

REMEMBERING DARIUS CYRIAQUE RACHAL

TEXAS ENTREPRENEUR

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REMEMBERING DARIUS CYRIAQUE RACHAL:

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There are individuals in history who have had their moments. This paper is going to discuss the contributions of Darius Cyriaque Rachal, see Appendix A. He was a solidier, rancher, businessman, and community leader back in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was a real entrepreneur in his time. He made a big impact in South Texas, but he has been forgotten in recent years. He was an individual who really had an influence on the development of San Patricio County and South Texas, and his contributions should be remembered.

D.C. Rachal was born in Clouterville, Louisiana in 1841.¹ He came to Liberty, Texas, with his family about 1847. The census records show that his two youngest brothers, born in 1847 and 1849, were born in Texas.² D.C.'s father, Louis Cyriaque Rachal, died in 1852 and left a wife and five children to fend for themselves.³ When he was about eighteen years old, D.C. herded cattle for Edward and Frank White from East Texas to White Point. He liked the land in San Patricio County, so he bought a little piece of land at White Point in 1866. After the Civil War, he married Julia Bryan, see Appendix B, of Liberty and the couple moved to White Point. When yellow fever hit in 1867, all the Whites died, and Mr. Rachal used his porch boards to build their

¹ Bette Gay Ash, "The Rachals" (Unpublished manuscript, 1982). p.1.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, "1850 United States Federal Census" 1850, Liberty, Texas, roll: M653_1300; page:312; Image:44" <http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&new> (accessed March 7, 2009).

³ "Louis Cyriaque Rachal" Ancestry.com. [accessed 7 march, 2009] available from http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=ROOT_CATEGORY

coffins. He buried the family in a small cemetery near Nueces Bay.⁴ Mr. Rachal named his ranch White Point, but no one knows whether it was named for the White family or for the white bluffs by the bay. "But the place should be called Rachal's Point."⁵ When people think of White Point, they think of D.C. Rachal.

Before Mr. Rachal was a rancher, he was a soldier. He was in the Confederate Army in Co. F, 5th Regiment Texas Volunteers as a private. This was part of Hood's Texas Brigade. He entered the Army on 3 August 1861.⁶ Hood's Texas Brigade was part of Robert E. Lee's Army. Company F was called "The Company Invincibles." The men were from Washington, Jefferson, and Liberty Counties. Mr. Rachal was a resident of Liberty County. The 5th Texas regiment was called "The Bloody Fifth." At the battle of Second Manasses, it attacked and defeated the 5th New York. At the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864, the Regiment stopped the attack of two Federal corps.⁷ It was involved in at least twenty battles including the ones at Gains' Mill and Sharpsburg. On July 1, 2 and 3, 1864, they also took part in the Battle of Gettysburg. The brigade fought at Chickamauga and at Chattanooga and Knoxville, too.⁸ It was estimated that 61 per cent of the members were either killed or wounded during the war.⁹ "When the battle flag had been furled and the last musket had been stacked, Mr. Rachal returned to Texas. . . Mr. Rachal was one of the largest cattle-

⁴ "Rachal, Darius Cyriaque," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, (accessed 05 September, 2008) available from [ht.://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rr/fra76.html](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rr/fra76.html), p. 1.

⁵ Murphy Givens, "Short trip in History" *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, 30 April, 1990, sec B p.6

⁶ Florence Hunter, "Application For Members , United Daughters of the Confederacy," May 1913, Rachal Family Papers, Private Collection.

⁷ "5th Texas regimental History 1861-1865." (accessed 20 November, 2008) available from [http2.://members.tripod.com/~Fifth_Texas/regimental_history.html](http://members.tripod.com/~Fifth_Texas/regimental_history.html).

⁸ "Hoods Texas Brigade", *The Handbook of Texas Online* (accessed 14 October 2008) available from http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/HUH/qkh2_print.html.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

raisers in the State and sent large herds up to the trail during this time".¹⁰ He ended his soldier career and began his ranching career.

