

Once Upon a Journey

By Minnie Humberson Guyton

The rickety covered wagon pulled by two travel worn horses, better known as plugs, joggled it's slow tedious way through the Texas Panhandle, on through the desolate desert lands of New Mexico and on through the high mountain passes in Colorado, over woods that were neither charted nor cleared.

In the wagon were a young man in his twenties, a young woman, and an older man and a baby boy. That would be my father and mother, my grandfather and my brother. Making the trek from Texas to Creede, Colorado during the Colorado gold rush days, because someone said, "Thar's gold in them thar hills". Sure enough there was, and silver too, as history testifies. But good things come to an end. And history also records that the rich silver veins were exhausted and the mines were closed. The once booming town of Creede became a ghost town. This left many people without jobs. My father was one of these. However he did not move out of the state as many people did.

The San Luis valley where the family lived was a rich farming country. The valley extends from Alamosa in the southern part of the state to South Fork, a distance of fifty miles, by ten miles wide. Here were vast acres of wheat, oats, alfalfa, hay and potatoes or spuds as they were called. So we became farmers on the shores.

As far as I know we never owned any land, but during the years, about twenty, we accumulated not a few horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and farm machinery.

In attempting to write this story I must say that I do not have all the facts, but after all the many details of the journey and life there don't alter the main fact that they did make the trip and they did arrive. There were delays, disasters, diseases, disappointments and doubts. I'm sure, but some way they survived them all.

My imagination may be mixed with fact as I name some of the contents of the wagon. There were at least two big puffy feather beds, some patch work quilts, wool comforters, an assortment of cooking vessels including a large iron skillet and a dutch oven, knives, and forks with black wooden handles. Some of these were still being used everyday when I came on the scene.

My father was named John Henderson Humberson¹. His mother died when he was quite young², and he was "raised" is the word, by his father and his oldest sister Mandy (Amanda). Born November 13, 1857 in Mason County Texas, he grew to manhood in the communities of Masonville and Centerville Texas. There were five of them as far as I know. Welch, George, Hence, Mandy and Hettie³ (Mehitahle). Of my father's family I know very little. When we lived in Texas, we were not a long distance from them, but there were few good roads, no bus service, no trains near and the only other transportation was by wagon or buggy and it took a long time to travel any distance.

My Uncle Welch visited us one time and Aunt Mandy came several times as she had a granddaughter living in Waco where we were at the time. Aubrey Nance James.

We became well acquainted with one of Uncle George's sons Ambus by name, who was a year older than I. He was a likeable boy and I rather enjoyed having him come for Papa would let us drive to town and other places that I wanted to go, but couldn't go alone. He and I corresponded for a while; then I lost touch with him after he married.

Footnotes added by Susan Rainwater

¹ Other sources say John Hence Humberson

² Frances Green Winn, died 1863

³ His siblings were Andrew Welton, Amanda, Thomas Jefferson, Lavinia, Wade Franklin, Francis Marion, Martha Jane, Sarah Adeline, William Travis, and George Mayberry.

Uncle Welch had some girls who were known to Arthur. I used to hear him speak of Elaine with whom he corresponded.

A funny incident was connected with Aubrey James and Maud and I. We know her and family quite well and visited often. One day I had a telephone call about the death of Charley Sims who was a cousin of Virgil, our sister-in-law. By phone the name sounded like James, so I thought it was Charley James. I was shocked and so was Maud and Momma. Maud and I after work took the streetcar to their house expecting to find Aubrey grief stricken, and Charley a corpse. Instead, when we arrived, he was up on the housetop repairing the roof. I don't know who was more surprised. I know that Maud and I were floored; we made some calls and learned who the dead person really was. After we recovered from the shock we could laugh, but it wasn't funny at the time.

Father and Mother were married on his birthday November 13, 1879. During the years between 1879 and 1899 there were eight children born into the family. Arthur, the oldest was born in Texas, but I am not sure about the others who were born in Colorado. We moved about from place to place. We lived at South Fork, Wolf Creek, Del Norte, Jasper and Monte Vista, always out in the country or on a farm. Martin Luther was the second son born in March 1883. Albert Merrell came in March 1886 then there was a little girl, Myrtle in 1888 and another in 1890 named Hettie. Both of them died of diphtheria in the winter of 1890. There was a lull of a few months before I came along at Christmas time in 1891. Four years later Maud was born September 1895. Then the last one of eight was John Oliver in 1898.

