

ED AND BESS FORESTER RANCH

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The ranch of Ed and Bess Forester, seven and a half miles west of Sanger, is the eastern one-third of the historic Forester Ranch in Northwest Denton County. The ranch was purchased by his grandfather, William S. Forester, in the early 1850's. ^{1.}

William Forester braved Indian marauders when he settled in Denton County. He lost a son, Sol, who at sixteen ventured too far from home, working cattle, and was killed by Indians. William S. Forester paid only fifty cents an acre for the land on which he settled and went into ranching, when western Denton County was still frontier territory.

His ranch grew to 6,000 acres. His brand, Jinglebob, became famous, and was used by his son, Lock, who passed it on to his son, Ed. In 1980 the Jinglebob was placed with some 3,500 other historical Texas brands on the wall of the Kleberg Animal and Science Center at Texas A. and M. College. John Chisum, about whom the movie "Chisum" was made, established a ranch just north of the Forester ranch, and his homestead can still be seen from the Forester ranch house. The Old Chisholm Trail ran through both ranches. ^{2.}

Lock Forester left the ranch about 1890, moving to Denton, where he died June 11, 1913. Management of the ranch then fell on the shoulders of the son, Ed. W. who was born at the old Garrison ranch in 1885. His boyhood had been spent on the ranch where he learned at first hand all the things that a successful stockman has to know. After the common schools, he attended old Denton Normal, and then for a few years was employed in the Denton County Bank, leaving there to take charge of his father's ranch interests.

1. Mrs. Paul Simpson, "Two I Jinglebob Brand", The Denton County Sunday Morning Enterprise, March 10, 1974.
2. Karen Muncy, "County Roots: Forester Ranch Dates to 1853" Denton Record-Chronicle, October 16, 1974.

After the division of the ranch property among the three children, Ailsey, Jum and Ed, Ed Forester, with his wife, the former Bess Johnson, daughter of a neighboring rancher, established his permanent home on a high plateau about two miles east of the original Forester home, the one built by his grandfather, William S. Forester. ^{3.}

In its time, the house was one of the showplaces of North Texas. The Foresters were hospitable people and the home was noted for its social affairs.

Ed and Bess Forester, raisers of fine stock, considered themselves residents of the county, and at their death, over one-half million dollars from their estate went to Flow Memorial Hospital in Denton, the county seat, to provide care for their friends and neighbors. The Ed and Bess Forester Wing of Flow Hospital, as well as essential life-saving hospital equipment, attests their generosity and their love of their fellow-man.

The Foresters had no children, but Bobby Johnson, Mrs. Forester's nephew, came to live with them when he was five and remained with them until he was a teen-ager and returned to his father's home in New Mexico.

Ed W. Forester was a shrewd businessman as well as a stockman and he built a very successful ranch operation. He became noted for building a herd of pure bred Shorthorns, a far cry from the rangy Longhorns which his grandfather branded with the Jinglebob. Some of the finest Shorthorn blood in the Southwest has been secured from his breeding farms at periodical sales. He exhibited the Shorthorns and his bull, "Butterfly Prince" was the champion at the State Fair of Texas and grand champion of the Louisiana State Fair. Although Ed Forester specialized in Shorthorn cattle, he raised some sheep and other livestock, important among them were his fine quarterhorses. Being a civic minded man, he served Denton County for two terms as County Commissioner. ^{4.}

After Ed Forester's death, his wife, Bess, established a home in nearby Sanger, Texas, where she lived until her death in 1971. She leased the ranch to Walter Wilson, a well-known stockman from Pilot Point. He carried on the standards of ranching established by the family. Oil was discovered on the Forester ranch in the late 1930's. ^{5.}

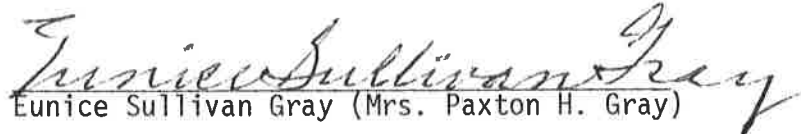
3. Deed Records, Denton, Texas. Vol. 119, Page 443.

4. Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, "Ed W. Forester".

5. Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, "Ed W. Forester".

The Forester ranch house, built in 1915, was completely renovated in 1979 by the present owners who purchased the ranch from Flow Memorial Hospital in Denton. A nursery, bathroom and storage closet were added upstairs by converting part of the attic. The ceilings downstairs, which were almost eleven feet from the floor, have been preserved, as have the original mantels on the fireplaces. Otherwise the original floor plan remained intact and the exterior appearance is virtually unchanged from its original design.

The Forester Ranch is one of the last intact historic ranches in Denton County.


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