

Dana Copes Rogers and Margaret Rogers Bullock
Interview 77a
August 19, 1985
Marie Davis, Interviewer
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ABSTRACT: Dana Copes Rogers and her daughter Margaret Rogers Bullock, descendants of the Copes family that owned the land that would later become Diboll, tell their memories of Copes family history and life in Diboll at the beginning of the 20th Century. Mrs. Rogers recalls her parents, attending church and school, Mable and Asenath Phelps, Copestown, and working for Franklin Farrington at the Diboll Post Office. Her husband worked in several drug stores in Diboll and Pineland before opening his own stores in Hemphill and Lufkin.

Marie Davie (hereafter MD): Today I am talking to Mrs. Dana Copes Rogers and her daughter, Margaret Rogers Bullock. They live at 301 Cunningham, Lufkin, Texas. Today's date is August 19, 1985, and my name is Marie Davis. Mrs. Rogers, what were your parents' names?

Dana Rogers (hereafter DR): Bassett Joseph and Lela Hanby Copes.

MD: Who were your grandparents?

DR: Which side?

MD: Oh, excuse me. I am sorry. The Copes side.

DR: Henry Francis Copes and she was Cynthia Jeanette Bassett.

MD: What do you remember about your grandfather Copes?

DR: Everything that was sweet and good.

MD: Oh, that's good! When he first came to Texas where did he come from? Do you remember?

DR: Somewhere near St. Louis.

MD: St. Louis, okay. And they came to Angelina County...

DR: In a covered wagon.

MD: How long did it take them to come?

DR: I don't remember.

Margaret Rogers Bullock (hereafter MB): Part of two years.

DR: Part of two years, they said. Jokingly, they said, but I don't remember.

MD: Where did they settle when they came to Angelina County?

DR: Stovall Prairie and out in there.

MD: That would be what is now Farm Road 1818.

DR: I wouldn't know. The Massingills and all of them lived out in there.

MD: And then they moved into Diboll later?

DR: Yes.

MD: And where did they settle in Diboll?

DR: Well, it is the area of the Methodist Church now. It was just a garden space between their house and ours.

MD: Were there any other close neighbors?

DR: Yes. Later. Southern Pine built a lot of houses around in back of us, like. In back of grandpa's.

MD: Tell me about the church and Sunday school that you went to.

DR: It was known as the Woodmen Hall. It was upstairs and the church was downstairs. And the Methodist had church on Sunday and the Baptist another until there was a Baptist Church built there.

MD: And tell me about your grandfather and you going to that church.

DR: Well, I went to Sunday school with grandfather and then when grandma came to church, I sat with her.

MD: And you said it was one of your sweetest memories.

DR: Sweetest memories.

MD: Him waiting on you.

DR: I can just see him standing out at the gate waiting on me to catch up with him to go to Sunday school. It is one of the memories way back that is awfully sweet.

MD: It is good to have those memories. What did your father do in Diboll?

DR: Oh, various things.

MD: What were some of his jobs?

DR: We had a bakery at one time and we had a stable, livery stable one time.

MB: Didn't you say you had horses and surreys?

DR: Oh, yes.

MD: And he would rent those to people?

DR: Yes, we had a driver that went with them if they needed it. And he had the bakery, and he worked at the sawmill some.

MB: Well, didn't he work at the picture show?

DR: He didn't work at the picture show, but where they had the lights.

MB: Sounds like he operated the generator.

DR: Yes, generator.

MB: They said that one time something caught on fire and that Cliff Kelley said, "Shut her down Bassett and run."

DR: I don't remember that.

MD: I believe that Wes Ashworth told that on his tape.

DR: He might have.

MD: And your grandmother had a boarding house?

DR: No, she didn't have a boarding house. She only served meals.

MB: That would be Grandmother Hanby.

DR: Well, Grandmother Hanby had a boarding house at Keltys.

MB: But she had one at Emporia, too.

DR: Yes, I believe she did.

MD: Did you ever hear her say anything about some of the people who stayed with her?

DR: No, I can't remember now.

MB: Henke and Pilot, who later owned the grocery stores in Houston, they came to Diboll in the early days because my Grandmother Copes was a seamstress. They were drummers and they brought their wares up from Houston and what Grandma Copes needed for her sewing--she did sewing, well, she let them spend the night with her to pay for her purchases. And then they hit the town and sold whatever they could to the other people. While they were there, they would stay with Grandmother Copes and she would give them their room and board for the merchandise that she bought from them. And she was also a midwife. She had her little black bag, and she delivered an awfully lot of babies during her time.