I have wondered about our names. Maybe Momma wanted to follow her family tradition and name her first born a bible name. He had Paul as part of his name. There seemed to be a trend at the time to name children for some character in history or some person known to the family. They must have been reading about the reformation when Luther was named Martin Luther. Merrell got part of his name from Queen Victoria's husband Albert. Where they got my name I'm sure I don't know! Certainly there was no famous woman in history named Minnie, nor any family or neighbor connection. They said that I was so little that they started calling me Minnow and then it became Minnie. The Leon was for another baby born about the same time in the community. Maud Mabel was named for a close friend and neighbor who was with Momma when she (Maud) was born. John Oliver, the baby of the family was a December Child. He came about the time when Admiral Dewey was very popular, and he almost became a Dewey, but none of the boys had been named for Papa so they decided to name him John for Papa and Oliver for the character in literature – Oliver Twist.

Momma was Sarah Grace Presnall, Sallie she was called. She was the second daughter of a large family. Her parents were English and Scotch decent. She was born in 1859 near Mobile Alabama, where the family lived until at the age of 13 they migrated to Texas and made a home at Gholson near Waco. There were five children, all with bible names. Elizabeth, the oldest, Elijah, James, Sally and Thomas. Their Mother died when Sally was small and their father remarried. There were other children born to them. Anna, Joseph and Caleb. Half brothers and sister. My grandfather was soldier in the confederate army during the Civil War. He fought under the command of General R. E. Lee.⁴ At the close of the war he returned to his home and family but died soon after from wounds received in service and exposure. He left a widow and with eight children. They had been slave owners⁵, and now the slaves were free and no longer profitable. Confederate money was of no value. It was then that they decided to move to Texas, to Gholson where they made a new home. Elizabeth married and remained in Alabama⁶.

⁴ *Only in the sense that all Confederate soldiers were under the ultimate command of Lee. Records show that Caleb Calvin Presnall served in Company B, Lewis Battalion, Alabama Cavalry as a corporal. He was captured at Blakely, Alabama on April 9, 1865, imprisoned at Ship Island, Mississippi, and was paroled at Meridian, Mississippi on May 9, 1865.*

⁵ *The 1860 census shows them owning seven slaves*

⁶ *Married M. T. McVay on 8 Apr 1874 in Clark Co., AL*

A short time after coming to Gholson, Grandma Presnall met a well-to-do farmer named Will Umberson, a cousin of our father Hence. He was a widower with four children. Billy Frank, Smith and Molly, about the ages of Sally and Thomas. These two families then became one⁷ and soon another daughter was born named Ollie. This branch of the Humberson clan dropped the H in typical English Style. This part of the family history is placed between 1859 and 1879.

If the family history from this point becomes a bit complicated – This is the way it happened. Sally, our mother, married a cousin by marriage. Her stepbrothers and sisters were also her cousins by marriage. But we children were taught to think of them as Uncles and Aunts and we always said “Uncle Billy” and “Aunt Molly” etc.

Since we lived near Momma’s family we know some of them very well. I practically lived at Uncle Tom’s home between the ages of 12 and 16. His daughter Edna and I were inseparable. There were five girls in their family. Ina, Verna, Ruby, Edna, and Nellie. Ina died at 19 from appendicitis complications. Nellie died at 23, also from an operation. Ruby was widowed young and left with 6 children, 5 boys and a girl. She took her children and herself to Buckner’s Orphan Home where she served as a House Mother until the children were old enough to leave the home and care for themselves. She later remarried. Edna married Maxie Lane, was divorced and remarried to Irving Webb. Verna married Wallace Smith. They have 4 children. 3 girls and a boy. Wallace died in 1958. When we lived in Waco; during my married years Verna and Wallace met with us often to play 42 with mutual friends. We were members of the same church and Verna was in the class that I taught. She continues to live in the old home.

When our family moved to Texas, the two older boys stayed in Colorado. They had jobs there and were on their own by that time.

