

LIFE *and* BATTLES
— of —

HENRY C. GILLILAND
FOR SEVENTY YEARS



WARS *of the* CONFEDERACY, WARS
with the INDIANS and WARS *with the*
"FIDDLE and the BOW"

This pamphlet
is one
of the rarest in
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LIFE AND BATTLES



HENRY C. GILLILAND

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“FIDDLE *and the* BOW”

Gift Mrs. C. D. Bruce

By
HENRY C. GILLILAND
Altus, Oklahoma

WARDEN COMPANY



OKLAHOMA CITY

PREFACE

In presenting this little volume to the public, I have been spared the great privilege of publishing a greater, and larger work. The seventy years of my life have been a sea of danger; I have been on the battlefield when cannon balls, and bomb shells were flying through the air like grasshoppers, and when the cruel war was over and I returned to my wasted home, where my widowed mother lived, it was gone forever—the Indians had stolen our cattle, our horses, and had driven my mother into another house for protection.

The entire country was in ruins and the fighting warrior was still lurking around our homes, to kill the family. Seventeen long years had passed, and the sound of the war-hoop could still be heard.

We lived on dry deer meat for bread, and fresh venison for meat. There are a few of those people alive today, and there are thousands who have never known what danger was—to both these—this little book will be read with excitement.

To the "fiddle-loving" world it will always be a welcome visitor.

To the pure and noble in heart, these lines are dedicated.

HENRY C. GILLILAND.

My father decided to remain until the next spring, and we rented land from Burrel Perry, three miles east of Sherman. When Spring came, we planted a corn crop; here we remained until the crop was made, and on May the 18th, the great storm that destroyed Gainesville came, and we were in the edge of the cyclone, and in a few weeks we were ready to move. We sold our crop and started west. Arriving in Dallas county, in August, we rented land and sowed twenty acres of wheat. We rented land from Robert Ray. We then moved on to the unorganized county of Parker, thirty-one miles west from Fort Worth. We arrived at the present city of Dallas and we could then have bought the entire county, that was for sale, at \$1.00 per acre. Dallas was a sickly looking hole and great clouds of mosquitoes, clustered in the air, humming the old song, "We will meet you when the sun goes down." We did not want to purchase mosquitoes and bull frogs, and hurried away. We had ox wagons, and came near sticking in the mud and filthy water of the Trinity River. We came on to Fort Worth; this town, though very high and healthy, did not suit us, but we left and arrived at the home spot, in old Parker county. We did not believe that Fort Worth would ever tear away the log cabins, and build the large and commodious brick buildings, that now makes her one of the grandest cities of Texas.

We settled five miles northeast, from where Weatherford now is, and here, among the Indians, buffalo and deer, we began the history of my life, anew. The Indians were very friendly, and would come to our camp and push the young children back, and warm themselves freely. My eldest brother was

of a very irritable nature, and one morning about six Indians came, and began to push us back from the fire, when my brother seized his gun, cursed, and abused them for their uncouth manner of living, and drove them away. Within twenty-four hours from this date, the Indians were all gone. Father was very uneasy for fear they would return, and steal our stock, and possibly murder our family.

Winter came, with all its usual calamities, that come with falling weather.

About the last of January, from extreme exposure, my father fell sick with pneumonia. There were no drugs, or doctors in our country, and although he was young (forty-three years old) and full of the ambitions of life, he fell a victim to the disease—dying February 14th, 1855. We had no carpenters or coffins in the country, and one of our neighbors, Charles Caviness, tore up a wagon bed, gave us the plank and the coffin was made, and the hero of our family was sank to rest in the windowless chamber of the grave.

This left my sainted mother, a widow, on the barren plains of Texas, with eight children. My brothers were workers, and they lived in the woods in day time, mauling rails, and building houses. When spring came, we had a nice little farm, fenced with rails, and we planted corn every fourth round. We failed to raise a crop, but according to the good advice of my father, we had twenty acres of fine wheat in Dallas county. We were now living without bread, using dry venison for bread and fresh venison for meat. We did this for days and weeks, and I do hope that the readers will not become "mirthful" over this story, and disbelieve it, for it is true, every word is true.

