

# **THE RACHALS OF WHITE POINT**

Written by Rachel B. Hebert (1906 – 1998), ca. 1976

Digitized by Ken Pinter Sept 2008

Note: numbers in parenthesis refer to Notes at the end of this section.

Note: Obvious misspellings were corrected. Questionable misspellings were left as is.

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of my interests this Bicentennial year is to visit cemeteries that are off the beaten path; some of these are ranch cemeteries. After visiting and cataloging the Corrigan Settlement Cemetery in Bee County, the next on my list was the White Point Cemetery. I enlisted my friend, Mai Frances Hunter, to help me in this project. We in turn went to Plaster and Wilda Hall in Sinton who had the keys to the gates of the pasture in which the cemetery is located. When we entered the weedy, ill-kept cemetery (all deserted ranch cemeteries are), the first thing I spied was a snake. I suggested that we leave, but Plaster Hall refused to budge. Instead, he picked up a fallen tree branch and began to beat the bushes and the tall, dead grass while I wrote the inscriptions from the gravestones.

It is strange how one thing leads to another. What is said as a casual comment will lead to a project that has not been thought of before. Mai Frances' comment that her nieces and nephews had been urging her to write what she knew about their ancestry and the life on the D. C. Rachal Ranch from its beginnings struck fertile ground. Even though my present efforts have been dedicated to the McMullen-McGloin Colony, I had the feeling that I would like to digress to write about the Rachals. For three or four generations our families have been friends, and D. C. Rachal without a doubt was a colorful character.

Thus it was that I came to write the family history. Much of the material came from two sources: Mai Frances Hunter and Dave and Irene Rachal. This is the reason so many personal touches could be included. Other sources are mentioned in the "Notes".

The more I asked and wrote, the more interested I became. Toward the end I became filled with enthusiasm, and at the end I had a flash of sentiment for the old home. I was extremely fortunate in having descendants who had actually lived at White Point; I did not have to depend entirely on dusty records, newspaper clippings, and books in which little about the Rachals is mentioned.

My wish is that other family histories, such as this, that depict the life of early Texans may be written **this Bicentennial year**, when the emphasis is not only on our national history, but on local history as well.

Rachel B. Hebert

## THE RACHALS OF WHITEPOINT

High on a bluff jutting into Nueces Bay on the left bank of the mouth of the Nueces River is White Point, a spot in San Patricio County imbued with both a tragic and a happy past. White Point is synonymous with the name Rachal, for it was here that the ancestral home of the members of the Rachal family stood for ninety years. In 1893 the San Antonio Express carried this item, "The D. C. Rachal home at White Point is one of the few Cattle Baron homes occupied by members of the original owners." Since then another forty-nine consecutive years can be added to the Rachal occupancy of the old home. Christopher P. Rachal, second son of D. C. Rachal, his wife and seven children came to live at White Point in 1916, two years prior to the death of his father, and lived there until his own death in 1942. Although the home was razed in 1956, his son Randolph still farms the land of the Rachal heirs at White Point. This makes well over a century that White Point lands have been in the Rachal family.

Thirty-two years before the coming of D. C. Rachal to White Point, a lone house with two tall chimneys loomed on the skyline of Nueces Bay Bluff. Only the chimneys withstood the years and were known to travelers in the early days as El Paraje de las Chemeheas (The Place of the Chimneys). Whose house these chimneys flanked has been swept away by the winds of time. Even historians of the area do not always agree whose house they served. Whether it was Empresario James Power's house or that of his father-in-law Felipe Roque de la Portilla is a moot question. Nevertheless, the chimneys were a landmark for travelers and a place to stop when the tide was in before they attempted to cross the oyster reef that was the only road over Nueces Bay. These chimneys are gone; no trace of them is left. They appear only in the memory of old timers now living who did not see them, but always heard of them. History records that they were "the only architectural feature" of the first home on Nueces Bay (2) sometime in the early 1830's. Oral tradition has it that its location was somewhere between the Point and present-day Portland. The chimneys stood as a lighthouse guiding the patient traveler on foot, on horseback or in ox-cart.

The Point might well have been named The Chimneys prior to the coming (3) of Edward and Frank White. With their arrival in 1856, with the establishment of their ranches, and with the building of their homes, it became known as White Point. The bluff on which these houses stood was of white clay, another reason why it was aptly called White Point. The fact that the White Brothers came to this area from Liberty, Texas was the turning point in the life of a young man of (4) French ancestry from Natchitoches, Louisiana, Darius Cyriaque Rachal. The Rachals also lived in Liberty having come there only several years before.