Luther was the first one to marry. He married Margaret Breen of South Fork. Their first child was a little boy named Kenneth. When he was about five, he was drowned in the creek, which ran through their yard between the house and barn. They never knew how it happened. It was early in the morning. He was still asleep and his mother went to the barn to feed the chickens. They suppose that he awoke and followed her, and fell in when he crossed the creek. They found him hours later caught in some debris down the swollen stream. It was a terrible shock to all the family. A year or two later they had a daughter named Nellie Mae, Nellie married Wilber Wyley and lives at Wagon Wheel Gap, Colorado.

Luther met with a tragic accident, which took his life. Margaret and Nellie were in Monte Vista and he decided to go rabbit hunting. A Spanish man was going with him and when he went to the house to get his gun it discharged and killed him instantly.

Arthur never married, after years in Colorado he came to Texas to live on a place near Huntsville, that Johnny Merrill had purchased for a home. He gave up playing the violin except for his own enjoyment and spent his time making violins. He was very good at it and made some really good ones. It is a coincident that he too met with a tragic death. He had been ill and spent some time in the hospital and had been home for a few days and wasn’t very strong. One morning early he looked out and saw an armadillo in the yard. He got his gun and started out to shoot the animal and must have stumbled and fell, anyway the gun discharged and wounded him. Johnny heard the shot and went to investigate. He got Arthur to the hospital as quickly as he could, but it was too late.

Merrel married Virgie Talbert, a girl he met in China Spring, Texas. Her father was a rancher and owned a lot of land in that area. At his death the land was divided among his children and Virgie inherited a farm. At that time Merrell had bought an oil driller and went to the oil field at Brownwood, Texas, where he did well, drilling oil wells. Later he bought the water system in the little town, which he operated until his death of a heart attack in 1947. No children.

⁷ *Mary Ann Singleton McDonald Presnall married William Franklin Umberson on 18 June 1867 in McLennan Co., TX*

Maud married Ernest Thomson of Durango, Texas. They had four children, Alice, Joya, James and Edward. His father wanted him to study medicine and sent to Baylor for the fore-med work and then on to Chicago to medical school. But his heart wasn't in it and he gave it up when his father died. He followed the building trade for a number of years, but died of a severe illness in 1952. Alice married Hub Bargainer and lives in Freeport, Texas. James and Edward are doing well in Insurance business. Joyce works for an insurance company in Dallas. Maud lives in the home place in Durango, Texas.

James (Uncle Jim) Presnall was a cripple and walked with a cane, with difficulty. He was accidentally shot in the legs while out hunting. He never married and made his home most of the time with Uncle Tom. He lived with us some and spent a year or two in Colorado with Arthur. He had a small grocery store in China Springs as long as he was able to work. I don't know the time or facts of his death.

Uncle Elijah had three boys and a girl. Named Owen, Emmett, Walter and Clara. We were never very close to them so I know little of them. I remember that Emmett was a big tease and delighted in tormenting me.

Uncle Caleb was a surgeon and operated a small hospital in Trinidad, Colorado. He served in the army during World War I. He was gassed and his health broke. He was married but there were no children. He and his wife were killed in an automobile accident.⁸ He left quite a large estate, but no will, so the estate was divided among his brothers and sisters.

Uncle Joseph I never knew. I think I saw him once. He had a family of several children and died at the age of 92. Lived at Wills Point, Texas.

Aunt Annie married Charley Wood⁹, a man much her senior and out lived him. Their children were Benny, Ollie, Hank, Frank and Anna. I spent a lot of time with them and liked the little boys. Benny was my age and very shy of girls.

Aunt Molly Umberson was Mrs. W.J. Garrett. There were three boys and a girl. Earl, Leo, Clyde and Louise. Molly was the best housekeeper I ever knew. I don't remember her ever going anywhere, but she always welcomed the family home. Her dining table was always set and covered over with a white tablecloth. And there were always cookies in her jar or apples in a big bowl. Earl was a businessman. Leo taught business in Baylor University. Clyde was a singer and known in music circles. When he retired from opera he became a teacher in college at Arlington, Texas. They have a son Clyde Jay.

Uncle Billy Umberson lived in the family farm at Gholson, Texas. He was a prosperous farmer and pillar of the Baptist Church there. He had one son Carroll, we never visited his home, but he was a favorite with Momma and we all loved Uncle Billy. During the years that I practiced Chiropractor in Waco, he was a patient on several occasions. Carroll still farms on the home place.