Finally harvest came, and the good Lord gave us a bountiful crop of wheat, and the bread was still better. We are now wondering what the people of Texas and Oklahoma would think to live just one week on what our humble servant lived on for months?

There were about six families in our community, the Woodys being first and many of them are still living, and a noble family they are.

Two years soon passed and our county was surveyed, by Llewallen Murphy, and a place designated for a court house; the county was named Parker, and the county seat was called Weatherford. We sold our home to a Mr. Cole, and went twelve miles north and settled another place. In 1858 the Indians broke out into hostilities and killed one of our neighbors, Mr. John Brown; a little later they killed Mrs. Sherman, who lived long enough to tell of their inhuman treatment, before she died. Many others were killed and women and children and horses stolen. It would be impossible for me to tell all I know of Indian hostilities, in so small a book as this. They would steal in at night, steal horses and kill people as they went out of the country, as they could not be trailed by the whites when darkness came. All of these incidents were awakening to the highest pitch, the minds of the people, and all we wanted was to find them once, and give them battle. I will now relate the murder of William Youngblood, by the Indians.

My second brother, James B. Gilliland, had married and lived in a colony four miles west from our home, and he and Mr. Youngblood were close friends. Mr. Youngblood lived within a mile and one-half from my brother. One morning my brother's wife, showed

my brother some people running west, and they both believed it was Indians, so James mounted his horse, and followed in a lope and soon overtook them; they were white people, but were after Indians. It was early in the morning, and they kept up the run until they came up with the Indians. The Indians were too strong for our people, and while they were skirmishing, one Indian left his bunch and James, and a Mr. Choate slipped around and cut him off from the main bunch, and ran him several miles, until his horse gave out; they ran him into the rocky mountains near Jacksboro, Texas, where the Indian dismounted and pulled his blanket over his head, and in that condition, they shot him dead. They found a new scalp in his shot pouch, and it looked to be that of a woman, as the hair was very long and a very light color; they took the Indian to the seven mile post from Jacksboro and tied him up with a rope; this was done to show the U. S. troops what had happened. The first man to find the corpse was a mail carrier, who ran back to Jacksboro and reported that "a thousand Indians were on the prairie coming for Jacksboro." In a short time, Jacksboro, with her large forces of troops were on the ground, to find "the dead Indian." It was now in the evening and Mr. Choate and my brother started for their respective homes, Mr. Choate living at, or near Veal station, and my brother on Dry Creek. They traveled until night overtook them and they stayed all night on Rock Creek, nine miles from my brother's home. Their horses were given out, and they had to stop. When they went to separate, it was decided that my brother take the scalp, as it was believed a woman had been murdered in his neighborhood. They ate no

breakfast but hurried home. On arriving home his wife ran to meet and tell him that the people had just gone to bury Mr. Youngblood, whom the Indians had killed the day before. Imagine the surprise and grief of my brother when he learned that the scalp he had was the scalp of his good friend, William Youngblood. He hurriedly told his wife and proceeded on to the grave yard. They had lowered his body into the grave, but took it up and placed the scalp back on the head of its owner and he was laid back in his grave.

Hundreds of other cases, along this line, can not now be retold. I will soon give you a history of a battle fought with Indians, in which I was a conspicuous figure. The Indians became so desperate that our family moved back into the settlements for protection. Politically, differences were now becoming widely known and the election of President Lincoln brought the north and south into warfare. In 1861, four of my brothers enlisted in the Confederate army and in 1863, in the month of February, I enlisted in Company "H" 2nd Texas Cavalry. I had two brothers in this company; they were older than myself, and the younger one was known all over the state as one of Texas' best "fiddlers." When they left home, I took charge of his fiddle, and learned very rapidly to play, but my strings were of "horse hair," and I lacked some one to show me how it was "done." In two years, I had joined the army, and had no opportunities. In 1865 the war was over, and we returned to our wasted and neglected homes; the people of Texas were trying, or had been, to fight two wars, one with the north and one with the Indians. Our comrades fell thick and fast on the Missouri and Tennessee prai-

ries; our stock was stolen and our people killed, or taken prisoners by the Indians. The people fortified up in four to a dozen families in one place and did but little work, except to stand guard over our property and protect our women, and gave chase to the Indians, that were continually visiting our country. During three years, until 1868 and 1869, I had a good opportunity to practice on my "fiddle" little dreaming that in later years I was to be called "one of the best in the state."