The name of Rachal's ranch was White Point, and it was part of the Juan Seguin grant in San Patricio County.¹¹ The U.S. Geological Survey shows White Point on north Nueces Bay. It also shows Rosita cemetery and Rosita Ranch. On the map, it's called Whites Point.¹² The ranch went all the way to Odem. It was one of the biggest ranches in South Texas in 1875.¹³

After the Civil War, Texas was not as badly damaged as the other Confederate states, but the economy of Texas had been hurt. There was very little money, and a Confederate paper dollar was only worth five cents. They could not get coffee or flour. They used wallpaper for writing paper. They made a substitute for coffee using parched sweet potatoes and parched corn.¹⁴ Money was scarce, but cows were plentiful in Texas because when all of the men went off to the war, there was no one to tend the cattle, and so they multiplied. But in the North, money was plentiful and beef was scarce. In 1873, a cow cost \$8 in Corpus Christi, and in the North it was \$23 per head.¹⁵ There were many wild longhorns in Texas, so young men got them and branded them and took them north to Kansas to the railroads to ship back to the big cities. "The great cattle-driving era - which lasted for about two decades- began

¹⁰ J. Marvin Hunter, ed, *The Trail Drivers of Texas* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985] 810.

¹¹ King and PERTs, INC. Juan Seguin Survey 4 A-246 "San Patricio County, Texas" 12 July, 2001, Rachal Family Papers.

¹² United States Department of the Interior Geological Survey, Ibid.

¹³ Givens, "Short Trip in History", p.6.

¹⁴ Jim B. Person, Ben Procter, and William B. Conroy, *Texas: Its Land and Its People*, 3rd ed. (Dallas: Hendrick-Long Publishing Company, 1987), 395.

¹⁵ Murphy Givens, "The Trail Drives began here in South Texas" *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, 13 February 2008 15A.

the year after the war, in 1866 , when 250,000 longhorns went up the trail. The greatest drive occurred in 1871 when 700,000 head of cattle went north.”¹⁶ D.C. Rachal rounded up wild cattle, and he branded them and took them north for money.

Cattle drives were very dangerous. They had floods and stampedes. Anything would set those longhorns off and start them to running-- gunshots, storms with thunder and lightening, and many cows either died or went blind during stampedes. The stampedes would sometimes kill the men. They were wrapped up in blankets and buried along the trail. “ One man wrote that the saddest sight he’d ever seen was a little mound of fresh earth with a pair of boots sitting by the last resting place of some poor cowboy.”¹⁷ Trail drives lasted from spring until fall, and cowboys were paid \$30 to \$40 a month. When they got to Kansas, they spent all their money in the saloons in towns, and when they got back home, they had no more money. ¹⁸

D.C. Rachal and his brothers were willing to take the risk to get rich. In 1871 they drove 1,200 steers to Kansas. They started at Chilitipin on March 20, 1871. D.C. was the boss and his brother, Nute, was the second boss, and the third brother, Albert, was one of the hands. There were six other hands and a cook. The second night it rained all night, and the steers scattered everywhere. They bought supplies at Fort Worth. They had a stampede, and their herd got mixed up with Buck Gravis’ herd, so they drove their cattle together until they got to the Kansas line. They met a good friend along the way and stocked up on supplies. They stayed at Wilson’s Station on the Smoky River in Kansas until October. Then the buffalo stampeded their horses. They could not find a sale at Abilene, so they took cattle to Ellsworth

¹⁶ *bid.*

¹⁷ *bid.*

¹⁸ *bid.*

and shipped them to Chicago. They returned home to White Point on November 20th.

" It was a long hard trip, but on the whole we enjoyed it. We went from the mouth of the Nueces River to Ellsworth, Kansas without going through any gates."¹⁹ The Rachals drove cattle very fast. When trail drivers wanted to hurry up the cattle, they would tell the cowboys to "Rachal 'em, boys, Rachal 'em."²⁰ Only people who needed money really badly would go on trail drives because they were very dangerous, and the men who went were risk takers. In a time when Texas was going under, men such as D.C. Rachal brought money to Texas and helped the state rebuild .

White Point stretched from Nueces Bay to Odem which is about 10 miles. Rachal bought the Rabb Ranch in 1884 which was a 31,000 acre ranch near Driscoll, Texas. It took 30 miles of fencing to reach around the ranch.²¹ The winter of 1878-1879 was very dry. and the cattle died. The family called it " the big die". So in order to feed the family, he skinned the hides of the cows and sold them for a profit. In 1885-1886 there was another drought, and he had to sell the Rabb Ranch to Robert Driscoll for three dollars an acre. But Mr. Rachal did not keep the mineral rights, and the Driscolls became rich from the oil found on this land.²² Ranching is hard because everything is so dependent on the weather. So D.C. Rachal went into other businesses in order to be more secure.

