

The history of the property you are about to look at is rich and varied. The fossil beds located here indicate that at one time it was a marine environment. The closest thing to a dinosaur was found in Stephens County, and that was a mastodon skull with its tusks. Other than arrowheads and fossils, nothing of great archeological significance has been found here. According to the Texas State Historical Association, this area has supported human life for at least 10,000 years. The Indian tribes that inhabited this area were the, Tonkawa, Caddo, Waco, and the Kiowa tribes. Raiding parties of the Comanche and Lipan Apache were known to occur.

In skipping the rule of Spain and France, this area was controlled by Mexico from 1821 thru 1836. Mexico had divided Texas up into municipalities, and this property was located in the Municipality of Viesca. This municipality comprised one-sixth of the land area of Texas. In 1825, in order to get Texas settled, Mexico gave out colonization grants. The first grant for Viesca went to Robert Leftwich. After Leftwich's failed efforts, the grant was given to several other individuals including Stephen F. Austin. After Austin went out of favor with the Mexican government, the grant was given back to Sterling Robertson in 1834; actual settlement of the region finally began.

In 1835 the legislative body of the Provisional Government of Texas renamed the Municipality of Viesca to the Municipality of Milam. Named after Benjamin Rush Milam. Milam was a native of Kentucky and became a colonist of Mexican Texas. He was in Texas as early as 1818 and began trading with the Comanche Indians living along the upper Red River. Milam fought beside American interests during the Mexican War of Independence (from Spain) and then became a hero of the Texas Revolution. He led a group of 300 men in the Siege of Bexar and was killed in that battle on December 7, 1835.

On October 3, 1836, the first Congress of the Republic of Texas convened and the Municipality of Milam was re-named Milam County. As Texas grew and became more populated, the counties were divided up into smaller areas. Milam County was divided into 16 individual counties with 18 existing counties receiving additional land. Palo Pinto County was established in 1856 out of two of these counties - Navarro and Bosque.

Most of the above information is obtained from the Texas Historical Association

To quote a line from a John Wayne movie, "Texas was a woman wild and free." "Free" being the operative word - I'm talking about land! Texas was land rich but cash poor. Texas followed Mexico's lead and issued Land Grants. Free land was raining from the sky. Since Texas could not pay its soldiers, it gave land grants for every three months that you served. Surprisingly, some people only served for three months! This included any battle fought on Texas soil, any Texan that fought for the Confederate Army in the Civil War. Many of the heroes of Texas History loaned Texas money during its fight for independence; they were repaid with land grants. After the Civil War, to get its infrastructure built, such as railroads etc., companies were paid in land "scrip"

One category of grant was called "Internal Improvement Scrip, Republic and State of Texas." Under this is a sub-category, "Navigation Scrip for the Building of Ship Channels and Improvement of Rivers and Harbors." This brings us to Capitan Junius Poitevent. If you have had any dealings with the sale of land across the State of Texas, you will have heard the name J. Poitevent as the survey name for tracts of land.

Capitan Junius "June" Poitevent was a riverboat captain on the Pearl River in Mississippi. He was an industrious man, owning several farms (one a fruit farm in Mexico), many houses, and a sawmill. He was also a blockade runner in the Civil War. In 1873, when Texas started handing out "scrips" for land in lieu of money for improving rivers, "June" signed up as a "River Contractor." He was charged with clearing 100 miles of the Trinity River to make the channel navigable for boats to use for commerce. For every mile that June cleared, he received four "scrips" good for 640 acres each. So, for each mile, he received 2,560 acres of land. For the total 100 miles that he cleared, he received 256,000 acres of land. Now, this was for land to be "located upon any of the vacant and unappropriated public domain of the State of Texas."

There were some rules that went with these "scrips." First, the land had to be located by the recipient and surveyed. A good way for Texas to get its land surveyed! Second, the surveys had to be square unless previous ownership or natural terrain prevented it. Third, and this is a kicker, for every two tracts of land surveyed, one tract (the even numbered tracts) went back to the State of Texas for the benefit of the State School Fund. HUM! These tracts became known as "State School Land". Once surveyed, the surveyor turned his field notes in to the Commissioner of the General Land Office who would number the surveys and return the information back to the surveyor. Once it was signed and sealed, the recipient of the "scrip", in our case, Captain Poitevent, could do whatever he please with his property. Captain Poitevent choose to sell his scrip; usually for \$145 per scrip.