In 1869, July 5th, just forty-six years ago today, I had a battle with Indians, long to be remembered and never forgotten by me. The fourth day of July fell on Sunday, just as it did on this occasion, and Monday the 5th was a big day at Weatherford, Texas, as they were going to lay the corner stone for the Masonic Hall. My brother Joseph, and myself, were to play for a big ball at the court house at Weatherford.

The morning of the 5th came, with heavy clouds and rumbling thunder. Our party of twelve people were ready to start to Weatherford and as the weather was hot, we did not care for the rain; so we took the north road for town, crossing the Gilliland prairie, at the north or upper end. We had an old time friend whose name was Jacob Lopp, who lived on the Gilliland prairie, five miles north from Weatherford. Mr. Lopp had learned that a party of Indians had been in Fort Worth the day before and had killed a man named Tinnell on Mary's Creek on Sunday. This news excited Mr. Lopp, who started out to find his daughter, who had gone to the north end of the prairie the day before. Mr. Lopp had gotten about one mile from home when the Indians overtook and murdered him in a brutal manner, shooting him seventy-

two times; two men working on his farm who were cutting hay, witnessed the murder. These men knew that our party was going to Weatherford and one of them ran across three miles ahead of our crowd and met us at Sam Wolfenberger's farm, and told us of the killing of Mr. Lopp. We turned back in a hard rain and when we reached the north end of the prairie where he had passed half an hour before, we found the trail. The Indians had just crossed the road. We had great difficulty in following the trail, for it was now raining in hard showers, but we struggled on, and would find it once in a while. About 9:30, the clouds cleared away and the sun came down with great heat. We had now reached Slip Down Mountain, and had lost the trail; we were discouraged, and several of our crowd turned back. I was seated on my horse, combing my hair when I look down under the edge of the hill and saw "mud," on the grass. I went down, and when I got to the muddy grass, I could see the trail of the Indians for one hundred yards. I called to the boys that there was the trail and it had not been made thirty minutes; several of the boys came, but several had gotten out of hearing. We started in a lope, I was in front and we were going fast, for the trail was fine, as they had over two hundred head of horses. Soon, I struck a deep narrow hollow. I kept up a look for them, and saw one Indian and one horse. I jumped the branch and made a run for the Indian. I did not run far, until I saw a second Indian and another horse. In a moment, I was within twenty steps of them and fired at them and in half a moment I heard a noise to my right and there came the whole bunch of Indians, who had tied up their stock for a fight. The Indians

were shooting and hallowing and making all kinds of exciting noise. I was badly scared, as I thought the woods were full of Indians, coming to our country on July the 4th to murder and rob the people. I was within fifty feet of them, and they could have killed me easily, however, they would shoot straight up and was trying to scare me. I looked back, and only one man was coming, the rest were standing still expecting to see me fall at any minute. The man who came to me was Fine Ernest. He dashed up to me and said, "dab it to that one on the gray horse." I thought that Ernest was wounded and fired at the Indian on the gray horse, which fell dead within forty feet of where I sat. At this moment, the Indians began to run. The Indians had seen part of our men and had tied their stolen horses for a fight. Our party when all together, numbered twenty-one; there were only ten Indians. We had six men who were willing to fight, and we had also fifteen men who did not care to get close in and were not fighting as they should.

