

THE TAMALE MAN

June 2020



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to

Barbara A. (King) Renfro

The wife of my only brother
for 55 years.

Charles M. (Lum) Renfro
1934 - 2018

And the Granddaughter of
THE TAMALE MAN





ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book has been written in an effort to inform all of those people who have grown up going to Corsicana, Texas with their families or as a teenager, taking your date over on a Saturday night, to get some hot tamales from the TAMALE MAN, to eat while sitting in your car with your date, doing this from year to year, enjoying the great tamales that had cost you a big 50 cents for a dozen, but never knowing who this person was who had provided you with these newspaper wrapped treats. Well, I am about to let all of you who grew up in Navarro County, and had come from all around the county, to see who this local celebrity was, but known only as -----

THE TAMALE MAN





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THE DRIVE

My wife and I were both born and raised in the country, near the town of Dawson, Texas, on a blackland farm. We both were in the graduating class of 1948, from Dawson Highschool, were married in October of 1948 and farmed for the first years of our marriage. We had grown up, both in families that went to Corsicana for a lot of the family shopping.

Where we lived, we traveled old Highway 31, which was later replaced by a new Highway 31 to the north side of Dawson and ran a more direct route from Corsicana to Waco. The old road then was renamed as a new farm-to-market road. It was the travel up this old road that has remained in my memory. I can remember the many farms, the houses, the buildings, going across the bridge over the creek, and I still remember passing a really nice home, which may have been built by one of the men that had made it big in the old oil boom days. I, as a boy, was impressed by the sight of one great car

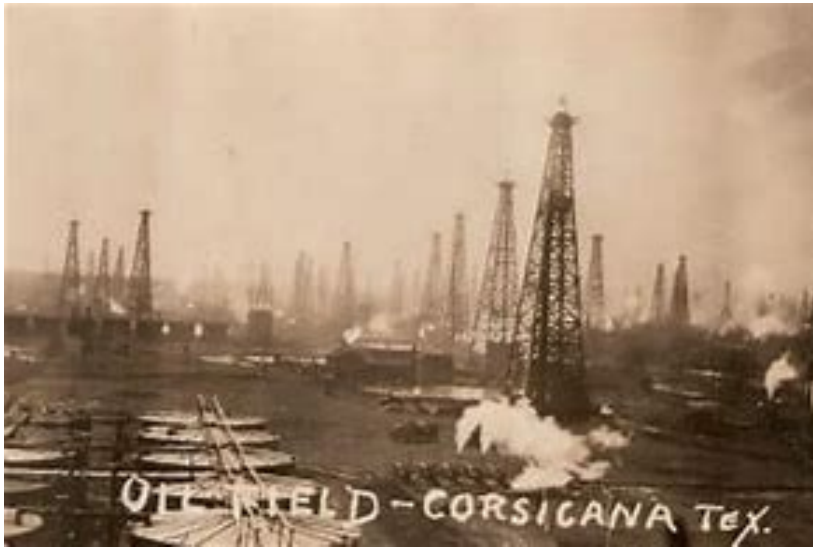
that appeared from time to time in front of the beautiful home which was protected by a long white wooden fence with a gate directly in front of the house, and where one of the first Lincoln "Mark 1 " automobiles would park for all of the world to see. I loved seeing this great car and dreamed about having one of my own, when I grew up.

A few more miles down the road we would come to the last survivors of bygone eras of the oil boom days of 1894. The Corsicana oil boom was the first discovery of oil in Texas. This discovery put the town on the map. As we had come in, we had passed old oil pumps still pumping that black gold, some sat closed while others pumped, we would come to the area where there sat rows upon rows of large storage tanks. I was at this time in my life, never really aware of the really historical background of what I was seeing, and the place in history that this entire area held in its past.

The oil boom was not the only contributor to history, but only one of many, some of which remain.



