

## SWEENY HISTORICAL SNAPSHOTS FROM FACEBOOK

Compiled by Basil Shannon basil\_shannon@yahoo.com



### SWEENY ABOUT 1911-1912

[Charlene Finley](#) May be around 1911 or 1912; ..... Can see way down on the left a store building that was my great-grandfather's and he came to Sweeny with his wife and children in 1910. First store on right was Smith's general store which had been located east of the railroad tracks but moved to present location; I was told by my Dad that when it was moved to present location, it was moved on logs.

Mr. Lingo told me that there was a saw mill near the railroad tracks south of the old depot and there were at least 2 brick factories also in operation.

**Wallace Ashwood Jr.** Directly across from Mr Smiths store, where the park is now, was a rooming house. My Dad told me he stayed there in 1947 when he hired on with Phillips. He said the first night he stayed there, he was blasted out of his bed at 4:00 AM from a steam whistle of a locomotive.

### **Charlene Finley**

Rooming house was known as **Aunt Rose's boarding house**. My mother was friends with the daughter of Aunt Rose and visited there often.

### **Henry Hanson**

Charlene you said your grandfather came to Sweeny in 1910, was that your grandfather Charles Ballard? They came from Itawanba County Mississippi, right? Your Sewell great grandparents came to Brazoria County before that didn't they? My grandparents came to Sweeny in 1919 a couple day after Christmas. They got on a train in Lexington, Henderson County Tennessee on Christmas day. My grandmother's younger brother Grover Cleveland Reddin came prior to 1917, I think with Frank Orr. Frank Orr came to Montgomery County Texas around 1902 then Brazoria County and they came from Hardin County, Tennessee. I wonder if there are others that know when their family came to Sweeny, like the Hammonds, Chenaults, Arringtons, Lindseys, Meadors, Presleys?

Note: Lindsey 1917. Book on subject

### **Dale Ryan**

I understand that my grandparents Will and Lydia Chenault Hammond came to Sweeny in 1912. Their oldest child Lydia (Bootsie) was born in Gallatin, Tennessee. The other 12 were born in the old Hammond homeplace on Ashley Wilson.

## Charlene Finley

Henry, My maternal greatgrandparents, **Ballards** came from Itawamba co. Miss, 1911 and the **Rimmers** came in 1910 from MO. Each family traveled by train to here. My **Sewell** great-grands settled in Prairie Lea TX and are buried there. My Sewell grandfather, George Lester came to this area around 1907, then married Lemma **Richardson**, whose parents and siblings had come to Lane City from AL on a train. George and Lemma married in 1908 and **at one time lived on Sweeny plantation in a slave cabin where my Dad was born.** Lemma's parents also lived there and they all were farming at the time, then finally all moving to Hasima in 1912. While living at Old Ocean they were renting from Judge Holland.

## Henry Hanson

I talked to Tom Holcomb about the historical post about Sweeny on Facebook. Tom told me that his wife Linda (Stokes) Holcomb's step father was Herman **Vezey** and he was postmaster of Sweeny in the early days. Herman Vezey told Tom Holcomb that the **stumps were dynamited out of Main Street Sweeny in 1911.** The problem was that some of the stumps were cut too high off the ground and a team and wagon would go down main street and the wagon axle would get hung up on the stump, which coined the term **stumped.**



## **SWEENY IN THE 50'S**

### **Charlotte Richers Sterling**

The reason there are so many cars back then is because Main Street was our commercial district. We bought our groceries there, shopped for clothes, shoes, fabrics, etc., at Kimmey and Boswell's, crafts at Miss Darnell's, flowers at Sybil LeBlanc's, dresses at Murrial's, ate at the Dixie Grill, had our shoes repaired at Sheffield 's Shoe Repair, bought lumber, etc., at Chick Anderson's, etc.,

### **Roger Hanson**

There were two Phillip 66 stations, post office, a grocery store by the post office and can't leave out the barber shop along Boone plumbing and the feed store where many of us sold pecans

### Charlotte Richers Sterling

Let's not forget the Curtis/Lindsey Lumber Yard. The grocery store near the Post Office was. That's where we shopped and as most families in the area had an account there on which we charged our purchases and paid monthly.