In our area there were four surveys that Capitan Poitevent choose with some of his scrips. Two of those tracts were designated School Land. At one time our family owned both of those tracts and one of those tracts is in the sale of this land.

Cameron Stringer was born in Ashe County North Carolina in 1837. His parents were farmers, but his grandfather was a blacksmith, and he taught Cameron everything he knew about this art. By the time the civil war broke out, Cameron was a schoolteacher in the Jefferson area.

Cameron volunteered for service with the Confederate Army at Ashville on May 17, 1861, at the age of 23. He became a scout and an ambulance driver with the 26th Regiment of North Carolina Infantry. On May 25, 1864, he was captured at Manassas and was held prisoner in Elmira, New York. On February 15, 1865, Cameron was released from prison after signing "that damn nasty oath" – the oath of allegiance.

After being released, Cameron did not return home to North Carolina. Instead, he headed south, or west, whichever way you want to look at it. His first stop was in Kansas City, Missouri. He was there long enough to get married, have four children, and acquire a covered wagon. This wagon will become an important asset in my family's history. Cameron married Lillie Wheeler, the daughter of a merchant who had moved his family to Kansas City from New York City.

Sometime in 1875 Cameron and Lillie loaded up the wagon, and moved to Fort Worth; the wagon, being drawn by oxen instead of horses. While in Fort Worth, Cameron worked in a blacksmith's shop, which was located in present day Forest Park, near the zoo. They were only here long enough to add one more child to their growing brood.

On his first trip west of Fort Worth, Cameron rode up to a store in Carter Bend on the Brazos River, with six-guns on each hip, and carrying a rifle. The merchant asked him what his profession was, and he replied, "I'm a blacksmith and a schoolteacher". He was hired on the spot as a schoolteacher. The bullies in the school had run off all the previous teachers. This school, located on Elm Creek, was a log cabin with a smaller log cabin attached by a dog-run for the teacherage. The pupils sat on split rail logs. This was the first school in the area. A story goes that on the first day of school, Cameron, wearing his six-guns, called the school to order. The bullies began their attack. Cameron pulled off his guns and invited the bullies outside. When they all returned, Cameron put his guns back on and proceeded with his lessons.

In 1877, on a buffalo hunt, and not too far from where the school was located, Cameron found what he had been looking for; a section of land, 640 acres, located on Fox Hollow Creek. This tract was known as the J. Poitevent Survey #2, Abstract 1931, and being State School Land. After filing his claim, Cameron loaded up the wagon one last time and moved his family onto their property. First, he dug a spring that was said to never run dry. During years of drought, neighbors would get their drinking water and water their cattle at this spring. Next, he built a three-room house made of both logs and lumber. The last three of his children were born here. He became a farmer and stockman; only practicing his blacksmithing for personal use. Later, when more schools were needed in the area, Camron & Lillie donated two acres of this tract for the Fox Hollow School District. Several of Cameron's future granddaughters would teach at this school. When the school closed, sometime in the 1940's, the land reverted back to the original tract. This 640-acre tract of land is no longer owned by the family.

Cameron would later become a county commissioner. He would ride on horseback to the courthouse located in the city of Palo Pinto to attend the commissioner meetings. It was at one such meeting in 1891 that he became ill. He rode home and died two days later; he was 54 years old. The cause of death was listed as "acute indigestion" which was later known as appendicitis.

Alexander Hawthorne "Alex" Stringer, my grandfather, was born in 1871 in Kansas City Missouri. He was the second child and oldest son of Cameron & Lillie Stringer. He was five years old when he arrived in Texas with his parents, and he was seven when the family moved to their claim on Fox Hollow Creek. Alex, and his older sister, Fannie, rode on horse-back behind the wagon herding the milk cow as they went. Alex recalled in his later years that there were no cedars or mesquites in this area when they arrived. He also remembered the remains of an Indian village close to where present day Sandy Beach is on Possum Kingdom Lake. A map on the Texas General Land Office web site indicates that it was a Caddo Indian Village.