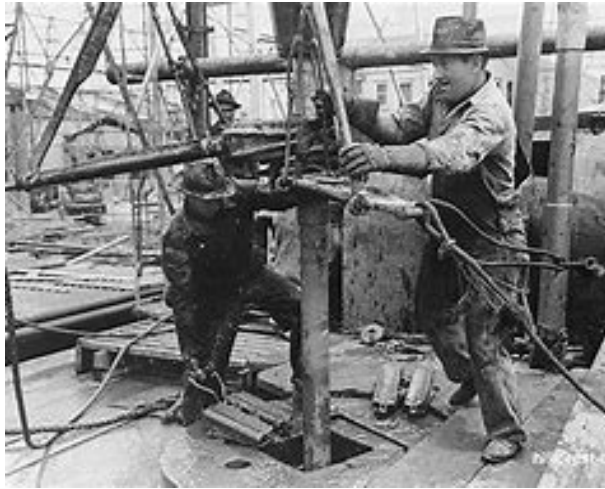
THE OIL BOOM OF 1894



THE OIL FIELDS



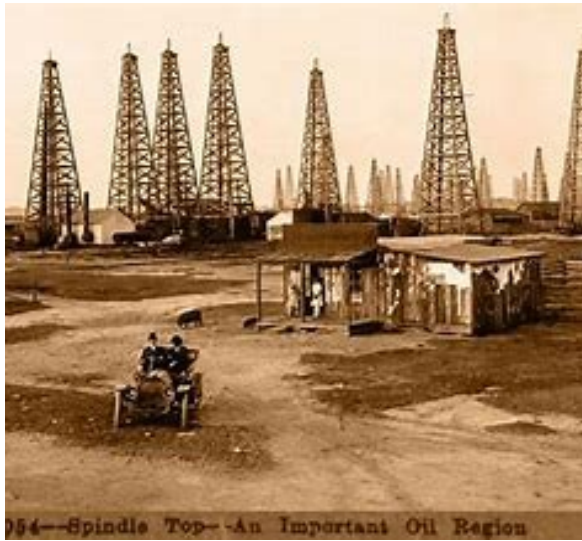
OIL FIELD CITY



OIL FIELD WORKER



PUMPING BLACK GOLD



054--Spindle Top--An Important Oil Region

THE OIL FIELDS



Spindle Top Oil Field, BRAUMONT, Tex.

THE OIL FIELDS

Corsicana was established in 1848 to serve as the seat of government for Navarro County, which the first Texas legislature had created two years earlier. The county was named after Jose Antonio Navarro, a Texas patriot. When asked what the new town should be called, Navarro replied, "Call it Corsicana after the island of Corsica, the birthplace of my father." Corsicana was a typical post-Civil War cotton town in the black lands of northeast central Texas. The city first adopted its Home Rule Charter in 1917 and last amended in May 2007.

Oil Fields

In 1894, oil was discovered by accident only blocks from Corsicana's business district as drillers were completing an artesian well to expand the city's water supply. Within six years, 500 oil wells operating within the city limits were producing 800,000 barrels of crude annually, making Corsicana the site of the first commercial oil field in Texas.



HISTORIC CORSICANA

Today the more than 26,000 residents of Corsicana take great pride in their rich history.

"Firsts" of Corsicana

Other historic information concerning the many "firsts" taking place in Corsicana include:

Corsicana is where oil was first discovered west of the Mississippi, thus Corsicana became the first Texas oil boom town, and one of Texas'

wealthiest cities.

In 1898, the state's first oil refinery was built by a new local company called Magnolia Petroleum Company (known today as Mobil). This made it the first Texas oil boom town, and one of Texas' wealthiest cities.

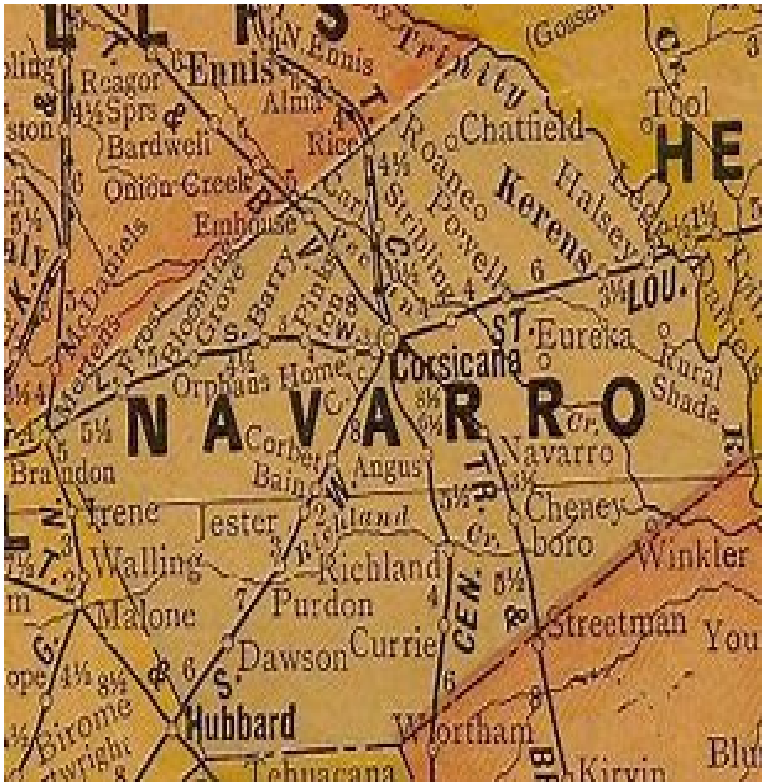
The Texas Company (Texaco) began shortly thereafter.

