

VICENTE F. CARVAJAL

Many men and women have carved their mark into the history of Wilson County. Historians meet them in print and in oral history. One marvels at the lasting contributions and bold adventures of these pioneer history makers. Vicente F. Carvajal was one of those remarkable pioneer people one has reason to remember.

Vicente Carvajal was the son of Jose Luis Carvajal. Members of this family were Texas pioneers during the Spanish era. Carvajal Crossing, a natural rock-bottomed ford across Cibolo Creek in north central Karnes County, was named for Jose Luis Carvajal. Vicente Carvajal was 88 years old when he died on March 1, 1935. A varied and productive life was packed into those 88 years. Old newspaper accounts tell some of his adventures. Other facets of his life are recorded in the Wilson County Clerk's office.

In March of 1872, Vicente Carvajal, a cattle buyer and trail driver, was hired by Collin Campbell to take a herd of about 1800 head of cattle to Nebraska. This was the time when many cattle herds were driven over old trails to markets in Abilene Kansas, Nebraska and other places where large herds could be sold to buyers. Vicente knew where good cowboys could be found and he went to Lodi to hire his drovers. One of the drovers was Vicente's brother, Aurelio Carvajal. Miguel Cantu, Francisco Longoria, Melchor Ximenez and other men made up the list of drovers. Collin Campbell entrusted Vicente with \$1500 for general expenses.

The drovers and their herd started out in March of 1872. Collin Campbell rode as far as Lockhart, Texas with them. They crossed several large rivers between Floresville and Fort Worth, Texas. Fort Worth, Texas was a fairly small settlement at this time but it was a trading center. Vicente purchased enough provisions to take the herd through the Indian Territory. They crossed the Red River at Red River Station in Montague County and entered the Indian Territory. It was customary to give the Indians several head of cattle. The drovers knew what to expect when the Indians rode up to them. The cattle served as custom payment for allowing the herd to pass through the territory. The men cut out three head of lame cattle. The Indians were satisfied and they traveled through the Indian Territory without trouble.

They arrived at Ellsworth Kansas where the cowboys were taking their cattle. Collin Campbell was waiting there for them. Vicente and the drovers were ordered to go to North Platte Nebraska. The western part of Nebraska was a wilderness and there were no roads in those days. Vicente acquired a map and a compass to help find the way. They believed the map would help them locate water for the herd. They followed the north star and consulted the compass to help find the way. The drovers had a rough journey and at one point the cattle went three days without water. They had to find water or risk losing the cattle, and the Soloman River seemed a likely place to water the thirsty cattle. Before they arrived at the river, they encountered some men from a settlement of people known as "short horns". They were not friendly. About twenty

men rode toward them with double-barreled shot guns. They would not allow the cattle to drink water from the river. Vicente knew the cattle had to drink water. He got one of the men from the settlement aside and offered him \$100 in gold or some of the cows if he would allow the drovers to water the cattle on his section of land. He agreed. They watered the cattle and went west to cross the Soloman River.

One evening while the drovers were eating, they saw a herd of buffalo coming toward their camp. Some of the tied horses were excited and broke their ropes. The men could not catch them and the horses started running ahead of the buffalo. They were a long way from home and they had a herd of cattle to drive. They had to have the horses. There was one horse left in camp and Vicente rode him out to overtake the buffalo and horses. By the time he caught up with them his mount was almost exhausted, but Vicente kept riding him. He rode along side the buffalo and the horses. Finally he caught one of the horses and led him away from the buffalo. The other horses followed him.

The next day they arrived in North Platte, Nebraska. Collin Campbell was there waiting for them. They had been on the trail for six months. They delivered the cattle to the buyer. Then, the drovers returned to Texas.

Vicente F. Carvajal was employed in the San Antonio post office during the American Civil War. At a later time he was elected county clerk of Wilson County. He also held other important positions in the county. In 1882 he purchased the Lodi Ferry business located on the east side of San Antonio River in Lodi. On an old map of the area, the ferry crossing is called Carvajal Crossing. Vicente lived in a house next to the ferry crossing. That house is gone, but the red rock chimney still stands next to the ferry crossing. Another house was built and attached to the chimney.

Vicente Carvajal is buried in Sacred Heart Cemetery in Floresville, Texas.