Our fight was now of a running battle and the bullets from our fifteen members behind, were far more dangerous to us, than the bullets were from our enemies. After running them for about a mile, the Indians struck a thick black jack grove, and our fighters were out in open prairie; here the Indians put up a hard fight and kept two of their men, riding forward and back, on each side of our forces. At this point, James M. Robertson, who was fighting with the Indians on the right, had his horse shot and killed. One Indian had come up on my side, two or three times, and I saw him coming again; I was ready and fired into the body of the horse, and he ran about two hun-

fighting, but they paid no attention to me. These men were good neighbors and under ordinary conditions would fight a white man, but the yell of the Indians seemed to shatter their reasoning faculties. So we started to the hole, where the Indians were, which was one hundred yards away. I took a tree just sixteen feet from the hole. Our party had secured large rocks, which was rolled in on the Indians, and they came to the surface, fighting hard. Here is where our shots told with precision; as we saw many fall lifeless back into the hole. One Indian ran a few steps, and fell, throwing his pistol back toward the Indians, which fell right on the brink of the cave; this was a good looking pistol and was a new "Remington;" I wanted it badly, but could not get it. This Indian fell prostrate on the ground and lay on his face from two o'clock in the evening until sundown. Fine Ernest took a long rope, and crawled down to him to drag him away, so that we could scalp him and when he reached him, the Indian arose and begged in Indian language to spare his life. The excitement was fearful and in half a minute we all fired and the Indian fell. Ernest went again and got him by the left arm and he arose again to his knees and Ernest placed his pistol against his side and fired; the ball passed through and out of the other side. I was thirty-six feet from the Indian and I never saw so much blood. As he died, great floods of blood ran as a branch of water and ran into the hole where his friends were. They cried, and sang songs to destroy the sound of their crying. They begged us for water, but we did not have it, and would not have given it to them if we had it. They talked good English and said they were "Wichi-

tas." When the Indian was dead, Ernest and three or four others got hold of the rope and dragged him one hundred yards to a grave. They called me and when I arrived they said that was entitled to scalp him. I knew how it was done for the history of Daniel Boone had learned me. After looking a few moments, I said that I did not want to do the work, but if any of the men did feel like scalping him, I would tell them how it was done. When a young man said he would do the work, I told him to lay him on his back, step his right foot on the arm at the bend of the elbow, and his left foot on the neck, weave the left hand in his hair, and run the point of his knife around the edge of the hair and it would come right off. He did this and there was a full-fledged dead Indian. He had a nice finger ring on his finger, it had a large plate on the ring which had a fish carved thereon. They offered me the ring but I refused it, but, if I had that ring today, I would not take \$100.00 for it.

It was now after sundown and it had been a long, hot and hungry day for us. We had done good work; had killed five Indians and captured over two hundred head of horses. We had one horse killed and one man slightly shot, but not at all dangerous. Several horses had been stolen out of Fort Worth. We took them home and every man came and got his property but did not offer to contribute one cent to buy a horse for James Robertson whose horse was killed.

On our road home, we stopped at A. J. Stratton's home and Mrs. Stratton did fix us all some supper. We were very hungry and ate very heartily. The next morning the remainder of our Indians came to Rock Creek where several families had forted up, and the

men had lariatied out their horses and gone fishing. The Indians were afoot, took one horse each and left others in the field and lit out for their homes at "Fort Sill," Oklahoma.

I have now told you of one Indian battle, fought 46 years ago today. I could tell you many other engagements and of our troubles but it is hardly necessary for it is unpleasant to go over the battle grounds and recall the many inhuman treatments of the Indians. They continued to trouble us and steal our horses and murder our people until 1875. The ground upon which this last Indian battle was fought is now a beautiful farm and the young girl sings her peaceful song as she goes to milk the cows or gather the fleecy cotton.