Corsicana was one of the first cities in Texas to use natural gas for lighting and fuel.

Lyman T. Davis first delivered his famous chili in downtown Corsicana in 1895. He started canning his chili in 1921 and named it "Wolf Brand" after his pet wolf. A picture of the wolf is still found on the label to this day. The company is now owned by ConAgra Foods.

As I run these memories through my mind, I can remember the other, now famous, things about Corsicana that have survived time.

As we continue our drive from our home near Dawson along old highway 31 to Corsicana, we have gone through the remains of the old oil fields and now are about to enter the historical area of Corsicana. This history has been well written and documented by historians for years. There are many websites for those of you who are history buffs, and would be well worth your time for a visit to them.



WHERE IS CORSICANA ?



DOWNTOWN CORSICANA



DOWNTOWN CORSICANA
ON ARMISTICE DAY



DOWNTOWN CORSICANA



HISTORIC BUILDING



HISTORIC BUILDING



HISTORIC PALACE THEATER



BEATON STREET NEAR THE
HISTORIC BANK BUILDING



HISTORIC HOME



OLD BEATON STREET TROLLEY



LANDMARK BUILDING



HISTORIC BANK BUILDING



HISTORIC HOME



HISTORIC HOME



HISTORIC CHURCH



HISTORIC COUNTY COURTHOUSE

During the glory years of the oil boom and the years that followed, it was said that Corsicana was home for the most millionaires in the state.

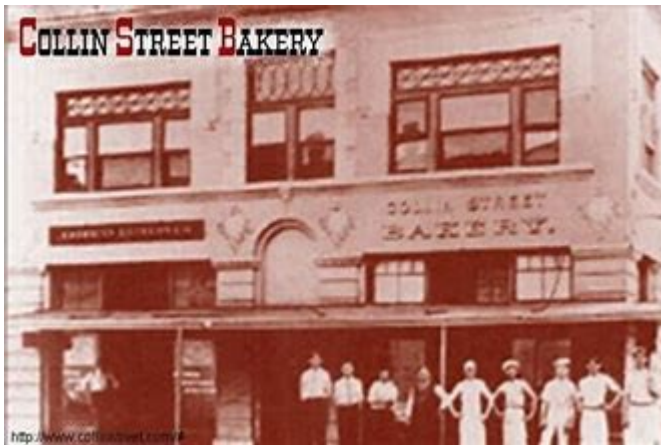
It also was the home of the Oil City Steelworks, a brick making company, a Dr. Pepper plant, and a cotton mill, was the center for cattle sales and many other businesses that served the farming and cattle economy.



THE COLLIN STREET BAKERY



The bakery was founded in 1896 by **August Wiederman**, an immigrant from **Wiesbaden, Germany**.^[2] With the help of local entrepreneur Tom McElwee, the bakery soon outgrew its original building, and required a new one in which the second floor was turned into a hotel. Celebrities such as **Enrico Caruso** and **Will Rogers** were sighted at the bakery, and in 1914 the **Ringling Brothers Circus** passed through town and ordered dozens of fruitcakes as **Christmas** gifts to be mailed to friends and family across the globe. In this way, the bakery entered the mail-order business. Lee William "L. W." McNutt, Sr. (1895-1972), Harry Cook, and Bob Rutherford purchased the bakery in 1946 from August Wiederman.