In 1857 the Whites engaged D. C. Rachal, a boy of eighteen, to help them drive their stock from Liberty to their newly purchased land fronting on Nueces (5) Bay in San Patricio County. Thus it was that for the first time D. C. Rachal beheld the coastal prairie where he was to settle the rest of his life. At that time it had knee-high grass and with only clumps of low Mesquite brush. D. C. liked what he saw. He brought some of his cattle to run on the unfenced range; for he knew that he would be back. But the War

between the States came between him and his dreams of land at White Point. He heard the call of the South and enlisted in Hood's Texas Brigade, 5th regiment that became known as the "Bloody Fifth" for its exploits in the Battle of Second Manassas. The uniforms were nondescript and threadbare; (they wore cowboy hats rather than the caps we see in pictures) their shoes were worn out, their hair uncut. Their appearance was ragged but their morale was high. Then came Antietam, then Gettysburg where a bullet went through D. C. Rachal's hat and grazed his head. He was with Hood at Chickamauga where Hood was wounded and had to leave the division, but the Texas Brigade made its way back to Virginia. Darius C. Rachal found himself under Lee's command in the Battle of the Wilderness, and on April 10, 1865, he was at Appomattox for the surrender. D. C. Rachal's memory was a storehouse of war experiences. Some of his grandchildren remember his tales of foraging for food, but he did not dwell on the misery of war; he was thankful that he was among the five hundred and fifty-seven who returned of the thirty five hundred or more that started out in Hood's Brigade.

Soon after the war, Darius C. Rachal married Julia Bryan in Liberty, Texas. His dream of White Point together with the availability of land to buy brought him, his wife and his infant daughter Florence to the spot he had first seen ten years before. In 1866 he bought a tract of land at White Point and built his home.

As soon as their one-story frame house was finished, yellow fever struck---the scourge of 1867. Edward White and his wife Aspacia White nee Blanchette and their son died leaving four orphans. Frank White died, but his wife and children (6) were spared. Julia Bryan Rachal had the yellow fever but survived. Oral tradition has it that the old-timers told of seeing a heavy, yellow fog come inland across the bay at the time of the yellow fever epidemic.

D. C. took boards and doors from his house to make coffins for the yellow fever victims. He selected a plot of ground for a burial place; the White graves were the first graves in the White Point Cemetery. Mai Frances Hunter granddaughter of D. C. Rachal remembers as a child seeing the White graves with their wooden markers painted gray and inscribed with the names of those that lay there. To the best of her recollection there were six. Coleman McCampbell says there were four, that is, of his relatives. The other two may well have been two other persons who died during the epidemic. It was reported that fourteen died in (7) the area. The markers were kept in good condition during the lifetime of D. C. Rachal, but time has taken its toll. The White graves are now lost; the markers are gone. It is known only that they are in the northwest corner of the cemetery which is now fenced and has many other graves.

Half mile from the cemetery was the home of D. C. Rachal. Sixteen productive years had passed. Meanwhile he had added to his holdings. The early 1870's began his purchases of land in San Patricio County which extended his (8) pasture land from White Point to present-day Odem. In 1883 their one-story home was enlarged to accommodate their family of four boys and two girls: Frank, Chrys, Ernest and William, better known as "Dick", Florence and Catherine (Kate). In this year it was made two-story. Most of the remodeled house was of cypress. It faced east and had galleries both upstairs and

down. It afforded views of Nueces and Corpus Christi Bays and, on clear days, the then village of Corpus Christi. Chimneys stood on the north and south of the main wing for the parlor and the front bedroom. A hall ran down the center of these two rooms. A long ell running west contained two bedrooms, each with its chimney, and a gallery on the south. A hall separated these two rooms and led into another ell on the north which contained the dining room and kitchen. This ell had a gallery facing east. This is where the laborers and cowhands gathered to receive their wages. On the second floor were two bedrooms in the main wing and above the two bedrooms on the west ell was a very large room called "the big room" which served as a dormitory for the boys. This room had a twofold purpose. On occasion the beds were removed, and it was used for dancing.

The D. C. Rachal home was one of the social centers of San Patricio County. The Rachals brought with them the never waning hospitality of the Old South. A genuine feeling of welcome pervaded the atmosphere of their gatherings. Especially was the ranch noted for its dances. The guests came on horseback, in wagons or in buggies from miles around. Their journey to the dances took hours; therefore, the guests were served supper, and after dancing all night and being served breakfast, they well might decide to stay on and dance the next night. Since they had come so far, their trip should be made worth the effort; thus reasoned the host and the guests as well. A favorite among those who provided music for the dances was Billie Favella, the fiddler. He brought with him a guitarist and a flutist. Sometimes some of the ranch hands would provide the music - a guitar and an accordion. Although D. C. Rachal and his wife did not dance, he watched the dances with gusto while they danced the polka, the waltz, and the schottish for a variety of dances as well as tunes. Then there was always the quadrille. P. A. Hunter, husband of Florence Rachal, was the chief caller for the quadrilles after 1884. (9)

After the periodic dances which lasted for two or even three nights, the Rachal household would settle down to the routine of daily living. The weather had much to do with the activities and moods of the ranchers. D. C. Rachal had weathered the drouth of 1876, but the drouth of 1878-79 dealt a severe blow to his cattle business. Large numbers of livestock perished for lack of water and grass. Writing about "the great die-up" of 1878-79 two studies reported that an eighteen month drouth ruined many small ranchers on the coastal prairies and depleted their herds.

