

LETTER WRITTEN BY EDNA FELTON TO IRA CONNELL:

Wednesday, April 11, 1956

Dear Folks:

I gathered up a lot of letters yesterday - most of them old letters - but you all had not read them, so just burn these up or keep them - I have formed a habit of keeping letters. I always enjoy Aunt Mooties' and Mary Bell's letters so, I enclosed several of each. In one letter Aunt Mary Bell is giving me a raking over for not going to see Mit more than I do. She forgets that I am almost blind, do not drive and Walter just will not drive in San Antonio, Houston or Fort Worth, so I do not have a chance to go. Mit and Johnney are not at home all the time, but they come by to see me when they come to Corpus on business. I see them about as often as I see Hade and Mary at Robstown.

It seems from all I can find out about the reunion this year that some one looked out for a place near Austin, but that is all I know and Eddie Jo wrote to me about that. Said she saw Artis and some of Aunt Lelia's children during Christmas while at Betty's, so you know as much as I do. I am expecting the chain of letters some time last of this week, so if there is any news about the reunion I will drop you a letter, so you can make plans about coming.

I am helping get up a history of San Gabriel Baptist Church in Milam County. It was organized in 1856. They are celebrating their centennial June 10th of this year. 1866 is about the time Grandma and Grandpa Perry moved to Milam County, but I do not know whether they ever belonged to San Gabriel church or not. I heard them talk about Daniels and Lilac Baptist Churches, but I am pretty sure they took part in getting Major Penn to hold camp meetings in 1880's at San Gabriel Penn Camp ground. Uncle Jim Perry owned the land that they held meetings on and Uncle Pete Perry surveyed out the lots for people to camp on - and Papa had feedlots to furnish feed for the campers, horses and mules. They drove wagons in that day. That is where my mother and father met. She was going to the spring to get water and had to pass by where Papa sold feed, and he helped them dip up water and bring it up the bank. They were married a year or two later on. My sister, Mary Bell Perry was 3 years 3 days older than me. I was born December 19, 1885. I heard Aunt Matt say Papa and Mama were married several years before my sister was born, so they must have married the next year after they met - not sure what date that Penn meeting was 1879? or 1880?

I remember when we all camped at Penn Camp Ground at Bartlett. Hayden was an infant, real small. I was about 6, Mary Bell 8, Guy 4, Mit 2, and Hayden several months old. Our mother took sick soon after we got home in early fall - October. She and Mary Bell both died same week - with some kind of fever that the doctors didn't know how to treat. Hayden was one year old in November after she died in October.

Major Penn used to come over and eat breakfast with Grandma and Grandpa. He was so large and heavy he always sat on the wagon tongue up near the wagon so he would not break the tongue. Mrs. Penn tried to keep him on a diet, but he slipped out real early every morning to come and eat some of Mollie's hot biscuit (all the rest of the campers were still asleep). Our tent was near Grandma's so she and some of the older girls could help Mama look after us kids. Mama always sang in the choir, so someone had to take care of the children. Old Ead was there to nurse Hayden, but I recall that I used to lead Guy and Mit to the tent when they got sleepy and help put them to bed. We camped near the big tent where they held the meeting.

I have heard Grandma Perry say that she and Grandpa Perry had helped organize three churches in their home (After they came to Texas, but I don't know what churches?). While they lived at Independence, Texas (4 sons in Baylor) they belonged there but of course that church was organized before they moved from near Austin at Fiskville. They belonged to the Walnut Creek church near Austin when they lived there. They moved to Independence before the Civil War started and three sons, Preston, Jim, and Pete were in the Civil War. Preston was killed at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, Jim was wounded and captured. He had three fingers shot off of his righthand, but they put him to work as a conductor on the railroad in the north somewhere. He served there until the south surrendered. Uncle Pete was a prisoner and had pneumonia and like to have died. They didn't know him when he got home - he was so thin and starved. He always had asthma as long as he lived. After the Civil War all of the family moved to Milam County - about 1866 and bought our old home place at San Gabriel, so by 1880 when Penn meetings came they were pretty well located. They had San Gabriel post office in their house. Uncle Jim studied law at Baylor and became a lawyer. Uncle Pete, Uncle John and Papa worked the farm. Uncle Pete and Uncle John finally moved to Rockdale, and Papa bought out the farm from Grandma and Grandpa Perry and they bought a home in Rockdale across the street from Uncle Pete and his wife. They all lived there the rest of their lives.

I will enclose some church bulletins, also back of the Baptist Standard page and picture of Lexington Mission. Our church built Lexington Mission building, and furnished it before they ever got a pastor. Then some of our members moved their membership out there to help carry on the work, so our church roll is not what it use to be. Roloff got about 300 members for his church but they are gradually coming back. We have a house full Sunday mornings but not Sunday night. The upstairs Sunday night is not full but all down stairs is. The church downstairs holds 1200 people, 300 upstairs.

We wish you all would come home and be here to help George. Little Thomas has "Connell for Sheriff" all over Valter's car, so he takes me to church and comes after me, so they all see me advertise for George. Some man, Mr. Bruno Morgan, took my picture Sunday as I came out of the church. I don't know what for. He stopped me and wanted me to smile so I did.

Guess this letter is long enough. Wish you all would come home and put in a Baptist Book Store in Corpus. We sure do need one.

With love to all,

Edna