

## **THE STORY OF AUNT SUSAN**

**By Susan Pierce Dacus**

**With Grateful acknowledgements to Aunt  
Susan Bowden Wilbanks and to each of Her children  
for Their untiring co-operation  
and helping making this essay possible, and to  
Coline Tower Martin for the western  
Sketches drawn especially for the "Story  
Of Aunt Susan"--The Author 1961**

**The Story of Aunt Susan**  
**A Biography of Susan Bowden wife of Floyd Wilbanks**  
**Written Susan Pierce Dacus Allen 1962**

See on my website at:  
<http://members.xoom.com/ldpierce/auntsusan.html>

The most interesting part of finding this document is to discover  
That Susan Bowden's mother (Mary Jane Lott)  
was a sister to the first wife of my great-great grandfather  
LD Pierce Sr. (Peg Leg)

See the LOTT Pages on my web site for more info.  
<http://members.xoom.com/ldpierce/lott.html>  
email for LD Pierce [eztone@hotmail.com](mailto:eztone@hotmail.com)

Susanna Lott Pierce died young, and as of yet I have not  
discovered the cause.

The document mentions the Pierce family a lot as they were cousins  
By marriage (2 ways) and were neighbors. It covers  
a lot of the early History Of Hansford County and time  
during which the Pierces and Wilbanks  
Moved from Johnson County TX to  
Hansford County TX in 1903-1906.  
Susan Bowden Married Floyd Wilbanks, and  
Rhoda Pierce (LD Pierce's sister)  
Married Allen Mansel Wilbanks.  
Both Floyd and Allen Mansel were sons of  
Hiram Wilbanks and Permelia Hale

**Editors Note: This is the first Publication of This Book outside of  
the small limited run of 4 or 5 copies that were manually produced  
in 1961 or 1962 by my Aunt Susie Dacus. Reprinted  
here with Permission of Susan Pierce Dacus family.**

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## Prairie Pictures

I stood at the close of a winter's day  
And watched the sun in majesty lower away  
Saw clouds fleecy and white  
Turn from rose to pink  
Then Mauve, and purple night.

I saw the moon in it's glory of silver light  
Cast soft basins across prairie and lake  
And listened to a mockingbird  
Sing a love song to it's mate.

I gathered prairie flowers in spring  
Of many kinds and hues  
From off the grassy prairie bed  
Where I dwelt with you.

Pictures that no artist's hand can paint  
Linger with me still,  
Of white faced cattle beside a lake  
And a wild stallion on a hill.

Written for and dedicated to Aunt Susan Bowden Wilbanks,  
who knew and loved the prairie.

By Susie Dacus February 16, 1958

## Preface

Aunt Susan Bowden Wilbanks is the mother of Hiram, Virgil, Lawrence, and Henry Wilbanks, well known residents of Hansford and Moore Counties; Mrs. Spray Bradford of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Mrs. Faye Klutts of Amarillo. It can be said that Aunt Susan has lived well, for she has laughed often and loved much. According to the Divine law of retribution she has reaped well because she has looked for the best in others and has given her best, her harvest is the abundant love and respect of all who know her.

My parents knew her before her marriage, long ago, and loved her. Since an early age I too, have known and loved her. I remember that her home was invitingly clean; her food good and that she was kind and pretty too, and that I liked going to home to visit. Extensive travel has been limited in Aunt Susan's life as the major portion of her time was occupied with the rearing of family. Except for two or three distant trips made on the train to visit relatives, short trips and local visits were made by wagon, buggy, and horseback or on foot if the neighbors were not too distant. Later she occasionally rode behind a son on their motorcycle or as passenger in the family car. Several years ago she visited the old homestead in Bosque County, where she was born. It was abandoned and in ruins but the fireplace was intact. The hearthstone, formed by a single flat stone, lay as it had for many decades. She had it removed and shipped to her home in Spearman, where it sets like signet on her lawn. Possessing the stone is like the renewing of an old acquaintance, and she enjoys recounting the pleasant memories it has afforded her. In winter it warmed her as she sat on it to pull up her stockings. She thinks the small nicks in it are due perhaps to the blows made with a flat iron to hammer out pecan means, and can point out the exact spot where the cedar churn sat to warm to proper temperature for churning butter.

