

A Perfect Home for the Chamber of Commerce

The Historic Hawthorn-Clabaugh-Patterson House:

A Source of Treasured Memories
for Billy Clabaugh & Family



Billy & Jane Clabaugh



E.C. & Cosette Clabaugh

By Kay Hubbard

A Chamber of Commerce by nature is designed to improve the quality of life in a community, to promote it, support it, and present it in a positive light. What could be a more perfect symbol of those goals than what we have here in Panola County—a Chamber of-



E.C.'s father would turn all the horses loose after dinner each evening and put a bell on one of them so that later he could hear where he was and go catch him and ride him back home. When Billy was visiting him in Kerrville, he let him ride with him as all the other horses followed them back to the barn.

fice located in one of the area's most handsome and stately historic homes?

The Hawthorn-Clabaugh-Patterson home was built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century by Stephen Adolphus "Tebe" Hawthorn (1863-1936), known to family as "Poppa Hawthorn," with timber harvested from some of his other property (likely in Clayton). Tebe was married to Lula Neal Hawthorn (1869-1956), also known as "Momma Lula." Their children were Woodie (1887-1889), Josie (1891-1892), Cosette (1895-1983), and Neal Adolphus (1902-1947). Tebe was a hardworking entrepreneur who opened three businesses in Carthage—a hardware store, Hawthorn Dry Goods on the square, and Hawthorn Funeral Home.

Cosette married E. C. Clabaugh; the two had met as students at Southwestern University in Georgetown and moved back to Carthage, where E. C. took over the management of Hawthorn Dry Goods. After Tebe's death, Cosette and E. C. moved into the fam-

ily home, and Momma Lula remained there with them until her death. The couple had three sons—William Hawthorn, Stephen Edmond, and David Lafayette. Each of the sons also had three children—all girls except for Bill's sons Billy and Earl.

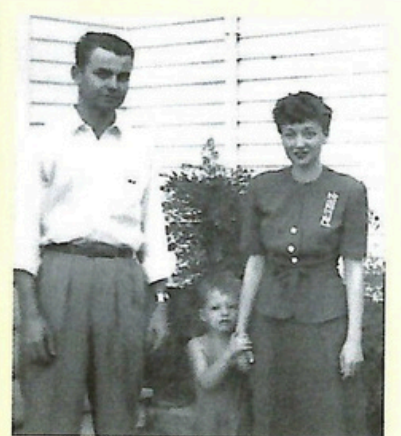
Billy recalls treasured memories of life in the family home. "I was born in 1943 while my dad was serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II," he says. "He had met and married my mother Louise while stationed in Mississippi. I was



E.C. and Billy at the smokehouse just outside the back door of the family home. There was also a well and a "milk porch" where his grandfather taught him to strain the milk. Billy also recalls churning butter in the closeby kitchen standing on a chair.



Bill was dressed to the nines for his pony ride. Billy had the wooly chaps framed, and they hang in his den as a reminder of the generational love in his family for all things equine.



*Top: Bill, Louise and Billy
Left: Billy says the Clabaugh men all learned to love guns from a very early age. He especially enjoyed being with his Uncle David, an avid hunter and fisherman.*

born there, and then we moved to Laredo, where he was stationed during the war. Not long after the war ended, we moved back to Carthage and lived in the family home while Daddy got our house ready. He had bought a house that needed substantial renovation and restoration and had it relocated on the property not far from the main house. David and his wife Louise also lived in the main house for awhile when their home was being built on the property."

"As our families grew," he continues, "all of us cousins were in a constant rotation as we vied every Friday night for the opportunity to spend the night at the big house with our grandparents, whom we called Bobo and Ginny (pronounced with a hard 'G' rather than a 'J' sound). Bobo was especially good with children, and we were all drawn to him like magnets. He played with us and watched us play and always seemed to genuinely enjoy just being with us. Occasionally we would get in trouble with him, but I never knew him to spank any of us but once. Uncle Edmond had built a goldfish pond beside the porch, and we all got to feed the fish. Bobo had been warning Earl over and over he was getting too close and was going to fall in the pond and would get a spanking. Sure enough, Earl fell in, and Bobo swatted his wet diaper about every three steps all the way over to our house. We boys were pretty hardheaded!"

Billy also recalls the big family dinner on the "back porch" area just off the kitchen every Saturday evening after the store closed. Everyone sat at a very long table, and Momma Lula prepared and served the enormous meal for years until her health declined to a point where she no longer could do it. Edmond was a professor of geology at the University

of Texas, and when he and his family were in town from Austin, everyone enjoyed going to Joe's Café to celebrate the whole family being together.

Both Bill and David worked with their dad at Hawthorn Dry Good—Bill for the rest of his life. David later worked for the post office, where he became Postmaster, and was then appointed Panola County Sheriff. He was killed in a tragic helicopter accident in December of 1979.