### **Sue Mitchell**

On our block, Reading's Cleaners, was Bakers café, Murray's Furniture Store, Cleaners, Muriel's Dress Shop, Mayer's Drug Store and the movie theater. Next block was Meador's Gro. Store, which became Benedicts. There was also a donut shop next to Sybil's Flowers and the Orr's building. Everyone shopped in Sweeny and did not go often to Lake Jackson or Bay City. When the shopping stopped the town declined. There used to be at least 5 gas stations on the drag. That was the Sweeny I was reared in, and it was great.

### **Wilma Parks Howard**

I remember riding my bicycle to the "picture show" on Saturday morning, hanging out at Mayer's drug store till time for the show to open, coming out in the middle of the afternoon, blinded by the sun. When television was new, Meador's put one in their window.

### **Paula Ashcraft Harper**

The Boone's had a plumbing service?? The Hitchcock's had the phone company Dorsey Slay had a lumber yard all behind the main street

### **Pat Patterson**

**I think that good roads and comfortable, air conditioned cars caused the demise of small town main streets.**

### John E. Farlow

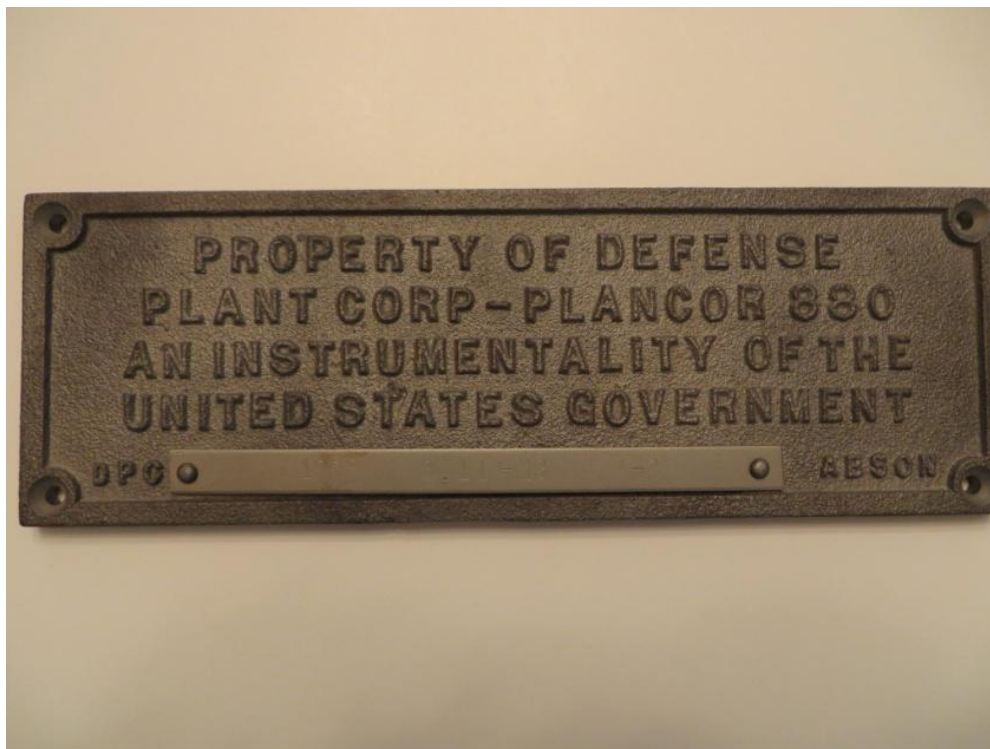
I remember Ben Franklins, Western Auto, Benedicts

### **Wallace Ashwood Jr.**

I was born in '53 but still remember a lot of downtown Sweeny. There was the ice house and a domino hall behind the dime store. Where the Stop and Go is now was a Gulf filling station. Next to it on Main was a restaurant

next to Maxey's furniture store. White's garage was 2nd street behind the Gulf station. I remember Kimmey and Boswells because it was the first air conditioner I experienced.

## OIL INDUSTRY



### Henry Hanson

Most everybody around Sweeny knows that James S. Abercombie was successful in wildcatting the 4 mile x 9 mile Old Ocean field because of his close association with blacksmith Harry Cameron, who perfected the blow out preventer. My father along with many Sweeny residents worked for Abercombie before and after the gas plant was sold to Amoco in 1952. But how many of you know that when WWII began, Franklin D. Roosevelt and John Nance Garner invited J. S. Abercombie to Washington to asked his advice about how the US could produce more aviation gasoline.



