

**Brazos County Natural History:  
Plants, Animals, Weather, Geology and Related Topics**

1885-1889

compiled by Bill Page

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Millican ... The weather has caused a great deal of sickness in and around here. Cattle are dying very fast from the want of food and excessively cold weather. Galveston Daily News, 12 February 1885, p.2

Bryan ... The ice company are increasing their water supply by deepening their wells to a depth of 150 feet. Galveston Daily News, 17 March 1885, p.2

Bryan ... The ice company are deepening their wells to a depth of 150 feet, and will endeavor to make arrangements with the aldermen to furnish the city with water. The plan, no doubt, will meet with the approbation of all the citizens of Bryan, and will be acted on by our city council. Galveston Daily News, 7 April 1885, p.2

Bryan, April 26 – The big and little Brazos rivers are out of their banks and doing much damage to crops. The rise is over two feet higher than last year, and still continues. Several farmers about eight miles south of Bryan are entirely under water. A large portion of the farmers west of Bryan are submerged. Major Watts has over 300 acres in cotton under water. Many farmers will have to plant over, and it is a question whether there is enough cotton seed in the county to plant with. Galveston Daily News, 27 April 1885, p. 1 (also in Dallas Weekly Herald, 30 April 1885, p.6.)

Benchley ... H. B. Steele, a wealthy merchant and planter from Mudville, came in to town day before yesterday. He says the overflow in the Brazos bottoms has done a great deal of damage to crops, but says the loss will not be so great as first thought. Farmers are doing all they can to get ready for replanting where cotton has been killed by water standing on it for three or four days. He also states that there were from 200 to 300 head of stock drowned, the water rising so fast on stock that they had no time to come out from the bottoms to the hills. Galveston Daily News, 7 June 1885, p. 3.

Bryan, June 29 – Rains have fallen in various portions of the county during the past week, and has done much good to the crops. The weather is warm and showery. Galveston Weekly News, 2 July 1885, p.2, col.5

A woman named Mayham living in Brazos County, near Millican, while her husband was asleep procured a sharp knife and performed a surgical operation on him which will ruin him for life. The *Navasota Tablet* gives the details. The woman having finished her work ran into the yard and jumped into a well 80 feet deep, but strange to say escaped unhurt. Brenham Daily Banner, 14 July 1885, p.2

College Station, Texas, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1885

... We are having 'weather what is weather' now, the thermometer going up to 125 degrees to 130 degrees in the sun, and in my room, which you know is about as cool as any place, is about 90 degrees every day at one o'clock ... R.H. Whitlock  
(Cofer, David Brooks, The Early History of Texas A. and M. College Through Letters and Papers, 1952, p.42)

Bryan, August 22 – Rains fell in various portions of the county last night, and did cotton some good. Galveston Weekly News, 27 August 1885, p.2, col.3

Bryan, Dec. 12 ... A heavy rain fell this morning, filling the cisterns, besides furnishing plenty of water for stock. Dallas Morning News, 13 December 1885, p.4

Millican ... Christmas will long be remembered by all who attended the exhibition given by the Millican Literary club last night ... The weather being so warm and congenial, the table was set out among the live oaks; and much praise is due the ever willing ladies of our town for so abundantly furnishing the table with such choice edibles. Galveston Daily News, 28 December 1885, p.4

Bryan, Jan.15 ... The cloudy weather has disappeared and it is now warm and pleasant. Dallas Morning News, 16 January 1886, p.3

"Mr. Spinelli's Death," Dallas Morning News, 4 February 1886, p.1. "... During the very cold weather in the middle of January Mr. Spinelli, while playing on a frozen pond near the college in company with several of his comrades, broke through the ice. The others immediately went to their rooms and changed their clothing; he alone remained at the pond with his wet garments on ...."

Bryan ... A large number of suits for damage to land by overflow have been instituted against the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad. The parties bringing the suits all live near Allen farm, in Brazos County. Dallas Morning News, 17 February 1886, p.3

