

WOLVES TRAILED FROM MEXICO

Honeymooning Couple Was Menard's First Wool Family

MENARD.—The first sheep ever stocked in Menard County were trailed from Mexico in 1876 by a honeymooning couple.

The couple, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Wilkinson, bought the sheep—Mexican woolies—across the border from Laredo, paying a dollar a head.

They left their Pegleg ranch near Hext in November, traveling in a two-horse wagon. After spending Christmas in San Antonio, they crossed the border, bought 1,000 sheep and headed homeward.

En route, they camped at "Scabtown," south of San Antonio. While there, one of their two horses disappeared during the night.

"LOST" FOR REWARD

The only American in Scabtown, a storekeeper, told them that certain unscrupulous Latin Americans had a habit of rustling the horses of trail-drivers. They would drive them into the brush and wait until a reward was offered, then return them and collect the reward for "finding" them.

The Wilkinsons offered a five-dollar reward. Within a few hours, they heard a familiar nicker. A few minutes later, a group of Latin Americans rode into sight leading the missing animal. The formalities were observed and the Wilkinsons had their horse.

The trip home was a slow one. The trail crew consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson and two Latin American trail hands. Mrs. Wilkinson drove the wagon behind the sheep. Wilkinson and the two Latin Americans flanked the flock on foot.

USED BRUSH PENS

Brush pens were built by the Latin Americans each night and the sheep driven into them as protection against predators and to prevent straying.

One day, Mrs. Wilkinson recalls, they heard wolves howling. The Latin Americans disappeared in the brush and returned an hour later carrying the hind quarters of an unidentified animal. That evening they roasted the meat over an open fire. "It was the best meat we had eaten during the entire trip," Mrs. Wilkinson said.

Asking the Latin Americans, "What kind of meat is this?" Mrs. Wilkinson was told, "No good for gringo—but good for us." She learned later that it was wolf meat.

LOW WOOL PRICES

The Wilkinsons ran sheep on the Pegleg Ranch until they moved to the present location of the home ranch at the head of spring-fed Clear Creek, approximately 14 miles west of Menard. They continued to raise sheep on the Clear Creek ranch until wool prices hit bottom during Cleveland's administration. They held on until prices went back up to 25 cents a pound, then sold out and began running cattle on their land.

"We had wool stored in every available space," Mrs. Wilkinson said, "even in our house. And when the price went up to a quarter, we sold and freighted the wool to Lampasas.

The country between Menard



SCABTOWN TO PEGLEG—Menard County's first sheep, 1,000 Mexican woolies, were trailed from Scabtown, south of San Antonio, to Pegleg in Menard County by Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Wilkinson in 1876, while on their honeymoon. Mrs. Wilkinson, shown here, says, "We ate wolf meat, had to pay a \$5 ransom for the return of one of our horses, and I saw my first railroad train. Mrs. Wilkinson, now 88, lives at the family's Clear Creek Ranch, 14 miles west of Menard.

County and San Antonio was knee-high in grass at the time, Mrs. Wilkinson recalled. "Grazing was no problem, but we did have trouble with varmints. The range was open and there was considerable drift. It was hard to keep track of our sheep at times, and wolves, coyotes and fox took a heavy toll. We killed one panther, too—a nine-footer."

Mrs. Wilkinson, now 88, still lives at the Clear Creek ranch, where her seven sons and a daughter were born. When interviewed recently she was busy in a spotless kitchen. Her clear eyes sparkled as she looked around the room and said, "It wasn't like this in 1876, but I'll never forget how good that wolf meat tasted that evening on the trail from San Antonio.

Australian Gulls Nest Far From Sea

SYDNEY (AP)—Seagulls on Philip Island in Westernport Bay on the coast of the Australian State of Victoria are startling the inhabitants by nesting in the open fields, well away from the sea. Such a

practice is unknown on Philip Island where the birds normally choose nesting sites on cliff tops and small rocky islets where they can see the sea. Nature-wise inhabitants of the island are shaking their heads and asking whether the seagulls' new nesting habit indicates that heavy storms are on the way.