Billy recalls that his grandfather had a great love for all kinds of animals. "He had a milk cow and chickens, so he milked the cow and gathered eggs every day and taught us how to do that and also to churn butter, and he would sell milk and eggs and butter since he always had more than the family could use. He kept cages for rabbits and other animals that any of us would sometimes have and would take care of any of them.

Once he even had a red fox named Freddie that he loved, but after Freddie got loose and killed some chickens, he was gone. Momma Lula had a parrot, and she would put its cage out on the porch most every day so it could get some fresh air. When people would come to get their milk or eggs or butter, the parrot would holler really loudly, 'Billy! Billy!' to let everyone know someone was there. Someone told me the parrot had also been taught some inappropriate words, but I never heard any. There was a big barn on the property where I kept my horse, and some of the school kids who rode horses to school would stable them in there as well. Bobo was from Kerrville, and his family had lots of horses. As a young man he had a job driving a wagon in Yellowstone National Park before there were drivable roads there. He was responsible for hauling tourists around the park and helping set up camp for them."

"I inherited my grandfather's love for horses," he adds, "and lots of my own memories come from that. Two of them involve the two mulberry trees near the house; I rode my horse over to one of them and stood up on his back to be able to reach up and pick berries off the tree. Later I decided to copy Roy Rogers after I had seen him jump off of a tall balcony onto his horse's back and ride off into the sunset. I tried the stunt by jumping out of one of the

mulberry trees, but my jump ended with a broken arm instead of a ride into the sunset. I walked across the street to the doctor's office and then was taken to the hospital to have the arm set. They kept me overnight because of my reaction to the ether they gave me, and I am happy to say it's the only night of my life I ever spent in a hospital."

Billy married Jane Poss in 1964, and they have three children—Tonya Clabaugh Foster, Shane Erick Clabaugh, and Toby Will Clabaugh. "Even though our kids never lived

This large cradle from the family home was first used for Bill when he was a baby. "He gave it to me when Tonya was born," says Billy, "and it has been used for all of our children and grandchildren."



Billy And Jane Wedding

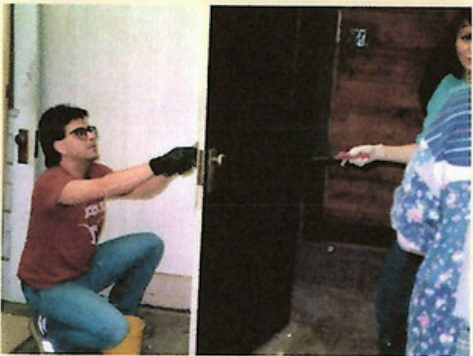


Tonya Clabaugh Foster



Hawthorn Dry Goods

in the old family home or on the property," he says, "it meant a lot to all of us, and when it went on the market, we considered buying and living in it so that it would remain in the family. But it really was not feasible for us because we were very involved in the business of raising cattle and horses and needed to remain out in the country instead of in town. We were also concerned about the enor-



Local community volunteers did most of the work on renovations to the house and the Tex Ritter displays.

mous expense of renovation, restoration, and maintenance we would be faced with.”

When the home sold, the family met to divide the contents. Billy says, “My brother Earl was executor of the estate, and I was so proud of the simple but ingenious method he devised for not only dividing it but for settling any situation in which more than one family wanted the same item. It involved us all walking from room to room and the drawing of three different colors of poker chips from one of those nice Crown Royal bags, and it went more smoothly and amicably than anyone could ever have imagined. All I really wanted from the estate were some of my granddaddy’s huge collection of books about Texas, and I ended up with a LOT of them. They are among my greatest treasures, and I still enjoy reading and rereading them!”

The generous and civic-minded Carthage couple W. F. “Pat” and Gertrude Patterson purchased the home and gave it to the city in the 1980s, and the Chamber of Commerce made a deal with the city to move into the home with the understanding that the new Tex Ritter Museum would be housed on the top floor. The old Chamber office was sold, and proceeds from the sale were used for renovations to the Museum. Over the next several years, the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame was established and experienced such growth that the city constructed the beautiful new building next door to the Chamber which houses the world class museum, a gift shop, and a large meeting and event room. The venue opened in 2002 and was expanded in 2015 to accommodate current need and future growth, and it continues to draw visitors from literally everywhere to our community.

Billy says, “We are all so proud that the home has been restored and is still right there in the middle of town when so many historic places have been destroyed or moved. Of course we are happy that it has our family name on it, too. We have had teas and receptions there over the years for various organizations we are in, and it bring us such pride and joy to be able to claim it as part of our family heritage. We are also big country music fans, so we are very proud of that incredible Hall of Fame. I spent a lot of time in that home and on that property in the past and have treasured memories about it, so it means the world to me, but I am equally excited about what it means to the future of this community that generations of my family have loved!”

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