"G., C. & S. F. R'y Co. v. L. Holliday," 65 Texas Reports 512 (February 19, 1886). L. Holliday brought this suit against the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe railway company, for the destruction of his crops of corn and cotton in the spring of 1884, in the Brazos bottom, on land near the railroad and near where the road crosses the Brazos River. Holliday alleged that the railroad was constructed a short distance below his farm in such an unskillful manner that the natural channels for the escape of water flowing out of the Brazos River above the railroad were dammed up, that a rise occurred in the Brazos River in the spring of 1884, and that the water flowed out of the river at low places in the banks, above the railroad, down to the road, and was there dammed up by the defendant's embankment, thereby destroying 30 acres of cotton being raised by plaintiff, at the value of \$20.00 per acre. The case was tried before a jury in September 1885, and resulted in a verdict in favor of plaintiff for \$ 300. From the Brazos River, where the railroad crosses it, to Allen farm, or Jarrell's, is 3 ¼ miles. The river bank at the bridge and the land at Allen farm are points elevated several feet above the intervening country. The farm lies on the river, about 1 ¼ miles above the railroad bridge, and between the farm and the bridge there are several low places in the river bank, one of which is about 600 yards

long. Before the railroad was built, the sloughs were "not sufficient, during a freshet in the river, to conduct the water off, but the sloughs flowed into Elm flats, which carried off the water." Through these low lands and sloughs, or bayous, defendant erected an embankment several feet high. In this space of 3 ¼ miles, from the bridge to Allen farm, defendant left 108 yards in openings for the escape of this volume of water. At one place across these low lands, there is no opening at all for a distance of 1,000 yards, and the water coming into this space would accumulate and be thrown back on plaintiff's land, until about 2 or 2 ½ feet deep, and then escape over the railroad embankment. When the flood of 1884 occurred, the water passed out of the river through the low places in the banks into natural depressions, and thence down the railroad, where it was stopped and thrown back through the bottom on to plaintiff's land, submerging it. It was said that the river had been as high in 1852, 1853, 1867, 1868, and 1879 or 1880, as in this freshet. The natural channels and out-lets, before the construction of the railroad, afforded a sufficient escape for the water from the Brazos River overflowing its banks at low places below plaintiff's farm and above where the road was built. The railroad was built through that section about 1881-2. The railroad was down the river from plaintiff's farm, his farm being north of the road. This part of plaintiff's land had not been overflowed in previous years. The water stood on plaintiff's crop 5 or 6 days, and destroyed it. The crop destroyed was worth from \$15 to \$20 per acre. The evidence showed that the water which overflowed plaintiff's land came out of the Brazos River from a general rise in the river, and not from local streams or surface water from local rains. One of Holliday's witnesses, M.R. Millican, stated, on cross-examination by the defendant, that the water in the Brazos River was, in 1884, higher than he had ever seen it before; that he would call it an unusual rise. Several witnesses had previously testified that many large freshets had occurred in the Brazos River, at intervals of 3 or 4 years, between 1852 and 1884, some of which were equal to, if not greater than, the one causing the damage to plaintiff. After the defendant had rested, the plaintiff introduced as a witness J. B. Thomas, who testified as to the topography of the country in the vicinity of the plaintiff's premises alleged to have been overflowed, and also as to the character and manner of the construction of defendant's road, and its effect upon the flow of the water in that vicinity.

Bryan, May 19 ... The cool nights are doing some damage to the cotton, and rain is needed very much for the corn. Dallas Morning News, 20 May 1886, p.6

Bryan, May 25 ... The weather is warm and dry and crops are in need of rain. Two weeks more of dry weather would ruin the prospects for a corn crop. Dallas Morning News, 26 May 1886, p.7

Bryan ... Crops are looking fine after the splendid rain which fell on Saturday. Dallas Morning News, 9 June 1886, p.6

Bryan ... One of the heaviest rains of the season fell in the northern part of the county and at College Station, extending as far south as Millican. Galveston Daily News, 1 July 1886, p.5

College Sta., Tex. July 8, '86 ... The thermometer in this country has been up to 110 degrees in the shade. You can see the effects on this ink ... W.L. Bringhurst (Cofer, David Brooks, The Early History of Texas A. and M. College Through Letters and Papers, 1952, p.44)

Bryan, July 27 ... A fine rain fell this afternoon, doing much good. The boll worm is reported in some sections of the county and is doing damage to the cotton. Dallas Morning News, 28 July 1886, p.1

Wellborn ... There have been three mad hogs killed here in the past three weeks. They were bit by a mad dog about six weeks ago. Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 28 July 1886, p. 5.

Millican ... We had a heavy rain here to-day commencing at 2 o'clock and lasting for three hours, with prospects of more. The cotton that had been shedding will now take a sound growth and everything will look prosperous again. Galveston Daily News, 28 July 1886, p.2

Bryan ... The ice company, owing to the failure of their wells, will begin next week to bore artesian wells. An outfit has been shipped, and will be here this week. Dallas Morning News, 22 August 1886, p.6

"Bryan," Galveston Daily News, 1 September 1886, p.1. "Two miles west of the town, in a picturesque grove of trees, are located the Manganic Wells, whose curative properties are a panacea for all liver, kidney, blood and nerve diseases known."

