

ANNIE CHANDLER

Interview 104a

August 10, 1954, Annie Chandler's home in Diboll, Texas

Clyde Thompson, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In a short 1954 interview with Clyde Thompson, Annie Chandler reminisces about her early life in Diboll. Her father was involved in Southern Pine Lumber Company's Diboll mill starting in 1895 and Mrs. Chandler spent the rest of her life in Diboll. She married and raised her children there. She remembers getting off the train in Diboll before there was a town. Mrs. Chandler's son, O'Hara was a longtime company executive, and two of her daughters, Rhoda Faye and Finney, worked in the office.

Clyde Thompson (hereafter CT): This is an interview with Mrs. Annie Chandler in her home in Diboll on August 10, 1954. Mrs. Chandler came here as a young girl of fifteen years of age fifty-nine years ago; and in this interview she will tell us something of the early days here in Diboll.

Annie Chandler (hereafter AC): We came here at four o'clock in the morning on the down train. The train from Shreveport. My father had been down here almost a month. But we heard of this Temple Lumber Company; and my brother-in-law knew Mr. Tom Temple up around Rosebud, Texas (I think it was Rosebud), and he liked the Temples. Of course, this being a brand new sawmill (It had started up in 1894, and we came here in 1895), it had been running a year when we came to Diboll. You know by us being here so long that we are bound to love Diboll, and we love the Temple Lumber Company. They have been so nice to us. We came here as a family of seven. There are two of us left, just my sister and me. She is six years older than I am. She has been here off and on, but I have raised my entire family here. I have seven children, and they were every one, raised to be grown men and women before they left Diboll. You know by that that we have ties in Diboll, that we just love it. Now my mother was afraid to leave Diboll; she was afraid to go away for fear she would die away from Diboll. She had lost all of her family here, and she wanted to stay. And the Lord made it possible that she should stay here. He took her away from here. We have just always loved the place; we have loved the Company. And they have just been so nice and so good to us until we don't have any right not to love the Company. We don't have no right not to love it. And do you know, you might as well say something about some of my own people, say something about my boy or the people that are head of it now. Of course, you know the Temples are all human just like we are. You know that, don't you? They are human, sure enough; they are not just men and women to be talked about. They have an interest in everybody that works for them. My father worked here eight years. He came here in 1895; and in 1902, the first day of September, eight years to the day, he died. He had lost three boys since we came to

Diboll. Our house burned, and everything in the world we had in the house burned up; but still we stayed in Diboll. Because it just seemed like it was a part of us, I guess.

CT: Tell us something about the town now.

AC: Mr. Will Rutland was working in the store when we came to Diboll, and it was just a one little room building, about 14' x 16', I guess, just a small place. Of course, the sawmill was small, too. It was a circle saw; that was before the band mills ever came in. This new number one mill is still standing. My father was the first one that ever raised steam in those boilers, and he turned the engines over that day. Of course, we were all so proud of that sawmill. We thought it belonged to us. But it didn't. It didn't belong to us, but we loved it just the same. And we still love it.

There were just a few of us here. We came here on the first day of September, and my oldest brother died the last day of September.

Will Carlisle was the general manager here at the time. He was the brother-in-law of Mr. Rutland. He had married Mr. Rutland's sister. There was just a few of us here at the time. When we came here we just lived in a little two-room building until they could build us a house. We lived there for years, and then we moved across the street to the next place. That is where all the family died with the exception of just one brother.

CT: Was Mr. Temple living here in Diboll at that time?

AC: No, the general office was in Texarkana. That is where Mr. Tom Temple comes from. And, of course, Mr. Arthur Temple wasn't here. We didn't know anything at all about Mr. Arthur Temple. He came on later. But he used to visit Diboll. His wife (Tom Temple's wife) was in bad, bad health; and I don't know whether she ever visited Diboll or not, but the oldest children did. But they were all youngsters then; there wasn't any of them married when we came to Diboll. They just kept adding on and adding on, and at one time there was three sawmills here. One of them burned down, and here the last year or so they tore one of them down.

This mill was started up in 1902, I imagine. My husband was here for forty-two years, and he died here in Diboll. So our whole family has lived here in Diboll, and we are still crazy about Diboll. Of course, none of my children work here, none but the two in the office, Rosie and Finny. Now Rosie has worked up there twenty or twenty-two years, but Mrs. Burkston lost her husband seventeen or eighteen years ago, and she got a job in the office, so she has been working here all this time.

Of course I like to visit with the children, but I love to come back to Diboll.

CT: Thank you, Mrs. Chandler. Did you see Mr. Tom Temple very much? He was here pretty often during those early days.

AC: Oh, yes. He and his oldest children (I think there was a Will Temple, and Mr. Arthur, Sr., a grandson of Tom Temple's), the older children we have seen quite a lot; but of course they weren't grown.

We got off the train at 4:00 in the morning, and the weeds were up to our shoulders. But still that didn't daunt us; we still wanted to come to Diboll. But it was a very small place; but the Company was a good Company, and that just caused good people to want to come and stay.

They didn't have a depot here. We didn't even have a post office here; the mail went to Emporia. And that is where they were going to take us to before they stopped the train. I had had a congested chill that morning, and my mother and sister had dressed me to come to Diboll. Mama told the conductor, "Don't take us to Emporia; bring us back to Diboll. My daughter just can't make that walk." Just out of the good heart of the conductor, he let us off here. You see, this was just a flag station; and without somebody out there to get on, they just don't stop the train.

END OF INTERVIEW