MD: Now what was her name?

MB: She was Cynthia--Cynthia Jeanette Copes.

MD: Cynthia Jeanette Bassett Copes.

MB: And another thing, Henry Francis Copes and Cynthia came to Texas from Missouri because Dr. Joseph Copes owned all this land in the Diboll area and Henry was his nephew. And he (Dr. Joseph Copes) gave him (Henry Francis Copes) so many acres of land as they had an agreement, and would educate his children if he would come to Texas and live and oversee the property. And that is when they came. They came in a covered wagon and they said that Indians would follow them. There were about three different times the Indians followed them, but they never did attack. And Grandma Copes discovered one time (they were staunch Christians) that she had gotten the days of the week mixed up and that she was riding along in the covered wagon knitting on Sunday. And that really upset her.

MD: That was a "No, no."

MB: That was a "No, no."

MD: Do you remember anything about Emporia?

DR: Yes, in a way. I remember the commissary came out to the railroad. The platform did. And I can just see the store and the big platform, the railroad track and different places around, homes that I remember. And Emporia pond where a lot of people were baptized. That was before we were prepared to do that in church. And I can see the Emporia pond and going to baptizing down there. That was from the sawmill down there.

MD: From the old sawmill down there. Did it seem like a long way to have to walk down there? Did it seem very far from your house?

DR: It was about a mile, I guess. It wasn't too far.

MD: Do you remember any saloons in the area?

DR: Not where I lived. There were some saloons in the west part of Diboll, back over in there.

MB: Didn't your daddy win a cut glass punch bowl?

DR: My mother had a beautiful punch bowl set that they gave away. My daddy had it and Margaret still has it. We still have it.

MD: What about Copestown? Do you remember how that was formed?

DR: Well, Miss Mable Phelps and her mother, Asenath Phelps came, and they surveyed all up in there and my daddy helped with the work.

MD: This was the only area that people could have their own homes?

DR: Then--yes.

MD: They could buy a lot?

DR: Yes, buy property.

MD: And build their own houses.

DR: Yes.

MD: What do you remember about Asenath Phelps? Do you remember very much about her?

DR: Yes, I just remember that she was awfully nice and all. She was very business-like. And Mable was, too.

MD: That was the daughter.

DR: Yes.

MD: This must have been property that they did not sell to Diboll--to Mr. Temple, I guess.

DR: What?

MD: The Copestown area?

MB: It was probably some division of that land...

DR: I don't remember the details about that.

MD: Where was the first school that you went to in Diboll? Where was it located? Do you remember?

DR: Well, I could show you, but I don't know the area. I don't know what they call it.

MB: Is it close to where the commissary is now?

DR: It is like going out towards the Massingills--out that way.

MD: Was it across a branch or anything?

DR: I don't remember that.

MB: How far did you walk to school?

DR: Well, I walked a good long ways. I did.

MD: How many rooms did it have?

DR: Let's see...Professor's room...2 or 3...I don't remember that just now.

MD: Do you remember what happened to that school?

DR: Not unless they tore it down. I don't remember. Right now, I couldn't tell you.

MD: Well, that is fine. Did your husband ever work in Diboll, Mr. Rogers?

DR: Sure. He worked at the drug store.

MD: That is where he got his start, I guess, to get his own drug store.

DR: Yes.

MD: Did he work for Mr. Agee. Who ran the drug store when he worked. Do you remember?

DR: No.

MD: Did you ever work when you were in Diboll?

DR: Yes.

MD: Where did you work?

DR: I worked at the post office.

MD: Who was the postmaster?

DR: Mr. Farrington.

MD: Do you remember how many trains came through. Were there a lot of trains?

DR: Well, one from Houston in the morning and one from Shreveport in the afternoon and the same thing at night. Of course, they had lots of freight trains.

MD: Did the passenger trains bring the mail?

DR: Yes.

MD: What were your duties?

DR: What?

MD: In the post office. Did you help stamp the mail and put it out?

MB: What were some of the chores you did?

DR: I separated the mail, and we put it in the boxes and gave the mail out.

MB: And you had to stand on the stool to put the mail up?

DR: Yes, I was so short I had to stand on a stool.

MD: What do you remember about Mr. Farrington? Was he a nice fellow to work for?

DR: He was a wonderful person. He certainly was.

MD: Did you ever hear that he had the first car in Diboll? Did you ever hear anything about that? You were probably too young.

MB: Her first car ride was with Mr. Hollaway.

DR: No, it wasn't.

