

# THE CUERO TURKEY TROT

by Miss Bertha Reuss

Who would have thought that an innocent, unsophisticated little Bronze Turkey would cause so much commotion and make so many thousands of people go miles and miles to see what it was all about? And yet it did. Congress had its most eloquent speakers pleading the cause of the little Bronze Turkey, and the Post Office at Washington felt its dignity was at stake. But the cause was strong and the efforts persistent, and finally permission was granted to allow the little Bronze Turkey a place on every envelope to leave the Post Office in the wide-awake little South Texas town that every two years startles the world with the most interesting and unique celebration imaginable, the *Cuero Turkey Trot*. Congress and Post Office Department at last realized that this particular *Turkey Trot* was not a ball room dance, known by many as the "Turkey Trot," but an event in which thousands of turkeys participated, trotting through the main streets of Cuero.

Just before the all important event, late in the Fall, when the fate of America's proudest bird, the King of Thanksgiving, is decided, Cuero holds carnival and joy reigns unconfined.

It is hard to imagine, much less believe, that thousands of big strutting, fussing turkeys can be mobilized and paraded through the main streets of a small city to the tune of the band, with thousands of excited spectators thronging the sidewalks cheering them on in the last Grand March to the Thanksgiving dinners of America. But it is successfully achieved at Cuero.

Back in 1912 some one in this little city, long since crowned hero, conceived the idea of making Cuero the "*Home of the Turkey Trot*." The idea, the outgrowth of the fact that Cuero and DeWitt County is the largest turkey producing and shipping point of dressed turkeys in the world, spread like wildfire and not long afterwards Cuero announced to her neighbors and friends that she would attempt the unusual and seemingly impossible, and so, suggestions were forth-coming from everyone and plans went forward, and a short while later Cuero celebrated her first Turkey Trot.

Great flocks of turkeys were driven in over hill and dale from the countryside, starting two days before the Parade, spending the first night out in trees and along the road, and being in Cuero for their entertainment under the magnificent, spreading live-oak trees on the old cotton mill hill the night before the Trot.

On the morning of the Turkey Trot Parade, rested, and again eager to take up the march, the very atmosphere giving them a delicious sense of anticipation and expectancy, the birds flocked down to lead the reveling of the street parade. A planter scattering corn on the ground attracted the leaders and the rest followed just like sheep. When they turned the "Fire House Corner" on their triumphal parade down Main Street, arrayed in all the glory of their uniforms of fluffy white, dull red, coal black, and shiny gold-bronze, glistening in the sun like so many peacocks, this miniature army marched proudly on amid the cheering cries of the onlookers, gathered from miles in every direction to witness the spectacle-marching on, they knew not where, for as the balance of the parade moved down the thronged streets, the heroes of the day were being marshaled through a gate, opened wide to receive them and on into huge coops. They had no time to wonder, for the packers work with speed and systematic precision to accomplish the biggest job of the year, that of slaughtering, picking and packing the major portion of the Thanksgiving dinners served in many parts of our United States which is evidenced by the fact that hotels in many of our country's largest cities serve turkey known on their menu cards as "*Cuero, Texas, Turkey.*"

It is a most interesting sight to witness this wholesale slaughtering exhibition. The catchers catch the birds, hanging them on the racks by the feet. They are then taken in hand by the butcher who, with his pointed knife, pierces the jugular vein, one after the other. After the blood is drained from the bodies of the turkey they are turned over to the pickers, who lose no time cleaning them of feathers after which they are taken to the cooling rooms, packed in barrels, and shipped out in iced cars to the various points throughout the country for consumption. But too much time and space must not be devoted to the turkeys and the industry which nets many thousands of dollars for this section of the country each year, least, our readers be placed under the impression that the Turkey Trot is participated in by turkeys alone.

Of course, the Turkey Trot Parade is the biggest and most unique drawing card of the *Turkey Trot* but it is by no means the only one. In the picturesque City of Cuero lies the royal realm of Oreuc, and from her midst is selected a Sultan, one of Cuero's most popular citizens, and a Sultana, chosen from the city's prettiest and most attractive young ladies. The identity of the Sultan and Sultana is kept a secret until the occasion of the Coronation, which takes place in the City Park with great pomp and ceremony on the night of November the 10th, Sultan's Day. In the Turkey Trot Parade the Royal Party, composed of the Sultan, Sultana, and Pasharinas, fair maids of the Sultana, lent Cuero by her neighboring cities, with their escorts, the Pashas, are given a prominent place at the head of the parade of floats which follows the turkeys. The Royal Party arrayed in all the splendor of handsome Oriental costumes, is indeed a most imposing spectacle. It has been said by many that the costumes alone worn by the Royal party at the Trot of 1920

were worth coming many miles to see. The floats for the parades are typical of most parades but Cuero each year tries to extend the limits of her celebration and to build it up in attractiveness and size making each celebration that much more worth the while of the many visitors who go to Cuero for the *Turkey Trot*.

Since the time of the first Trot in 1912 Cuero has in many ways improved her celebration. During the period of the war the *Turkey Trot*, like many other public festivals, was discontinued. The Trot of 1920 was the first to be celebrated after the war. It proved to be a wonderful success and the Chamber of Commerce of Cuero unanimously decided to make the Cuero *Turkey Trot* permanent. The great number of turkeys used for the parade causes a great drain on the supply produced by the county so it was decided that if Cuero made her Trot biennial it would be of great magnitude and worth. So it is, that every two years the mere words "*Turkey Trot*" attract people from the most remote portions of this section of the country draw from great distances including many states far distant from the Lone Star.

Along other lines of expansion Cuero is improving her exhibits of livestock, poultry and other agricultural products, this year planning to have better and more varied exhibits than every before. The carnival attractions, heretofore of the smaller type, for the Trot of 1922 will be furnished by the J. Geo. Loos Co., well known as one of the largest carnival companies on the road today.

The 1922 *Turkey Trot* will be opening on the 9th of November by the Hon. Pat M. Neff, Governor of Texas. Hon. Hy. C. Wallace, Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture, has been invited to lead the Turkey Trot Parade on the 11th, Armistice Day.

The entire city co-operates in every possible way to make Cuero's biennial *Turkey Trot* a huge success, something that will not only be amusing and entertaining, but instructive as well.

Cuero has chosen as her *Turkey Trot* flower the winter cosmos, and it will glow a golden glory of welcome to the visitors who come to Cuero on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of November, 1922.