Millican ... The long drouth has at last been broken and we are having a fine rain. Farmers have been busy planting for the last two weeks. We have at last two iron bridges finished, one leading to Allenfarm, the other to the Brazos. Galveston Daily News, 29 January 1887, p.2

Bryan, Tex., January 31 – At fourteen minutes past 8 o'clock to-night the little town of Wellborn, nine miles south of here, was shaken twice by a slight earthquake, the shocks causing windows to rattle and houses to tremble. This is the first earthquake shock ever felt in this section. Charleston (S.C.) News and Courier, 1 February 1887, p.1, col.5

"Verdict Against the Santa Fe," Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 1 February 1887, p.2, col.5. For damages to crops caused by flooding from railroad construction.

Wellborn, Tex., January 31 -To night at 8:14 our little town was shaken twice by slight earthquake shocks, making the windows rattle and houses tremble. Galveston Daily News, 1 February 1887, p.2, col.1

Wellborn was visited by two distinct shocks of earthquake on Monday night, making windows rattle and houses tremble. Brenham Daily Banner, 2 February 1887, p. 2.

Bryan, Tex., Jan. 31 ... The drouth is continuing, and there is no prospect of rain, which is much needed in this section. Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 2 February 1887, p.6, col.4

Bryan, Feb.2 – Two railroad cases that have been pending for about a year and a half were decided in the County Court today in favor of plaintiffs. Action was brought against the Santa Fe Road by parties living near the Allen farm, in the southern part of this county, on account of alleged damage to their crops by overflow caused by the embankment of the railway damming back the water and thus forcing it over the adjacent plantations. The decisions are important ones as test cases, as there are many other suits. Dallas Morning News, 3 February 1887, p.5

Navasota ... Col. John D. Rogers is having an artesian well bored at Allen Farm, Brazos County. The well is more than 600 feet deep, but no water yet. Only a quantity of mephitic gas, but the work still goes on. Dallas Morning News, 18 February 1887, p.1

Col. Rodgers has bored an artesian well to the depth of 600 feet on the Allen farm, in Brazos County, without finding water. Brenham Daily Banner, 19 February 1887, p. 1.

Bryan, Tex., Feb. 19 ... A slight norther prevailing and a very hard rain fell here to-day accompanied with several hard claps of thunder. Weather still very threatening. Dallas Morning News, 20 February 1887, p.11

Bryan ... Bryan has two artesian wells, in good repair, that could be had on easy terms. One is nearly 600 feet deep and the other something less. The wells are alright, except that they do not flow. Dallas Morning News, 28 February 1887, p.8

Bryan ... Work has recommenced on the artesian well, and it is to be hoped success will result. The depth now reached is 365 feet. Dallas Morning News, 19 March 1887, p.5

Millican – Charles Lewis, colored, was killed to-day at 12 o'clock by William Jones, colored, a lad of 18 years. Your correspondent interviewed the assassin at the city calaboose this evening, and found him in fine spirits, not seeming to realize the consequences of such a crime. He seemed willing to tell all he knew, which was about as follows: They had a quarrel about loading a gun to go rabbit hunting and made it up again, but Jones says after Lewis went back into the house he saw him whetting his razor, and when he came back out he told him, "Now as you want to kill me I will do you up," and discharged one barrel of his gun into him. The boy made no effort to escape and was arrested by Deputy Sheriff Franklin and will be taken to Bryan tomorrow. Houston Daily Post, 22 March 1887, p.4

Wellborn, Tex., April 16 – The long continued drouth came to a close to-day. Quite a refreshing shower fell here this morning, and prospects are good for a heavy rain to-night. Farmers are wearing smiles. Dallas Morning News, 17 April 1887, p.2

Millican, Tex., April 22 – A good rain is reported to-day from Bremond to Navasota, the first in over two months. It is simply invaluable to this county. As the rain began to fall the yells of the citizens almost drowned the sound of the heavy thunder. Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 23 April 1887, page 2

Bryan, Tex., April 22 – This morning about 10 o'clock a heavy rain came up from the north and poured down for nearly two hours. The rain seems to have been very general, and the amount of good done to growing crops can scarcely be estimated ....

