

LUCILE ESTELL-Sesquicentennial July 12, 2024

Lucy Hill Patterson Memorial Library, Rockdale, TX.

Dora Lucile Estell was born in Ft. Worth, TX, to High and Hattie Lucile (Poole) Estell. Lucile's first honor was to be the first baby born in the Harris Ft. Worth Methodist Hospital. Many accolades followed!

The family moved to Rockdale where they lived with Lucile's maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Poole, when she was two months old. In 1937 the family moved to Rodessa, LA, and remained there until Lucile graduated from high school in 1947.

Education was always important to Lucile. She received her BA degree from East Texas Baptist University, her Master's from North Texas State University, and her Doctorate's degree from Texas A&M in Commerce. She also studied at the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Texas at Austin, UT Tyler, and Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches.

Lucile began her teaching career in Mission, TX in 1951. She moved back to Marshall in 1953 to accept another teaching position. In 1968 she moved into a public information officer and curriculum director position at the Region 7 Education Service Center. She also taught in the history department of East Texas Baptist University from 1975-1994.

Lucile was published in several magazines and authored four books. She was also an avid photographer.

Lucile retired in 1995 as the deputy director of the service center. She returned to Rockdale where she served as an interim assistant superintendent for a year. **Then she changed from a teacher to historian.** She worked with the Texas Historical Commission and the Milam County Historical Commission, serving as chairman and also in other offices. One of the things Lucile loved to do is write marker applications for historical sites! She wrote many in Milam County and Rockdale. **She wrote the City of Rockdale Marker application.** It involves a lot of time and research, which Lucile loved. And she encouraged, strongly encouraged

others to write and research! Lucile is a member emeritus of the Milam County Historical Commission. She received two prestigious awards from the Texas Historical Commission, the John Ben Sheppard Award for Leadership and in 2022, the Ruth Lester Lifetime Achievement Award (Highest THC Honor before Governor's Award). Lucile was actively involved in bring recognition of the El Camino Real National Trail to Milam County. She was instrumental in forming and served as chairman of the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Trail Association and also the Milam County, Rancheria Grande chapter of El Camino Real de los Tejas. Milam County was the first county to receive El Camino Real National Trail signage. She was active in many other organizations. Some of these groups were TSTA, DKG, DAR, Rockdale Thursday Reading Club, Rancheria Grande chapter of El Camino Real de los Tejas, Linwood Acres Garden Club, and she is a member of the First Baptist Church in Rockdale.

As, I mentioned Lucile has written 4 books. *The Images of Rockdale* is a treasure for anyone interested in Rockdale history. It was a labor of love for Lucile. She LOVES Rockdale and Rockdale LOVES Lucile. She spent 7 happy years in Rockdale and came for frequent visits to see her grandparents in Rockdale after her family moved to Louisiana.

Any of you who know Lucile also know that when Lucile sees something historical that needs saving or restoring, she saved or restored it or takes part in getting the job done. She and her friend, Joy Graham, worked together on SO many historic efforts in Rockdale and Milam County, including two Milam County books, El Camino Real De Los Tejas, and Bridges of Milam County.

The stained-glass window behind you, in this Library and a smaller one in Melanie Todd's office were saved from the Old Wallis House, one of the oldest homes in Rockdale. After it was severely damaged by fire, and the ruminates of the once beautiful stained-glass windows were left hanging in shreds, Lucile knew that there were parts of the house worth saving, so she set about getting it done. With the city of Rockdale, the Milam County Historical Commission, and helpful community members like Linn Perry and Annette Stone, we were able to have

some of the stained-glass windows removed and restored, you see the results here today.

Now about Lucile's Rockdale Book:

I have spoken with Lucile many times about this book, but in 2012, when the book was published, the late Mike Brow interviewed Lucile and wrote an article for the Rockdale Reporter.

These are some comments from the article.

