

After growing up on the family farm in Bee County, Lee Barber marries a local girl and moves first to Barbers Hill then to west Texas. As a grocer, restaurateur, sheriff, and road contractor, he’s the first Barber ancestor who is not a rancher.

Lee Marries and Moves to Barbers Hill

When Lee’s thoughts turned to marriage in the 1890s his eyes, like those of his cousins, roamed no further than Beeville, twenty miles to the west, or to Refugio, ten miles to the east, and to the ranches in between. There were wagon roads and telephone service to both towns from McGill’s store,¹ permitting an active social life among the ranch kids with ample opportunity to meet potential spouses. Rufus Barber, a cousin who lived on the Benjamin Barber ranch almost next door, wrote that Saturday night dances were common. Boys and girls both would travel miles on horseback to the dances, which could be preceded by riding tournaments, complete with prizes.²

Just like elsewhere in the rural South, youngsters found their spouses locally and area families quickly became thoroughly intermarried. For example, three of Lee’s father’s sisters had married Ives brothers.[†] Lee’s father, Addison, had married one of Henderson Williams’s daughters; then two of Addison’s sisters married two of Henderson’s sons.^{*} Finally, three other of Henderson’s children married other Barber kids.[‡]

[†] Amanda married John; Betty married George; Martha married William.

^{*} Addison married Adeline; Eliza married Rufus; Clara Francis married Albert Jefferson.

[‡] Jane Williams married Benjamin Barber; Eliza married Ben Maley, Benjamin’s nephew; Henderson May Williams married Annie Barber, Benjamin’s niece.

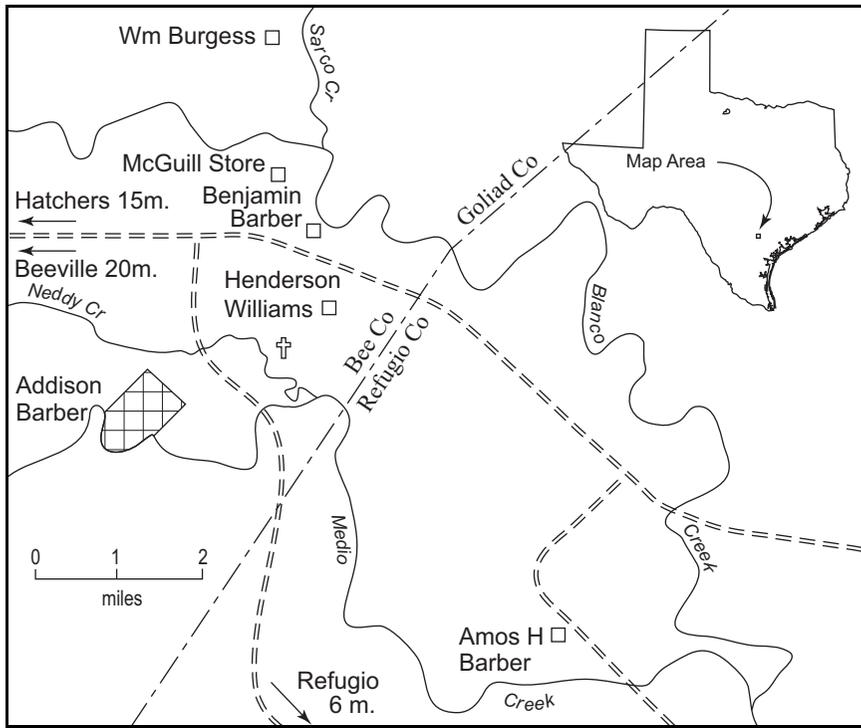


FIGURE 1. *Blanca* was not really a town, but a settlement. Originally known as “Kimo” and “Dark Corner,” it gained its official name from Blanco Creek in 18xx when the post office was opened at the McGuill Store.

This tendency toward multiple marriages between two families appeared once again between the Hatchers and the Barbers. John Ezekiel “Zeke” Hatcher and his wife Sarah Jane had moved to Bee County in about 1890 after two decades in Delta County, near the Oklahoma and Arkansas borders, where he was a farmer and owned a cotton gin (for more on the Hatcher family history see page xx).^{3,4,5} Nine of their children followed, immediately or within a few years. Only the oldest, Nancy Caroline “Lina,” who had married James Millstead, remained in the Delta County area permanently.^{6,7,8,9} In Bee County Zeke and Sarah purchased three parcels of rural land totaling 241 acres located five miles east of Beeville between Poesta and Medio Creeks and on the way toward Blanco and Refugio.^{10,11} He presumably farmed and ran a few cows, as he had all his life.¹² According to one descendant Zeke at the same time operated a store in Beeville.³

Within a year or so their second son, James Langford Hatcher, married one of the Barber girls from Blanco, Martha Ann “Mattie” Barber,¹³ the first child of Lee’s uncle, Amos Barber. Amos had a ranch about

five miles down Medio Creek from Lee, toward Refugio. It's unknown how Jim and Mattie met; they lived twenty miles apart. They may have met through Mattie's father, Amos, who travelled extensively in his multiple roles as banker, prosperous rancher with multiple properties, and circuit riding Baptist minister. It was Amos, in fact, who performed their marriage ceremony in the spring of 1892. Or, they may have met through the Williams. Mattie's uncle, Albert Jefferson Williams was noted locally for his large mule teams he used for hauling freight from Beeville for McGill's store in Blanconia. The Hatcher ranch was on the way. He was known for taking kids with him for their entertainment and education.¹⁴ In any case, Jim and Mattie Hatcher made their home with the Amos Barbers for at least a decade, probably on the ranch but in a separate residence.^{15, 16} Their affection for Amos and his wife Indiana "India" was evident—they named their first son Amos.

Now that the Hatchers were kin to a prominent Blanconia family—and still had three unmarried teenage girls—their ranch doubtless became a convenient stopping place for teamsters and cowboys on their way to Beeville. Those girls would also surely have attended their share of dances in Blanconia. Perhaps that's how Lee met Cora, one of the three unmarried daughters.

Through 1894 and 1895 Zeke and Sarah sold their ranch in Bee County, bought property two hundred miles northeast and moved the family to Chambers County.^{17, 18} Such moves are often disruptive to teenagers, so it may

be that Cora, then seventeen, stayed behind and moved in with Jim and Mattie at the Amos Barber ranch in Blanconia. Lee and Cora would then have been near neighbors and could easily have met. Perhaps they had already met and so carried on a long distance courtship with Lee in Blanconia and Cora in Chambers County. In either case, on a Sunday in May, 1897, Amos married them, probably at his home.^{19, 20} The newlywed couple then followed her parents east to Chambers County. This retrograde move, in reverse of the near universal westward movement of the nineteenth century, can best be understood by examining the particular circumstances of both families at that time.



FIGURE 2. Alice Hatcher, age 16 in 1897, one of three teenage girls at the Hatcher place in Bee County in the early 1890s.

Zeke Hatcher was a farmer, a good one in his small scale way. He had sold out all his holdings in Delta County, including his cotton gin (albeit to his son) and the mortgages had been paid off by 1892.²¹ He was cash rich when he arrived in Bee County, and he invested less than half of it in the new property there, based on the tax assessments.^{17, 22} He had double the acres in Bee County as he had in Delta County, so it's difficult to understand what motivated his move east to Chambers County. The best explanation is that he just saw a good opportunity. The State of Texas was selling unclaimed land to support schools and the terms were excellent: two dollars per acre, with forty years to pay for it. Hundreds of rich farming acres were available near families he was now kin to—the Barbers. Since the 1820s the Barbers had lived within a two hour ride of the land Zeke was about to buy. Since the Barbers were cattle people, this land had never seen a plow. Zeke sent his oldest unmarried son, John Preston “Pres” Hatcher to Chambers County to buy some. He returned with title to 477 acres adjacent to Amos’s first cousin, Elmer Barber.²³

So in 1895 Zeke moved to Chambers County and, like in the move four years earlier from Delta County, most of his children eventually followed. They set to work building a home, putting in irrigation ditches, and planting a first crop of sweet potatoes. The potatoes did well and were easily marketed in Galveston, so Zeke soon added 200 acres of corn, then cotton and sugar cane.²⁴ As before, he kept a few cows, but never enough to be called a cattle man.¹⁸ A successful farmer and businessman in his fifty-ninth year could be expected to slow down and enjoy what he had created but not so Zeke and Sarah. Zeke still had serious illness, recovery, and an oil rush to Spindletop between him and retirement. Meanwhile, he and Sarah had raised ten children, many of whom were gathered around them. To summarize:

Their oldest, Nancy Caroline “Lina” who had married James Millstead in Delta County, was still living in that part of Texas as she would all her life.

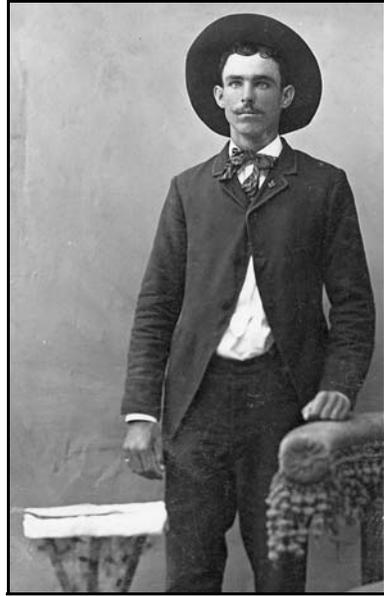


FIGURE 3. Pres Hatcher bought the land for the Chambers County farm, then sold it to Zeke and Bud and returned to Bee County.