Frank and Smith Umberson, I know by name only.

Aunt Ollie Umberson was married twice. She was a McElhaney. There were several children, I met two of them Johnny and Irvett¹⁰. They lived in west Texas at Lubbock, were in the dairy business and the McElhaney butter and other products were well known in all grocery stores. I knew her best after she married Mr. Bousmare and lived in Farmington, New Mexico. She was an artist and did beautiful paintings. She was well to do and was a very fussy dresser. Visited often in our home. Where I was

⁸ *Caleb Wesley Presnall was charged by a grand jury with killing his wife, May James, in 1924. Sent to a mental institution for holding until trial, he hanged himself.*

⁹ *Benjamin Carter Wood*

¹⁰ *The McElhaney children were William Umberson, Johnnye Mae, Joe Singleton, George Truett, Jesse Roland, Jack, Ollie Louise, and Samuel Frank. Irvett is probably George Truett.*

working at Glorieta, she came two summers and stayed a week with me. She died at the age of 86. Her daughter Johnye Gholson is in the wholesale candy business in Albuquerque.

Johnny¹¹ married Alene Easterlin, a Brownwood girl. They had two girls, Anna and Virginia. After living for several years in Brawley, California they came back to Texas and he worked with Merrell for a while, then later went to work as a guard in the State Prison in Huntsville. Where he worked until his retirement in 1968. He built a nice home on his place in the country near Huntsville. Alene died of cancer. The two girls remained at home until they finished their education in the college in Huntsville. Both are married, Virginia is a missionary to Indonesia. She married Dr. Frank Owen. They had five children, 2 girls and 3 boys. Anna married Jack O'Bryan but was divorced soon after their son was born. She remarried later and has a second child.

I have wished many times that I had questioned Pap and Momma about the trip from Texas to Colorado. I don't remember hearing them say much about it. I'm sure it must have been a very rough journey and maybe they didn't want to talk about it. One incident I recall Momma said that they were camped at Taos in New Mexico. They may have stayed there a day or two for they had set up their tent. Papa was away and she was alone. She said she heard a little sound and looked to see an Indian man standing at the door watching her. She was terrified fearing that he was going to try to take the baby or harm her in some way. She picked up the baby and prepared to run or to fight whichever she had to do. But the Indian went away without saying a word. It must have been during the time when the Apaches were on the warpath in that part of the country and she may have had cause to fear. She mentioned too about the scarcity of wood on the way through the desert country. In some places, there was nothing but mesquite roots and it was hard work digging them out. She said at times all she had for fuel was cow chips. Imagine!! She was a real pioneer.

There was no shortage of wood where they got to Colorado for there they were in the forests thick with trees small and great. There were no restrictions on cutting the trees. Most of the houses we lived in were built of logs. It was no problem at all to cut down enough big pine trees, take them to the sawmill and have them cut to size and sawed into boards for the floor and roof. There was always a sawmill close by. The creaks between the logs were sealed or chinked with mud. Sometimes the mud would dry out and fall out leaving a hole to let in the cold air. These houses were seldom finished inside. There would be an opening on top or at the side for the stovepipe for there was no central heating, no electricity or gas, but only an airtight heater or a wood-burning heater of some kind. Then there was always the kitchen range. Our houses were never very large and often the kitchen was the room where the family lived most of the time. There was never a living room or parlor as they were called then. Our parlor was usually a bedroom. We were fortunate to have a rug on the floor in this room, a wonderful, colorful woven rag rug. Momma would save all the worn out clothing to cut into strings for a new rug. These had to be sewn together and wound into balls of string she would take them to a place where they would be woven into a rag carpet. Ours were usually woven with white twine because the colored twine was more expensive and we couldn't afford the extra money.

A new rug on the floor made a wonderful place to play and at night when the fire was burning at top speed the whole room would be warm and we could play. The boys played with marbles and I played with clothespin dolls. Momma had a book of wool samples that were just about right for dresses for clothespins. These clothespins were the straight kind, not the clamp pins we have now. Maud and I would spend hours dressing and undressing the pins. The boys would sometimes squabble over the marbles and have to put them up, but we played until we fell asleep. Maud did anyway. The kitchen table was another good place to play. We were allowed to play with the matches. And we knew better than to light one. We could build houses and anything our imagination led us to do. It was great fun. Matches were also used when the boys played poker, I never could see any sense to that game, but they got a lot of fun out of it and made a lot of noise laughing. Papa played cocina with Merrell and me and we made up some games of our own sometimes. The boys played a game of checkers that they called "Beans and coffee". This was because they didn't have any checkers, so they made their own board from a piece of cardboard and used pinto beans and coffee (whole beans). One player

¹¹ *John Oliver Humberson*

had coffee beans, the other the pintos. It worked just the same way as if had been store made checkers.

