

Mulock Way Station, Post Office, and CemeteryHuff's Chapel/New Hope School

by Ruth Jo Hibbs, 1980

Both the Fort Dodge and Fort Lyons Wagon Trails forded the Palo Duro Creek near the Mulock Way Station which was established in 1899 by Mr. Ira Mulock to accommodate travelers migrating westward. Frequently after wagon trains had passed by on the trails, fresh little unmarked graves would appear in the small Mulock Cemetery. There also might be some fresh unmarked adult graves as well. The cemetery lies approximately one mile north and one mile west of the old Mulock Way Station and original site of Mulock Post Office.

The Post Office was moved later and but then permanently discontinued about 1920. The Mulock Cemetery was established by the early settlers surrounding 'Mulock Way Station' and Post office to be used by the local community. Mulock Way Station was on the east side of the creek and lay less than one hundred yards above the Palo Duro Creek and included small barns, corrals, and pens to accommodate a variety of livestock destined for their new home. Over the next few years other Postmasters followed Mulock. By 1912, Mrs. Lula Newcomb was appointed Postmaster and she promptly moved the Post office into the Newcomb ranch house.

The Mulock Way Station was put up for sale. In the early part of

1906, Lura's father, Ethan, and mother, Julia Elizabeth, had moved to the area around Palo Duro Creek and became neighbors of the Newcombs. Upon learning that Mulock Way Station and adjoining land was for sale, and knowing that Rob and Lura wanted more land, Ethan sent word to them about this opportunity, everything eventually worked out and in 1912, my parents bought Mulock Way Station. They also owned two sections east of the Palo Duro Creek, part of which lay in Ochiltree County where we moved later. Then soon after the first of the year in 1913, they and their small daughter, Julia Rosa, moved from Beaver County, Oklahoma into the house at Mulock Way Station, on the Palo Duro Creek, twenty miles west of the present town of Perryton, Texas. The Mulock Way station is where I, Ruth Jo Hibbs-Reardon, was born followed the next year by my brother, Lawrence Dell. Since the Palo Duro drained such a large area and a dam was nearby, my father feared that we might sometime be flooded so he later tore down the Way Station and built a four room house up a hill above the old location, The gates were removed from the dam and this became a favorite swimming and fishing hole with a grove of trees nearby that was ideal for picnicking. During that time, it was customary for farmers and ranchers to haul winter supplies by wagon from Guymon, OK. As the main wagon trail passed our house frequently, men and wagons spent the night with my parents. Watering their horses at the creek and sheltering them in the barns and corrals remaining from the Way Station. We were taught compassion and hospitality for those less fortunate than we. Many were those who found refuge and hospitality in our home for a night, a week or longer. We lived there until 1921. About 1908, my maternal Grandfather, Ethan Allen Luke, an outstanding stone mason and

engineer was then living in Yale, Oklahoma near Tulsa. He and his sons owned the Alamo Construction Company and had a reputation for doing good construction work. Hearing of his dependable reputation, he was persuaded by local ranchers of North Hansford County, Texas, to move to the area to construct irrigation ditches and dams on the lower Palo Duro Creek. He bought land and built a home two miles north of Mulock Cemetery and constructed some dams which were used until they washed away in the floods of the 1930's. While Grandfather Ethan Luke and Grandmother Julia Elizabeth were living Near the Palo Duro Creek in Hansford County and engaged in constructing dams on the Palo Duro Creek, their nephew, Ralph Luke, the son of Ethan's sister, Caroline, who had lived with them part of the time as he grew to manhood, returned to their home. Ralph had enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he contracted tuberculosis and returned to the home of his Uncle and Aunt hoping to recover. But he died and was buried in Mulock Cemetery. Mama spoke of her cousin, Ralph, many times. It seems that both Grandpa and Grandma Luke were very fond of him and I heard my mother say that he had lived with Grandpa and Grandma before going into the Navy but did not ever hear of his mother.