Their second, William Nathan Nimrod "Bud," had married Sallie McFarlan in Delta County.²⁵ He bought Zeke's cotton gin there²⁶ and apparently disposed of it and followed the family to Bee, then to Chambers Counties. In Chambers County he purchased part of the school land that his brother Pres had acquired²⁷ and was living on the farm in 1900 with his daughter May and son John.²⁸ Although he was still married, Sallie wasn't there. He would later remarry, apparently after divorcing Sallie, and raise two more daughters in east Texas.²⁹

Their third child, Sarah Jane, had married William Washington Bishop³⁰ who was passing through Delta County on his return to Tennessee from the gold fields of California in 1888.³ They, too, followed Zeke to Bee and Chambers Counties^{31, 27} and were living on the farm there in 1900 with three sons and two daughters.³² We can thank Sarah Jane and W. W.'s fourth daughter, Pearle, born in 1905, for her account of the Hatcher family life through these years.

Zeke and Sarah's fourth child, Mary Susan "Sudie," married James Hall in Delta County.³³ The couple did not follow Zeke and Sarah to Bee County but they did follow them to Chambers County.³⁴ By 1897 they were living not on the farm but three miles away in the town, with their five children.^{35, 36}

Mattie and Jim, who was the fifth child, were still living next to the Amos Barbers in Refugio County. They were farming on rented land, probably part of Amos's landholdings.³⁷ By 1900 they had four children.

"Pres," their sixth child, and the first to be born in Texas, had not remained long in Chambers County after buying the school land that Zeke and Sarah moved to. He quickly sold the land to his parents and to his brother "Bud" and returned by 1898.²⁷ In 1900 he was still single, working and living on Amos Barber's ranch.³⁸ Within a year he would marry another Blanconia girl, Susie Burgess, and ultimately settle in Beeville.³⁹

Emma Ellen, the seventh child, married J. L. Rice, a physician who would practice in the Lubbock area. She was living with her children at her death in 1952, but her whereabouts in 1900 is currently unknown.^{40, 41}

Cora married Lee Barber in 1897 and also followed Zeke and Sarah to Chambers County. We'll follow their story in detail shortly.

The two youngest, Bertha Alice and Charlie, were still single and living and working on the farm with their parents.²⁸

The situation of the Barbers in the Bee County area differed from the Hatchers in many ways. First, the Barbers had a long history in the area. Lee's grandfather John had arrived in 1852, followed shortly by two brothers, Ben and Reuben, and their sister, Eliza. Two generations of large families and extensive land acquisition gave the Barbers broad and deep kinship roots across Bee, Refugio, and Aransas Counties. Second, the

Barbers, without exception, were cattle men, not farmers. (For more on the Barber Family history prior to Lee's generation, see page xx.) Their land holdings were typically a few hundred acres but the largest amount cultivated, according to Lee's cousin Rufus, was about ten acres.⁴² Like many Texans, the Barbers had thrived in the years just after the Civil War by running their cattle on the open range then delivering them to rail heads in Kansas. By the 1880s the arrival of farmers, fences, and railroads changed all that. The cattle business had been in serious decline for some years before Lee's marriage. Some, including Rufus's family, resorted to selling their cattle and turning to sheep, which required less land.⁴³

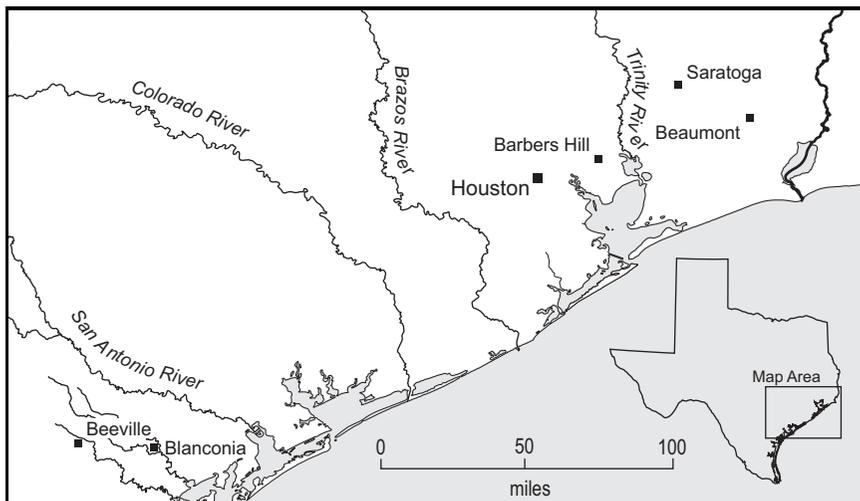


FIGURE 4. After his marriage in Blanco Lee Barber moved east to his grandfather's childhood home in Chambers County, Barbers Hill.

To understand Lee's move in 1897, consider how limited his prospects were compared to those of his father before him, or even the Hatchers, successful farmers. Making a living from range cattle was no longer viable, and sheep raising or farming were probably unattractive, given his heritage. Consequently, Lee and Cora followed Zeke to Chambers County. They didn't live on the farm with their in-laws, they lived "in town."⁴⁴ Lee was probably the first in his family to abandon cattle as a livelihood, but all his siblings eventually did the same, as we'll see. Wherever he went Lee always did have a few cows and cultivate a little patch, but he never made his living that way. Instead he would be at times a store owner, a restaurateur, a hotelier, a sheriff, or a road construction contractor.

Lee and Cora arrived in Chambers County by October 3, 1898, when their first child, Archie Lloyd, was born "at home."⁴⁵ It's uncertain where

"home" was when they first arrived—they were surrounded, after all, by three generations of Barbers and might have lived temporarily with any of them, but Lee quickly established a home and livelihood of his own. Two months after Lloyd's birth Lee leased one acre from Z. T. Winfree⁴⁶ and three weeks later purchased four acres from his father's cousin Albert Barber.⁴⁷

The leased acre was square atop the salt dome that, along with Amos Barber[†], gave Barbers Hill its name. Lee's grandfather, John, had grown up and married Elizabeth Kokernot just five miles away, near the mouth of the Trinity River. In the 1840s when John, along with his two brothers Ben and Reuben and, later, sister Eliza had moved west, the oldest brother, Amos, settled here and the community that grew up around him took the family name. Amos had been dead more than a decade but his widow, Susan, still lived there and Lee's one acre was adjacent to her. Z. T. "Taylor" Winfree, now in his fifties, was the adopted son of Benjamin Freeland Winfree,⁴⁸ the nemesis and enemy of Lee's great-grandfather David Kokernot. That feud had contributed to the Kokernots as well as Lee's grandfather leaving this part of Texas a half century earlier, but it's not known how much bitterness remained at Barbers Hill nor how aware the young Lee was of it. He certainly knew of it later in his life and related it to his grandchildren (see pages xx, xx, and xx). In any case, this leased acre became the site of Lee's first store. By the terms of the lease Taylor Winfree, a prominent member of the Church of Christ, prohibited all sale of "intoxicating beverages" on the site.

Albert Barber, who sold Lee the four acres, was a son of Amos and Susan Barber. These four acres, also adjacent to Amos and Susan Barber,^{*} were a small part of Albert's holdings, which in turn had been a part of Amos and Susan's holdings. It seems likely that this small sale was more a favor to Lee and his family than it was any part of the Barber family's strategic plan for their real estate. We know that Lee lived on this parcel of land in 1900,[‡] so it's almost certain that he improved it, perhaps by clearing it, putting in a road, and certainly building a house. The ability of Lee and his sons to quickly build a small house on newly acquired land,

† Do not confuse this Amos Barber with his nephew and namesake Amos Hamilton Barber, Lee's uncle in Blanconia.

* The Amos Barber, Albert Barber, and Z. T. Winfree tracts were all on the order of a couple of hundred acres. The exact location of Lee's acres is unknown, but "adjacent" should be interpreted to mean within a quarter mile or so.

‡ The 1900 census states that Lee lived in a home that was not a farm and that he owned it without a mortgage. From tax and deed records we know this is the only real estate that Lee Barber owned in Chambers County.

later demonstrated so often in west Texas, Idaho, and Alaska, may have been first learned here. Lee and Cora's second child, Vivian Dale "Vic", was born in this house on July 26, 1900.⁴⁹

Lee had arrived in Barbers Hill at age twenty-four in 1898 with enough capital to buy land, build or buy a house, and stock a store with merchandise. Where did he get it? We don't know, but there are several possibilities. His parents may have given it to him. It was common then for parents to help their children get a start by giving them land. The ranch that Lee grew up on was a gift from Adeline's father in 1868 (see page xx). Henderson helped all his children this way and it may be considered the equivalent of parents paying for a college education today. Or the money may have been his



inheritance from his mother, who had died in 1888 (Addison remarried; see page xx). Adeline was heir to 230 acres of land as her one fourteenth share, with her siblings, of Henderson and Emily Williams's land. Henderson outlived Adeline by eleven years, but when he died in the summer of 1899 Lee and his six siblings jointly sold their inheritance to Albert Jefferson Williams, Adeline's youngest brother.⁵⁰ Lee received his share of the proceeds in the fall of 1899, while he was setting himself up in Barbers Hill. A third possibility is that Lee simply saved up the money by working on his father's ranch.