During this time he had to deal in hides rather than to drive his cattle to market in Kansas. But he managed not to lose his land; a new start would always come as long as he could hold the land. Cattlemen of that day had to operate on borrowed money by mortgaging their land. When times were bad, money was tight and interest was high. The going rate was 12% to 18%. The pitfall of this kind of operation was the drouth and the resulting die-up. But rain cannot stay away forever, and the 1880's broke the spell.

The first four years of the 1880's brought unparalleled prosperity to the ranchers. It rained as if there had never been such a thing as a drouth in Texas; ranchers increased their herds and extended their pastures. D. C. Rachal was among these. In April of 1884 he and Henry Scott of Refugio bought the Rabb Ranch, 31, 000 acres extending from Banquete

to the left bank of the Petronila Creek, which now includes the town of Driscoll. It was fenced with thirty miles of fence which took a man on horseback two days to ride.

Florence Rachal married P. A. Hunter in 1884. For the first two years of their marriage they lived in the Rabb Ranch house situated on the Banquete Creek; the Agua Dulce Creek runs through Banquete and is there known as the Banquete Creek. P. A. Hunter managed the ranch. There the young Mrs. Hunter, a bride of eighteen, knew the "Cattle Queen of Texas", Mrs. John Rabb; at that time she was Mrs. Rogers married to C. M. Rogers who was called "Parson Rogers", but she still ran cattle on the Rabb Ranch. Mrs. Hunter recalling her days there said, "She was a very businesslike woman giving orders about her cattle. When she would come to the ranch, we would get in my surrey and go to the cattle pens (now the little settlement of Rabb between Banquete and Robstown). She would go to the corrals, climb up on the fence and watch the branding (12) and selling of stock, all the time talking business to the buyers!" In 1885 another drouth and a cold winter prostrated the cattle business. By 1886 the watering holes and streams were dry and the range grass was nil. The New Orleans cattle market dropped; the shipments of cattle were at a standstill. Rain (13) did not come until June 1886.

D. C. Rachal and Henry Scott could not hold on any longer in the face of almost a two-year drouth. In April 1886 they sold the Rabb Ranch to Jerry and (14) Robert Driscoll for \$93,000. Later it became the property of Clara Driscoll. D.C. Rachal was a doer and a mover. Undaunted by his loss of the Rabb Ranch, he entered into partnership with S. G. Borden in several business ventures. These included a gin, a ferry and a schooner "The Nueces Valley" that plied up and down the Nueces River hauling cotton, wool and mohair, and on the return trip brought back other products and supplies for the Borden Store. Borden cultivated an extensive vineyard at Sharpsburg where he pressed wine for export. (15) One brand was called Sharpsburg's Best and the other Rachal's Choice. D. C. Rachal was one of the first to buy stock in the Sinton Town Company. His prime interest was the development of San Patricio County.

Enterprising though he was, D. C. Rachal was essentially a family man. This trait has come down to his descendants. He was devoted to his wife Julia Bryan; her serenity was a foil to his buoyant disposition. Hot-tempered though he was, it was only she who never became fearful or upset at a show of his quick temper! Once his sudden outbursts were over, he was quick to repent and make amends. It was only his wife who would say at the-peak of his anger, "Now, Darius, watch your temper." The rest, that is, the children, the grandchildren and the servants alike would "freeze", wide-eyed and silent, until his rage passed. They knew it would pass, and they never doubted his love and affection. Collins, sometimes called Cap, the handyman who by chance came to live with the Rachals, was fired and rehired so many times that he learned not to be disturbed by his frequent dismissals. Collins stayed on for years almost like a member of the family. He was an English sailor from the Isle of Man, Captain William Shoveller Collins of Shoveller Hall, no less. He came on a boat that was wrecked and somehow landed at the Rachal Ranch. He did odd jobs: fixing the windmills, taking care of the mail at the ranch post office known as Rosita, Texas, and filling the water pitchers which

stood on the washstands in the bedrooms. What a boon he was for the children! He was a teller of tales. His audience sat rapt in wonder as he spun his yarns.