One of these businesses was the wine industry at Sharpsburg. One of the wines was called *Sharpsburg's Best*, and the other was called *Rachal's Choice*. He was partners in the winery with Mr. S.G. Borden. They also owned a cotton gin, a 5

¹⁹ E.G. [Nute] Rachal, " A long Hard Trip", in *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 808-809.

²⁰ Givens , "The Trail Drives Began Here in South Texas." 15A.

²¹ "Rachal, Darius Cyriaque", *The Handbook of Texas*, p1.

²² Ash,"The Rachals, " pp. 4-5.

ferry, and a schooner named the *Nueces Valley*. The boat carried cotton, wool, and mohair down the river. This helped ranchers and farmers get their crops to market. He also was involved in real estate. But that was not all he did. He was in the oil business.²³

In 1913, oil drilling began at White Point. On September 6, 1913, that well blew up, see Appendix C. So now that they knew there was natural gas on the ranch, they started drilling lots of wells. In 1915, a gas well blew out and caught on fire. It burned for two months and could be seen for 40 miles. Family members said the chickens wouldn't go to roost for miles around because it never got dark. One of the guests at the Rachal's house woke up when the well blew out and began shouting "Wake up Brother! Hell's broke loose and the world's on fire!"²⁴ Soon natural gas pipelines were built to other towns, and in 1926, a pipeline was built all the way from White Point to Houston. These pipelines helped in the development of industry in Houston.²⁵ The oil industry was important to South Texas because it provided a lot of jobs and income for many people. "There is plenty of visual evidence in the White Point area of the gas blowout that helped to bring the oil era to South Texas. There are deep craters caused by the explosions and, here and there, old drilling equipment dots the landscape, detritus of the past."²⁶

D.C. Rachal was a community leader as well as a business leader. For example, he went with a posse to catch outlaws who killed some people in Penascal

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Ash, "The 'Rachals,'" 10.

²⁵ "Oil and Gas Industry," *Handbook of Texas Online* (accessed January 23, 2009) available from <http://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/00doogz.html>.

²⁶ Givens, "Short Trip in History", b6.

in 1874. D.C. Rachal wrote their confession down, and the posse hanged them.²⁷ This shows that he believed in law and order. He was a county commissioner from 1880-1896, in San Patricio County.²⁸ In Sinton, which is the county seat for San Patricio County, there is a street named Rachal Avenue. D.C. Rachal was also the post master at Rosita at White Point.²⁹ All of these activities mean that he was a community leader.

Rosita was a little town on the ranch. The vaqueros of Mexican descent lived on the ranch with their families, just like they did at the King and Kenedy ranches. This was true on all the big ranches. There were also Negro cowboys who worked in separate crews from the vaqueros. The ranch had a school and a post office, and the address was Rosita. The priest was a circuit rider who came around to baptize and to hold weddings and funerals. The post office was discontinued in 1914, and the school was closed in the 1920s. The town no longer exists, but the White Point Cemetery is still there, and the land it is on still belongs to the family. They are hoping to get a Texas State Historical Commission Marker for the cemetery.³⁰

See Appendix D

The Rachal home was a social center for San Patricio County and the surrounding areas. The house was a large two story home with porches on three sides. It had four bedrooms downstairs and a dining room and a kitchen. The

²⁷Murphy Givens, "Suspect Found in a Sheep Pen," *Caller Times*, 7 April, 1999.

²⁸ Rachal, Darius Cyriaque, *Handbook of Texas On Line*, p 1.

²⁹ Ash, the Rachals. p. 11.

²⁸ Bette Ash, Interview by the Author, Alice, Texas, September 29, 2008.

²⁹ Ash, "The Rachals, 11-12.

upstairs was a large room that was the boys' bedroom and a dance room³¹. See Appendix E. In 1893, the Rachals held the party of the year. It started on Friday afternoon. They danced all night and all day Saturday. They only stopped to eat. On Saturday night, they had to get a new band. The dance ended on Sunday afternoon. "It was the out-dancingest dance ever held and those who participated in it remembered it to their dying day".³² The Rachals were very generous people and wanted to share their home. At some time, nearly all of their children and grandchildren returned to the ranch to live in small houses nearby. The grandchildren remembered that Mr. Rachal really loved his family. When they were living on the ranch, he would come by their houses each day and pick them up to go riding with him in a one-seater buggy. They said he was always whistling a little tune. They also remembered that he had a very bad temper, and almost everyone on the ranch was afraid of him when he got mad. But the older family members who had nowhere else to go lived at the house until death. D.C. Rachal died in 1918. In his will he divided the ranch into equal parts among his six children, and much of it is still owned by descendants today³³.