FIGURE 5. Lee and Cora had this photo of Vic (l) and Lloyd taken in the fall of 1900. Despite appearances, neither boy grew up effeminate

Barbers Hill? Mont Belvieu?

They're the same place. In the pancake-flat environment of coastal Texas this just perceptible rise in terrain qualifies as a "Hill." At forty-five feet, it is, in fact, the highest elevation in the county. Amos Barber, brother of Lee's grandfather John, was the first to settle and raise a family here, starting in 1848. The name "Barbers Hill"—usually spelled without the possessive apostrophe—continued in use even after Taylor Winfree, landlord for Lee's store, successfully applied for a post office in the name Mont Belvieu in 1890. In our family, of course, it's called Barbers Hill, at least when it's not called just "The Hill," or (the height of conceit!) "Big Hill." Jewel Harry in his "A History of Chambers County" of 1940 uses both names about equally and inconsistently, but calls it Barbers Hill on his only map. The town, now city, was incorporated in 1970 as Mont Belvieu and that name predominates locally now. On the other hand, if you're looking for the school district or the oilfield, look under Barbers Hill.

Lee and Cora seemed to be thriving in Barbers Hill. They had two healthy sons. The store was growing from \$150 in inventory in 1899 to \$200 in 1900 to \$500 in 1902.⁵¹ Lee had family all around him. Besides his cousins, Lee's younger brother Charlie had just married back in Blanton and by 1900 was in Barbers Hill, helping Lee tend the store.^{52, 53} Cora also had lots of family nearby: Her sister Susan lived in Barbers Hill where her husband James Hall was a laborer in a lumber mill.³⁶ Her brother Bud and sister Sarah Jane both lived with their families at Zeke's farm just three miles out of town. Her youngest siblings, Alice and Charlie, still single, lived there, too. Zeke's farm was doing so well that he bragged to the local newspaper in the fall of 1899 that he had turned down an offer of \$12/acre for his land, six times what he had paid for it four years earlier.²⁴

The only sour note to arise came in 1902 when Zeke "got real sick," according to his granddaughter Pearle Bishop.⁵⁴ The Bishops had only just relocated about 120 miles north to Cherokee County but had to return to care for the farm until he recovered. Pearle says nothing about the nature of his illness but, judging from a later photograph of Zeke and Sarah Jane, Figure 6, one could speculate that Zeke suffered a stroke. He apparently recovered. Zeke, with two of his children and Lee, soon caught another disease—oil fever.

Much to his annoyance, Elmer Barber had hit gas at sixty-five feet instead of water when digging a well at Barbers Hill a decade earlier.⁵⁵

More recently all had noticed Patillo Higgins drilling test wells around town. His unpopular theory was that huge underground salt plugs, of the kind that created the “Hill” of Barbers Hill, harbored huge stores of oil and gas. Other such domes were at Saratoga and Beaumont to the east where drillers for Anthony Lucas were following Higgins’s advice. On January 10, 1901 they watched mud oozing out as they slipped a new bit into their existing thousand foot test hole. At seven hundred feet the drill pipe and bit reversed direction before an unstoppable force. All seven hundred feet of pipe flew out of the hole, blowing off the top of the derrick as it ascended. It was followed by oil gushing to twice the height of the derrick. Spindletop was born. Lucas, recognizing that Patillo Higgins had given him the secret—salt domes—gave Higgins 10% of Spindletop in return.⁵⁶

Spindletop was beyond anything the world had seen. In a week the unstoppable gusher had flooded surrounding rice paddies with 800,000 barrels of crude. In another week the well was capped and another flood began as drillers, speculators, spectators, swindlers, and ordinary folk swelled the population of Beaumont to 50,000 by summer.⁵⁶ By fall Lee had started selling his property in Barbers Hill and would soon follow.

Patillo Higgins continued drilling test wells around Barbers Hill, causing land values to rise in anticipation of a second



FIGURE 6. Sarah Jane and Zeke Hatcher, date unknown, probably around 1905.

Spindletop filling the local rice paddies with crude. In October Lee received \$300 for the sale of one acre of the four acres he had purchased

from his cousin Albert just the year before for \$100.⁵⁷ Albert, unfortunately, was not the purchaser—he and his brother Will had been murdered in August as they returned from Liberty with the \$500 proceeds of a stock sale.⁵⁸ The buyer of Lee's acre was instead A. R. Shearer, the physician who had delivered Cora and Lee's second son, Vic, the previous year.⁴⁹ Then in May and July of 1902 Lee sold the remaining three acres in three transactions of \$200 each.⁵⁹ Not all of his \$800 gain was profit due to oil fever; Lee had built a house on the land and he may well have improved the property further—after all, he later earned a living as a road construction contractor. Though he sold all his property he kept the store on the leased property, according to Pearle. His brother Charlie probably tended it until 1903, by which time he and Mandy had returned to Blanconia, where their third child was born.⁵³

It was probably the summer of 1902, though it could have been earlier, that Lee left for Beaumont and Spindletop. He had a wagon, three mules, and \$500 in merchandise,⁵¹ plus the cash from his land sales. He surely calculated that those crowds of workers would need what he had, and he was right. Workers there were sleeping in tents and ramshackle huts, were eating where ever they could, and were well paid. Even though Lee's startup cash was two zeros short of what he would need to buy land nearby,⁵⁶ he was still able to open a hotel and restaurant, according to his niece Pearle Bishop. The grocery was located at 15½ Shell Road according to a contemporary city guide.⁶⁰ Apparently he rented space for it or made some other arrangements.

Lee didn't go to Spindletop alone. The Bishops went—William Bishop freighted oil field equipment with a wagon and mules. Even Zeke, now sixty-one but apparently recovered from his illness, went to Spindletop and opened a grocery, hardware, and dry goods store.⁶¹ It's not clear who stayed behind on the farm in Chambers County. Possibly it was W. N. N. "Bud" Hatcher, now a part owner of the farm. If he stayed behind at first, it was not for long. By 1910 he was living at the Spindletop oilfield, working as a fireman, having married Inez Wilshire in about 1901.²⁹ Inez was the oldest daughter of William and Mary Wilshire, who had a farm near the Hatchers in Chambers County.⁶²

The weather was wet and the environment was muddy and mosquito infested, according to Pearle, so the Bishops moved on to Griffith, in northeast Texas. Soon after that, Zeke and Sarah Jane also returned, not to the farm but to Dayton, the nearest town to their farm, about a dozen miles north.[†]

Lee and Cora soon moved on, too. Since Spindletop had proven Patillo Higgins's salt dome theory correct, a world of believers with drilling rigs swarmed over every salt dome in coastal Texas. Saratoga, some

thirty miles northwest of Spindletop was the next gusher. It generated a rush much like Spindletop and, in a pattern already becoming apparent, Lee and Cora followed. Since the Bishops didn't go there we don't have Pearle to tell us what Lee did and, as at Spindletop, he didn't buy any property or pay taxes. We can only guess that he catered to oilfield workers with beds and meals again. While in Saratoga, Lee and Cora produced their third child, Audrey, born September 18, 1904.⁶³

Pearle mentioned in passing that after the Bishops moved to Griffith Lee and Cora returned to Barbers Hill to tend the store that they had not completely abandoned. If so, this, too, would fit Lee's emerging pattern, because another big oil rush after Saratoga was to Barbers Hill. Patillo Higgins had continued drilling there and announced a major strike was imminent in 1902.⁵⁵ By 1904 tent cities and astronomic land prices appeared in Barbers Hill.⁶⁴ This boom quickly busted, for it wasn't until the 1920s that drillers figured out how to extract oil from the reluctant Barbers Hill salt dome. They learned well and by the 1930s Barbers Hill was the second largest producing field in Texas. Probably Lee and Cora followed the oil field workers back to Barbers Hill. Two writers, one Cora's niece Pearle and the other an acquaintance from later years in Spur, wrote that Lee started construction work during these years, either digging underground tanks or building railroad bed.^{65, 66} Construction work would become one of Lee's many livelihoods as he chased a different kind of boom, this time in west Texas.

To West Texas

For at least a half century in the United States railroads had been key to opening sparsely settled lands to new growth. The transcontinental railroad had produced an explosion of small farms in Iowa and Nebraska and smaller railroads would soon do the same in Texas. The federal government had enabled that transformation in two ways: first, by granting huge tracts of land to the railroads in exchange for laying track and, second, by granting small homesteads to farmers in exchange for tilling the land and building a home. A similar bargain could have benefited West Texas but for the fact that the federal government never held such tracts and the state government had for the most part already given them away.

The United States never controlled much land in Texas owing to Texas's arrival in the union as an independent republic. Spain, Mexico,

† Pearle Bishop was born in Griffith in 1905 so, obviously, these early parts of her account rely on stories told her, presumably by her parents.

the Republic of Texas, and the State of Texas for over a century had all used land to attract settlers, pay soldiers, and even build its capitol, so there was little left by 1900 to offer the railroads. Ranchers, however, did. The days of the open range on the plains was over and the large ranches were disposing of their properties, often very cheaply. They soon discovered that their land was far more valuable to farmers if there was a railroad nearby and railroads already knew that farmers made good customers. Railroads and big ranchers experimented, tentatively at first, then enthusiastically, with partnerships to create whole new towns from empty plains. Lee Barber was there to help.