Being the oldest son, it fell to Alex to help support his mother and the youngest four of his siblings after Cameron died. He too became a farmer and stockman. Alex married Maggie Parsons in 1900. Alex traded the infamous wagon, a grey horse and two guns to his brother-in-law, Horace Randal, for 640 acres, J. Poitevent Survey #4, Abstract 2188, and being State School Land. This tract was adjacent to Cameron's 640-acre tract. Horace had moved the Elm Creek school house onto this property (the schoolhouse where Cameron had taught) log by log and re-assembled it along with the dog run and the teacherage. He and his wife, Fannie, used it as their home. They traded the property along with the home to Alex, as they were moving to Brownfield. Alex and Maggie soon moved into the house, and all seven of their children were born there. As his family grew, Alex added a kitchen and a south "wing", both made of lumber. Their two sons slept in the teacherage, and their five daughters slept in the added wing. It was a tiny house for nine people. Due to time and decay, this house no longer stands.

In addition to ranching, Alex, would take on different jobs to support his own growing brood. He carried the mail on horseback from Ivan to the residents scattered through the area. He also worked with the Palo Pinto County Tax Office collecting the taxes from the residents in the Fox Hollow Community. We still have his book where he logged each payment he collected from each landowner. In his later years, he would cut firewood to sell.

Alex, in trying to increase his land holdings, bought, sold, and re-bought property. Every acre he owned, he patented with the State of Texas. He patented Cameron's 640-acre tract, the top 270 acres of the tract he traded Horace Randal for. In 1935, the bottom half of this tract was lost to the Morrison Company of Graham for debts he could not pay. He purchased from the State a tract that W. D. Nicklas had abandoned; and he was promptly sued by said W.D. Nicklas. Rather than go through a court hearing, he let Mr. Nicklas have the property back. There are four tracts in our area known as the A. Stringer Survey, two of which are still owned by the Stringer family. Alex worked hard to raise his family, and he lived a long life, passing away at the age of 86 in 1957.

We have in our family files a letter dated November 2, 1902 from the Sherriff of Grayson County, Texas to the Sherrif of Palo Pinto County. It seems that one of Cameron's sons was in jail in Grayson

County and was in critical condition; he had fallen from a bridge. The Sherriff was asking that the Palo Pinto Sherriff contact the incarcerated's brother, Alex Stringer. Alex arrived in Grayson County and found that his brother had two broken jaws and was beat to a pulp. It seems that the brother was accused of stealing some horses, and it was going to take over \$4,000 to get him out of jail. Alex returned home and contacted his siblings. It was agreed that they would mortgage Cameron's original 640-acre tract and help their brother. Alex, being a good customer of the Cunningham Banking House of Palo Pinto, mortgaged the property to the tune of 10% - in 1902. He brought his brother home, and Alex's wife, Maggie, nursed him back to health. After having his jaws wired, he could only drink broth. Once healed, the brother left, and never helped with the debt. It was up to Alex to pay the debt, as no help came from the other siblings either. Alex paid on, and renewed this note so many times, that the courthouse is filled with papers bearing his name. It was during the great depression that the property was foreclosed on and would never be owned by a Stringer again.

Rupert Littleton "Ton" Stringer, my father, was born to Alex and Maggie Stringer in 1916. He was the sixth child and the second son born to this family. He started out with a normal country childhood doing all the things that country boys like to do. When he was about 15 years old, he was with a group of boys and their dogs hunting for "varmints", when an accident occurred that would change his life forever. The dogs had treed something in a hole under a large rock. My father leaned his gun against a tree while he and the boys tried to get the varmint out of the hole. In the excitement, one of the dogs knocked the gun over. When it hit the ground, it went off. The bullet hit my father in the leg, shattering the bone. Some of the boys went for help. Alex loaded Ton in a car and took him to Graham, to the hospital. Word traveled fast. As they reached each gate they had to pass through, the gates were open, and families had gathered to see Ton and his leg.