Abercrombie said; Get Pritchard in San Antonio to design and build you a refinery and I will operate it with my employees. After the war the government put the refinery up for sale to the highest bidder. This began the Phillips 66 era. One of my last turnarounds a vessel in the old Cat Cracker unit was replaced by a new vessel. I went to the salvage yard and removed a plaque off the side of the old vessel. The plaque says" Property of Defense Plant Corp - Plancor 880 An Instrumentally of the United States Government". Also, Harry Cameron's blacksmith shop later became "Cameron Iron Works".

To add to this piece of history, when Pritchard was building the refinery for the US Government, they purchased material from all over the US, some of which were Crane valves. Crane is a manufacturers name. Crane valves were made in Germany and made and sold to suppliers in the US before WWII began. In the refinery there were a number of Crane valves and they had a swastika below the name Crane forged into the body of the valve. I recall **one old Crane valve with the swastika** being removed from the old Cat Cracker unit, sent to be repaired and it replaced a Japanese (Kitz)valves in the new unit built in the late 70's. I wish now I had taken a picture of it.

### Jim Cameron

Harry S. Cameron, a formally-trained and highly skilled machinist, was partner in a chain of machine shops headquartered in Humble. He had assisted Abercrombie for years, by the way, before Abercrombie nearly perished in a blowout. He decided he had enough and also recognized the enormous cost savings potential.

### Steve Pourteau

JS Abercrombie (also owned Old Ocean Gas Plant and Field) operated the Defense plant for the Federal Government until Phillips bought it in '46. He sold the Defense Plant all of the crude feedstock out of the Old Ocean Field and fuel gas from the Old Ocean Plant. The Old Ocean Field and Plant was bought by Amoco in 1954 for \$80mm. JS Abercrombie's granddaughter is the same one that owns the Great Southwest Equestrian Center in Katy (or used to, I don't know if she still does...). Abercrombie also owned Cameron Iron Works that turned into Cameron Valve. CIW worked to develop the modern day blow-out

preventer that all drilling rigs in the world use (or one like it) right there in the Old Ocean Field.

### **Steve Pourteau**

The first gas plant at the Old Ocean Field was built in '39, and the second one in '46. The '46 expansion was a result of the sale of the Defense Plant to Phillips as Abercrombie no longer had the Defense plant to process the liquids recovered from the gas as well as a significant capacity expansion for the gas processing. The '39 plant was 78 mmscf and the '46 was 240 mmscf.

(MMSCF Million Standard [Cubic](#) Feet (*oil industry*))

### **Henry Hanson**

J. S. Abercrombie had a partner Dan Harrison. Harrison sold his 48% interest to Mobil in 1948 and Abercrombie sold his 52% to Stanolind which was the Exploration Production side of Amoco. Amoco bought a pipeline company called Pam American and the Sweeny Gas Plant fell under that name but the mother company was still Amoco until 1998 when Amoco and British Petroleum merged. When Amoco plugged and abandon the well on 2nd street near the hospital, they pulled up the flow lines and I called Amoco and asked them if they would sell me the flow line right of way next to my house on Ave. A. Two years later they offered the lots for sale after they came to an agreement with Mobil.

### **Steve Pourteau**

I used to like to listen to the old timers that were around when they were drilling the field. They used to have mule teams they used to haul the welding machines on skids into the swamp with. Back in the 30s and 40s, before the Old Ocean Swamp was drained, most of it was full of water most of the year. Abercrombie pretty much knew he was going to hit a well as they were drilled. Wasn't much actual wildcatting done, because almost every well hit... They would lay a flow line from the gas plant to the drilling site for fuel, as those drilling rigs were all steam driven back in those days, and after they completed the well, the flow line laid for fuel was turned around as the well's production line to BRLD station... The first well drilled was at the end of the separator station right there at the plant. It was used as a water disposal well when I was there in the 70s, 80s, and 90s... The Old Ocean Field was also the first unitized field in the US where all of the land owners basically became partners.



### **Steve Pourteau**

The Old Ocean Gas Plant expansion that was built in '60-'61 was the largest gas plant in the world until Exxon built the twin sisters, Katy and King Ranch plants in '66. Also at that time, the Larsen Reservoir was also the largest known high pressure gas field in the US.