The Texas Central Railroad had extended its tracks westward to Stamford, Texas, a small townsite some thirty-five miles north of Abilene. The Swensen brothers, huge Texas landholders, owned the townsite and surrounding land.⁶⁷ They worked together with the railroad to market town lots and nearby farm land. Both found it very profitable and looked for similar opportunities elsewhere. The Texas Central found one in Rotan, and the Swensen brothers found one in Spur. Lee Barber was there for both, Rotan first.

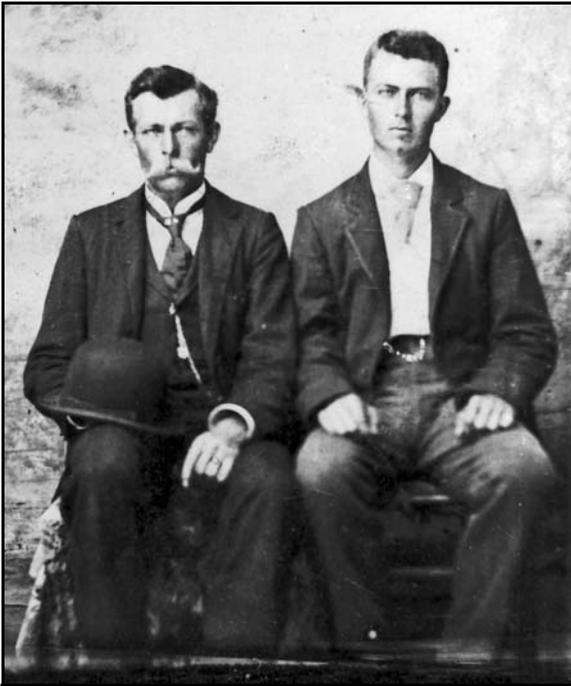


FIGURE 7. Neither Lee (r) nor his older brother Johnny appeared cut out to be farmers or ranchers. They moved to Rotan together and opened a store.

The railroad chose an existing small community, White Flat, as the site for a new town partly because it was surrounded by three counties of good agricultural land. They bought land from local ranchers and platted a larger townsite. When they applied for a post office, however, they learned that "White Flat" was already taken, so they named the town for Ed Rotan, a major stockholder in the railroad. They announced that they were extending their track the forty miles to the new town from Stamford and would

start selling town lots on the day of the arrival of the first train.⁶⁸ Lee and Cora were there ahead of time. Their fourth child, and second daughter, Lucille, was born there on February 1, 1907.⁶⁹ The first train arrived the following day and Lee bought property on February 25 and March 7.⁷⁰

Once again, he hadn't come alone, but brought family with him. Or perhaps his brother brought *him*. Johnny Henderson Barber[†], four years older than Lee, had left Addison's ranch in the early 1890s to work on a truck farm near San Antonio.⁷¹ From there he moved into that city and boarded with four other single men, all but one of whom worked as motormen on the city railroad with him.⁷² He married Medora "Dora" Nuckles in San Antonio on Christmas Day, 1900, and by 1905 they had a son and two daughters, Addison, Agnes, and Lois.

It's hard to know whether the move to Rotan was Lee's or Johnny's idea. The railroads and ranchers were learning the value of promotion so either, or both, of them could have learned of it first. Also, their father Addison had died in 1906 and his mother Elizabeth had died the previous year. Both events brought the brothers together with their other siblings for funerals and discussions of legacies. Both brothers received inheritances, but not early enough to finance their land purchases in Rotan in February of 1907.



FIGURE 8. Lee and Johnny's store on the north side of Snyder Avenue, about 1908. Cleveland Avenue separates them from the A B Barrow Furniture Store.

Snyder Avenue was the new main street of Rotan and was commonly called "Main Street," even by Lee.⁷³ Five blocks were laid out with streets one hundred seventy-six feet wide with two rows of chinaberry trees down the middle and hitching rails in between.⁷⁴ The first merchants operated out of tents. Perhaps Lee and Johnny did, too, but they soon erected a building on Snyder at the northeast corner of Cleveland⁷⁵ and opened their

[†] John Henderson Barber was named for his paternal grandfather, John Albert Barber, and his maternal grandfather, Henderson Williams.

store. This was the first building constructed on their block, though the next block to the west was fully built (Figure 8). As a newly created town, Rotan boasted modern infrastructure: a municipal water system, a light plant, a telephone exchange, and an ice plant.⁶⁸ From a photograph of the inside of the store (Figure 9), we can suppose Lee took advantage of at least two of these. He had an overhead sprinkler system and, judging from the scales and the wrapping paper, he sold meat and produce and so patronized the ice plant.



FIGURE 9. The store in Rotan. Lee Barber is the man in the center, "X". The others are unidentified, but the man on the left resembles Johnny Barber.

Lee's investment in the store was substantial. The assessed value of the store itself in 1908 was \$1500 in addition to inventory, also valued at \$1500.⁷⁶ He had presumably done well at Spindletop and Barbers Hill and was probably comfortable with his new life as a merchant. He doubtless left behind all thoughts of returning to cattle ranching, but he did not completely forget his roots. From Figure 9 we can see that he sold saddles in his grocery store. As usual he kept cows, three of them, probably on the small parcel of land he and Johnny owned on the edge of town.⁷⁶

Tending store was not Lee's only employment in Rotan. He made deliveries, especially to large ranches, as far away as Dickens County, several days round trip, and he continued his road construction work. Both occupations exposed him regularly to the people, places, and opportunities that would attract him next.⁶⁶

The model of development used by Rotan was steadily being tuned and perfected for use elsewhere. Large ranchers who needed to subdivide and sell their land due to the economics of the cattle business would part-

ner with a railroad. Together they would choose a location for a new town and plat the site. The railroad would extend a line to the new site and build a station. The new town would be promoted widely with the announcement of the opening of a land office timed to coincide with the arrival of the first train. This worked well for everyone. The ranchers had long since given up on the practicality of county-sized spreads and were happy to sell farm-sized parcels for higher prices than cattle land fetched. Farmers from elsewhere in Texas, or even Iowa and Illinois, were acquiring farmland for what to them were low prices and good terms. The railroad typically received land grants and cash from the ranchers and, naturally, was creating future customers.⁷⁷

The town of Sylvester, just eighteen miles to the southeast, had already followed a similar path with the arrival of the Orient Railroad on Independence Day, 1905.⁷⁸ The following year A. V. “Jake” Carothers had arrived in Sylvester with his four unmarried daughters. Neither Lee nor his second son Vic knew it, of course, but Lee’s future daughter-in-law, Elmah, was one of them.

Lee, too, had begun to establish a pattern. He followed booms. It worked well for him at Spindletop and Saratoga, and now Rotan was growing explosively. Within two years he was turning his eyes northward for the next boom to follow.

To Dickens County

By 1906 the British syndicate that owned the Espuela Land and Cattle

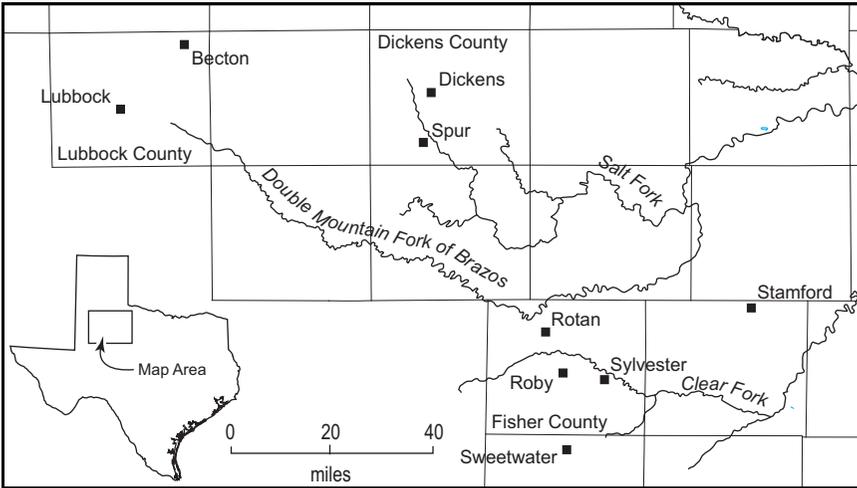


FIGURE 10. Rotan is four hundred miles northwest of Barbers Hill.