The home of D. C. Rachal was not only a stable home for his children, a place of fun and frolic for his grandchildren to visit, but a haven for relatives when they needed it. The fact that Mrs. Rachal's mother, her uncle, and her two sisters died in this house is proof of this. As Mai Frances Hunter and I were visiting the White Point Cemetery, I remarked how many relatives were buried there who did not live in this area. She answered, "They came here to die." What insight these words give into the feeling that D. C. Rachal's in-laws had for him! They felt that they would be welcome even though their days of usefulness were over and death stalked their every step.

The spiritual needs of this family and its employees were taken care of first by Rev. Benito Donado and then by Rev. Miguel Puig. There was no language barrier between either of these priests and their flock because they were both natives of Spain. Father Puig has often been called the priest on horseback who brought the church to the ranches. Once a month he would spend two days at the Rachal Ranch to hold services for the ten or more Mexican families who lived and worked there. He would say Mass on an improvised altar in the parlor, hear confessions and distribute Communion, and if the occasion called for it, he would baptize, perform the sacrament of matrimony and bury the dead. Once a year he would bring the bishop to confirm. Once when he brought Bishop Verdeguer, he had him baptize the newly born infant Robert Lloyd Hunter so that he, Father Puig, could be the godfather and add the name Michael after-himself. "My namesake will be a priest some day!" was his prediction.

These two-day visits were a treat for both Father Puig and the Rachal family. He could converse on any subject. To be around him was to absorb an appreciation for music and art. He would tell of the art museums he had seen in Spain, El Prado and El Escorial, and the operas he had attended. Having come from a cultured family in Gerona, Spain, he missed that part of his life in the wilds of Texas. Although he came to Brownsville, Texas as a sub-deacon when he was twenty-three and was ordained in San Diego, Texas two years later, he never lost the heavy Spanish accent of his mother tongue. His sermons in Spanish were inspiring, but those in English were halting and had the usual errors, some of them comical. He often called the Blessed Virgin "he", an error which he never conquered. One of his favorite tales was of his having got lost in the Brasada or the brush country for three days in Webb County.- There he lived on roots and bird eggs until he came upon the Tex-Mex railroad. His first assignment was Aguilares, a short distance east of Laredo. From there he was sent to Hebronville. He built its first church, then he came to San Patricio and the neighboring ranches. Father Puig was forthright and practical. Once he preached a sermon in San Patricio saying that there were too many spinsters and bachelors in the parish. The sensible thing was to have some marriages so that the parish would grow. His sermon, however, bore no fruit. It was during these years at San Patricio that he was a monthly visitor at the Rachal Ranch. But Christmas was a time to be with his parish at San Patricio.

The celebration of Christmas at the Rachal Ranch was unique in that it included the production of the religious drama of the Middle Ages, *Los Pastores*, (16) which became a tradition lasting many years. Dionicio Ortiz came from Mexico to settle on the Rachal Ranch in 1885. With him he brought the script of *Los Pastores* and the knowledge of how to produce it. Dionicio produced it, directed it and taught the other Mexicans their roles. In his house there was a large room in which he built a stage that he kept up from Christmas to Christmas. The Rachal family attended the Christmas Eve performance. Dionicio's grandson Bias played the part of the Angel. Once the wire that held him suspended above the players broke, and Bias fell to the floor with a thump. In the script of *Los Pastores*, ravaged by time, the roles of Michael, Lucifer and Gabriel were the best, indicating that they were of the original text. The tradition of having roles pass from father to son and from mother to daughter was carried out.

Aside from the presentation of *Los Pastores*, Christmas was celebrated on the ranch with the decorating of a laurel or ebony tree brought in from the pasture, an exchange of gifts, and a wild turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

Julia Bryan Rachal, the presiding spirit of many Christmases was gone. On April 7, 1911, death came, and she was laid in the White Point Cemetery beside her two infant children Eddie and Ida Rachal. Early of a morning the lonely figure of Darius C. Rachal could be seen making his way to the grave of his life's partner" This became an every morning ritual, to start the day with a visit to his companion in life who had stood by him in sorrow, through drouths and business reverses. Seven years later he was to join her.

In the intervening years (1911-1919) D.C. Rachal witnessed some changes at White Point that were to affect South Texas. An oil company drilled a well in 1913 which blew out from the enormous pressure of natural gas. Another well was drilled in 1914 which exploded sending the derrick into the air and bursting into flames that lit the country for miles around. Millions and millions of feet of natural gas, almost too many millions to tabulate are consumed and wasted in the spectacular plume of fire that towers against the skyline for a period of months. The ingenuity of the foremost gas experts can't extinguish it. Both Federal and State aid is necessary to effect control.