Abercrombie sold out to Stanolind in '54... Amoco and Pan American (Stanolind) were the same company. Stanolind (Pan American) were changed names to the parent company in '68. Pan American was Amoco's E&P side of the business.

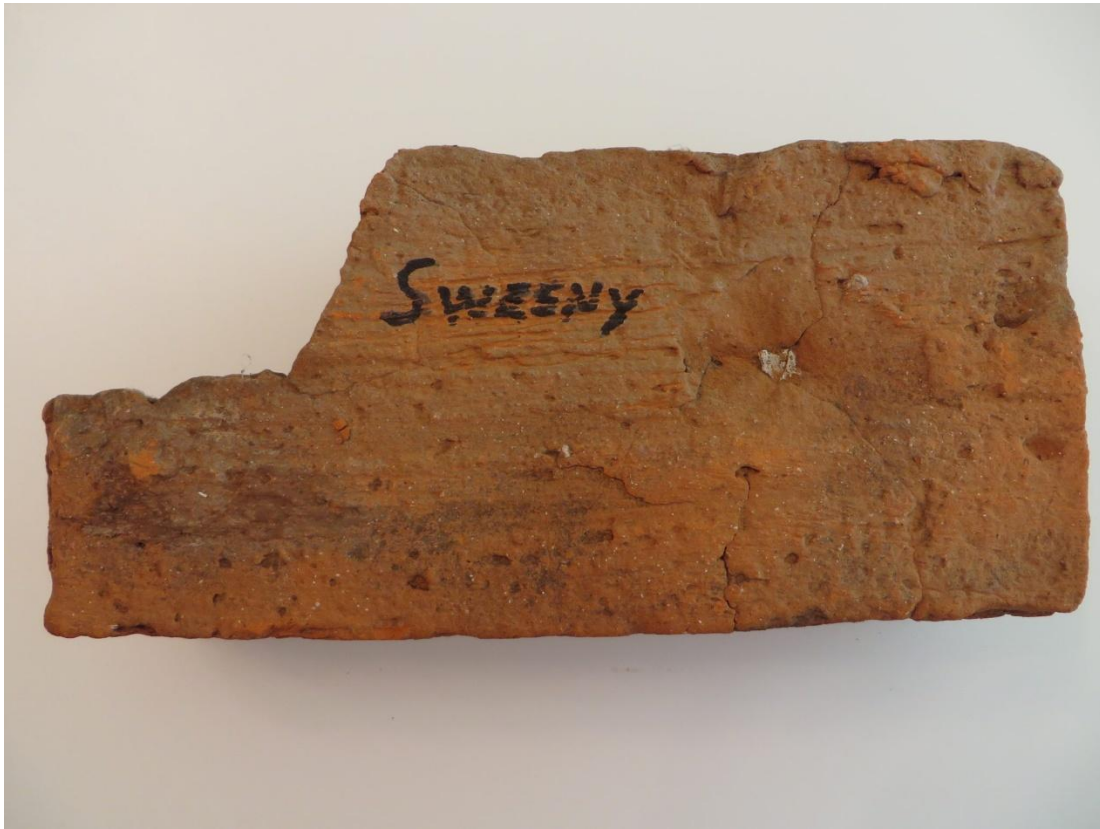
### **ASHLEY WILSON ROAD**

#### **Basil Shannon**

##### **ASHLEY WILSON ROAD**

Ashley Wilson is named after Ashley Fly Wilson (1887-1953) who was the son of Erwin Nicholas Wilson and Ella McGrew (1855-1931). Ella was the daughter of Sophia Sweeny McGrew (1819-1990)/John McGrew and her grandfather was John Sweeny Sr. (1783-1855) the guy who came here in 1833 and the rest is history... There was also an Ashley Fly Wilson II & III. III alive in his 70s 2014.

**JOHN SWEENY SR (1783-1855)**



**Henry Hanson**

This brick was taken from under a large oak tree on the East side of the old highway going by the Sweeny Cemetery. If you find Thomas Lemon's grave site then look in the direction of Stewarts Store you will see the two large oak trees above the underbrush. It is my belief that the John Sweeny Sr. plantation house was in that same vicinity. This would be the same house that was occupied by Sophie and John McGrew. What are your thoughts?