Company—the Spur Ranch—had despaired of making a profit. For twenty-one years they had fought drought, cattle rustlers, and poor markets without success. Then in 1899 they faced another, ultimately fatal, threat. The Spur Ranch only owned about half of the half million acres of their range. The ranch had been created in 1884 from railroad lands—lands the state of Texas had given to various railroads as inducement to lay track elsewhere in the state. Alternate sections of land had been retained by the state, which leased them to the ranch for 4¢/acre. In 1899 the state converted these lands to “school lands” and offered one section to any purchaser for \$1.00–\$1.50/acre, with one-fortieth down and forty years to pay, the same attractive terms that induced the Hatchers to move to Chambers County a decade earlier (page 4). As its leases expired the Spur Ranch found its once-solid range peppered by small farmers or cattlemen.⁷⁹ Disputes over fencing and water sources inevitably followed and the syndicate threw in the towel and sold everything—land, cattle, horses, buildings, equipment—to S. M. Swenson and Sons for \$1.4 million.⁸⁰

The Swensons were huge Texas landholders and cattlemen who personally fled the state before the Civil War but continued their Texas acquisitions from their New York headquarters. They had already seen the success of a partnership with a railroad when, together with the Texas Central they created the town of Stamford and marketed their cattle land

to farmers (page 13). They bought the Spur Ranch not for its cattle but instead to repeat their success at Stamford on a larger scale. They hired Charles A. Jones away from the Armour Packing Company in Kansas City to immediately come to Texas and set about liquidating the ranch.⁸¹

Jones surveyed the land and determined that some 62% of it was arable, the rest suitable mostly for small cattle operations. Jones's plan looked just like plans that had worked well at Stamford and Rotan. A railroad would be induced to lay track to a newly platted town, and separate companies would be created to sell farm and town lots. It is not known exactly what inducement he provided the Stamford and Northwestern line to extend track the seventy-five miles from Stamford to the new townsite of Spur, but it typically amounted to cash and right-of-way.⁷⁷ The railroad agreed in 1908 and construction began immediately with a goal of rolling the first train into Spur and commencing town lot sales simultaneously on November 1, 1909, preceded by heavy promotion.⁸⁰



FIGURE 11. The Stamford and Northwest Railroad job, near Spur, 1909. Lee Barber (1), his sons Vic (2), Lloyd (3). Others unidentified.

Lee built a piece of those seventy-five miles of railroad. He received a contract to construct five miles of roadbed near the present town of Girard, fifteen miles southeast of Spur.⁶⁶ He moved crew and equipment to the site and set up camp, probably for some months, judging by the means used, Figure 11. Based on Lee's later habits, it's probable that this camp was complete and self-sufficient. He would have brought his family and would have had housing and board for them and his workers. When he finished that job he simply moved on to the future town of Spur and took his tents with him.



FIGURE 12. *Lee and Brainard's ad a few days before opening day.*

The new town was ready for buyers on opening day. Lots had been platted and the major streets were graded, with ditches and wooden sidewalks.⁸² The depot was open. The sales office was open. Hotel space was available in town at the Western Hotel and outside of town across the tracks in Lee's tents. Only one other commercial establishment was open in a wooden building that day: Lee Barber's store.⁸³ and they'd put an advertisement in the *Texas Spur* a few days before November 1, Figure 12.⁸⁴

Lee had already been in town for at least a few weeks, since he finished up the railroad job. He had everything he needed—wagonloads of food and equipment to cook and serve it, and tents that had been for his workers would now hold opening day crowds. The Company had also rented him a large tent to use for serving meals.⁶⁶ Floye Rector was one guest, and she described her arrival in Spur at age four by buggy with her family from the Lubbock area a few days before opening day. Her father planned to look over the prospects ahead of time. "We reached Spur late in the day and stayed in a tent hotel. Since there were no buildings yet, Mr G. L. Barber set up a bunch of tents and rented them out instead of rooms."⁸⁵

While Lee was operating the tent hotel, construction was underway on a permanent building for his new store, even before he was permitted to buy the lot it rested on. A photo, taken on opening day, shows the store open, but without a sign or even siding on the south side exterior. Well dressed men loiter at the entrance and on the sidewalk. The lot to the south is empty and a new building is being framed on the lot to the north, across Fifth Street. On November 1 Lee paid the Town Site Company \$200 in cash and \$400 in notes for his lot.⁸⁶

Just as in Rotan, Lee had chosen a corner lot on the main commercial street in Spur, Burlington Avenue. Burlington was a wide avenue that ran from the train depot, prominent at the south end, to Hill Street seven blocks north at the bottom of a small bluff. The blocks closest to the depot were the most commercially desirable and his location was in the second block, on the west side of the avenue, at the corner of Fifth Street. His neighbors within a year were a tailor and hatter to the south and a competing hardware store across Fifth to the north, Figure 13.

Also just as in Rotan, Lee brought kin with him. His brother Johnny came from Rotan with his family and may have worked in the tent hotel or store, but was apparently not a partner.⁸⁷ His sister Augusta "Gussie," six years younger, had married Edwin "Ed" Traweck, son of a neighbor-



FIGURE 13. C. B. New's partnership with Barber & Hancock lasted less than a year, allowing this photograph, looking north up Burlington Avenue in Spur, to be dated to the latter part of 1910.

ing farmer in Blanconia and by 1909 had three sons and a daughter when they moved to Spur. Ed built the store on Burlington for Lee and continued to work as a residential carpenter in Spur for two years before returning to Berclair in Goliad County.^{88, 89, 90} Lee's youngest sister, Fanny, had married Nathaniel Brainard Hancock, also of a local farming family, close neighbors of the Traweeks.⁹¹ Fanny and Brainard had one daughter, Mabel, two years old when they followed Lee north to Spur and became a partner in the hardware store.^{92, 90} Lee's three remaining siblings all stayed close to their roots in Blanconia. His older sister Emily Elizabeth "Lizzie" had married Welsh immigrant Vaughan Thomas, a traveling preacher who had visited Blanconia. They moved frequently with Vaughan's work but ultimately ended up with homes on the farm and in Beeville.^{93, 94} Charlie had returned to Blanconia from tending the store in Barbers Hill and had been selected by his siblings to settle Addison's estate and care for the ranch.⁹⁵ Robert, the oldest, had moved forty miles to the gulf coast near Estes after marrying Dora Mullan in Bee County and would spend his life there, farming.^{90, 96}

Sales hype and excitement were effective; almost all town lots were sold on opening day. Many were purchased by speculators not intending to use them, but to resell them quickly at a profit. Second buyers even used lotteries to sell attractive lots. The Barbers participated. For example, Gussie and Ed bought a residential lot on N Second for \$125 (\$35 cash plus notes) and resold it the next day for \$950 (\$400 cash plus notes).⁹⁷ Lee even sold the lot his store stood on. Barely three months after opening day he sold the front 125 feet to W. H. Crouse for \$2100 and the remaining 40 feet on the alley to Oran McClure, who was already publishing the local paper, the *Texas Spur*, out of the back of Lee's store,

for another \$425. Of course, much of this increase in value was due to the construction of the building.⁹⁸ Lee presumably leased the property back from Mr. Crouse, because the store operated on the site for at least another year.

Fannie and Brainard bought four adjacent residential lots on Miller Avenue on opening day and Lee and Cora bought one and a half of them the next April to build their residence on.⁹⁹ Lee probably used his brother-



FIGURE 14. Lee and Cora at their newly built house on Miller Avenue in Spur, 1910. Children (l to r) Vic and Lloyd, Audrey and Lucille.

in-law Ed Traweck, the carpenter, to build his home on the site, an easy seven block walk from the store.

While promotion had been feverish and speculation rampant in the sales of town lots, another company, Spur Farm Lands, run by Jones, sold acreage for farms in a more sober manner. From the beginning the Swensons, thrifty Scots in Texas for three generations, managed the farm land development for long term success rather than quick sales. In addition to the railroad they financed a state agricultural experiment station, a cotton gin, a new hotel, and a bank in Spur. They discouraged sales to land speculators and never used land companies or agents, instead dealing directly with buyers. In the end it took twenty years to liquidate most of the ranch and thirty years before they closed their sales office.^{77, 100}

Through these years in Spur Oran McClure had been a close acquaintance, or even friend, of the family. Starting in the days before the town

opened, when his presses were in the back of Lee's store, he seldom passed up the opportunity to plug Lee's business or comment on the activities of the family. "The writer has known Mr. Barber a number of years, knows him to be a gentleman in every respect..." he wrote before opening day.⁸⁴ If the family went fishing, McClure took note: "G. L. Barber and family left Tuesday for Blanco Canyon where they will spend several days fishing."¹⁰² This may, of course, have been simply quid pro quo, as Lee advertised in McClure's paper once a month or so (Figure 15).



FIGURE 15. One of many ads Lee and Brainard placed in the *Texas Spur*.¹⁰³

In November of 1911 McClure placed an eight line notice in the paper that began "Mrs. G. L. Barber returned Thursday from Beeville where she had been summoned to attend the bedside of her sick father..." Recall (page 11) that after Zeke's illness and later adventures at Spindletop in 1902 he returned not to his farm in Chambers County but to a new home he made in Dayton, a few miles to the north. He and Sarah Jane lived there until the summer of 1911 when Zeke fell ill again and they moved to Beeville, where three of their sons (James, Pres, and Charlie) were living. He died there November 5 and was buried the next day in Glenwood Cemetery.¹⁰⁴ Sarah Jane returned to Dayton to live with her daughter Alice, where she remained until her death sixteen years later.⁶⁵

In mid 1910 Lee and Brainard had taken on a third partner in the store, Cleveland B. New. The reason for this and the financial arrangements are unknown, but the variety of stock expanded dramatically. Instead of only groceries they now carried hardware, farm implements, guns, and ammunition. The partnership was short-lived; in December Lee



FIGURE 16. Road work around 1914, probably between Lubbock and Farwell. Vic Barber (1).

announced in the paper that he was buying New out.¹⁰⁵ Then in January the paper announced that Barber and Hancock “had moved to new quarters next to the Morrison establishment.” The business seemed to suffer through 1911 and in July Lee and Brainard were in court attempting to collect bad debts. In August Lee bought out Brainard and in December he announced a “close out sale.” In January of 1912 he was making the rounds of the countryside, collecting debts from the outlying farms and ranches where he had continued making deliveries, as he did in Rotan. He told his friend Oran McClure of the Texas Spur that he didn’t intend to leave Spur but “will probably engage in some other line of business.”¹⁰⁶

That line of business was the one he was already in (Figure 16). He built twenty miles of railroad bed between Lubbock and Sudan and yet more between Sudan and Farwell, on the New Mexico border about 150 miles from Spur.⁶⁶ All the while the family maintained their home in Spur despite being at the construction camps for long periods.