MB: It wasn't?

MD: Do you remember your first car ride?

DR: No.

MB: I think it was from Ryan's Chapel.

DR: No, that was later.

MB: That was later, okay.

MD: Were you too young to help in the bakery?

DR: Yes.

MB: And girls didn't work in livery stables.

MD: I guess not.

DR: I was too little.

MD: Did you and Mr. Rogers grow up together in Diboll?

DR: Well, not from the very beginning. We went to school together.

MD: Were you sweethearts during school?

DR: Some, the last of school when we grew up.

MD: Were you in the same grade or was he older?

DR: No, he was older.

MR: When World War I came, he went in service and when he came out, you all got married?

DR: Not right then.

MB: Not right then?

DR: April 26, 1919.

MD: When were you born?

DR: September 10, 1901.

MD: Where was your first home after you got married? What town did you live in after you got married?

DR: Pineland.

MD: Pineland. Okay. Was he working in Pineland for the company?

DR: For Southern Pine.

MD: Did he work in the drug store over there?

DR: Yes.

MD: How did he start his own drugstore?

DR: He worked in a drugstore over there for awhile and then we opened our own drugstore in Hemphill.

MD: And then you moved to Lufkin?

DR: Yes, and opened a drugstore here then.

MD: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

DR: I didn't have any brothers.

MD: Name your sisters.

DR: Ida, and Bea and Ruby and Ollie.

MD: Five girls.

DR: Yes, and no brothers.

MD: How many children do you have?

DR: Me? I have Margaret and Mary Virginia now. Besides the grands and greats.

MB: Tell her about Florene.

DR: Florene got killed, the oldest little girl.

MD: So you had three daughters?

DR: She had just started school. She had been home to lunch, and started back and this car struck her.

MD: Do you remember the Rutlands?

DR: I do. Mrs. Rutland and my grandmother were very dear friends. Mr. Rutland was always so nice to us. He helped us a lot of ways, Mr. Rogers and I.

MD: I guess Mr. Rogers worked for Mr. Rutland when he worked in the drugstore down there?

DR: Yes, and Mr. Agee.

MD: And Mr. Agee.

MB: Do you have anything on daddy's family?

MD: No.

MB: At least who they were.

MD: Mr. Rogers, was he born in Diboll?

DR: No, they moved there.

MB: They moved there. Some of the children were born there. My daddy's, Homer, father died when he was just a young boy.

DR: He was a Methodist minister.

MB: And his mother remarried to Bob Hogue. And it was this family that moved to Diboll. And these Rogers children and the Hogue children...let's see, there was Marvin T. Rogers, and daddy, W.B. (Uncle Bill) and Aunt Patty (four children). Aunt Patty was a King, a Taylor, and then she was a Null. Rufus and that gang, you know, Franklin, were her children. And the Hagues were Paul, Cecil, Aunt Laddie and Aunt Evelyn. And there was just a garden space between Grandma Copes and Grandma Hogue up in Copetown. There was just a big garden space between them. We would go to visit. We would visit one, staying part of the time at Grandma Copes and part of the time at Grandma Hagues...visit back and forth.

DR: My daddy's youngest brother...

MB: And his name was Thomas Cushman Copes and he was born in Diboll and raised there and worked in the sawmill until he was grown and went to Houston, I believe, and sometime or other he married Georgia Mae Patton and they lived in Port Arthur and then he returned to Crockett. They never missed Diboll Day as long as they were able to travel down to Diboll Day.

MD: Now he was born after they came from St. Louis.

DR: Yes, Angelina County.

MD: Mrs. Rogers, what church did you go to...you and your father and your mother?

DR: Well, Baptist.

MD: Your father was probably a very devout Christian?

DR: Yes.

MD: You can remember some of the things he helped people do?

DR: He didn't go to church a lot and things like that but he did other things. When people needed his help, he went. Whatever he was doing, he quit and would go help.

MD: He practiced his religion, didn't he. I don't guess Diboll has ever had a funeral home, have they?

DR: Not that I know of.

MD: Did they bury most of their dead out at Ryan's Chapel?

DR: Yes, and different cemeteries...at Prairie Grove and the one down at the river.

MB: Henry Francis Copes, after he came to Texas, was working for his uncle (Joseph S. Copes) and then after the property was sold, he did farming. He taught school at Stovall Prairie, down at Emporia, and he also worked at the county clerk's office at Homer. He was working there when the court house burned. I think it was about 1891.

DR: He didn't set it afire, though.

MD: No.

END OF INTERVIEW