Sometimes when it was snowing outside and the snow was soft and juicy Papa would bring in a pan of it and pour thick cream and sugar over it, flavor it with vanilla and we would have ice cream. I still like that kind of ice cream. I guess Papa was a pretty good carpenter. He made most of the furniture we had. Beds, tables, chairs, cupboard, washstand. He even made sleds for the boys and skis too. That was the favorite out door play during the long winter days. I was always a "scardycat" and would not ride down the hillside on a sled, so Maud and I didn't play outside in the snow.

We always had a lot of music at our house. There were all kinds of instruments. Fiddles, guitars, mandolin, banjo, horns, harmonicas. Papa played the fiddle. He knew three tunes and they were the fiddle kind. Arthur played the violin. I don't know how he learned to play so well, but he could play most anything he heard played. He played popular music and was much in demand for dances. He played for most of the dances given in our community. He played classics too and many times I have gone to sleep while listening to him play. I didn't know what he was playing then but now I recognize many that he played. Luther also played, but his playing was more on the fiddling type since he helped Arthur play at the dances. All of them played the guitar. Arthur had a coronet, which he ordered from Sears, Roebuck and learned to play very well. Merrell played the harmonica, which is about as far as his musical education took him.

When I was fourteen Papa bought an organ. It was a beautiful instrument. It had a golden oak case with a high mirror top and a lot of small shelves and ornaments and carvings. There was an instruction book, which I studied, but I never made much progress. There many stops, pedals, and combinations, which I never learned to use. The tremolo stop fascinated me especially and I wanted to use it all the time. Arthur taught me several chord combinations and had me to accompany him on the violin. He said I did real well and I was especially happy when I learned to change from one chord to another as his playing indicated. He taught Merrell and me to play the Fandangos on the guitar. Merrell's fingers were longer and stronger than he and mine could play much better, but we both learned how to tune the guitar for these numbers and practiced a lot. No one ever seemed to mind and we weren't told to "please stop". Maud learned to play the guitar too. I don't know who taught her, but she used to play and sing her favorite songs. She also played the violin and even played in her church.

Church going was one thing we missed. Living in the country as we did, there were no churches for us to go to. In fact there were few churches, period. I remember going to Sunday school twice before I was twelve years old. Once was when a neighbor family decided to have a service and Sunday school in their home. It was in the spring and I had a new dress and shoes. They gave me a card with a memory verse on it. The other time we went to the Methodist church in Monte Vista. They sent Maud to the little children's class but didn't tell me where to go, so I went with her to a beginner's class. I don't remember anything about it except the tiny chairs we sat in. They looked like doll chairs to me. We did have a bible and Papa and Momma both read it sometimes, but not aloud or to us kids. But there was a peddler who came our way and sold Papa some Bible Story books. By this time I could read and I read those stories over and over. The story of the ark showed pictures of the animals going into the ark, and of the people in the water crying for help. There was the story of Daniel in the lion's den and the three men in the fiery furnace. Those were the ones I think we liked the best. We learned Christian songs from hearing Momma sing. She sang while she baked bread and washed dishes. "What a friend" "Amazing Grace", "Beulah Land", "On Jordan's Stormy Bank" were some that she sang a lot. Papa whistled while he worked and his favorite was "Old time Religion" They were brought up to keep the Sabbath, so there was no working on Sunday but necessary work like feeding and milking, cooking etc. The boys chopped wood on Saturday, cleaned the barn, and oiled the machinery to be ready for work on Monday, Momma baked and scrubbed and a lot of other things. But she always had to cook and wash dishes Sunday as well as the other days. The workhorses had to rest too, and if anyone needed a horse to ride, he could go out in the pasture and catch himself one to ride or drive, but not a workhorse.