By the middle of the decade the boys reached the age when teenagers often become a little rebellious. Descendants tell that Vic, at about age sixteen, disappeared for some weeks without letting anyone know where he was. He proudly returned with a .30-30 deer rifle, a wagon, and a team of mules. He and a friend had gone first to El Paso, then walked the seventy miles to Columbus, New Mexico, where they worked making bricks and rebuilding the Opera House destroyed the previous year by Pancho Villa.

Then Lloyd and Vic, in late 1916, together—or maybe not, depending on who is telling the story—joined the army that year or the next. The Great War was raging in Europe but the United States had not yet joined. No one knows where the boys were sent, but Vic had lied about his age, and maybe Lloyd did, too. In any case either Lee or Cora demanded their return and the Army complied.[†]

Lee usually kept alternate sources of income going, so it isn't surprising that he wasn't relying solely on his road construction work during these years. In February of 1917 he bought two tracts of Spur Ranch farmland, totaling 344 acres, about eight miles north of Spur on flat land between the rugged gullies of J2 Creek and Croton Creek for \$3736.¹⁰⁷ That same year Vic registered his brand at the Dickens County courthouse¹⁰⁸ and, as we'll see later, he ran some stock and farmed land for Lee over the next few years, probably on this tract of land.

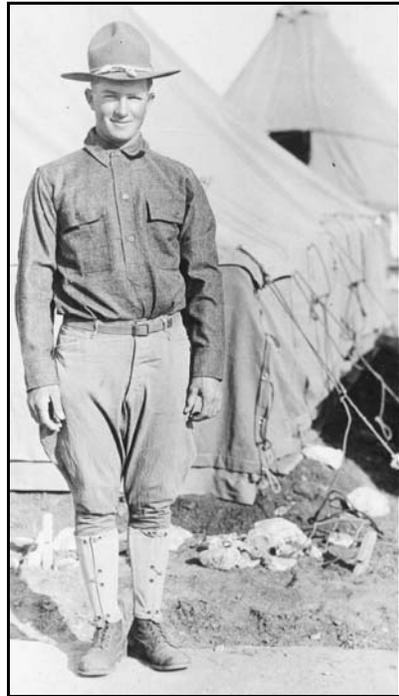


FIGURE 17. Vic in the Army, 1917, location unknown.

[†] In 1973 a fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis destroyed most Army records for this time period. No confirmation of Vic's Army service has been found. Fortunately Navy records were kept elsewhere so his later Navy service is well documented.



FIGURE 18. Vic, Mare Island, 1918.

Vic was still restless, however. The United States had entered the war and massive numbers of men were being drafted and sent to Europe. Even his own father, at age forty-three, would register for the draft.¹⁰⁹ Vic knew he would have to register, too, after his eighteenth birthday on July 26, 1918, and would likely end up back in the army he had been rescued from earlier. Visions of the sea, too, may have influenced the boy from the dry plains of west Texas as he journeyed to Dallas on June 25 to enlist in the Navy. He probably still didn't have the blessing of his parents so, being a month shy of his eighteenth birthday, he lied about his age once again. He pushed his birth date back a full year, thus avoiding awkward explanations if birthday greetings or gifts should show up at mail call. Pushing his luck still further he fibbed about his place of birth, stating Dickens County rather than the correct Chambers County. Then to top it off—though it's difficult to fault him for this—he lied about his name.

Throughout his life he would use "Vic" or "Victor" whenever he could, though he would use "Vivian" if he judged it necessary.

It may be that Vic had been cooking for the road crews at his father's construction camps. He gave his occupation as "cooking" and was enlisted that day with a rating of "Ship's Cook." His enlistment documents give more detail than most would want to know, but one item will catch the eye of his descendants who always thought that tattoo on his right forearm was acquired while in the Navy: not so. He already had it the day he enlisted.¹¹⁰

Vic was immediately posted to Mare Island, California, where he arrived five days later. Mare Island was a shipyard and training center in San Francisco Bay and it was here that he received both his basic training and cook's training. Like all sailors, he was looking forward to enjoying the delights of San Francisco thirty miles away and even of Vallejo, the small town adjacent to the naval station. He was to be disappointed. He

was immediately placed in a detention camp for a couple of weeks.¹¹¹ Then by the time his boot and cook's training finished at the end of October another disaster struck, one more deadly than the World War itself.

Influenza had already plagued the Navy at the Great Lakes Training Center in September, and the first case showed up at Mare Island on September 25. The Navy knew the danger posed by such outbreaks and immediately acted by cancelling leaves and shutting down mass assemblies. The only weapons available against influenza were hygiene and quarantine and the Navy was easily able to enforce these actions using an emergency hospital in tents.

The situation in Vallejo was very different. With fewer resources and no military authority, action was delayed. Ultimately the city closed down all public buildings and opened emergency hospitals in the YMCA and a Dominican school and staffed them largely with nuns and Navy corpsmen. By the time the war had run its course, November 11, the 1918 influenza epidemic had, too. Worldwide deaths amounted to more than twenty million. American deaths were some 675,000, both more than their respective combat deaths in the war.¹¹²

Vic escaped the influenza and was bothered only by boredom brought on by the quarantine. "I am getting tired of so much of this laying around with no where to go. I think I shall put in for a furlough after this quarantine is lifted," he wrote to his sister on October 24. He continued, "—that is if I can raise the necessary money. I am almost broke again. I have drawn no money for two paydays, and don't look to draw anything soon." This was because his pay was apparently being sent home. "...you will get my allotment soon," he wrote.¹¹³ Despite the flu, the cancelled liberty, and lack of money, Vic was happy. "I get fine chow," he had written to Audrey earlier.¹¹¹ "You ought to see me when I get all dressed up. Have two suits of Blue Broadcloth (Figure 18) and three of common white duck. Two pairs shoes, hats, and plenty sox and handkerchiefs."¹¹¹

On October 25 Vic took the exam for advancement and, receiving marks of "Good" in all areas, was rated Ships Cook 4c on November 1. The boredom continued, however, for within two weeks the war was over and he received no assignment beyond "General Detail" at Mare Island through the following March. He continued to cook and his proficiency ratings increased from the mid 2s to 3.9 out of 4.0. All who knew him in later years attest that Vic learned how to cook for men. In hunting camps or on road trips he was always elected cook. With the influenza epidemic passed, liberty was reinstated and the sailors got into town. At least one picture in his photo album shows Vic, striking a goofy pose with a friend, in uniform in a park setting, most likely San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

Finally at the end of March Vic received an assignment and reported for duty in New York harbor. He served as Ships Cook aboard the *USS Floridian*, a civilian freighter pressed into service as a military transport. Vic made one three week trip to Saint-Nazaire, on the Atlantic coast of France, presumably to haul back men and materiel. On his arrival back in Hoboken on April 23, 1919, he was placed on inactive status and paid \$191.77, including pay to date, a mustering out bonus, and travel allowance back to Dallas.¹¹⁴

Postwar Life

Vic arrived home to find that life at the Lee Barber household had changed in his absence. First, his brother Lloyd had married Helen Grace, youngest daughter of John Grace, a Spur physician. Lloyd and Helen had



FIGURE 19. Dickens County officials in 1918. Lee is in the back row, second from left. His office deputy, Oren C. Arthur, is to our right of him.

set up housekeeping in Spur but the marriage was unhappy from the beginning and they separated almost immediately. They had no children and their divorce was final two years later.^{115, 116}

Second, Lee had been elected county sheriff for a two year term starting the previous December.¹¹⁷ The courthouse and jail were in Dickens, ten miles north, but the family continued to live in Spur. Lee had one of the few—one of four, he said—cars in the county and, judging by his later stories, he spent little time in the office. In all he served three terms in the era of Prohibition, of rowdy cowboys, and of horse thieves but never was injured on duty. He never wore a uniform or a badge. "Spur was pretty

rough during those years, but I didn't have much trouble with anybody," he told a writer in 1961.¹¹⁸ "I wore my gun and everybody knew I could use it, although I didn't have to very much," he told another.¹¹⁹ That side-arm was remembered by almost all who knew him, but the pearl handled Colt Single Action .45 wasn't his. The McArthur family had loaned it to him and he later returned it, according to descendants.

