

Frances Brandon Pickett

Ever since one cold November night in 1927, **Frances Brandon Pickett** has been a contributing influence to the Queen Creek area. She was born at home to Charles and Laliar Brandon, in a building that had been once been an old mule skinner's cook shack. Frances grew up loving the outdoors. She remembers constructing toys from whatever she could find; the desert was her playground. Sometimes small cans would be buried to collect insects that crawled at night. And then in the morning, the makeshift traps were checked for bugs. Frances and her brothers liked to pretend that the bugs were cattle, and they were taking part in a round-up.

But it wasn't all fun and games. Frances and her brothers were expected to help with chores and the farming. One time when Frances was about five, she was allowed to drive the mules alone to the cotton gin. The mules had made the trip so often; they knew exactly what to do. They pulled onto the scales, and after the wagon was weighed, the ginner gave a command to 'getty-up.' The mules proceeded to the gin's suction pipe where the wagon was emptied. Another 'getty-up' was given and they were on their way back to the cotton field. This is a memory she'll always treasure!

But when Frances entered school, she felt that the fun times had ended. She hated school, for it robbed her of the freedoms she'd cherished. Frances lived for recess and the noon hour, even though she had to walk a half mile home for lunch. She didn't mind, for it offered an excellent opportunity to be tardy or to skip her afternoon classes. Sometimes she'd find a nice shady greasewood bush to take a nap and delay her trip back to school; trying to time her waking with the end of classes. When she was caught at this trick a new one was tried, like pretending she couldn't see the words in her reader. After being fitted with glasses, yet another scheme was quickly created. Frances soon discovered the excuse of having a bad headache worked the best, for they never really knew when she was telling the truth. But over time she discovered that with the right teacher, school could be fun and rewarding. Years later, Frances became a teacher at the Rittenhouse Elementary School; the same school that she avoided as a youngster and the same school that is now the home and museum for the San Tan Historical Society.

