

[Note: Willie Cauble Powell E111 was the first daughter of Molly O. Cathey and George Clinton Cauble, Sr. She was born 20 September 1888 in Hill County, Texas. She came with her parents to Howard County, Texas, in the late summer of 1896, when she was nearing her eighth birthday. Their earlier homes were in Albany and Waco, Texas. When Willie was seventeen, her mother died. Her father sent her and her siblings to board at the Catholic convent school located at Stanton in Martin County, Texas. In the summer before she was twenty-one, Willie Cauble married **Robert L. Powell** (23 September 1873-02 August 1953 Howard County, Texas; buried Trinity Memorial Park, Big Spring, Howard County, Texas) on 26 July 1907 in Howard County. The couple ranched and raised a son, a daughter, and a grandson. She died on 11 October 1977 in Howard County, Texas, and was buried at Trinity Memorial Park, Howard County, Texas. The following interview was published about two months before her death.]

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By Marj Carpenter

### **Powells Working Hard On...**

“The Land is what is important and the land is what will remain,” says Mrs. Bob (Willie) Powell, who is 92-year-old and lives on 18 sections of land east of Big Spring. She and her two sons, R. L. and Bob work from “can to can’t” every day to raise cattle, sheep, goats, and to raise the hay to feed them.

Some people call them “loners” because they don’t want their ranch tromped over and down with sightseers, hunters or wanderers. They take care of their property and go to town when they need something.

They are glad to see their close friends and are glad to emphasize to sightseers that their ranch is posted. And they’ll emphasize it anyway they see fit.

But they are examples of a dying breed. They think nothing of rising before dawn and working with a hay loader until dark. They stack their hay and feed their cattle when there is no good grass.

They care for their sheep the only sizeable herd of sheep in Howard County and they shear their sheep. They are kind, good men who circle their ranch each day and check the tanks to be sure that a small lamb hasn’t bogged down in the mud and needs to be lifted out.

Or that a curious young goat hasn’t stuck his head through a fence for that grass on the other side and stuck right there.

Mrs. Powell cooks. There are very few women of any age that can turn a pan of homemade rolls like Mrs. Powell. And she's 92.

Her father was George C. Cauble, the oldest of seven Cauble boys. He came out to Howard County in 1896 and bought many sections of land from a man named Sid Moore.

They first stayed in a hotel in town for three days before moving out to the ranch. The home which they moved to burned many years ago and the present home is a few miles from that site.

But both ranch houses were within viewing distance of Signal Mountain. They also can see Lobo Mountain in the other direction. It got that name when an old wolf hunter climbed up the mountain with a 30-30 and killed a mean wolf holed up in a cave.

"He tied up his dogs," the old-timers recall and when asked why, he replied, "That old wolf is mean. I don't want him to hurt my dogs."

The Powells live on some of the most beautiful land in this part of the state. She lived there ever since she was ten years old. "We celebrated my tenth birthday shortly after we arrived in 1896," she recalls.

Her dad had six younger brothers, Hub, Doc, Sam, Frank, Jim, and Ewke. Some of them ranched in East Texas, some in Glasscock County and some in other parts of Howard County.

She recalled that her father originally came from Waco to Albany. "But he didn't stay too long before he moved on to Howard County. I used to have chills when I was a child and the doctor told him to take me west to a higher, drier climate, so we came here," she stated.

Mrs. Powell has seen the time when it took all day to get to town in a buggy. "When the ranch house burned, there was no way to get help. We just had to let it burn," she added.

They lived in Coahoma for a while while the children went to school. Mrs. Powell is the only charter member left.

“Every once in a while they come out here to have a meeting. Since I fell and broke my hip and can’t get around too well. One day, they just called that they were coming right now,” she related.

Mrs. Powell takes a great deal of pride in her hospitality so she started getting refreshments ready. She called their friend George Bair in town and asked him to hurry and get a cake at the bakery and he got the bakery to put Eastern Star on it and rushed out to the ranch.

Imagine the surprise of the group when the refreshments included a “spur of the moment decorated cake.” Mrs. Powell still laughs about it. But she laughs a lot. And the lines in her face are laughter lines.

A lot of her friends bring her little mementoes from their trips since she rarely travels. One friend bought her a small crystal peacock recently. She has real peacocks stalking around the ranch. They have become quite acclimated to West Texas. They will circle round a rattlesnake and kill it. They also give the turkeys on the home place a bad time.

She also has some paintings that a friend paints for her. One of the paintings was especially painted for Bobby. It shows a lone cowhand riding toward a mountain similar to the ones on their beautiful ranch. And above soars a lone eagle, similar to those which nest up in the hills on the Powell Ranch.

The Powells have fought the big drouths—those in the 30s and those in the 50s. They lost many thousands of dollars one year that included a drouth and blizzard that nearly wiped them out.

They recall burning the prickly pear with flame throwers to feed the cattle during the drouth in the 50s. “Boy those things are hot to operate,” R. L. recalled.

The Powells have no pump jacks and no oil wells on their land. They've had to work in the old-time ranching way and are not sitting around counting their oil royalties. They've been through house fires, range fires, blizzards, sandstorms, hailstorms, sickness, accidents and all the rigors of early day ranching.

But they still have that beautiful land. And they work from sun up to sun down to raise their sheep and raise their cattle.

When there's hay in the barn, roots stacked up for firewood, water in the ponds and contented sheep and cattle, the Powells rest long enough to enjoy good food or welcome their friends. Then they get up and work again. They are the same hardy pioneer stock that built this land out west in the first place.