Sheriff Stories

Of all the occupations Lee pursued he seemed most proud of his years as sheriff and he liked to tell of it in his later years. He recalled registering the first women voters in the county in 1919. Whenever travel took him to south Texas, usually transporting prisoners, he would visit his kin there. Children of his sister Gussie and brother Charlie related stories of those visits to me, mentioning the ever-present .45.

He described a trip to California with a prisoner. "When those Long Beach officers found I was a Texas sheriff, they really went all out to show me a good time. I stayed out there for several days and they showed me around all over Long Beach. Why, the City of Long Beach even owned an airplane and they wanted me to go for a ride in it but that thing was too much for me." He would later ride lots of airplanes visiting his children, who had scattered around the country.

Another story is not typical, but shows he could laugh at himself. He always carried a short barreled shotgun in his car and the car had a windshield that hinged up for ventilation. While excitedly pursuing a scofflaw at high speed he raised the shotgun to fire through the open windshield. It wasn't open, he discovered, and the front seat was filled with broken glass.

Vic moved in with Lee and Cora on his return from the Navy in May of 1919 while figuring out what to do next. Lee had parked all his road building equipment as sherifing was a full-time job. He still had his 344 acres and Vic helped to farm it and run some cows on it that summer.¹²⁰ Audrey, 14, and Lucille, 12, were still at home, of course.



FIGURE 20. *Elmah Carothers in 1919, just before moving in with the Barbers in Spur.*

Vic's future began to crystallize that fall. With Lloyd gone, the Barbers had a little extra space so they took in a boarder. Elmah Carothers had just graduated from Hardin-Simmons College in Abilene with a degree in pharmacy and had taken a job at Spur High School teaching English and Latin, starting fall term. Her family had been in Sylvester, twenty miles southeast of Rotan, since 1906 (see page xx). There her father was a shopkeeper with two unmarried daughters at home and another daughter and son, each married with families, also in town.

In February Vic and his friend Ed Potts made plans to take Elmah and her friend Kate Spivey to Sylvester for the weekend. Lee had broken a spring in the car the previous night so Vic attempted to get it repaired while in Sylvester, but the wait for parts took days and it was apparent they would not make it back to Spur the following week. Vic and Elmah seized the opportunity—she simply resigned her job and they made plans to marry. On Wednesday they travelled to Sweetwater to buy a wedding dress. On Thursday, February 26, 1920, they picked up a marriage license in Roby, the county seat, and travelled on to Rotan where the Reverend John H. McLaughlin, a Baptist minister, married them.¹²¹ Then they took the newly repaired car back to Lee and Cora's home, where they continued to live for a time until they moved onto Lee's acreage, possibly still the acreage between J2 and Croton Creeks, where Vic continued with small scale farming and cattle raising.¹²⁰

The next spring Elmah was pregnant with Lee and Cora's first grandchild. She went home to Sylvester for her confinement and gave birth to a son on March 16 at her parents' home. Perhaps in a gentle rebuke to Lee and Cora they gave the child the name that Vivian used whenever he could—Victor Dale. Then, since the child's father had preempted the use of "Vic," and they couldn't use "Junior," the child was called "Dale" from the beginning. The couple moved to Dickens where they lived in the sheriff's quarters at the jail—the sheriff, after all, lived in Spur. Elmah cooked for the inmates and Vic worked on a road crew for the county. Elmah was later fond of telling friends that "If Dale turned out poorly it was because he was born in a jail." He wasn't, of course. He only grew up there.



FIGURE 21. Dale at Dickens Jail, 1922.

The summer and fall of 1922 were busy ones for Lee and Cora and their family. In June Lee bought a larger house on Hill Street, further from town and the railroad.¹²² He had actually sold his house on Miller two years earlier¹²³ and it's not clear where he lived in the meantime. He may have been renting either the Miller or Hill Street houses, or he may have lived somewhere else. Then on July 10 Lloyd married Lois McKeever, second child and oldest daughter of John and Alice McKeever. John was a local farmer and later had a blacksmith shop in town.¹²⁴ Then barely three months later, on October 10, Lee and Cora's older daughter Audrey married the widower Clifford Jones.

Jones was the son of Charles Jones, the Spur Ranch manager hired to sell off the Ranch lands. When the Swenson brothers relocated the elder Jones to Freeport, Texas, in 1913 Clifford assumed his father's position and managed Spur Farm Lands sales until 1938.^{81, 101} Cliff's wife of eleven years, Alice Palmer, daughter of a Denver judge,^{125, 126} had died in 1919.¹²⁷ The newlyweds immediately moved into the apartment at the Spur Inn that Clifford kept, along with his office. The Spur Inn was an exceptionally elegant hotel, built by the Swenson brothers specifically to accommodate potential buyers who came to investigate acreage at Spur Farm Lands.⁷⁷

The year 1922 ended with Lee being defeated in his try for a third term as sheriff by H. L. Cole, who had held the office when Lee and Cora first arrived in Spur in 1909.¹¹⁷ Consequently, Lee went back to railroad work.

He didn't just pull out the equipment he had parked four years earlier. Family photographs show the evolution of earth moving equipment that he used. In 1909, Figure 11, and 1914, Figure 16, a scooping bucket, called a "Fresno," is seen dragged by four mules and controlled from behind by a man on foot using two long handles attached to the bucket. With this arrangement, one man and four mules could scrape a small amount of earth, well under a cubic yard, and move it a short distance to fill in a low spot. When Lee returned to road work in the 1920s he upgraded his equipment to that shown in Figure 22, unfortunately badly blurred by the slow film of the day. In place of the Fresno is an "elevating grader," drawn by the two mules at the far side of the frame. An (unseen) disc turns earth onto the conveyer belt which lifts it into the dump wagon driven on a parallel path. The man on the "high seat," Vic in this case,



FIGURE 22.

controls where the earth is removed from. When the dump wagon is full it pulls forward to deliver the dirt to where it is needed while another wagon slides into place behind it. The lettering on the side of the dump wagon reads "G. L. Barber and Son." (*"Son" is singular. Was this Vic? Where was Lloyd?*) Lee's great-grandchildren who grew up in Alaska among dump trucks lettered on the side with "V. D. Barber and Sons" need look no further than this photograph to understand the roots of that trade within the family.

Meanwhile, Lee and Cora were gaining grandchildren. Elmah had returned once again to Sylvester to deliver her second child, a son, in November of 1922, just after Lee suffered his defeat at the polls. The child was named for his grandfather and for the Georgian poet who lived and wrote for a time in San Antonio, Sydney Lanier. George Lanier didn't gain his lifelong nickname of "Pete" until his teenage years in Sandpoint, Idaho. The following summer, in May, 1923, Lloyd and Lois presented Lee and Cora with their third grandchild, named for his father and known within the family as "Junior," or "Archie." Archie was born in Spur. Then on June 29, 1924, Elmah, in Sylvester again, delivered her third child and named him for her older brother, Vernon Carothers. Vernon, in a pattern growing consistent in the family, didn't use his Christian names but was called "Bobbie" from the beginning, evidently because his older brothers were unable to pronounce "Baby." In May of 1925 Lee and Cora's youngest daughter, Lucille, met and married George Douglas Harrison in Lubbock. (*Why Lubbock? Lucille said the Barbers were living there in 1925. True?*) Their first child, Doug Jr., was born the following January in Amarillo.

Meanwhile Lee and his sons were laying down railroad bed wherever they could find work in their part of Texas, mostly north of Lubbock.

They would bid on a section of work, which would take about six weeks, then bid on another. They lived in wanigans on wagons in the work camps and moved them to the next job as required. Elmah and Lois usually cooked for the crews. In 1926 they were working near Petersburg, some thirty miles north of Lubbock when the first grandchild turned old enough to start school. The nearest school was at Becton, six miles south, so Dale was enrolled there, temporarily as it turned out, but they would soon return.

The following year found the Barber wanigans 150 miles north of



FIGURE 23. Cora with all her grandchildren, probably taken in 1927 at the construction camp near Stinnett, Texas. Back row: Pete, Cora, Dorotha "Dot," Dale. Front: Archie Jr., Vernon.

Lubbock as they lay roadbed into Stinnett for the Rock Island Line, pushing a new road toward Liberal, Kansas.^{120, 128} To date, all the horsepower for their roadwork had been hay powered, but on this job Vic made a surprise trip to Plainview, more than half the way back to Lubbock, and returned with a Caterpillar tractor after an all night drive. This job turned out to be the last road building job for the Barbers in Texas. Lee, Lloyd, and Vic all bought acreage in Becton, where Dale had started first grade the previous year. None moved onto this land yet, however. Lee returned to Spur and Vic moved to Rotan, where Dale finished first grade under the

same teacher that Vic had in 1907. (*What did Lloyd do?*) By August of 1928 a house had been constructed on the Becton property so Vic and his family moved there.

