

TRUE STORIES

By: Elizabeth Alice Petit Homer

Following told to daughters Ruby and Vivian on December 29, 1978, while the three visited Cousin Susie Michel Hertz in Westwego, La. (701 5th Avenue) and enjoyed a Holiday luncheon.

LOUIS SANDERS, a business man, while in New Orleans, met and married MARY MAGDELAN RICE and took his bride back with him to Bayou Lafourche. Three daughters were born to LOUIS SANDERS and MARY RICE, JESSIE FLORENCE, OPHELIA MARY and EVA LOUISE. When EVA was only three weeks old, MARY RICE SANDERS died of Pneumonia. She was buried in their own back yard. The three girls were brought by skiff to New Orleans by their father - and were brought to St. Mary's Catholic Church (Irish Channel) to be baptized. They were raised in the home of their grandparents in New Orleans, NORA SHILLING RICE AND JOHN RICE (see St. Joseph #1 Cemetery for burial tomb of Rice family - Main gate and a few feet on left of path) until the second marriage of their father.

Second marriage of LOUIS SANDERS was to ELIZABETH TANNER (very stout woman) and he moved her and his three daughters back to Bayou Lafourche to live. Liz Tanner played the piano beautifully. Her brother was hired as a tutor for the three girls - they learned to read and write - and taught others how to sign their names to leases and documents (few persons were interested in education in those days in that particular local as most all were poor French fishermen who had little time for anything except their boats and repairing of their nets for the next days work). Various chores about the home and land were done by the girls. There were seldom occasions for socializing in that vicinity in those days. EVA was the first of the girls to marry to a widowed fisherman EMILE PETIT. He hardly knew a word of the English language. He was born and reared in Cheniere Caminada near their home in Golden Meadow. He had lost his wife when she drowned during a great storm in Cheniere Caminada Bay area a few years before. EVA taught EMILE to read a little and how to sign his name. EMILE was a fisherman by trade. Seven children were born to EVA and EMILE PETIT - ELIZABETH ALICE (born September 10, 1896) PHILONESE EVELYN, AMELIA EVA, LAURIE ADA, LOUIS ROBERTOR, ERVIN ALCIDE and AUSTIN MARTIN PETIT.

JESSIE SANDERS was the next of the three girls to marry to CLIFTON LATHROP and three children were born to them - LEWIS, ZETTA and ETHEL. They settled in Bayou Lafourche Parish between Golden Meadow and Leesville, not too far from the fathers estate and farmed the land. Soon after JESSIE married, LOUIS SANDERS decided to sell all his property and he then moved to Houston, Texas (Peas Avenue and Live Oak - near the railroad tracks). It was a sad parting for EVA and OPHELIA who dearly loved each other. EVA lived in a small house previously owned by her father and had to find another place to live when the estate was sold to the Lefort family. EVA had just given birth to her first child, but was given 6 weeks to reside in the house (by law) so by selling a cow for a plot of ground and some material, they were able to build a large room which was later divided into 2 rooms.

OPHELIA, yet unmarried, lived in Houston, Texas with her father and stepmother and was the housekeeper and cook. It was not unusual, since the family home was very close to the railroad tracks, that some one would come to the back door seeking food or shelter or a days work. It was in this manner that OPHELIA met ELMER SWYGGERT, son of a farmer from Palaski, Ohio who had gotten off the train in Houston, Texas because it seemed a prosperous and growing city and promised him a new way of living. They were married and took up residence in Houston. Two sons were born of this marriage - CALVIN AND MERRILL.