Her way of life is now legendary, but remains interesting and inspirational. I am proud to present her story as a lasting memorial for her children, old friends and neighbors—and for those who wonder perhaps what the country was like in the beginning.

The Author Susan Pierce Dacus 1961

Preface February 05, 2000

Susan Pierce Dacus remarried later in life after the death of Mutt Dacus and was known as Susie Allen. She also published a book of her poetry in 1973, "Prairie Poems" which her nephew L.D. Pierce Edited for her. He is the Editor of this manuscript. He has also discovered that his Aunt Susie Dacus also wrote another biographical and historical manuscript about Rhoda Pierce Wilbanks-her great Aunt and LD's great-great Aunt. This manuscript is titled: "Aunt Rhoda" She won a prize for this manuscript at West Texas State University. Jan. 30 2000, LD Pierce is trying to obtain a copy of that manuscript. As Editor of Aunt Susan I want to thank Reba Hunter director of the Hansford Stationmasters Museum in Spearman for making me a copy of the original manuscript. I also want to thanks Margaret Evans of Spearman for donating this manuscript to the Stationmasters Museum, along with other Wilbanks Genealogy she had worked on. I have been working on the Pierce & Wilbanks Genealogy for over 5 years and now two new biographical manuscripts turn up!!

**What Fantastic Luck!!**

LD Pierce Editor

January 30, 2000. GAGE, OK

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## **THE STORY OF AUNT SUSAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Susan Ella Wilbanks known to many people of the Panhandle Plains, as Aunt Susan, was born in Bosque County near the present city of Meridian, Texas. Her parents, Mary Jane Lott Bowden and Al Bowden, welcomed their baby as a gift from heaven, December 24, 1871. Eighty-six years have passed since then--fifty-five of them lived in Hansford County. "I guess I'm a truly Texan," she says. "I was born a Texan, I was reared a Texan and I hope to die a Texan I love Texas, but the Panhandle is my great love, especially the old homestead In Hansford County. It was there my children grew up, married and settled down, rooted deep in the land we love so well and of which we boasted long ago, could grow anything in the world given the rain and sun." Aunt Susan has lived the past few years in Amarillo with her daughter, Faye Klutts. Days once spent busily occupied with caring for her family entertaining travelers visiting the sick and the rearing of an orphan boy, are now lived leisurely and reminiscently A remarkable measure of beauty is retained in her old age. A merry twinkle sparks her eye and laughter punctuates her conversation, as she relates the highlights of her life. It is her story--as she lived it and told it unto me.

### **CHILDHOOD**

The old homestead, where I was born, was made of logs split down the middle. The golden hearts were turned inward and the cracks were chinked with clay. A fireplace with hearthstone made of a flat slab of rock, warmed our primitive home. The setting for the old was, beautiful. Lovely trees made abundant shelter for bird life. Red birds, flashed in gay plumage amongst the green foliage, stealing berries from the scolding Jays. Robins hopped to earth in search of worms for their young. As a musical backdrop, the doves cooed, crows cawed and mockingbirds sang with glee. I have always loved trees and think a Christmas tree a resplendent sight decked in holiday finery.-"yet in all its glory it is not arrayed like one of these." We had good crops in season and the crows like to feast on the roasting ears and watermelons. To hinder their vandalism, my father posted "scare crows" in their favorite eating-places. Often, I stared at the scare crows in fascination-awed by their foreboding outstretched arms and sentinel like loneliness, yet amused at the



likeness to my elders, dressed as they were, in slat bonnet and Mother Hubbard, or tattered straw hat and overalls. It seemed to me that they could speak, and I think I understood how the crows must have felt about them.

## **MY FIRST SCHOOL**

My schooling began in 1878. Remembrance is keen because I was very disappointed with my teacher. The year before, a lady taught our school. Each morning I ran to the roadside to watch her ride by on a beautiful dappled gray horse. She rode a sidesaddle and her long riding habit fanned the gray's flank. She smiled at me and waved. I could hardly wait to be her pupil. Years of owning and loving good horseflesh have taught me that my love for my teacher was probably "horse love." The Man Teacher

