

On Independence Creek: The Story of a Texas Ranch



Enjoyable anecdotes about ranch life, fishing and hunting, and the nostalgia of growing up during the 1940s and 1950s. . . . Charlena Chandler has produced an enjoyable book that takes us back to the fondly remembered mid-century in small-town West Texas. Southwestern Historical Quarterly Charlena Chandlers work is about the dreams and hard work of her grandfather, Charles Chandler, the vision and tenacity of her father, Joe Chandler, and the ebb and flow of life along Independence Creek, a large spring-fed tributary of the Pecos River south of Sheffield in Terrel County. . . . You might not know the characters in the book, but if you have ties to West Texas, youve known people like them. Chandlers book is full of West Texas colloquialisms and wit, but also a twinge of regret for the changes that time brings. Scott Turner, Desert Mountain Times Deep in southwest Texas a creek pours into the Pecos River. Because it flows from the west, one might expect that even in the rainiest of years it would be intermittent, but its flow is steady, and it is the largest freshwater tributary of the Pecos. As a result of its reliable, spring-fed flow, Independence Creek has had a long history. Indians camped along its banks for centuries before the white man arrived. Spanish conquistadores may have found an oasis there during their exploration of the otherwise arid region. And in the nineteenth century, cattle, sheep, and goat ranchers felt the pull of its sweet water and the rich grass on its banks. The authors grandfather, Charles Chandler, settled the area of the mouth of Independence Creek in 1900 and ranched it for many years. But her father, Joe Chandler, saw more potential for the green valley than ranchland. Over the years he built there one of the most popular recreation areas in southwest Texas. First a guest ranch for hunting and fishing, it later included a

nine-hole golf course. For about forty years it was the only such entertainment spot on the Pecos River in Texas. Because of its unique ecological situation, the ranch was named a potential natural landmark by James F. Scudday of Sul Ross State University in 1977, and in 1991 the Nature Conservancy of Texas obtained a conservation easement on seven hundred acres of the ranch, the first such arrangement in the state. Charlena Chandler goes beyond the history of the ranch to tell a more personal story of the experiences of her grandparents and parents and of her growing up on the ranch. She tells of the good times, such as sleeping on her grandfathers porch under starry night skies, successful golf tournaments, and happy family events, and the bad: Depression days, family strife, and the time the creek flooded, destroying the camp. Her book is a realistic, human-events account of the generations that came to realize there was no other place on earth like the place they lived.

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