The Mulock Cemetery where Ralph Luke lies is about 21 miles north of Spearman going toward Hardesty, OK, and is now on private property. A little more than a week ago, my husband, Bruce (Tim), and I drove out to the little cemetery and got permission to see where Ralph Luke was buried. The current

landowners keep the fence in good repair and the cemetery is locked with a very old iron gate decorated with wrought iron and there are Yucca Plants directly behind the entry gate. Ralph's rather large tombstone has his name on it but no date. Looking east from Ralph's tombstone, the trees in the background about 1-1/2 miles away are along the Palo Duro Creek. The large dam that Grandfather was hired to build was never completed because the ranchers who contracted for the construction ran into financial difficulties and didn't furnish the money agreed upon. Grandfather Luke resigned from that construction job and moved his family to the town of Ochiltree in Ochiltree County, Texas, some twenty-five miles southeast. He bought land and a home and a local livery stable which he operated with some of his sons. He also bought a threshing machine, this being long before the days of wheat combines so wheat threshing was a very profitable business. In 1916, my Grandmother Luke (Julia Elizabeth) died. I barely remember my father holding me up to see her in her casket. She was buried in the local Ochiltree County Cemetery. Grandfather Ethan Allen Luke was also buried next to Grandmother when he died in 1929. But after she died, Ethan and part of his family worked in Colorado for a while. Later he moved back to Ohio where he was born and still had any close relatives.

The Mulock Cemetery also lies approximately three-quarters of a mile west of the final site of "Huff's Chapel". Huff's Chapel was originally located about two miles further south near the Palo Duro Creek. But, due to the frequent changing of the Palo Duro Creek channel, the Chapel had to be moved to prevent it from washing into the creek. This chapel location is twenty

miles due north and one mile east of the present town of Spearman, Texas. It is also approximately twenty miles west and one mile north of the present town of Perryton, Ochiltree County, Texas. The Palo Duro runs about 1/2 mile east of the old location of Huff's Chapel and the cemetery lies approximately three-fourths mile west of the old location of Huff's Chapel.

The local schoolhouse built of "sod" had become unsafe for use so Huff's Chapel was used both as a schoolhouse and church for several years until another school building was constructed. When my sister started to school there, she was the only girl to attend, so I was also sent along with her to be company for her that year. While being used as both a school and church, Huff's Chapel began to be called "New Hope" as that was also the name of the local school. Also, the cemetery took the same name of New Hope Cemetery, which name it still goes by. This little 'Huff's Chapel-New Hope school was the first school that my sister, Julia, and I attended. In 1919, the first railroad was completed through Hansford and Ochiltree Counties. The railroad missed the three towns of: Old Hansford, Old Ochiltree also Gray in Beaver County, OK which was twelve miles north of the present location of Perryton. The three towns literally moved, buildings and all, from their former locations to the railroad tracks. Hansford became the town of Spearman in Hansford County, Texas, and Gray, OK became the town of Perryton, Texas.

In 1921, with a need for better school facilities for their three children, Julia, Ruth, and Lawrence, my parents moved to land one and one-half miles east and one-half mile north of the old Mulock Way Station. This placed our house just barely across the Ochiltree County line, so they were able to attend Waka and Perryton

schools. Here we lived until 1936, when we moved to Sunset, Arkansas and lived for five years before returning to the town of Perryton where they spent the remainder of their lives. They are buried side by side in Ochiltree Cemetery where my grandparents are buried.

In the mid-twenties, Huff's Chapel, owned by the Presbyterians, was offered for sale. My parents bought it, then loaned it back to the community to be used as a local community church. The congregation of this little church cared for and kept the little cemetery in repair for many years.

Finally, our ranch land was sold to larger ranch interests. My brother, Lawrence, removed the little church building. Most local people moved from the area but the little cemetery, surrounded by a high woven wire fence with a padlocked iron gate, still remains as a memorial to the pioneer settlers of Hansford County, Texas.

Hansford County Historical Society of Spearman is publishing a historical book on the county. Our County Judge asked me to write a history of this little cemetery, so I took this from what I had written for the book.

By Ruth Jo (Hibbs) Reardon, 1980

Lura Bell (Luke) Hibbs, her daughter, Ruth Jo (Hibbs) Reardon, wrote

the following very interesting historical piece about the area where Lura's family lived and grew up in Hansford County TX in the early 1900's. As noted in the article, this work was written to be published in the Hansford Historical Society's history books about Hansford County.

Evidently Ruth did not get it submitted in time. This article was first published by Kenneth E. Luke of Mobile, AL in his Luke Genealogy Book-- "Descendants of John Luke Jr., son of John Luke Sr. It is reprinted here with permission of her daughter Iris Cornell of Perryton TX.