As a beginner, my first teacher was a man. He kept a rod standing by his desk that was woven of red bud scythes. It popped and cracked on legs and backs and of its fear I had no lack. My dread of him once kept me standing in a corner on one foot because I could not spell "salt cellar" correctly. We "learned readin' and writin' and 'arithmetic to the tune of a red bud stick." Our schoolhouse was also built of logs. The seats were made of great logs split down the middle and were polished smooth by blue jeans, flour sacking and linsey wool. Our drinking water was carried from a nearby spring in a wooden bucket; Our common dipper was a gourd. The girls giggled, the boys threw, spit balls and when the teacher was out of sight, notes flew back and forth. They were read quickly and thrown into the fireplace. Somehow it did not sound romantic, for teacher to read aloud, "roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet and so are you!" We found time to visit, in the old days. It was a pleasant Sunday pastime to visit in the home of relatives or friends. Once or twice yearly we went on a two days' journey to visit an aunts and cousins. We went in the wagon that had been made ready for the trip by bows and wagon sheet. An over jet held a bed. Smaller bedrolls and trunk for clothing went under the bed. We carried drinking, water in a keg that hung on the side of the, wagon. On the back was a "grub box" with a door that let down to form a sort of cook table.

We made camp if possible beside a stream of water. We went "up stream" to drink--and down stream to clean up. That meant wading and splashing and pursuing tiny schools of fishes, up stream. I lay and dipped my face in the cool water to drink. Refreshed it was fun to gaze long intervals at my reflection mirrored there. Tired of preening, I could amuse myself by making funny faces at all MY imagined foes or friends. Knowledge of the great outdoors and the simple pleasures of "the bare foot boy, with cheeks of tan" that the poet sang about, edified our childhood and helps

us to learn of the greatness and goodness of God. Some times we fished and cooked them on our campfire. This was a feast indeed. Once however, we threw our fish back into the creek after a man rode up to tell us not to eat them--that someone had put out grasshopper poison and as a result the fish in the stream were dying. I love the charcoal steaks grilled in our back yard--but they couldn't smell more appetizing than coffee boiling and bacon sizzling on a hickory wood camp fire of long ago, nor of a cow chip fires either, for that matter. After supper on our journey to Auntie's house we sat around the campfire and listened to the tales told by our elders. Often a nearby farmer with wife and children dropped in to talk over the news events or another camper stopped close to share the campsite with us. Often they told cowboy and Indian stories, Civil War tales and nearly always ended with a spine tingling ghost story.

Listening and watching-the glowing embers of a dying campfire I we children often fell asleep? Not knowing when our mothers Hands tucked us in for the night. Arriving at Aunties house we could hardly wait for the fussing and hugging to stop, so that we could start our games and playing. We feasted at such times on fried chicken roasting ears and fresh peach or berry pie. The adults ate at first table and the children at second table. Sometimes we could hardly wait--and the funny wishes we made with the pulley bones often had fantastic answers. Going home time was sad. "Good bye, " and "you all come again," rang in our ears. We comforted ourselves with the thought that perhaps soon they would return our visit and we would renew our good

## **I LOSE MY FATHER**

My father died when I was very young. Grandfather Bowden trying to take his place endeared himself to me. He took me on squirrel hunts in the nearby woods. I threw, sticks and stones at the squirrels and flushed them toward an old tree standing in a clearing. As they made a run for the knotholes in the tree, Grandfather shot them. The little rabbits made such frightened noises when Grandfather twisted them out of hollow logs, that I felt sorry for them and could never enjoy hunting them with him. After frost I helped him gather pecans and wild persimmons. Some times, when I ate one too green and talked with pursed lips he laughed at me. Grandfather knew where the fish would bite and where the choicest berries grew and I was very happy when I could be his pal.

## **I GROW UP**

My mother remarried. Suddenly I was a child no longer. As other children were born into our home, my responsibilities increased. Much of my playtime was

spent baby tending. Many times as I churned with my hands, my foot rocked a cradle to hush a baby's cry. Growing up meant not only an increased workload, but also taking our place and part in the social life of our community. Our family attended church, singings and protracted meetings under a bush arbor in summer time. We went to play parties where we played "Skip to My Lou." Dances were frequently held in neighboring homes. We square danced to the fiddlers' tune of "Turkey In the Straw" and to such lively phrases as "Chicken in the bread pan pickin' out the dough, do-se-do ladies-do-se-do." It was easy to tell when boy liked girl at the square dance. When it was time to swing, he might just squeeze ones' hand a little bit, or, if he were angry or jilted. He often refused to swing. A Sweetheart --The boy I fell in love with played the fiddle at many of our dances. I met him first at church where he asked permission to accompany me home. We went by horseback. As we rode along side by side in the moonlights he told me he was going away and asked me to write to him. Our courtship began, for me, after his first letter. I forgot about the other beaux and set my "cap" for Floyd (Wilbanks).