There were plenty of unbroken horses out in the pasture and often the big boys would bring one in and cause a commotion by trying to ride him. Monday was washday and come rain or come shine nothing interfered with that. The clothes might have to be hung by the stove to dry, but they got washed anyway. Washing was an all day job. It was done by hand and by washboard. It was quite a process. First the clothes had to be soaked. Then the white things were scrubbed with lye soap. The kind that was home made and then boiled. We had a big black wash pot that we kept in the yard and built a fire under. There were no detergents, so we cut up a bar of soap in the water. Sometimes it didn't melt and stuck to the clothes, making a mess when they were rinsed. They had to be put through rinse water and then a bluing water and some of them had to be starched in the big pan of starch that had been made earlier. You can see why it took all day. Momma prided herself on having the whitest wash of anyone in the neighborhood. She wouldn't put out clothes any other way. All dresses, shirts, socks and anything that had to be turned inside out. Sometimes I had to help and I didn't have any patience with that procedure, but Momma did. She was a meticulous housekeeper. No dirt in any form ever got by her. The kitchen floor was plain pine boards and she kept them white by scrubbing with a lye soap and elbow grease. She was always scrubbing cupboards and putting clean paper in the shelves. Her windows were always clear enough to see through. Some of the neighbor children wore dirty clothes but none of hers ever did. Oh, we got plenty dirty, but we didn't stay that way long. She cleaned a lot of muddy shoes, where she should have made us do it. And she wiped a lot of dirty faces and noses, because it seemed that some of us always had a cold and runny nose. No wonder though, we wore so many heavy clothes our skin couldn't breathe. There was long underwear, long ribbed black stockings, flannel petticoats, wool socks for the boys and sweaters and heavy coats, boots, overshoes, head wraps called fascinators. The fascinators that Momma and we girls wore were knit or crochet of wool yarn in colors and had tiny beads mixed in, which is why they were called fascinators I guess. All of these warm clothes were necessary for it got very cold in winter and the winter months lasted from September to May.

When we lived in the mountains the sun would disappear about four o'clock and it would be nine in the morning before it would show up over the top of the mountains. This made long nights and short days. The temperature would be zero or below at night. The house would be icy in the morning and on those real cold days Momma would make the little kids, Maud and me stay in bed until she got breakfast over for the men and boys. While they were out feeding stock or other outside chores we would get dressed and eat our breakfast. Of course we didn't sleep all that time. It was a good time for me to tell fairy stories. I had a book of Grimms fairy tales and I read those so much that I know them by memory and I would entertain Maud by telling them over to her. I must have overdone the story reading for one day Momma took my book and threw it in the stove and burned it. I cried and cried. I don't think I ever got over it until I was grown up and realized that she must have been sick or she would never have done such a thing. My next set of storybooks were starch books. With every box of starch that we bought we got a storybook free. They were fascinating and I loved them as much as I did the fairy tales. My school readers were wonderful books too but nothing to compare to the fairy tales and starch books. As I grew a little older a different type of reading presented itself with the Elsie Books. Oh how I cried over and loved Elsie Dinsmore and "Lena Rivers" and "Tempest and Sunshine". Mrs. Montgomery and Mrs. Davenport will never know how much they meant to young readers. School may have begun for me when I was six or maybe seven. I don't remember the first or second grades. It was first or second readers but I remember the third reader quite well.

We lived in Jasper, a mining town way up in the high mountains. It was perhaps a mile down the road to a school, but it seemed like four miles to me. Before the snow fell I walked and was alone most of the time. The boys went early. There was a bend in the road where it ran beside the river. There was a high cliff on one side and the river on the other. It was in shade and was dark especially on cloudy days. I dreaded that spot and was scared stiff. Too scared to run for fear something would run after me, but the minute I got by the place I tore out for home, which was just around the bend. We had an old spotted bloodhound named Spot. She had been a police dog but was old and retired. I used to coax her to walk with me and with my hand in her mouth, I wasn't afraid of bears, lions or anything. She would have to stay all day at school and Momma didn't like her to be away from home that long. I guess she was afraid too. There were lots of stray men coming through the country looking for work or a place to stay. We called them "tramps" and Momma was afraid of them and we learned fear from