In 1916 another well was drilled which came in hot mineral water. Doctor Henry Redmond gave it high praise for its curative powers. It became a spa where people with eczema and rheumatism came to bathe in its waters and use mud packs on erupted skin. One woman claimed a complete cure from rheumatism. Ernest Rachal put up a bathhouse with several tubs, but the water was so full of (18) iron that the tubs rusted and had to be discarded.

Darius C. Rachal died at this ranch home August 27, 1918, with his sons and daughters at his bedside. He was buried by his wife, Julia, and his two infant children in the White Point Cemetery.

The death of D.C. Rachal marked the end of an era at White Point. A full life had come to a close. No matter where he would have settled, his life would have been a colorful

one, but the times and the place were a fitting background for the man. He came to live in Texas when the range was an unfenced wilderness, when the hostility of the Indian was still to be dealt with, when the aftermath of the war made Confederate money worthless and inflation rampant. It was a time when Mexican banditry was at its height, and living was a true experience in pioneering. He was a man who met life head-on; he accepted both its joys and its vicissitudes as they came.

The late sixties and the seventies ushered in the era of the trail driver. D.C. Rachal was one of these. There is an account of a drive in 1871, told by his brother E. R. "Nute", of which D.C. was the boss, he, "Nute", was the second boss, and Albert Rachal was among the hands. These three brothers left the Nueces River with 1200 head of Coleman cattle from the Chiltipin Ranch on March 20; it was November when they reached home. They had to contend with a stampede caused by a herd of buffaloes, a mix-up of the cattle with the Gravis herd, a rain that scattered the cattle; then, there was no market for them when they arrived at Ellsworth, Kansas. They shipped the cattle to slaughter in Chicago and started (19) the trek home. Such was the life they took in their stride.

The late seventies and the early eighties were to see the great pasture company which covered 215, 000 acres of San Patricio County; it was organized by Coleman, Fulton and Mathis, and later became Coleman and Fulton Pasture Co. They operated by making breathtaking mortgages, and somehow managed to pay them off. These were the contemporaries and neighbors of D.C. Rachal. As the years went on their cattle pastures became smaller and smaller because they sold land to Eastern investors who had other ideas for the land besides the raising of cattle. They found that the soil was fertile and would make excellent farm land.

D.C. Rachal witnessed the conversion of most of that great pasture company into farm land under the Taft Ranch regime. He too began to clear his White Point land and put it into cultivation. The drouth of 1885-86 had forced him to sell his interest in the Rabb Ranch at \$3.00 an acre, a spread of virgin black land which is a part of the most fertile land in Nueces County today. Add to that the unexplored pools of oil which the Rabb Ranch covered, and some idea of what he lost might be estimated. His business interest with Borden lasted until Borden died in 1908.

It was not in D.C. Rachal's makeup to be bitter over financial losses and refuse to change with the times. He still had his health, his family and his friends on which he placed the highest value. This value was not misplaced; it was returned a hundredfold. He still had his White Point land, a thousand acres in cotton and four hundred in corn. He had become a prosperous White Point farmer, but there was too much of the rancher in D. C. Rachal to dedicate himself entirely to farming. He leased a ranch west of Hebbronville and there the cattle carried the D. C. Rachal brand, a flowered loose L which was a stylized fleur-de-lis with an L attached on the right-hand side. Besides this there was an outline of a square block on the ribs.

D. C. Rachal did not live to see the devastating hurricane and tidal wave of 1919. Chrys Rachal had come to live with his father and farm his land in 1916, the year of a hurricane

that packed winds of one hundred and twenty miles an hour with heavy rains. The old house was battered but stood firm on its foundations; therefore, in 1919 the Chrys Rachals were not unduly alarmed when a hurricane was predicted! The only indication was the dropping of the barometer and an eerie feeling of being in a vacuum even though slight breezes stirred.

North Beach in 1919, the most vulnerable spot in Corpus Christi, was a well populated area. Some of the best homes were there as well as the Breakers Hotel and Spohn Hospital. Many tourist cottages had mushroomed near the bay. Although the people were expecting the storm, they felt that they could weather it as they had done in the past. But what they did not expect, nor even imagine, was a tidal wave thirty feet high. While the Chrys Rachals and their employees were closed up in the old house that night riding out the winds, they were unaware that North Beach had been completely devastated; human beings were clinging to roofs, telephone poles, doors, or any piece of debris at hand as the wind was blowing them across Nueces Bay. The oil tanks of Port Aransas had deposited crude oil on the churning waters, and those who were fighting for their lives in the darkness were covered by it.