D.C. Rachal was a self-made man. His father died when he was eleven years old. This is probably why he became a hard worker. He was also willing to try a lot of things to make more money. He was a very important person in Texas at one time, not as important as Sam Houston, but just as important as Richard King, the founder of the famous King Ranch. The reason no one probably knows about him is because when he died, his land was broken up and Richard King's was not. D.C. Rachal was a soldier in the Confederate Army. After the Civil War, he was a trail

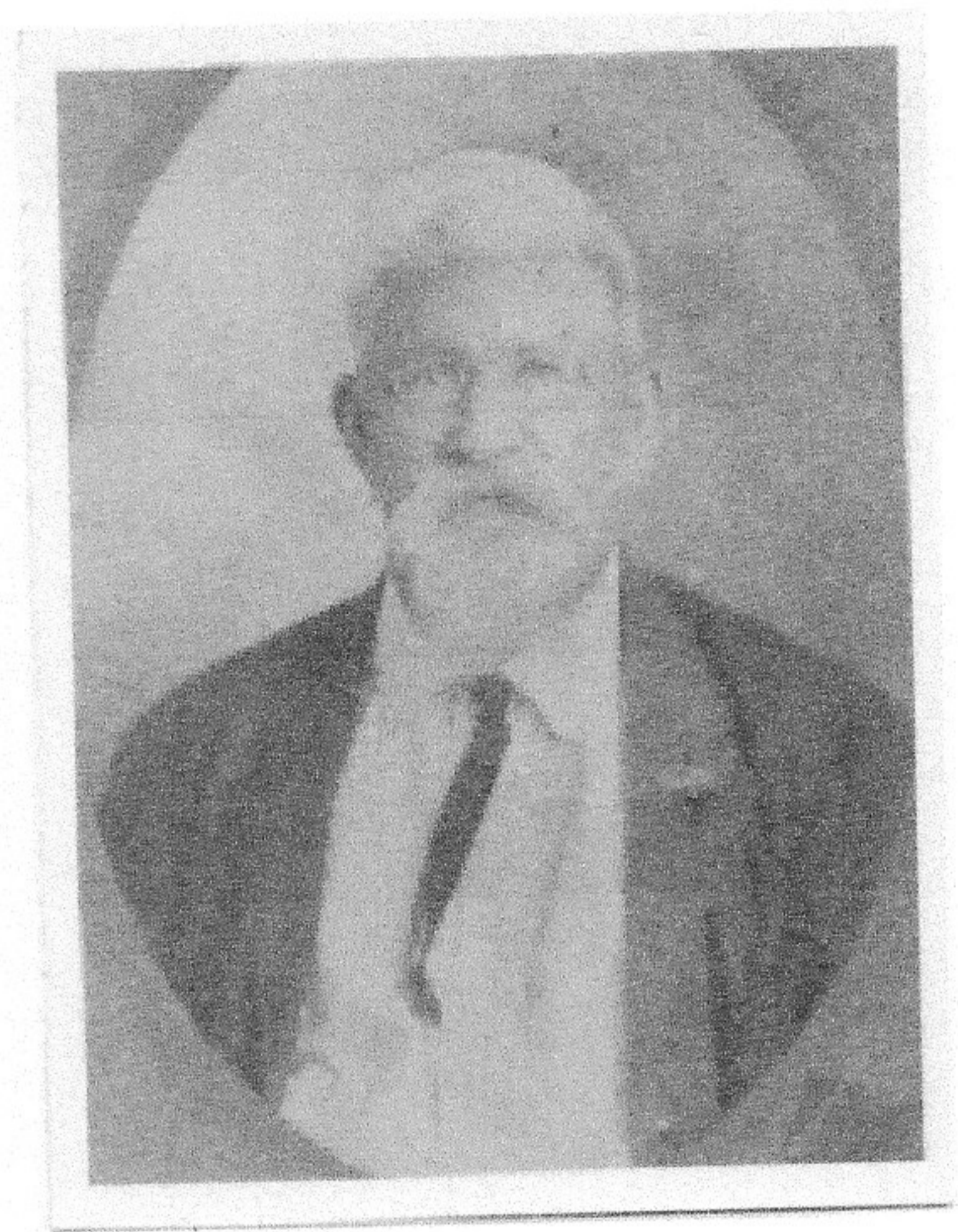
³² Givens "Short Trip in History."