her. During the snowy weather Merrell had to take me with him. He waded through the snow and pulled me on his sled. That may sound like fun, but it wasn't. I nearly froze and would be chilled to the bone by the time I got there. One day I was sitting by the stove throwing out and became overheated and fainted. Fortunately, I didn't fall on the stove. There were three small children there, so we didn't get much attention. The teacher spent most of her time with the big boys and girls. My three brothers were there. I learned more from listening to them recite lessons than I did from my own books. Arthur was studying literature and I learned about poets. Longfellow, Whittier, Lord Byron, Southey, etc. I followed Evangeline through her tragic experiences. And when he came to "Snowbound", I could look outside and appreciate what the poet was talking about. My fourth grade year was everything that it should have been. We had moved down to the valley and I went to the city school in Monte Vista. The teacher must have been very special for I advanced in "wisdom and knowledge". She was patient and thorough. Spelling was a fun game. Geography came alive. Reading was an adventure. She kept a storybook going all the year. She read "Beautiful Joe", "Black Beauty", and "The Little Rebel". And we had wonderful plays where we could use our imagination, of which I had plenty due to my background of fairy tales. She never did get very far with me in Arithmetic. I knew the tables, which was about all I really understood. By the time I got to the fifth grade, we had moved to Texas and I entered upon an entirely new phase of education.

When the school year was over and the summer vacation began, it was a time of complete happiness for Maud and me. The boys had fun too, but there was always so much work that they had to do. There was the spring planting and ploughing, harrowing, irrigating. The farmers didn't have any motorized equipment as farmers now have. Ploughing was done with a team and a man walking behind the plough. It was all hard, backbreaking work. When it was potato planting time, I would help cut the seed potatoes. That was usually Merrell's job and he would coax, entertain and threaten me, to keep me working with him. Papa didn't make me stay with it as Merrell had to, but he was glad when I did. I don't know how many bushels of potatoes we cut but it was a lot. It took a lot to plant the acres and acres that were in our field. That was one of our principal crops. Next to potatoes was wheat. This crop was also sown by hand rather than machinery. But the harvesting was done with machinery. We had one of those wonderful reapers. "Binders" we called them. A team of horses pulled it and usually some little girls brought up the rear as it went across the field. If Papa was driving, he would let one of us ride on the seat with him. And when he unhitched the horses to take them to the barn we could ride on the backs of those same horses. They were too tired to object. It was great fun.

Those bundles of grain had to be gathered and stacked in shacks and that was work the boys dreaded. Then the great day came that some grain was to be threshed. We didn't own a thresher, but there was one available for the farmers. We knew in advance when it would come to our place and we children anticipated it with much excitement, but I'm sure Momma didn't for it meant much extra work for her. She had to feed all the hired hands as well as her family. For days she cooked bread, cakes, pies and on the days they were there she cooked pots of meat, beans, and potatoes, and then washed stacks of dishes.

As far as I recall, there was never any lack of food on our table. There were no grocery stores around the corner, so it was a real event when Papa went to buy groceries, which he always did when he sold the wheat and potatoes. Then he bought supplies in large quantities to last for months. There would be a 50-pound bag of sugar, several pounds of coffee – (only Momma and Arthur used coffee), a wooden bucket of jelly, mostly apple and it wasn't very good. But at times he would bring a 5 gal. can of honey and maybe a small container of honey in the comb. A box of prunes, I mean a lug. And a lug of dried apples and dried peaches; a whole cheese; a barrel of flour and a barrel of apples; dried beans of two or three kinds; canned tomatoes and corn and many items and small staples.

We always had a garden and in the spring and summer months we had all kinds of fresh vegetables. Momma evidently didn't know how to can them for she never did, except to make green tomato pickles. The place was always running over with chickens and we had eggs to spare, and chickens to eat. Besides we always had pigs and calves, which furnished meat for the winter. We had no way to keep meat for very long since there was no refrigeration. Cottontail rabbits were plentiful as were wild

turkeys and any time we wanted venison all we had to do was go deer hunting. In wintertime, there were no hunting laws until much later. Fishing was also good and we often had trout.

Momma baked light bread at least once a week. She made buttermilk biscuits every day for breakfast. There were no cake mixes or any kind of prepared foods. Sometimes we might have a chocolate cake or a coconut, provided those items were on the grocery list. Otherwise our cakes were iced with white of eggs beaten very stiff and spread on the layers. Then set in the oven to brown delicately. Other times we used whipped cream for icing. One of mine and Maud's favorite snacks was a big slice of home made bread spread with butter, sugar and cinnamon; or dried apple sauce with cinnamon.

