

THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: Van Trimble (carpenter)
PLACE: Home of Grace Wilhelm, Menard, Texas
INTERVIEWER: Mayon Neel
DATE: Sunday, November 16, 1986

Neel: We are happy to have Van Trimble with us of Menard County, and he has a lot of family history in his grandfather, or his uncle, which one was it, Van.

Trimble: Both; great grandfather and great uncle.

N: I see. Dawson's men?

T: They were both.

N: Alright. So, he's going to give us the story. And I'm going to let him tell it however he'd like to.

T: I've only got word from my father which came down through the line to his father which was a very small child at the time of the Dawson massacre and my grandfather went to fight with the Dawson expedition for the reason one of his neighbors was sick and he couldn't go so he took his place. He went on with his brother and they joined the Dawson expedition and was in the Dawson massacre. I don't really know what all had taken place during the time but after the Dawson massacre he was one of the fifteen men that was captured and taken on to Perote, in Mexico, and he stayed there for I don't really know, maybe several months though,

T: before he died of dysentery.

But I did remember some of the things that he said; how it felt to be in a strange land in chains for reasons that he couldn't explain. The thing that has struck most in my mind was his good friend, Gonzo Woods, who made an escape from the Perote prison and dodged the lance of a Mexican renegade and pulled him off the horse and pinned him to the ground and got on his horse and made his getaway. He came back home but it wasn't long after this until whether they had taken dysentery from something they ate or some food poisoning or what, but he did die in prison. And as far as I know, his bones was left in the moat that surrounded this castle or the prison. I don't know anything else to say but this is only words that came down to me through the family line.

N: Go ahead. Tell about how did you come to come to Menard.

T: Well, my family came to Menard from Field Creek and they came here in 1884. But they went back and came back again I believe it was 1898. And, of course, my father was here practically all of his life. He lived here until he was 82 years old, and passed away in 1955 and his daddy was here from 1884 off and on until 1923 when he passed away. He was one of the old timers here at Menard.

N: What did they do? Farm?

T: Daddy, when they first came here, my granddaddy worked for the old Noyes farm down here and on the river. But when they came back, of course, they had bees and he

T: kept a big apiary of bees here and my daddy had bees and he was in the farming and ranching business for most all of his life until he moved to Kimball County where he was in 1949 just before his death.

N: Don't you have some family history or something in here you'd like...

T: No. I've got all the rest of it in another deal on family history. I didn't know we was to have all that.

N: Did you want to read some of these letters?

T: No. I don't know of any other that...I've been through all of it. It seems to me like it was just letters from friends and family back home where they mention our family in the letters and what all was going on.

N: Well. Wouldn't you like to read one of those and kinda tell what was going on? That sounds like it would be very interesting. Now, they were from what county? What was it called where they were?

T: They was from Fayette County, Texas, when they came to Menard the first time. Here's one that says:

"Dear wife: I am well at present. I hope when these come to hand that they may find you all well. I am yet a prisoner and in Perote but hope to be released before long but it is uncertain. We can tell nothing but look forward to a better time. Winter is coming and may you endure to look out forward for your next year but I shall instruct no more but advise you to do the best you can. I

T: have nothing more to write but remain your affectionate husband. W. M. Trimble"

N: How many children did he leave at home?

T: I just don't know.

2nd voice: William James. Now do you know anything about Edwards.

T: Not only that he was a brother. And he was killed at the Dawson massacre. William James was one of the fifteen men that was captured and taken on to the Mexican prison in Mexico.

N: I guess they were marched down there probably.

T: As far as I know they were. They were marched.

2nd voice: Now later they were supposed to have rescued the bones of those that died there.

T: Did they bring them back to La Grange?

2nd voice: I suppose.

N: Did your grandmother die, then, in La Grange?

T: You know, I just don't know.

N: I just wondered how she got along after ...

T: I know they went back, my daddy did later on, and found where his mother was buried at Littlefield or something down at Field Creek, I believe it was, close to Littlefield or something. But, this hasn't been too many years back, it's been thirty years back, I guess, when ...

2nd voice: Well. Have you told all about your family?

T: Yeah. That's all I know.

N: How many came to Menard?

T: Well, there was my daddy and his daddy which was an old Civil War veteran. And, he had three girls, I believe, and three boys when he came. There was one passed away early in, I believe might have been 189____, I don't know it's on the tomb up there, and there was a Palm Trimble. Of course, he married Fanny Ellis and then there was my dad and then there was Aunt Josie which married Ace Bradford, and Maudie who married Jim Glasscock. Joe and Zimmer was their children. And then Aunt Minnie married a Griffin. He passed away in Big Spring and Aunt Katie, the oldest one, married Bob Glasscock. That's Ray's children's mother and dad.

2nd voice: It's just like Melvin says. You can't say anything in Menard - everybody's related to somebody else. Well, if you are of a mind to, I think it would be very interesting to tell you a story about the war, serving in two wars.

T: Well, I only served through one.

2nd voice: Well, you enlisted though again, didn't you?

T: No, I come out as a disabled vet, and I was in the beginning with the anti-aircraft and then I went to England and stayed 11 months before going on to France across the English Canal or whatever -- English Channel -- and then I stayed in combat for almost six months and my feet were frozen in the Belgium Bulge and I was returned back and I had several operations in England and returned back home.

T: The final operation was in California and I was discharged from that point.

2nd voice: You never know about people you've known all your life. A good part of it and then you find out things that you didn't know.

T: I didn't know that you wanted all of this but I've got it back from in the early days when my folks first came over here. We've got our history all the way up.

N: When did they first come over to America? Way back?

T: It's way back. They've even got it where the name started back in Scotland and Ireland. I have the whole story. I didn't know. It would take hours to go through that though. We are compiling books of it now. It's gonna be pretty interesting when we get it all. I am making five copies for _____. And we are gonna compile the whole thing up in book form. I think that is the whole archives there. Everybody has that information as far as I know. My brother was supposed to have been here.

Voice: Are you any relation to Lee Trimble? The ranger?

T: No. No. There is no relation to him.

Voice: He died last year.

T: No. I was no relation to him. I know that the judge at that time didn't take the, turned down the judge because he thought it was Dad because he was a second cousin of my mother's. So he turned down the trial because ... had

T: some other judge take it because he thought it was kinfolks. But come finding out, there was no relation.

N: What trial was that?

Voice: When Trimble killed Tomlinson.

N: Oh.

Voice: He had been hired by Ott to help him move his camp and all of his stock out and of course Tomlinson didn't want it moved. It all happened before I came here. I've just heard bits and pieces.

T: Yeah. This was back when I was fairly young. What year was it? '27.

Voice: No, it was later than that. I was married.

T: Right after the depression, I know.

Voice: We knew Lee Trimble well.

T: Forty years ago. Of course, that sets us back quite a bit doesn't it?

Voice: Everybody in Menard can date things by this what happened and that what happened.

N: You don't have any other letters you wanted to read.

T: No. I believe that's everything that I had.

N: Well, we thank you.