³³ Ash, "The Rachals," 10-11.

driver and brought lots of money to Texas. Then he went into the wine business, and he owned a cotton gin, a ferry, and a schooner. The oil business in South Texas began at White Point. All of these businesses helped the economy of the area.

White Point had a town named Rosita and D.C. Rachal was the postmaster. He` also served as a county commissioner and was a leader of the county. His home was like the heart of South Texas, and everyone was welcome there. D.C. Rachal was a Texas entrepreneur who helped develop South Texas. He left a legacy of community service and economic development which contributed to the advancement of San Patricio County and the State of Texas. He is an individual who deserves to be remembered.

APPENDIX A



Darius Cyriaque Rachal

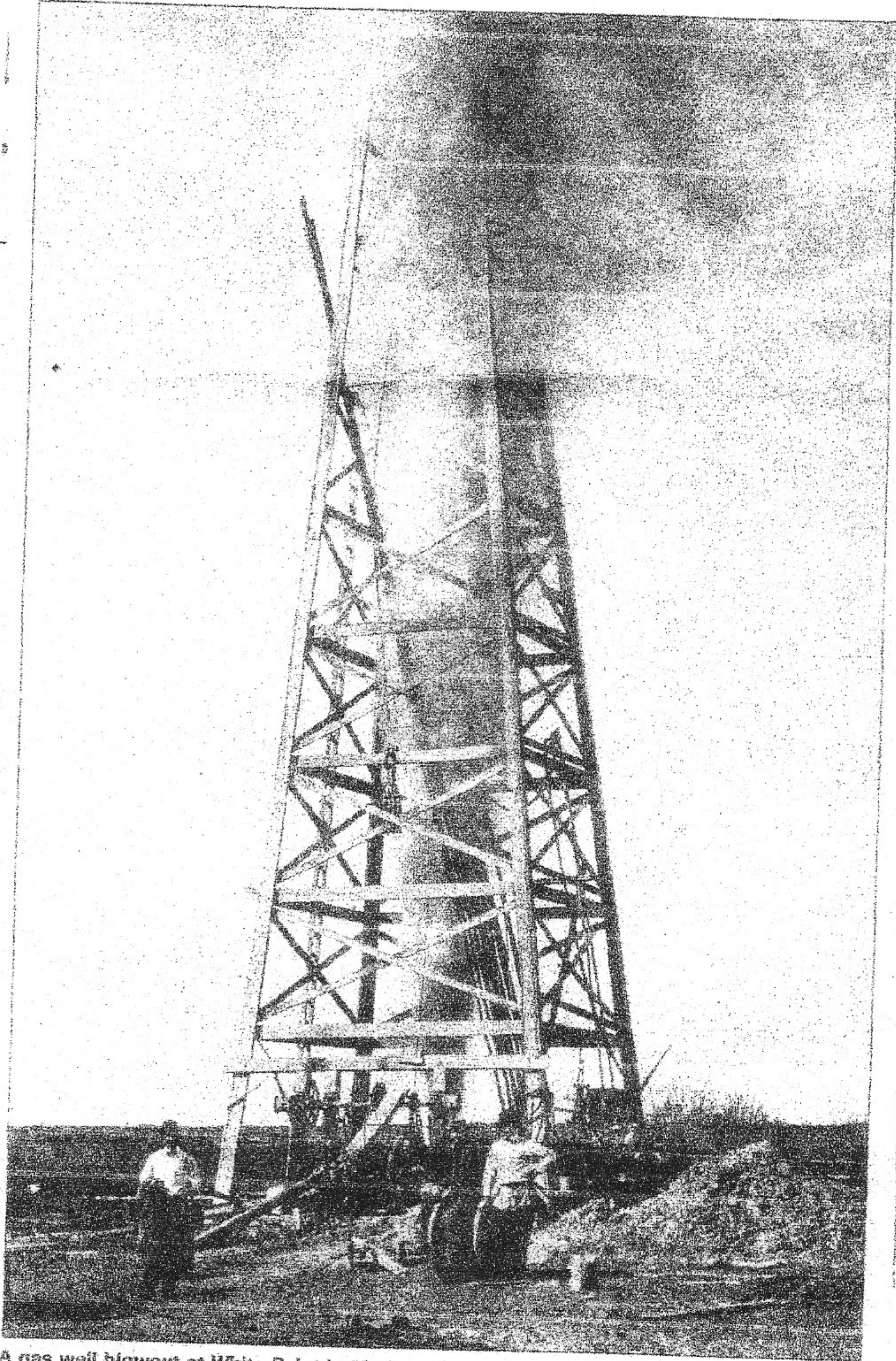
1841-1918

APPENDIX B



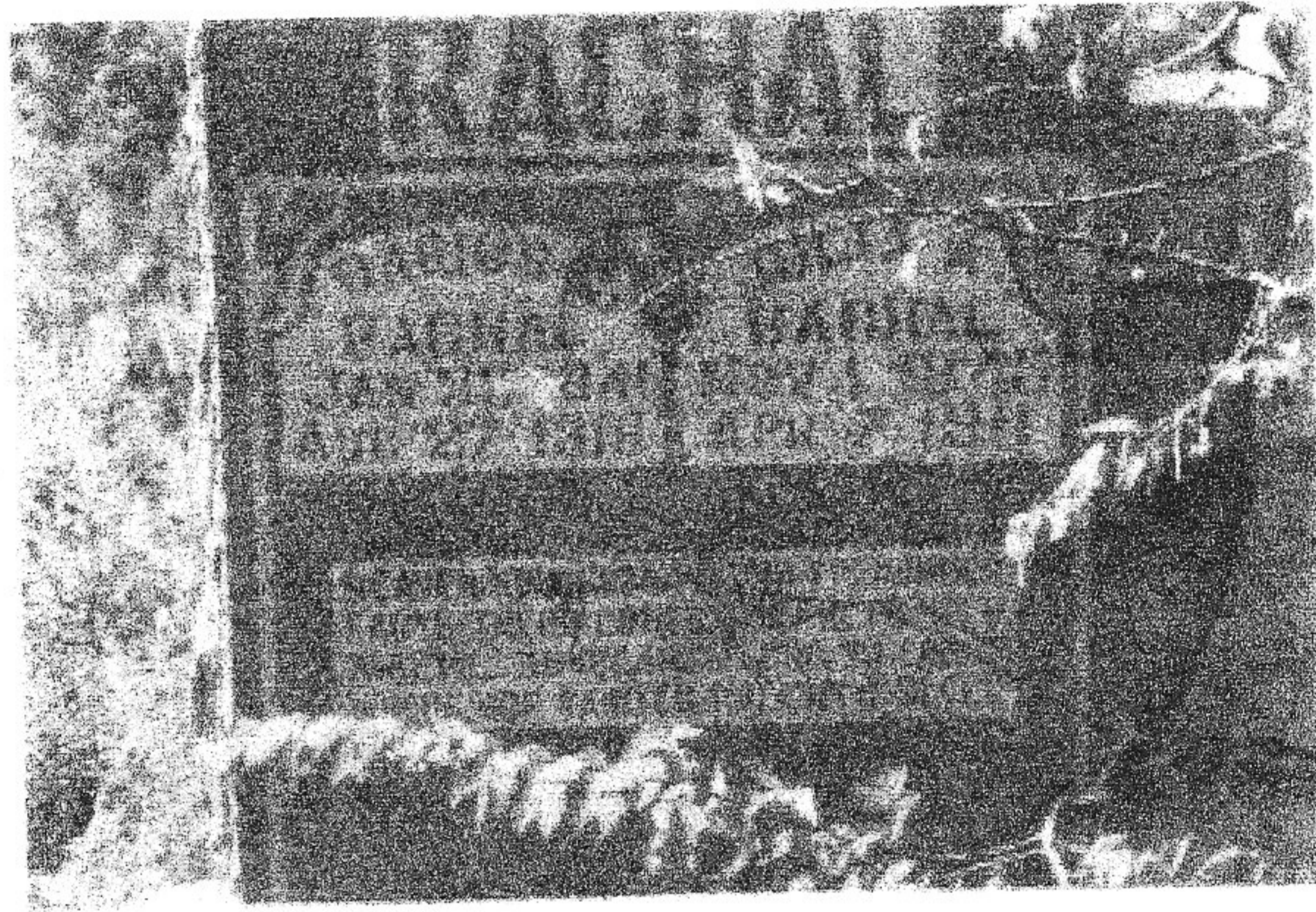
Julia Bryan Rachal
1845-1912

APPENDIX C

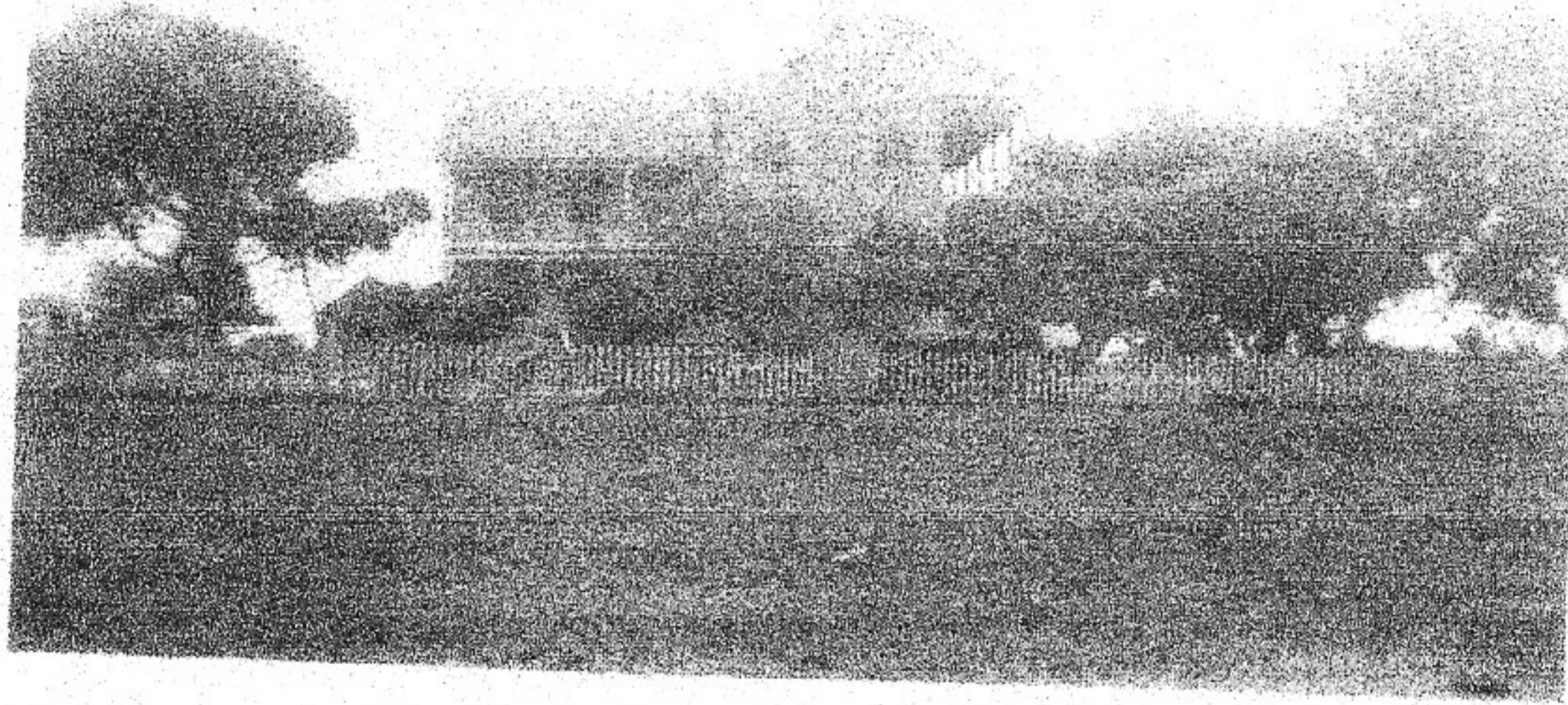


A gas well blowout at White Point in 1914.

APPENDIX D



Rachal tombstone
White Point Cemetery



Ranch house

White Point

Annotated Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

Hunter, J. Marvin., ed. *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 2nd ed. Cokesbury Press, 1925.
Reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.

This book was helpful because it told me a little about one of D.C. Rachal's cattle drives. This is a collection of short stories and memories of old cowboys. It is a primary source because the cowboys told their stories in person to J. Marvin Hunter. It included the letter from Nute Rachal.