Millican, Tex., April 22 - The first rain of any consequence visited this section today, and from all appearances it was general. Farmers and merchants now wear smiles in place of frowns. Nearly everybody was up with their work and ready for the rain. Dallas Morning News, 23 April 1887, p.2

Bryan – Another good rain yesterday and last night. Rains are getting too numerous to mention. Dallas Morning News, 18 May 1887, p.2

Bryan ... The cotton crop is suffering greatly by reason of the continued drouth. Dallas Morning News, 24 July 1887, p.14.

Millican, Tex., July 28 – Cotton on the hills is dying in some places for want of rain, while in the bottoms the boll worm, as well as the caterpillar, is doing some damage on some plantations, though small as yet. Planters have poison and intend to use it freely as soon as they have web up. Dallas Morning News, 29 July 1887, p.5

Bryan, Tex., Nov. 19 – For several days the atmosphere has been choked and burning with foreign matter, the nature of which has been somewhat in dispute. One man says it is “Indian summer,” another highly scientific gentleman says it is ozone, another says it is fog, another, with lore garnered from the astronomies, says it is a comet’s tail, or perhaps primordial star-dust. Some old fogies say it is smoke from prairies or districts burning somewhere north of here, and driven hither by the recent norther. The latter theory, I think, satisfactorily explains the phenomenal nebulosity which envelops us. I know that you have at command sufficient sources of information. Will you be so good as to inform us if extensive recent fires have prevailed in regions north of here, either in this State or the Indian Territory? An answer will probably enable us to decide whether the obstruction referred to be smoke, Indian summer or comet’s tail, and will oblige your Subscriber. Answer – See last Saturday’s *News*, first page, sixth column. Dallas Morning News, 21 November 1887, p.4. [There were fires in the Red River bottom in northeast Texas.]

The [Brazos] *Pilot* says to intending immigrants: Brazos County possesses every element to constitute as good a country as could be desired by immigrants. The seasons are more regular than in the West, there is never a complete failure of crops, rainfall is generally good, the soil is productive, producing as many bushels of corn and pounds of cotton to the acre as the average counties of the State. The climate is salubrious, there being none healthier. We have an abundance of cold, freestone water and wood for fuel. Our schools are unsurpassed, our churches numerous, our people law-abiding and sociable. Dallas Morning News, 10 February 1888, p.4

Bryan, Texas, March 16 – Robert Elliott, a barber, died yesterday of hydrophobia. He was bitten by a mad dog three weeks ago, but did not know at the time that the dog was mad. Three days ago he began complaining of the arm on which he was bitten hurting him. The pain increased until he was compelled to take to his bed. New York Times, 17 March 1888, p.3

Bryan, Tex., March 16 – Robert Elliott, a Negro barber who was bitten by his dog about three weeks ago, was taken with convulsions a day or two since, and died yesterday undoubtedly from hydrophobia. Galveston Daily News, 17 March 1888, p.6

“Brazos County,” Dallas Morning News, 21 March 1888, p.6. “The uplands of Brazos County are equally divided between prairie and timber. The timber consists of post oak, black jack and hickory. The timber in the bottoms, elm, pin oak, mulberry, cedar, cottonwood, ash and pecan.”

Bryan, Tex., June 2 ... Cotton is very late, of inferior stand, greatly injured by frequent rains, and in poor condition generally, as compared to last year. There is a fine oat crop, though it rusted some. Most of this crop has been gathered, and what has not is much damaged by recent rains ... Dallas Morning News 3 June 1888, p.9

Brazos [County] – Too much rain, cotton badly in grass. Galveston Daily News, 26 June 1888, p.4

Bryan – Good rains. Fifty bales of cotton have been received to date. Dallas Morning News, 19 August 1888, p.2

Bryan, Tex., Dec.10 – The strongest artesian well in this county was struck last Saturday on the plantation of J.B. Thomas, ten miles west of Bryan on the Brazos River, at a depth of 317 feet. The water is as pure as melted snow, and furnishes through a one-inch pipe three and one half gallons per minute. This well was made by Wm. Clarke, a former employe of the Aurora wellworks, who is an expert in the business. Dallas Morning News, 11 December 1888, p.6

Wellborn -- A five-year-old Negro boy from near here got lost while rabbit hunting yesterday morning and was found dead this morning. His three dogs were still with him. He probably died from exposure, being out all night in the cold rain. Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 31 December 1888, p.1

Entirely too much rain has made the crop prospects around Millican much less promising than they were two weeks ago ... There is an immense immigration of squirrels to the country around Millican. The woods are full of them, and the Negro and his rifle and squirrel dog are making music in the woods. Brenham Daily Banner, 26 June 1889, p.1

Waterworks & wells. (weekly) Bryan Eagle, 21 November 1889, p.4, col.4