The next morning the winds had abated as the hurricane moved inland. The inhabitants of White Point looked down on the beach and beheld to their astonishment piles of lumber and debris of every kind. As they made their way down the bluff, they were shocked and speechless at what they saw. They hurried to the assistance of crude-oil-covered bodies, some showing signs of life but stretched out on the beach with exhaustion! Others were unrecognizable corpses; approximately two hundred had been hurled against White Point Bluff.

Chrys Rachal went into action.

When we arrived at White Point at the old Rachal home, we found Mr. Chrys Rachal Sr. there in front of the little school-house, and he had ordered some of the laborers to butcher and barbecue a calf as people were coming to help on horseback and on foot. These had already begun to bring bodies to the school-house on house doors. We worked checking for identification, checking for jewelry, scars, teeth or anything that would help to identify. Mr. Rachal was having a long grave dug by mules and scrapers that happened to be there on account of the oil company using them to make slush pits. There were thirty two survivors who had no clothes. He wrapped them in whatever he had and put them in two wagons drawn by four mule teams each and sent them to Taft. I will always be grateful to Mr. Rachal and his family for the things he did for those people in distress. (20)

The old house had seen tragedy strike during the yellow fever epidemic of 1867; now it had witnessed a greater tragedy. The tidal wave and hurricane of Sept. 1-4, 1919, will never be forgotten by those who saw its destruction.

Chrys Rachal sent word of the conditions that existed at White Point to Maxwell Dunne. He made several trips by boat to take care of the bodies. Some were identified; some were not. In either case they were taken from the shallow-ditch grave and were buried elsewhere.

The weather was back to normal, and after several weeks the Rachal household had reached some degree of normalcy. In all the years that the Rachal home had stood, the life in it had never been one of tedium and boredom. Now with the second generation of Rachals, the good life continued. D. C. Rachal had left a legacy, one that neither time could erode nor money spoil, the esteem for family life, to which he, in his own life, had given first priority. Now the old home was abuzz with the activity of eight growing children; three more were to come. The Chrys Rachals upheld the traditions carried out by the generation before. The dances in "the big room" continued. Family and friends knew how to dance the same dances, the waltz, the polka, the schottish and the square dance. And they danced untiringly and exceedingly well.

For years the family gathered every Sunday; married sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, innumerable cousins came to White Point to visit and kept in tact the family ties from generation to scattered generation. Mrs. Rachal presided with unhurried composure over many gatherings at White Point. It seemed as if the carefree and happy days would go on indefinitely.

But a sad day in 1942 Chrys Rachal rose at dawn, as was his custom, and went to the kitchen to make coffee. There he was seized with a fatal heart attack and was found dead by members of the family. He was a good and gentle man who had the calm and fortitude of his mother Julia Bryan, rather than the fiery and venturesome temperament of his father. His was a lively faith in God; his religious example was ever before his children. With his death he became the last Rachal (21) to occupy the old home which had seen so much living. After this his wife Eliza Odem Rachal and her younger children would come back to spend some time there each year. But time and circumstance decreed that they leave the old mansion, and she moved to Corpus Christi where she lived with her daughter, Mrs. John Harney. After several years of emptiness, the old home was razed in 1956; its stout cypress boards were used to build smaller dwellings on the farm. White Point was no longer the focal point of the Rachal family. Nevertheless, they still own and farm the land, and the home site to them is still a treasured spot.

Myriads of automobiles heading north over the causeway that spans Nueces Bay glance to the left and see a white bluff protruding into it. This is White Point. Behind it fields of grain turn golden brown in the summer, where only a hundred years ago it was prairie land with grass enough to give sustenance to longhorn cattle. Oil and gas wells dot the White Point land, the oldest oil field in South Texas. Bird watchers make pilgrimages to see the great variety of land and water birds that make it their habitat and sing, perhaps,

of its past and its future. The old Rachal home overlooking Nueces Bay lives in the minds of those who remember it. But it has met the fate of most of the old houses that are gone. They cannot survive emptiness; they fall into ruin. The imaginations of succeeding generations of Rachals will be tantalized because they have not seen with their own eyes the home of their forefathers.

The spot on which the Rachal house stood is a hallowed spot. It speaks out from its foundation now buried in weeds and wild grass,

"These were my people, My people in joy and in sorrow.  
The floors of my big room held up the dancers While I  
rejoiced in their merriment. I stood firm through hurricanes  
And weathered drouths and die-ups. I mourned with my  
people And cast my shadow on their graves. I housed  
generations, But when I no longer felt familiar steps Or  
heard voices raised in laughter, I knew loneliness and  
desolation; But still I hoped for their return That I might  
hear and see and feel What I had once known, The presence  
of my people!"