During these long, and tedious months, I was busy with my "fiddle." They were having balls all over the country and I was one of their "fiddlers" and dancers." I did not play in contests then, for they did not have them, but the time soon came when the "old fiddlers" had their contests and I had to meet such men as Jesse Roberts, Polk Harriss, Mose J. Bonner, Sam P. Stafford, Jim Gunn and hundreds of others. Among that number was Mat Brown, the best fiddler on earth. This fiddling comrade met death the 18th day of June, 1915, while fishing at Spur, Texas. Some people think that he was drowned, but he died from "heart failure." He was very warm and undertook to wade the lake to where they were eating dinner and as the cool water struck him it rushed the blood to his heart and he thus died. The reason that I offer this argument is the fact that a doctor came from Haskell, Texas to embalm him, and not a drop of water was

found in Mr. Brown and we all know that when a man drowns he is filled with water. Here the life of the best "fiddler" has stopped forever, but his name and his reputation as a "fiddler" will last as long as time lasts.

At the close of 1869, or during its summer months, we became acquainted with the people and especially the young girls of Parker county and among them was a Miss Susie Borden. She was a beautiful young woman and was born September 2nd, 1847, being two years younger than myself. And on December 9th, we were married. We were very poor but knew how to work. We settled down and worked with a will that knows not a failure and finally there was a company formed in our county to fight the Indians. Captain Willis was the captain of that company and at the end of one year, I was elected its captain. I had now reached a point in life where I could kill Indians to my liking. I had one hundred and fifteen men who were regarded as fighters; but before we had a fight, our company was called in, and disbanded. I now had but little to do but practice on my "fiddle" and soon there was a fiddlers' contest called for at Weatherford. I entered that contest, and won first honors; then at Fort Worth, another contest was held and I won again; then a contest at Cleburne, and Wm. Snyder won. After this, contests were held all over the country, from Dallas to Fort Worth and from there to Dalhart, and I won many of the first prizes. In Oklahoma, I played in thirteen prize contests and won twelve out of thirteen. I cannot begin to tell the number of first prizes won in Texas, but they were many. I lost one prize at Chillicothe, Texas, by being beaten by a man

whom I had beaten four times before. His name was Wallace P. Stafford. I am going to play him again but this book will not know its record. It will come off at Chickasha, August 5th, 1915. In 1901, I sold out in Texas and came to Oklahoma and have been here fourteen years. In 1913, my wife's health began to fail and on May 25th she died. I was now broken up; my good wife called away, and I was left alone to finish fighting the battles without a helper. I had been playing at the Dallas Fair for several years and on my way home from Dallas, I would go out to and spend one night with my two old friends, Mr. Walter Morgan and his good wife. After supper each night I would play for them and they most always asked me to "play" for a friend of theirs and I had done so for four years, not knowing who I was playing for. The last night I played there, I was asked to play for their friend. I consented and played "Sallie Johnson." When I had finished the tune, I heard a rich mellow voice say, "Oh, that is so fine." I said that is a woman I am playing for and Mr. Morgan said, "yes, and the prettiest widow in this town;" I said, "tell her to come over tomorrow and I will play for her all day. She was invited to come and did so, and when we were introduced, I, too, thought she was beautiful; I played my best and we were soon in love with each other and the next August 20th, we were married at Wichita Falls, Texas, and she is my wife today. She is twenty-six years younger than I am, but she is all that keeps me alive.

I have been leading you readers for a period of seventy years. I have taken you along the rugged pathways of my life. I have lead you out into the Indian

battles and have shown you how the people suffered in the early days of Texas. I have taken you to the ball room and "fiddlers" contest, and you have been with me when I was married twice, and today finds you wondering how I have lived so long—and I can tell you. My mother was the best woman that ever lived. She had been religious from her earliest days, and learned me to pray in secret, and I have done so for sixty years. I then joined the Baptist church and have been a God loving and Heaven seeking Christian all of my life.

In the early settlements of Texas, we had no schools and my mother learned me my letters and I learned to write on the ground and the first writing school I ever attended, I was the assistant teacher. In my younger days, I would cut and pile black jack brush in the day time and at night I would set them on fire and around the burning brush I studied my books and came out a man with a fairly good education. I have filled several offices and was elected District Clerk in Parker County Texas in 1888; have been City Clerk of Altus until I resigned and am now holding the position of Justice of Peace in Altus, Oklahoma, and am now at the end of my story.

HENRY C. GILLILAND.