

Museum News: Daisy and Archie Cochran – Pioneering Spirit

by C. W. (Bill) Smith

W. A. "Archie" Cochran was born in 1867 in Jasper County, Mississippi. His family moved to Texas in the 1870s and he taught school in Ozona. He married Daisy May Harrell, daughter of Joe Berry and Tallula Kendrick Harrell. She was born in Burnet County and married Archie in 1897. He had been her high school math teacher. After Archie taught school he went into the mercantile business and finally became the foreman of the Couch

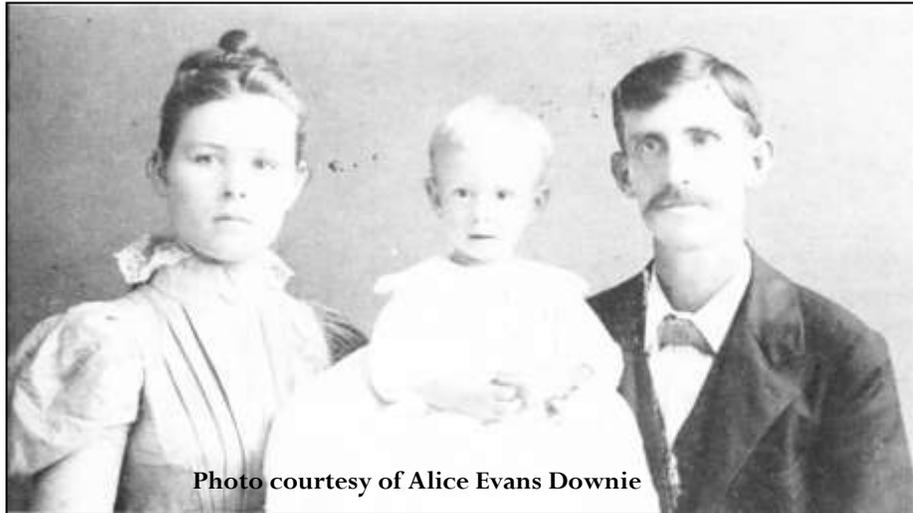


Photo courtesy of Alice Evans Downie

Ranch at Ozona. Their children, Carl, Layton and Ruby were all born at Ozona. In 1910 the Cochrans moved to Sanderson to homestead a place just two miles east of town. They traveled by hack and drove their cattle with them. When they crossed the Pecos River they had to dip the cattle for ticks and stay for a week before continuing on to Sanderson.

Once established at Sanderson Cochran gradually bought out other homesteaders and eventually owned a spread of 14,000 acres. He ran mostly cattle, but he also had sheep and goats. Archie ran a dairy in addition to his cows, sheep and goats. Before their ranch home was built they lived for two years in Sanderson. The frame home on the ranch lasted until it burned in 1940, long after Archie and Daisy had moved to San Antonio. It was replaced with a cinder block structure.

Cochran served on the school board from 1913 until 1918. In that period the school, faculty and curriculum grew and a sports program was introduced. He served as secretary of the school board for several terms.

During his time as commissioner, which began with his election in 1919, the county made much progress towards becoming a modern entity. A sheep scab inspector and two trappers were hired to assist local ranchers. Ordinances were passed that affected the city of Sanderson, including a rule that trash and waste could no longer be dumped into the streets. A 1922 Ford touring car was purchased by the county to aid in the construction of the new Highway 12 being constructed through the county, which was the county's responsibility before the state and federal government took over that task. For his work as a commissioner, Cochran and the others received \$4.00 per day for services rendered, a far cry from today's pay scale. His county work was in addition to running his cow, sheep and goat operation and producing and selling milk from his dairy. Archie Cochran was a hardworking man.

In addition to his county and ranch duties, Cochran found time to be a Mason and both he and Daisy were actively involved in Eastern Star. In 1920 when the Sanderson Chamber of Commerce was organized, W. A. Cochran was a founding member and put in charge of a committee promoting good roads in the county. At this point in time the county was responsible for creating and maintaining all roads found within its boundaries, and so this committee was important as an advisory position with the county, especially as Cochran was a county commissioner at the time.

The Cochrans were people of faith and joined the local Presbyterian Church in 1920 and served in various positions until 1925 when they moved to live with Ruby and Layton in San Antonio. Carl leased the ranch and replaced the cattle with sheep. Layton became a physician in San Antonio. Even after they moved to San Antonio and were supposedly retired, Archie got a job as a Fuller Brush salesman and did that until his death in 1939. Daisy passed in 1960.

Archie and Daisy Cochran were amazing people, with a huge capacity for not only taking care of their own family and business, but also finding the time to volunteer and promote civic life in Sanderson. They were among the founding citizens of our county who had a tremendous impact in its growth and modernization during its first two decades. Their willingness to dig in and carve a home and a community from this desolate wilderness exemplifies the hardy pioneer spirit that built our city and our county.