There was an abundance of milk and butter, for we milked half a dozen cows.

There was one particular area in the valley where raspberries grew wild. I never did help to pick them but Momma made the most delicious raspberry jam, which didn't last very long in our family.

Up in the Colorado Mountains, the chokecherries grew wild and also crab apples, gooseberries, and wild strawberries. Gooseberry pies were often on our table.

When we lived in the country in Texas, there were hedges of wild plums, "hog plums" as they were called. They were small, but sweet and juicy and made very good jelly and preserves. The wild bees made honey in old tree stumps and often Papa would bring in buckets of dark colored honey in the comb.

I've often wondered why my mother never made lemon pies. She very often made vinegar pies, which were made just like a lemon pie except that she used vinegar instead of lemon. And she never did put meringue on them. My Dad used to plant lemon and apple seeds in a can and we always had a small lemon or apple tree growing in the house. There were also geraniums and baby finger plants to be watered and covered up on icy nights.

We seldom had any close neighbors, so we kids had to play together and entertain ourselves. The big boys hiked or went horseback to see boys on neighboring farms and those boys came to our house sometimes. But Maud and I had to stay at home and play. In summer it was fine, we could play mud pies and build playhouses. Momma could make very good rag dolls from a worn out shirt or a towel. If she felt creative she would sew buttons on for eyes. I don't know about Maud, but I really loved those old rag dolls. We used to sit on the bank of the irrigation ditch for hours and watch the dragonflies darting about, or float leaves or sticks. One day we discovered the flume over the big ditch and after that we climbed in and played boat until we were discovered and told never to do that again. We always had a swing – sometimes two, for the little girls and the big boys couldn't use the same swing. A time or two Merrell would get me to pump with him, but he wanted to swing to high and I was afraid. He didn't like me much, but he had to be nice to me because I nearly always knew where he was doing something bad that he shouldn't be doing – like smoking behind the barn or the hay stack, and he was afraid I would tell on him. I did too whenever he teased me or made fun of me. Other wise I stood by him because I knew that Papa would be severe with him and I didn't want to see him punished.

In the year 1903 Momma became very sick and the doctor in Monte Vista said she would have to be taken to a lower elevation and warmer climate or she could not live. Papa then made arrangements for the family to come to Texas. As soon as she was able to travel we came by train from Walsenburg to Waco. Uncle Tom met us and took us to his home where we stayed for several weeks until he could find a house for us to live in. Papa had to stay in Colorado to wind up his affairs there so it was Mama, Merrell, Maud, Oliver and I who made the trip. I was 12 years old that winter.

Merrell got a job on a ranch and helped to pay expenses. Papa and the older boys also sent money for us to live on and to pay the doctor. Momma improved in health and by spring she was able to care for herself and us.

My father died in 1910. Momma lived with we three younger children and kept house. I was 18, Maud 14 and Johnny 11 – Maud and I stopped school and went to work to help support the family. The boys had to help us, but we managed most of it ourselves. If the price of milk (5 cents a pint) and bread (6 loaves for 25 cents) had been more, I don't know how we would have done it. Our wages covered about 1.50 a day.

Momma died in the summer of 1925. The family burial plot is at China Springs, Texas. Father, Mother, Arthur, and Merell are buried there. After our father's death, Momma and we three younger children continued to live in the rented house in Waco. We paid twelve dollars a month rent. It was a very small house with no heat, lights, or hot water. After Maud and Johnny began working, we moved into a larger place where we had lights. The streets were not paved and when it rained, which it did for weeks on end, there was much mud and we had difficulty getting to work. We managed a telephone for safety and convenience; and we had a wood stove for heating, an oil stove for cooking.

The family disintegrated when Maud and I married the same year. 1917. Momma and Johnny went to Colorado to live with Arthur, but came to Brownwood to go to college. Momma went to Chicago to stay with Maud and then lived for a while with me in Waco until we moved to San Antonio to go to college. I'm sure it was a very unhappy life for her never having a home, but she made the best of it and never complained.

Like the woman whose story is in the Bible – “She hath done what she could”

And that's the way it is.....