HISTORICAL STREET MARKER

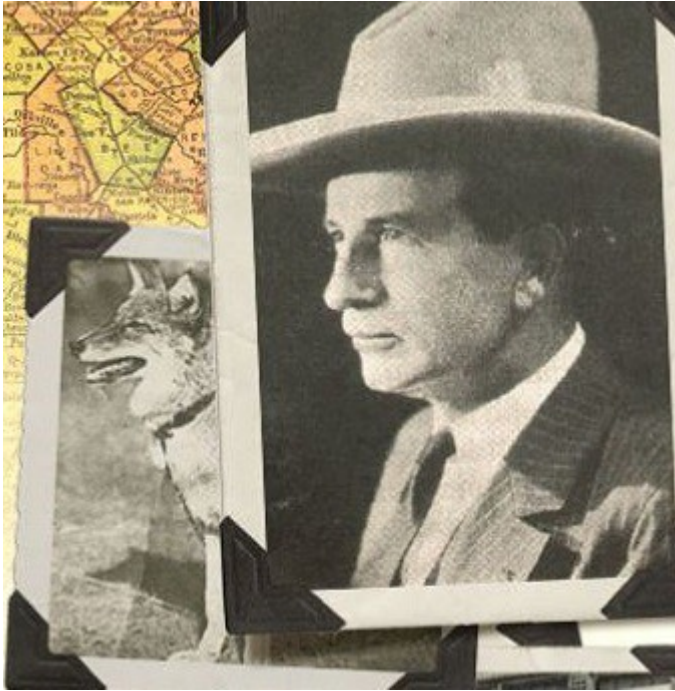


THE COLLIN STREET BAKERY



THE DELUXE FRUIT CAKE





WOLF BRAND CHILI. In 1895 Lyman T. Davis of Corsicana developed the original recipe for Wolf Brand Chili, which he sold for five cents a bowl from the back of a wagon parked on the streets in downtown Corsicana. He later opened a meat market in Corsicana where he sold his chili in brick form, using the brand name of Lyman's Famous Home Made Chili. In 1921, using the simplest machinery, he began canning his chili and marketing it in the immediate area. It was about that time that he adopted the brand name "Wolf Brand," in honor of his pet wolf, Kaiser Bill. By 1923, with improved equipment, Davis had increased production to 2,000 cans of chili per day. Because of the discovery of oil on his farm, he had neither the



DELIVERY TRUCK WITH WOLF



ADVERTISEMENT

time nor the interest to devote to his chili business, and in 1924 he sold his operations to J. C. West and Fred Slauson, two Corsicana businessmen. The new owners modernized production and introduced new marketing techniques. Among the most successful innovations introduced by West and Slauson were Model T Ford trucks with cabs shaped like cans and painted to resemble the Wolf Brand label. A live wolf was caged in the back of each truck. The vehicles not only provided practical transportation for company salesmen but also were effective traveling advertisements for their products. In 1954 the company expanded into interstate markets, having previously distributed its products only in Texas. The new markets included New Mexico, Louisiana, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. In 1957 Quaker Oats of Chicago purchased Wolf Brand from Doyle and James West, sons of J. C. West. Quaker Oats continued to operate the Corsicana plant as a separate division of the company, leaving Davis's original recipe unchanged. In 1977 Wolf Brand, along with other chili manufacturers, successfully lobbied the Texas legislature to have chili proclaimed the official "state food" of Texas. In an effort to consolidate its operations, Quaker Oats closed the Corsicana plant in 1985 and merged its operations with another subsidiary, Stokley-Van Camp, in Dallas.

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RESTORED CHILI TRUCK WITH
WOLF CAGE BEHIND



CHILI TRUCK FROM THE FRONT



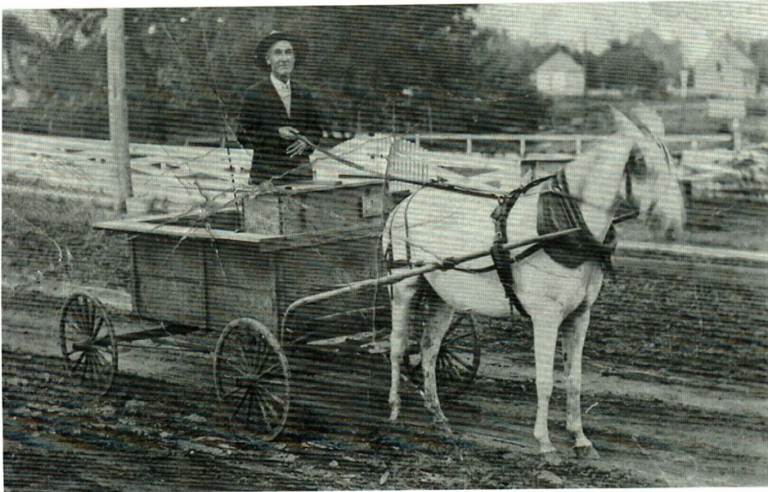
THE TAMALE MAN

We have now driven past the main business street and are at our destination. Waiting at the same location each night, beside the street, next to the old Greyhound Buss Station is the street vendor known only as the Tamale Man.

His name was William (Will) Carpenter, and now you know. He was a real person like us all, and this is his story.