Back in Spur, H. P. Cole, who had defeated Lee for sheriff in 1922 had himself been defeated in 1924 by M. L. Jones, who was now in his second term. Lee ran against him in the fall election of 1928 and won.¹¹⁷ He and Cora settled back into their comfortable home at 201 Hill Street, just two doors down from his old friend Oran McClure, who was still publishing the local newspaper.¹²⁹

Lee served only one more two year term as sheriff. In 1930 he was defeated by Bill Arthur, older brother of Olen, who had served as Lee's deputy in his earlier terms. Arthur was killed in a jailbreak near the end of his second term in 1934.¹³⁰

Lee and Cora owned property at Becton where both their sons lived and farmed but Lee was still not a farmer. He let the boys take care of his property and stayed in Spur. In 1932 he was hired as Chief of Police of Spur, a nonelective position, and served in that office until 1937 when, at age sixty-three, he effectively retired.¹³¹ Even before retiring Lee had, or made, more time for personal pursuits than while he was sheriff or railroad contractor, and those spare hours were largely devoted to his extended family.

He was perhaps closest to his daughter Audrey. She and Clifford still lived in Spur. Besides being manager of Spur Farm Lands, Cliff was president of Spur Security Bank. He had invested heavily, and successfully, in the bank as well as in Spur land on his own account during the depression. Maybe because he and Audrey were childless, they contributed their time and wealth to public life. Cliff served on the draft board during the Great War and built a football field for Spur High School. He served on the board of directors of Texas Tech College from its creation in 1923 and as chairman of that board from 1927.¹³² Through these years he and Audrey continued to live in the apartment at the Spur Inn, only a few blocks from Lee and Cora. As we'll see, they grew even closer in the last decade of Lee's life.

Lee and Cora's younger daughter, Lucille, had moved to Long Beach, California, in 1926 just after the birth of Doug Jr. The senior Harrison had lived in Long Beach with his parents and sister, Helen, before moving to Texas and marrying Lucille. Now Doug and Lucille were living just a few blocks from the beachfront home of his parents, Harry and Pearl, on Ocean Avenue. Lucille's daughters Virginia and Joan were born in 1928 and 1931 in Long Beach.^{133, 134} (*Virginia--is this correct?*)

In 1932 Lee and Cora went for a visit. They piled into a car with Vic and Elmah and their five boys—Carroll and Reade had been born in 1928

and 1930 in Becton—and drove to Long Beach. With Lucille, Doug, their three children, and presumably another car, they headed north to Oregon. Today those children remember that trip mostly as continuous play and endless amounts of wild blackberries, peaches, pears, and other fruit.¹²⁰ To Vic and Elmah, at least once Vic recovered from a severe case of poison oak, it would remind them of how different the Pacific Northwest was from the Texas plains, then just entering its second year of the Dust Bowl. Two more years of dust storms in west Texas would convince both Vic and his brother Lloyd to leave for the northwest.

Lee and Cora didn't ignore their grandchildren in Becton during these years, either. He had land there, which Vic and Lloyd farmed for him, so he visited often, bringing gifts for the kids, whose number had expanded with Dorothea Jean "Dot" and Billy Mac born to Lloyd and Lois in 1926 and 1930. Once they got a red wagon with a goat to pull it. Each later got a pony to ride to school, only a mile away.

In 1938 Clifford was named president of Texas Tech. Almost all of the Spur Ranch lands had been sold, so after one last purchase of 12,000 acres Cliff closed his office in Spur.¹⁰¹ He and Audrey moved to the president's house on the Tech campus in Lubbock.

For the first time in their lives Lee and Cora had no family nearby. Lucille was in California, Vic and Lloyd had moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, four years earlier. Audrey, seventy miles away in Lubbock, wasn't so far but was deeply involved in the social obligations that always befall the wife of the president of a large university. Further, Lee had recently lost his vision in one eye when struck by a flying nail as he chopped up a fruit box for kindling. He had retired as Police Chief in 1937 and now occupied himself raising Morgan horses and running his roller skating rink, where he often gave free admission to children.

Lee and Cora were probably happy to accept when Vic and Lloyd invited them to move to Sandpoint in 1939. Their grandson, Dale, had spent fall semester at Texas Tech and, seeing that the academic life was not for him, agreed to pack his grandparents up and take them north. In early 1940 he and his cousin Archie loaded up a trailer and delivered Lee, Cora, and their belongings to Sandpoint. Lee immediately bought a lot on the residential outskirts of town¹³⁵ and all the Barbers pitched in to build them a small house that spring. When Vic bought a sawmill at Moyie Springs, about forty miles north of Sandpoint, that fall Lee did the cooking for the crews.

By World War II all of Lee's grandsons, except the ones still in school, were away in the service. In the last years of the war he and Cora moved to Long Beach (*Did he live with Lucille?*) and Lee, now seventy years old, worked for a time as a security guard. After the war he returned

to Sandpoint and moved to a different house, on Boyer Avenue. During these years in Sandpoint, Lee and Cora never lost contact with their Texas and California family. Both Audrey and Lucille, with her children, would commonly visit for a month in the summer. Even two of Cora's sisters visited (Figure 24).



FIGURE 24. Cora, Emma, and Alice Hatcher, Sandpoint, abt 1947.

By the late forties the Barber family in Sandpoint was in full flight to Alaska. Vic went first in 1947, followed by Elmah, Carroll, and Bruce. By 1951 all of Vic's and Lloyd's families were in Alaska (see page xx for the story of the Vic Barber family.) Lee and Cora were ready to return to Texas.

In 1944 Clifford had stepped down from the presidency of Texas Tech (though he was given the honorary title of President Emeritus),¹³² and he and Audrey moved from the president's house to a nearby residence. (*Did they? Jim tells of visiting them at the president's house.*) Though the reason given

for his resignation was "ill health," he ended up living another twenty-eight years, even outliving Audrey, who was two decades younger. He lived those years in Lubbock and filled them with his banking, insurance, and land investment work as well as countless civic activities. The best remembered of these was probably his part in the construction of a new football stadium at Tech. He and Audrey donated \$100,000 of the \$300,000 construction cost and the stadium was named after them in a dedication ceremony at the first game, November 29, 1947.^{136†}

Lee and Cora clearly wanted to be near Audrey. By 1951 they had moved into a modest 622 square foot home only a few blocks from them and one mile from the university.¹³¹ They saw steadily deteriorating health through the last decade of their lives, but they still devoted themselves to their family and, in Lee's case, his garden. "...you're likely to find G. L. (Lee) Barber painting his house or chasing bugs out of his thriving rose garden," wrote one interviewer in 1960.¹¹⁹ "Only if you caught him at home," he might have added. The albums of their grandchildren, and even

† Though two touchdown underdogs, the Tech "Red Raiders" beat Elmah's alma mater Hardin-Simmons that day. Later, Southwestern Bell Communications outbid Cliff and Audrey, donating \$20 million to the stadium's renovation. In 2000 it was renamed Jones SBC Stadium.

great-grandnephews, hold photos, and their owners hold memories, of their visits during this time.¹³⁷



FIGURE 25. Lee and his brother Charlie, Blanconia, 1954.

Lee visited his younger brother Charlie in Blanconia in March of 1954 (Figure 25). They had plenty of old times to discuss. Charlie now owned half of Addison's ranch, where they both grew up,[†] and he was living there, raising horses. Charlie had also been with Lee at his store in Barbers Hill a half century earlier (page 6).

Cora visited with her sisters, too, Figure 26. The date appears to be the late forties or early fifties (Emma died in 1952) and the location is unknown, but it was not an accidental gathering; the women came from widely separated homes. Cora by this time was living in Idaho or Lubbock. Alice Smith was living in Humble, near Houston.

Sarah Bishop, the mother of Pearle, who gave us the account of the early years of the Hatcher family in Texas, was widowed and living in Houston. Carolina "Lina" Millstead was the oldest of the Hatcher children, born in 1862. Also widowed, she lived in Kaufman County, near Dallas. Emma Rice lived in California.

Lee and Cora also visited Alaska at least three times, in 1951, 1954, and 1957, each time staying for many weeks and each time involving hunting trips, Figure 27,^{*} and, in later years, fishing trips to Paxson Lake.

My Memories of "Grandpop"

The only memories I have of Lee are from his Alaska visits, probably in 1954. Grandpop loved to tell stories, but they were always "coon stories" and they always ended with the coon up a tree. When fishing he always insisted on the side of the boat that put his good eye toward the

[†] Their sister Lizzie owned the other half.

^{*} Left to right: Bruce Barber, Bob Smith (Florice Barber's brother), Vic Barber, Geraldine Barber (Vernon's wife, holding Dean), Dale Barber (in back), Vernon Barber, Elmah Barber, Bryan Barber (Lee's nephew), Lee Barber, Alan Barber in front.

water. I remember Grandmom better, however, because I was mesmerized by watching her give herself insulin injections.



FIGURE 26. Five of the six Hatcher sisters, early 1950s. Cora, Alice, Sarah, standing; Lina and Emma, seated.

By 1960 Lee and Cora's travels were ended and they mostly remained at home at their little house on 33rd Street in Lubbock, nine blocks from Audrey and Cliff. Lee was diagnosed with cancer in January, 1962, and Audrey informed her brothers and sister. He died on February 10 while Vic and Elmah were en route to Texas. After the funeral, Vic, accompanied by Audrey, brought Cora to Lewiston, Idaho, to live with.



FIGURE 27. Barbers preparing for hunting trip, Fairbanks, fall 1951.

her grandson Pete. She lived only another six weeks. Pete and Audrey accompanied her back to Lubbock for her funeral. Audrey died seven years later and Cliff three years after her. All four are buried side by side in Lubbock Cemetery.¹³⁸