Rachal family papers. Private collection.

This is a large collection of primary sources. The collection included pictures of D.C. Rachal and his wife, Julia Bryan Rachal, a picture of the White Point ranch house, and the Rachal tombstone at the White Point cemetery. It also included the last will and testament of Mr. Rachal and Mrs. Rachal. It was interesting to see what the Rachals and their home looked like. The U.S. Geological Survey of White Point and the application of Mrs. Hunter, who was D.C. Rachal's daughter, to the Daughters of the Confederacy are in the papers.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Liberty, Texas; Roll: M432_912; page : 341; image: 258."
<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=17msav...> [accessed March 7, 2009].

This helped me a lot because it showed me when they moved to Texas and the names of his family. It also showed me he had more brothers than I thought he had.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Ash, Bette G. Interview by author, 29 September 2008. Alice, Texas. Notes.

D.C. Rachal was Mrs. Ash's great-great grandfather and she told many stories she learned from the family's tradition, including stories told by the Rachal grandchildren.

Ash, Bette G. "The Rachals." Unpublished Manuscript, 1982.

Mrs. Ash has done a lot of research on the Rachal family and got her materials from wills, deeds, and census records. She also wrote about family stories that had been passed down. This helped me understand D.C. Rachal's personality. I think that she could write a book with all this information.

"Fifth Texas Regimental History, 1861-1865," available from
http://members.tripod.com/~FifthTexas/regimental_history.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

This helped me understand about what D.C. Rachal did during the Civil War and all

the battles he was in.

Givens, Murphy. "White Point: a Short Trip in History." *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, 30 April, 1990,

This column was about the drilling for oil. It had a picture of the blowout in 1914, and it gave me an idea what a gusher looked like. All the newspapers article are secondary because he did the research and then wrote the articles.

_____ "The Cattle Queen of Texas". *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, 10 May 2000.

This article was about how D.C. Rachal bought out Ms. Rabb's ranch [The Cattle Queen of Texas] and sold it without keeping the mineral rights, and the Driscolls got rich on the oil wells.

_____ "Suspects found in a Sheep pen". *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, 7 April 1999.

This helped me know that he respected the law by helping catch murderers.

_____ "Rachal's home with a view". *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, 7 July 2004.

Mr. Givens is telling his readers about the Rachal's house. It was torn down in 1956. D.C. Rachal was very rich to have such a home.

_____ "Trail Drives Began Here in South Texas" *Corpus Christi Caller Times*. 13 February 2008.

This article explains about D.C. Rachal's cattle business and trail driving.

_____ "King, Kenedy, Pierce: the Grandees of Grasses" *Corpus Christi Caller Times*. 3 September, 2008 .

The article says how he bought the Rabb ranch and was one of the biggest rancher in South Texas.

Hood's Texas Brigade. *The Handbook of Texas Online*
http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/HH/qkh2_print.html (accessed October 14, 2008).

The was about all the battles Hood's Texas Brigade fought in. D.C. Rachal was in this brigade in the Civil War. It is secondary because the research was done and then written up for the article.

"Louis Cyriaque Rachal". Ancestry.com <http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.ddl?rank=1&new=1&msav> [accessed 7 March, 2009].

This helped me know when D.C.'s father died and when they moved to Texas.

"Oil and Gas Industry." *The Handbook of Texas Online*
available from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/00doogz.html>. (accessed January 23, 2009).

This gave a summary of the oil and gas industry in San Patricio County.

Pearson, Jim B., Ben Procter, and William B. Conroy. *Texas: The Land and its People*. 3rd ed. Dallas: Hendrick-Long Publishing Company, 1987.

It helped me understand what life was like back in Texas after the Civil War .

"Rachel, Darius Cyriaque. " *The Hand Book of Texas Online*. Texas State Historical Association, 2008 , available from <http://www.thaonline.org/-handbook/online/articles/RR/tra76.-html> (accessed September 5, 2008).

It was helpful because it summarizes D.C. Rachal's life. It is secondary because the research was done and published.

Texas Historical commission staff. "White Point/Rosita." Official Texas Historical Marker with Post. San Patricio county. Location 5 mi. sw of Taft on fm 63, Then 2 mi. FM 1074.

It described the town of Rosita. Having a town out there meant he had a pretty big ranch. It is a secondary source because the Texas Historical commission staff wrote it.