by President Houston's letter to him during subsequent Indian uprisings:

"To Colonel T. G. Brooks, San Augustine; W. M. Means, Sabine; John Todd, Nacogdoches: (August 19, 1844)

"Sirs, You will immediately take the proper steps to have your command in readiness for marching orders, armed and equipped for any emergency. You will consider this an order sufficient, after any notification from authority, and act as it may command. SAM HOUSTON."

Although William Means sold his land certificates rather than occupying his land, he did obtain the right to have his name listed as the putative Owner of 960 acres of land in Coryell County. This was about 100 miles to the northwest of the patent of his mother on the Pedernales in 1845.

Tracts along the Pedernales adjoining the Rachael Means tract were held entirely by Mexicans. Their names were: Juana Isadora Leal (2 patents), Mitilde Rivera (2 patents), Luisa Ramos (2 patents), Juan Rodriguez (2 patents), Leandro Escamilla, Juana Francisca Flores, Epaphras W. Bull, Abrosio Rodriguez. Across the Pedernales, the patentees included people named Trevino and Flores, and others of Spanish flavor.

In 1872, the land passed from Martha Means of Dewitt County to B. M. Odom of Austin; and to C. C. Howell of Austin.

In 1876 and in subsequent years, George B. Zimpelman, residing in Mexico became owner of the 3,070 acres.

On May 15, 1882, Zimpelman sold 650 acres of the tract for \$1,950 to be paid in sums of \$650 every October 1, 1882, 1883, and 1884, to William Meier (Page 378, Deed Record Book No. 2 Gillespie County Courthouse).

William and Anna Meier owned the land from May, 1882, until September 17, 1906.

Shortly after the purchase in May, William began hewing down trees and built a one-room log cabin for his family to move into that fall. William and Anna Meier had migrated to Texas several years before from Germany with four children: Ida (born in Germany and later to die of childbirth at her father's homeplace), William, born in the Houston area: Anna, and Clara (born in Fredericksburg in 1876. Clara is the only living child of William Meier, and supplied this information. She is Mrs. Clara Everett of Round Mountain.)

William and Anna Meier and their children lived a hardworking life on the rocky banks of the Pedernales. There was no kitchen in the one-room log cabin, only a loft above where the children slept. Cooking was done with a skillet over an open-fire behind the cabin. Potatoes were the staple. Daytime the children worked the cotton fields. School was a hit-or-miss business at Junction School, later flooded out and rebuilt. Mrs. Everett said the family did not attend church.

Her father obtained the nickname "Polecat Meier" or "Stinkanzen Meier." A man with "absolutely no sense of smell," he once brought home a small kitten which turned out to be a skunk. The name stuck and he is still known as "Polecat" Meier in Gillespie County.

The Meier family lived in the log cabin until the one-room two-story rock house was built. Otto Lindig, now living in Fredericksburg, fixes the date at 1893 and the builders as Peter Nebgen (a grandfather of Lawrence Klein, still employed in carpentry work at the LBJ Ranch); John Sebble, and Max Schoenfeld. He fixes the date to the date when the three men finished building the house of his father-in-law, Gus Schumann of Albert. He heard his father-in-law mention the builders many times.

Mrs. Clara Everett remembers the house took a year to build and was finished just in time for her wedding in it. Gillespie County rolls show a wedding license of Clara Meier and Wesley Everett on January 17, 1896. This would make construction of the stone house sometime between 1894-95, if a year were required for it.

Various children and in-laws of the Meier family lived in the house until 1906 when it passed briefly into the hands of Charles Wagner, Jr. of Burnet County. A part of the deed included "the sale of 14 head of cattle, 11 head of hogs, 2 wagons, 3 sets

of harness, 1 cooking stove, 1 heating stove, 3 bedsteads, 2 safes, 3 chairs, and all farming implements and tools." A wire-stretcher, sugar cane and some fodder were excepted from the conveyance, dated January 1, 1907.

Charles Wagner sold the 350-acre tract to James G. Odiorne who in turn sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Martin on June 22, 1909 for \$9,500. At this time, young Lyndon Johnson, approaching his first birthday, lived a mile down the road to the East on his father's (Sam Johnson) farm. Some twenty years before, his grandfather, Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr., had moved to the Pedernales River country from Hays County in 1889. They settled some twelve miles from Johnson City on land adjoining the now LBJ Ranch.

Mrs. Martin (Aunt Frank) was the President's father's sister. They lived in the house for 42 years until they sold it to the then U.S. Senator from Texas.

During its occupancy by the Martins there were many additions and improvements including the addition of the elevated fireplace in the old part of the house. The stone work was done by Lawrence Klein, Sr. and his young son, later to be the mainstay carpenter for the President and Mrs. Johnson.

According to Clarence Martin, Jr., the original house consisted of the stone living room, a pantry located where the bathroom now is, and a kitchen dining room where the dining room is located. Off the present dining room was a screen porch where the present kitchen is located. It included a summertime kitchen and eating place. In 1912, Clarence Martin added several rooms. The Presidential bedroom was a music room including the victrola which is now in the Johnson City house. The first floor back bedroom was a parlor.

Aunt Frank's home was a favorite visiting place for the Sam Johnson family. Young Lyndon would stand on the elevated fireplace and recite poems on special family gatherings, Christmas and Easter.

The Lyndon Johnsons' purchased the house on May 5, 1951, after Aunt Frank had become a widow and wished to move into Johnson City. Part of the purchase was a "trade" of the ranch for the Johnson City house, later repurchased after Aunt Frank's death.

Senator and Mrs. Johnson visited the place with their friends, Senator and Mrs. Stuart Symington early in 1951. Through the widowhood of Aunt Frank, it had fallen into disrepair, and Mrs. Johnson recalls "looked something like a Charles Addams cartoon of a haunted house."

"To my horror, I heard Lyndon say, 'Let's buy it!', she recalls, but horror turned to blessing and we put hand and heart to it to build it into a small, productive, operating ranch."

Mrs. Johnson redecorated the house. Various additions were made. An office, and the two upstairs bedrooms were stretched to include baths and dressing rooms when a host of visitors--including heads of state--began arriving.

Visitors leave their mark signing in cement blocks which are used in "Friendship Walks" around the ranch.

The Land has been planted in coastal bermuda grass to nurture the scarce 29 inches of rainfall. The white-faced Hereford graze there.

Official representatives of more than half of the nations of the world have been entertained on the banks of the Pedernales with the favorite dish of the country--Texas barbecue.

It is still the favorite "retreat" for the President and Mrs. Johnson..."our heart's home!"