Unknown

**NOTES ON**  
**“THE RACHALS OF WHITE POINT”**

Written by Rachel B. Herbert (1906 – 1998), ca. 1976  
Digitized by Ken Pinter, September 2008

1. Huton, Hobart, Refugio Vol. I, p. 15

"Following the north shoreline of Nueces Bay, we pass El Paraje de las Chemeneas near which was the colonial home of Captain Felipe Roque de la Portilla, father-in-law of Col. James Power. Here Col. Power lived during the first years of his married life. "

Oberste, William, Texas Irish Empresarios p. 91

"James Power induced the Portillas to move from Matamoros to Texas on marrying Dolores and established a home for all of them on the banks of Nueces Bay near Corpus Christi. The home was commodious and simply built of pickets and palmetto. The chief architectural feature was its two chimneys for which it was soon known as, "The Chimneys'."

2. Obid. p. 91 (Oberste)
3. Baylor, Mrs. H. L., San Patricio County News, 1938
4. Ancestor Chart compiled by Mrs." Gary Mills, 32-H University Village, Starsville, Miss. 39759 Sept. 13, 1972, and in the possession of Mrs. Dave Rachal

(1) Pierre Rachal, born on the Isle D'Oloron off the coast of La Rochelle, France, came as a soldier and settled in Natchitoches, Louisiana in 1721 with his Parisian born wife Marie Anne Benoist.

The following generations were born and reared in Natchitoches:

- (2) Louis Rachal dit Blondin 1753-1785 m. Marie Louise Le Roy
  - (3) Antoine Francois Rachal 1763-1787 m. Marie Louise Lemoine
  - (4) Sylvester Rachal 1789-1841 m. Marie Rose Michel-Zariche
  - (5) Louis Cyriaque Rachal m. Anais P. Compere
  - (6) Darius Cyriaque Rachal 1841-1918 m. Julia A. Bryan
5. Obid.(Baylor) Interview with Chrys Rachal, Sr. 1938
  6. McCampbell, Coleman, Texas Seaport, p. 255 .
  7. Obid. (Baylor)

8. Some of the land purchased by D. C. Rachal including that along Nueces Bay.  
Source: Deed Records, San Patricio County Courthouse, Sinton, Texas.

(Entities listed below are the sellers, D.C. Rachal is the buyer)

- |  |          |               |                  |
|--|----------|---------------|------------------|
| (1) Roswell Gillette                       | War.Deed | Aug 18, 1873  | Book 3, p. 531   |
| (2) T. J. Roberts                          | Deed     | Dec. 1814     | Book 6, p. 230   |
| (3) E. R. & A. P. Rachal                   | W.D.     | Mar. 15, 1873 | Book 5, p. 356   |
| (4) G. W. Fulton<br>Pasture Co.            | W.D.     | 1873          | Book 6, p. 603-5 |
| (5) Coleman, Mathis,<br>Fulton Pasture Co. |          | Aug. 1876     | Book 6, p. 511   |
| (6) S. G. Borden Co.                       | W.D.     | Dec. 1877     | Book 1, p.108    |
| (7) Coleman and Fulton                     | W.D.     | Nov; 1879     | Book 7, p. 400   |
| (8) Coleman-Fulton                         |          | Jan. 1882     | Book 7, p. 601   |
| (9) M. A. Harris, et al                    | W.D.     | April 1890    | Book 8, p. 376   |
| (10) M. A. & C. M. Rogers                  | Deed     | April 1888    | Book 8, p. 246   |
| (11) A. L. & Ellen<br>Woodward             | Deed     | 1894          | Book M, p. 173   |

9. Caller-Times, Jan. 1893 "Salute Your Partner"  
"They Danced All Night and Danced All Day and then Danced Some More"

10. Stephens, Alva, The Taft Ranch, p. 32

11. Deed Records, Nueces County Courthouse, Book Q folios 94-97

12. Ward, Mrs. Howell, Caller-Times, Interview with Mrs. P. A. Hunter March 10, 1946
13. Obid. (Stephens), p. 73
14. Deed Records, Nueces County Courthouse, Book R, p. 54-56
15. Moreman, Travis, Caller-Times Special Edition, Jan. 18th, 1959
16. Hunter, Mai Frances, M.A. Thesis "A Translation of Los Pastores from the Spanish Text" with an introduction on the origin of the play.
17. Obid; (McC Campbell) p. 82
18. Rachal, Mr. and Mrs. Dave Rachal, Interview May 12, 1975.
19. Rachal, E. R. "Nute", "A Long Hard Trip" Memories of a cattle drive to Kansas by the three Rachal brothers, D. C., Nute, and Albert, March to November 1871.
20. Crow, Richard V., "A Watery Grave on Land" An eye witness account of the tragic scene at White Point after the hurricane of 1919.
21. Rachal, Mr. and Mrs. Dave Rachal Interview on life at the ranch during the time the Chrys Rachals lived there, 1916-1942 May 18, 1975

In some articles that have been written about the Rachals they were said to be Acadians (Cajuns) or Huguenots from South Carolina. The ancestor chart proves that neither assumption is true. Pierre Rachal and his wife came directly from France and settled in Natchitoches, Louisiana where the next five generations lived as practicing Catholics.