1892. Corsicana, Nathan Carpenter selling tamales. *Photo courtesy of Bobby Carpenter.*



NATHAN CARPENTER
THE FIRST TAMALES MAN - 1892



THE TAMALES WAGON



NATHEN CARPENTER'S
TAMALE RESTAURANT
HOT TAMALES AND COKE





THE TAMALE MAN IN HIS
FIRST HORSE DRAWN WAGON



THE TAMALE MAN IN HIS
FIRST TRUCK SALES WAGON



THE TAMALE MAN AT 7th AVE





Muy Bueno, Señor!

Carpenter's Hot Tamales are back! Bill and Bob Carpenter have opened their new shop featuring "Will Carpenter's original Hot Tamale recipe" at 2300 W. 7th Ave. Drive-in window service makes purchasing hot tamales convenient. (Sun Staff Photo)

Corsicana Daily Sun
April 4, 1972

Famous Hot Tamale Receipe Is Back

Carpenter Hot Tamale fans are happy to know that Bobby and Bill Carpenter have opened Carpenter's Hot Tamales store at 2300 W. 7th Ave., using the family recipe famous in Navarro County since 1892.

Third generation hot tamale makers, the brother's grandfather, the late Nathan Carpenter, created the original recipe. Their father, the late Willie Carpenter passed it down to them.

"This is the only place in Navarro County that you can get hot tamales made from the original recipe created by my grandfather," Bill proudly said.

Carpenter noted that it takes approximately five hours to prepare hot tamales.

Wrapped in parchment paper, each hot tamale is a tasty combination of meal and meat specially seasoned with Carpenter's secret touch.

Fanciers will be able to buy hot tamales by the dozen between 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday. "We are specializing in drive-in window service," Bill said.

Like grandfather, like father and now, like son, aptly describes the tradition of making hot tamales in the Carpenter family. Stop by today and pick up several dozen. Excellent for lunch or dinner, or appetizers, you'll enjoy a Carpenter hot tamale prepared from the original recipe and "tender loving care."





LABOR OF LOVE



THE TAMALE FACTORY



MORE CARPENTER TAMALES



A 5th GENERATION CARPENTER
TAMALE MAKER AT WORK



HISTORIC FIGURES OF
CORSICANA



BEAUFORD H. JESTER
1893 - 1949

GOVERNOR OF TEXAS 1947-1949

COUNTRY MUSIC
HALL OF FAME

ELECTED 1982



LEFTY FRIZZELL

MARCH 31, 1928 - JULY 19, 1975

BORN IN CORNHAMA, TEXAS, WILLIAM ORVILLE FRIZZELL GAVE UP TO BECOME ONE OF COUNTRY MUSIC'S MOST LEGENDARY ARTIST/SONGWRITERS. THE INNOVATIVE UNIQUE SINGING STYLE HE INTRODUCED IN 1950, COUPLED WITH HIS REPERTOIRE OF CLASSIC COMPOSITIONS, HAVE REMAINED AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON THE CAREERS OF MAJOR COUNTRY PERFORMERS FOR DECADES. A POPULAR ARTIST FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS, HE ACHIEVED A FEAT UNRIVALED IN COUNTRY MUSIC WHEN FOUR OF HIS SONGS, SIMULTANEOUSLY, APPEARED IN THE NATIONAL COUNTRY CHARTS TOP TEN.

COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION



COUNTRY WESTERN SINGER
LEFTY FRIZZELL
1928 - 1975



CARPENTER HOT TAMALES

WILLIAM (WILL) CARPENTER
1891 - 1967



THE TAMALE MAN



A WORD FROM THE WRITER

I hope that you have enjoyed following us down our journey thru memory lane, and the story that I have tried to tell about a street vendor named Nathan Carpenter, who began selling his home made tamales in the year 1892 and passed the business on to his son William (Will) Carpenter who we knew only as THE TAMALE MAN. Will passed the tradition down to his children, and their children and to their children. The Carpenter Family still make the original recipe tamales today, and are available for your order from their facebook page CARPENTER'S HOT TAMALES.

This story has more than a passing memory to me because the wife of my brother, Barbara King was the granddaughter of The Tamale Man, and the daughter of Tyson King, who was the Master Baker in charge of making the world famous "Deluxe Fruit Cake" from the Collin Street Bakery for 40 years.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I WISH TO THANK THOSE WHO
HELPED PUT THIS BOOK TOGETHER,
FOR WITHOUT THEIR HELP I WOULD
HAVE HAD TO DO IT ALL BY MYSELF.

DARRYL RENFRO

BARBARA (KING) RENFRO
Granddaughter of the TAMALE MAN

ROBIN RENFRO
Great-granddaughter of the TAMALE MAN