If any of you are "old timers" here, you will remember stories about Dr. Padgett. A painting of him hung in the Graham hospital right by the chapel for years, until the hospital was re-modeled. In that day and time, with his injury, my father should have bled to death. But as luck would have it, the leader in his leg had wrapped around the main artery that had been severed and blocked the flow of blood. Of course, the leg was removed, and daddy had a long stay in the hospital. To build up his blood, Dr. Padgett made him eat oysters and asparagus. He also put a can of coffee grounds by his bed and gave him a spoon. Dr. Padgett told him to eat as much of this as he wanted. Daddy said those coffee grounds sure tasted good. Every day, Dr. Padgett would ask how those coffee grounds tasted. Finally, one day, my father answered that they tasted bitter. Dr. Padgett said "good, you are ready to go home." Have you ever heard that anemics craved odd, and sometimes non-food items. I knew a girl that loved the smell of gas, until she went to the doctor, and he put her on some iron pills.

I can tell you that the "phantom feeling" of missing limbs is real. Immediately after removing my father's leg, Dr. Padgett wrapped it and gave it to Alex and told him to take it home and bury it. He also told him to make sure that the toes were wrapped tight and straight. At some point my father was experiencing terrible pain in the missing leg. Dr. Padgett told Alex to go home, dig up the leg and make sure the toes were straight. If not, Alex was to re-wrap them. When Alex got home and looked at the toes, they had drawn, as they normally would do in death. Alex re-wrapped them, this time making sure the toes would stay straight. When he returned to the hospital, Dr. Padgett told

Alex the exact time that he had straightened the toes; that was when my father's pain had subsided. I cannot count the number of times that I've seen my father turn his missing leg toward the fireplace to warm it.

A missing leg did not slow my father down. He raised every animal known to man. His favorite past time was watching his animals eat. He fed his chickens just so that he could sit and watch them peck. A friend recently told me that my father had the biggest hands he had ever seen on any man, but that those hands were gentle. He could rope anything that ran past him. And he could hold on to whatever he roped by bracing his crutches. Ton married Charity Cretsinger in 1947, and they had three daughters.

In 1929 the Texas Legislature created the Brazos River Authority for the purpose of flood control along the Brazos River. Sometime in the early 1930's, the BRA started purchasing the land that Possum Kingdom Lake would be built upon. One of the properties was owned by the W. D. Nicklas family. The Morris Sheppard Dam was completed in 1941, and almost over-night, the lake filled. In 1946 the BRA sold off, by sealed bid, all the excess land they had purchased to build the lake. Ton bid on the 431 acres that was left out of the W. D. Nicklas property. He won by out bidding the next highest bidder by \$1.00 per acre.

After the lake filled, Alex and Maggie moved into the W. D. Nicklas house which was now located on the banks of Possum Kingdom Lake. They just packed up and moved in. Ton had to go down to the BRA office and lease the lot since his parents had moved in. When Maggie died in 1953, Ton and Charity moved into the house on the lake to take care of Alex. When Alex died in 1957, Ton and Charity was preparing to move back onto their land, but their oldest daughter did not want to move, so they ended up staying on the lake.

By the time Alex passed away, he owned two tracts of land. The 270-acre tract that was originally known as the J. Poitevent Survey #4, Abstract 2188, now known as the A. Stringer Survey, and a 204-acre tract of land known as the Gunter and Munson Survey also known as the Beaty, Seale & Forwood Survey. He left the 270-acre tract undivided to his five daughters and the 204-acre tract to his son, Ton. By Alex's death, his oldest son, Simpson, had passed away in a hunting accident. Ton leased the 270-acre tract from his sisters; eventually buying out two of his sister's shares.

1963 the heirs of the Morrison Company sold the bottom half of the J. Poitevent Survey #4 (now known as the H E Randal Survey) to Ton. This was the property that Alex had owned that the company had foreclosed on.

Ton and Charity ran Herefords on this property. Living off the land, growing gardens of vegetables, and fruit, hunting deer for meat because every dollar that the cattle brought in was needed to feed their family, pay on debts, and send their daughters to college.

Ton and Charity's place was a hub for family and friends alike. It was a busy place, and a lot of life happened here. Ton passed away in 1990 and Charity in 2002. They left their three daughters with a legacy that few people would ever have. Not just land, not just a lake lot, but a rich history of family, friends, and of love. There is so much more that I could tell you, but it is late, and you are tired of reading. Just know that while it may not look like much now, this land has been loved since day one. It was loved by the creatures of the sea that first covered it; loved by the creatures that later lived upon it; loved by the Indians that first inhabited it; loved by the soldiers that fought for it, by the settlers that settled it; and especially by three daughters who lived their whole lives roaming every square inch of it.