# WHITE POINT CEMETERY

## Burials

### **Edward White**

**Aspacia White nee Blanchette**, wife of Edward White

**Son of Edward White**

**Frank White**, brother of Edward White

Note: The Whites were victims of the yellow fever of 1867 and were the first to be buried in this cemetery

**Darius C. Rachal** (veteran of Hood's Texas Brigade)

b. January 23, 1841

d. August 27, 1918

**Julia A. Rachal nee Bryan** (wife of Darius C. Rachal)

b. November 1, 1845

d. April 7, 1911

**Elizabeth Bryan nee Whitlock** (mother of Julia Rachal)

b. March 4, 1819

d. April 1892

**Anais P. Rachal** (mother of D.C. Rachal)

d. July 20, 1886 @ Age 65

**Frank S. Rachal** (eldest son of D.C. Rachal)

b. November 29, 1868

d. March 30, 1923

**Anna C. Rachal** (wife of Frank S. Rachal)

b. January 3, 1867

d. April 16, 1918

**Robert Whitlock** (Uncle of Julia Rachal, Veteran of San Jacinto)

b. 1811

d. 1895

**Janie A. Bryan** (sister of Julia Rachal)

d. Nov. 16, 1883 Age 28, 10 mo, 8 da

**Octavia B. Stoval nee Bryan** (sister of Julia Rachal)

- b. July 21, 1836
- d. December 25, 1901

**Nancy V. Lewis nee Bryan** (sister of Julia Rachal)

- b. 1848 wife of Steve Lewis
- d. 1902 at Sinton

**Ida Kaleta Rachal**

- d. November 28, 1877 @ age 28 days

**Eddie Rachal (twin of Chryst)**

- d. March 9, 1873 @ age 17 days.

Note: Both Ida and Eddie were infant children of Darius and Julia Rachal

**Mary Rowena Hunter** (mother of P. A. Hunter)

- b. December 12, 1827
- d. November 12, 1898

**D. C. Hunter, Jr.**

- b. December 15, 1910
- d. May 5, 1911

**William "Dick" Rachal** (son of D. C. Rachal)

- b: September 8, 1885
- d: October 29, 1929

**Melquiades Martinez**

Aqui duerme en sueno eterno  
los restos del senor Melquiades  
Martinez que fayecio el dia 10  
de abril de la edad de 68 anos.  
Su esposa y su familia dedican este requerdo.  
Que descanse en paz.

**Victoriano Hinojosa**

- b. March 5, 1890
- d. December 7, 1947

**Manuel Pinon**

Private in U. S. Marine Corps, World War II

- b. November 28, 1923
- d. June 3, 1951

**Matilde Beli**

- b. November 28, 1920
- d. 1951

**Guadalupe**

- b. December 12, 1888
- d. March 14, 1943

**Petra Blanco**

- b. June 29, 1860
- d. February 25, 1938

**Senora Angela Davila**

**Margarito Yanas**

**Faustina**

- b. September 25, 1907
- d. December 10, 1915

There are about ten graves which have markers, but no inscriptions.

**THE RACHALS OF TEXAS**

Louis Cyriaque Rachal m.. Anais Compere moved to Liberty, Texas

1. Ezilia Rachal m. P.A. Bitterman
2. Frank Rachal m. Anna Blanchette
3. Darius Cyriaque Rachal m. Julia Bryan
4. Ernest Rachal single, died as a youth
5. Alfonse Rachal single, died as a youth
6. E. R. "Nute" Rachal m. Louise Perrenot
7. Albert Pierre Rachal m. Dizena Peters

Darius Cyriaque Rachal m. Julia Bryan moved to San Patricio County, Texas

1. Florence Rachal m. P. A. Hunter
2. Frank S. Rachal m. Anna Webster
3. Christopher P. Rachal m. Elizabeth Odem
4. Ernest Rachal m. Maimie Gaffney
5. Catherine (Kate) Rachal m. Dominic Dunn
6. William "Dick" Rachal m. Lula Shaw
7. Eddie Rachal (twin of Chrys died in infancy)
8. Ida Rachal (died in infancy)

Edward Rene "Nute" Rachal had a ranch at Cotulla, Texas

Albert Pierre Rachal had a ranch in the Falls City-Floresville, Texas, area

L. A. Bitterman had a store, a gin, and a ferry at Nuecestown.