

Widow of 1812 War Veteran, Still Hale, Visiting Here

Mrs. S. A. E. Dyer Recalls First Husband's Story of Battle a Century Ago.

The one thing most prominent in Mrs. S. A. E. Dyer's memory of the first of her four husbands, who was a soldier on the American side when Gen. Andrew Jackson defeated General Pakenham and other English soldiers, with the aid of rifle balls and cotton bales at New Orleans in 1815, is this incident:

"The commanding officer told my husband and all the rest of the men to stick behind the cotton bales—that the first one of them to stick his head above might lose his life. And right away one of them stuck his head up. His head was shot nearly off."

Mrs. Dyer repeated the incident Saturday.

It all seemed so uncanny in the telling, one could hardly believe that during the recital a glass of ice water should be handed to a youthful listener by the widow—probably the only surviving widow of a hero of that famous battle. Yet Mrs. Dyer, gray and grizzled, sat in the coolest room of the home of her son, J. C. C. Dyer, 1819 West Twenty-sixth street, North Side, Saturday afternoon and not only linked one end of a hundred years with another, but made ice water and served it with a hand that showed not the slightest tremor.

Mrs. Dyer is 80 years old. She lives in a small farm house in Hill county with her eldest son, J. O. Dyer, as nearest neighbor. The second son is the one living here. There are two others, C. A. and R. F. All of them are sons of her first husband, Maj. James Dyer, who was born in Kentucky Feb. 3, 1796. Mrs. Dyer was a Miss Bilbo of Louisiana—of the famous Bilbo family which is high in the annals of both Mississippi and Louisiana. Her grandfather built the first house in the historic old town of St. Charles, La.

In the latter part of the first half of the Nineteenth century the lovely Miss Bilbo met the dashing Major Dyer and was married. There were six sons born to the union. Two of them have since died. Mrs. Dyer had no other children.

Had Only Two Names.

Although Mrs. Dyer has been married four times and lived to see all four husbands buried—the last, three years ago at the age of 81—she has never borne but two married names—Dyer and Pierce. Her second husband, D. C. Dyer, she married in 1877; her third husband was A. J. Pierce, in 1883, and her fourth husband was Dr. A. J. Dyer. She married him in 1892. All of the Dyers were blood relations.

"Just before the war I had brain fe-



MRS. SARAH ANNE ELIZABETH
DYER.

ver and they said I wouldn't get well," Mrs. Dyer said Saturday. "All of the doctors gave me up except Dr. A. J. Dyer. They said he was simply torturing me by trying to keep me alive. I was apparently unconscious. But as I remember now my brain seemed to be a sea of fire. One day when my teeth clenched so tightly they couldn't open my jaws, Dr. Dyer knocked one of my teeth out. Then he fed me liquid foods to sustain life. I married him afterward."

Mrs. Dyer came to Texas with her first husband in the early sixties. She settled in Hill county and has lived there ever since. Her three last husbands were Hill county men.

Grandfather Texas Pioneer.

William Stephenson, her grandfather, is credited with having been the first Methodist minister to preach in Texas. That was in 1815 in Bowie county.

"I remember I had the first sewing machine in our part of the country," said Mrs. Dyer with a smile. "People used to come for miles around to see it. The machine just had one spool of thread above another and did plain sewing. But it was a wonder. It was the same with a stove we had. No one else had one for a long time in our neighborhood. Nearly everyone cooked on the open fireplace."

Cotton was a thing unknown to farmers when Mrs. Dyer first came to Texas. Farmers contented themselves with growing small grain crops and were prosperous after a fashion.

"I understand they are going back to the same fashion, now that they've tried too much cotton," she smiled.