Mike wrote, If it's true that one picture is worth 1,000 words, local historian Dr. Lucile Estell has just authored a book with 200,000 of them.

[Images of America: Rockdale](#) has just been printed by Arcadia Publishing Co. and it contains over 200 historic photos tracing the town's history from 1873 to the present.

(www.arcadiapublishing.com.)

By the way, Limited books available here today, from Main Street Books

Dr. Estell is also the co-author of a similar book on Marshall for the Arcadia series on Texas towns. "The idea is that the pictures tell the story," she said. Each of the nine chapters consists of historic photos and begins with one page of prose explaining significance of the photos to come.

That's by design, she said. "The narrative is limited, so we could get in the maximum amount of pictures."

Dr. Estell sees the book as an updated and expanded version of the 1974 Rockdale Centennial book, to date the best collection of historic photos dealing wholly with Rockdale and the immediate area. **And I would say it continues to be the best collection of historic photos dealing with Rockdale.**

Lucile said, "I tried to concentrate on 1940 and before, she said. I believe someone could easily come up with another book, just as big, focusing on the 40s to the present."

There are CLASSIC pictures -Dr. Estell appealed to the public for historic photos and Rockdale residents came through. "It was my goal to have photos that really told the story of Rockdale's history, not just old family photos, although there are obviously plenty of those in the book," she said.

Many names familiar to students of Rockdale history will be given faces for the first time by the photos in this book. Those include founding fathers, Ben and Joe Loewenstein, mine owner Hermann Vogel and physician Dr. Duncan Wallis.

There's a very special name from early Rockdale, milliner, and pioneering female business owner, Dora Orr Poole. "She was my grandmother," Dr. Estell said. "I got my love of history from her."

SPECIAL PHOTOS - There are many photos which are special to Dr. Estell and to some of the first Rockdale residents who got advance copies of the book.

"I just love the photo of a little boy going to school at Bushdale, barefoot and carrying his lunch bucket," she said.

Another favorite is the 1932 street party in the 200 block of North Main, sort of a Depression Era rave triggered by a band brought in by Backhaus Bros. grocery when it affiliated with the national IGA chain. Both those photos are reproduced here.

COVER ICON - In the background of that photo the Buck Henry garage building is clearly visible. Henry Garage is also on the book's cover.

"I love history, of course, but I hope everyone realizes Rockdale isn't all about history," Dr. Estell said. "We've got a future, too."

Dr. Estell **didn't put** down the pen, either. She, historian Joy Graham and Steven Gonzales **teamed** up to write a history of the El Camino Real National Historic Trail, which passes through Milam County.

Lucile's Rockdale Book has 9 Chapters with just wonderful pictures with text about them.

Her introduction tells briefly of the early Native Americans and Europeans-the beginning of another of Lucile's Loves, the Rancheria Grande and the El Camino Real de los Tejas.

I'd like to read you a little of the later Introduction.

LUCILE'S Introduction:

Read here

The Book has 9 Chapters with just wonderful pictures with text about the pictures.

1. First There was the Land p.10-11, 14-15
2. Then Came the People p 18-19 stores
3. The Railroad Births a Town p.27-28
4. Black Gold From Beneath the Earth p. 42-43
5. Rockdale Grows and Grows p.52-53, 56-57
6. George Sessions Perry by Garna Christian p. 64-65
7. School Bells Ring p.72-73, 76-77
8. And the Church Bells Chime p,80-81
9. Ramblin' Round Rockdale p,92-93, 94-95

Lucile is a respected teacher and historian, a really good photographer, but mostly Lucile is a great friend and a friend of Rockdale.

Recently, when I was visiting with Lucile, we spoke about her writing this book. She said it brought back great memories of a time long ago when you knew everyone in your neighborhood and community –like an extended family. Where people really cared for one another. That is Rockdale to her.

I know many of you know and love Lucile, as I do!

I'd like for Annette to say a few words about Lucile too.