

[Anne Brazel]

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Words-[1338?] PIONEER STORY

By-Mrs. [??].

My father J.C. Wiggins, mother and four children, two girls and two boys, and Ned Taylor, wife and two children, left Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in September 1886, for Grapevine, Texas, twelve miles north of Dallas. They chartered a railroad emigrant train consisting of a coach and several box cars. The two families lived in the coach which had a cook stove and places for us to sleep. They furnished the wood for the cook stove. Our farming implements, two span of mules, game chickens and some blood hound pups were in the box cars, Ned Taylor was a school teacher in Tennessee and was going to Grapevine to locate as his brother Sam Taylor lived there and owned a big stock farm. When we arrived in Dallas it was [?]. We had to cross the Trinity swamp and it was four miles across it. We were in wagons drawn by four large mules and it was all they could do to pull us thro'ugh the swamp. We went to Sam Taylor's farm where we saw our first cotton and self binding reaper cutting wheat and our first jack rabbits, called mule eared rabbits, in tho'se days. We lived in Grapevine for two years where father ran a stationary engine for a cotton gin. We children attended a subscription school while in Grapevine. We left there in covered wagons for Weatherford, Texas, where Father farmed for two years. He sold this farm and we went to Duck Creek, sixty miles north of Greenville, Texas. While here Father worked as a carpenter, building bridges for the Railroad Construction Company. [???

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Jay Gould was building a new railroad from Greenville to Dallas. It crossed the Santa Fe railroad at Duck Creek. The Santa Fe ran north and south and the Jay Gould road ran east and west. We lived here six months and while father was working in the construction camp they had an epidemic of Grippe and two of the workmen died. Father was one of the men elected to sit up with the bodies of these men who were laid out in tent.

The camp was composed of tents for the laborers and they were very close together. While sitting up with tho'se bodies Father heard some one in the next tent speak of Charlie Jefcoats, who was my mother's brother, whom she had not heard from in twenty years. Father went in to the tent and asked who in there knew Charlie Jefcoats. A man by the name of Red Keith said that he knew him and that he was living in [Dening?], New Mexico. Father came home the next day and told mother what he had heard, she wrote him a letter but did not hear from him.

In the meantime we moved to Bowie, Texas, where Father farmed and we children went to a subscription school. We left Duck Creek in a covered wagon drawn by two of the mules that we had left Tennessee with. We had sold everything except the mules and wagon. We camped out in the open at night. Father and the two boys did the cooking over the camp fire as Mother was sick and Father was afraid we girls would catch our dresses on fire as we were rather young. We used wood for fuel as we were traveling thro'ugh a densely wooded country. Mother had us lay a table cloth on the ground and lay stones on the corners to keep it from blowing away. We lived in Bowie two years. While 3 [?] in Bowie someone told my Father that Mother's brother, Charlie Jefcoats was living on a farm sixty miles north of Bowie. We got in touch with him and he was getting ready to go back to New Mexico as he liked that country very much. He sold out and went to Little Creek, New Mexico, taking a few head of cattle and some horses with him. He wrote back and told Mother about the beautiful and healthy country and wanted us to come on out as he had a place picked out for us. Father began at once to try to sell his farm but it took

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sometime to dispose of it. In the meantime we had heard stories of the Indians still being on the warpath in New Mexico, and Mother was afraid to make the trip.

We started for New Mexico April 10, 1891, leaving Bowie, Texas, in a covered wagon drawn by two horses. Father had hired a man to take us to New Mexico but when we got to Plainview, Texas, he decided that he did not want to go on so he turned back and left us there. Father was determined to go on so he borrowed a saddle horse from the Long [S?] outfit, which was a big cattle company owned by the Slaughter Brothers. He rode his horse to the next side camp and there got another horse and rode on to the next camp. He did this until he reached Roswell, New Mexico. These side camps were about thirty or forty miles apart, each having a sod shack, windmill and watering tanks, with one cowboy in charge to look after the windmills and the immense herds of cattle that would water there.

Father hired an old freighter in Roswell to come to Plainview after us. We were living in a sod house that Father had 4 built for us before he left Plainview. To build this house he had dug down in the ground about six feet, walling this up with boards to the level of the ground, then building up with sod blocks (about the size of a large adobe) out from the ground where there was grass growing. We had two windows in the shack and it had a sod roof. We lived in this house about two weeks and then Father came from Roswell with the freighter for us. We traveled in a covered wagon and camped out. We had to use cow chips for fuel on this last lap of our journey. The old freighter showed how to eat in camp like they did in the west, which was to help your plates from the dutch oven and pots. Our first stop after leaving Plainview was the Long [?] cattle ranch, where we saw our first white faced Hereford cattle. The cowboys were burning cow chips for fuel and my brother and I were so embarrassed when we saw them put them in the stove. The next stop was at a X I T side camp and the cowboy there entertained us by singing cowboy songs which we children tho'ught were the grandest songs that we had ever heard. On our third day out we were approaching Fort Sumner, and saw our first view of the Capitan Mountains by field glasses. We camped out in the open in the X I T pasture. The antelopes were so numerous in this pasture that the young ones came up to our camp. The men folks killed

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one and cooked some in a dutch oven for our supper that night. The rest of the fresh meat that we had on this trip was given us by the cowboys at the side camps. We crossed the Pecos River just above Roswell, 5 which was not a very big town at that time. We turned north and traveled up the Hondo River and camped that night just below Picacho. The only excitement that night was the howling of the coyotes and wolves. We came on up the Hondo Valley thro'ugh Lincoln and on to Little Creek, where we found a new two roomed log cabin in a beautiful pine grove awaiting us. Our hearts were filled with delight at our new home. This was in May 1891. Two days after our arrival a beautiful snow fell on the pine trees.

We had left Tennessee on account of my mother's health and that is the reason we lingered along as we did. Mother was very much afraid of the Indians in New Mexico. Geronimo was still on the war path.

Narrator: Mrs. Anna Brazel, Carrizono, N.M. Aged 64 years.