## **A WEDDING**

My family was talking about and making plans to move to Idaho. This may have induced a proposal of marriage from him sooner than ordinary, but the result was a ready acceptance from me. Young and in love, it was yes, for then and always.

March 18 1888 we were married at the old Wilbanks homestead by a Reverend Mr. Green, local Baptist Minister. Fiends and relatives came from miles around to attend our wedding and wedding dinner. That evening we rode in the back of the wagon with my folks to church, but we didn't watch for mother's head to turn and look at us-we just held hands in the moonlight and kissed unafraid.

## **MY FAMILY GOES TO IDAHO**

It was hard for me to see my mother leave on the long trip to Idaho. I knew that many years would pass before I saw her again-maybe never.

My first news of them was a letter from my sister Mollie. It was mailed in New Mexico, and arrived months after they left Bosque County. It pleased me to hear that I was missed and that my small half-brother cried for me and begged the folks to go back and get me. I had tended him lots a home and he missed the sense of security I gave me. He seemed to think I could protect him from the Indians of whom he was greatly afraid.

The route led them over rough mountainous terrain. Bands of Indians sometimes demanded a horse or a cow. My folks were afraid to refuse them and were revolted to see them eat in gory mess the raw flesh and bowels of their gift.

One of the bands of Indians fell in love with my small half-sister. They tried to bargain for her. It seemed that they believed that it was good luck to have a blonde headed child in their camp. After that she was kept out of sight when Indians were around

The trip was long and hazardous. My stepfather stopped a few mining camps along the route to earn money to finish to journey. He didn't stay longer than he had to, however, for the camps were filled with a rough and tough element that kept every one on the alert for fear of their lawlessness.

### **CHARLIE DAY**

Sister Mollie left her husband, Joe Day, and small son Charlie in Texas. I comforted Joe and cared for them as best as I could, and when he died two years later, so I took Charlie to raise him as my own.

Charlie Day-as a child he was a bright and beautiful boy. He showed that he was mechanically turned by building tiny engines and well rings out of anything he could find to work with. Often I asked him, "What are you going to be when your grow up, Charlie?" "A well driller," he always answered. This ambition was fulfilled. Many old timers in the Panhandle will remember him for the wells drilled on the XIT ranch and in Hansford County. He drilled a well for us that-after more than fifty years-is still furnishing water for our farm use.

### **BABY OF MY OWN**

My husband bought the Bowden homestead after our marriage. In the house where I was born, my first born, a son saw the light of day. We named him after his grandfather, Hiram Wilbanks, a grand old gentleman whom I always loved and respected. When my baby was in infant in my arms, I took him and little Charlie in the buggy on a trip from Bosque to Johnson County. Floyd had gone there to help his father out for a while and I went to pay them all a surprise visit.

I had to cross the Brazos River. If the river was up, we crossed on the ferry. They water in the river was low. I saw wagon tracks on the opposite bank and knew the crossing was unstable. I had two horses hooked up to my buggy. When I pulled into the water, the old sorrel mare started down stream. It was all I could do to pull

her back into line and make the crossing. She was afraid of the water and when I used the buggy whip she would rear up and kick in the traces. The other horse, a good bay, helped me pull her across and probably saved our lives. It seems foolish now to take such risks, but at that time we lived with danger and thought nothing about it. (When I asked Aunt Susan, "How in the world did you have the courage to cross the river in a buggy with two babies??" She answered laughingly, "just a woman in love with her man!")

## **JOHNSON COUNTY**

We traded our farm in Bosque for a farm in Johnson County. We prospered in our move, and three sons and a daughter were born to us there. We were surrounded by relatives and enjoyed the visits of our family and friends. However, it seems to me one always has a few setbacks. Once during our busiest time on the farm we lost several horses with distemper. Floyd went to Cleburne to buy a replacement. I went along to shop. We always tried to reach home before dark, but that day it was mid-afternoon when we left Cleburne for home. The blind horse was tied by a rope to the rear of the buggy. Floyd had settled for a bargain.

Everything went along just fine until we pulled onto the Nolan River Bridge. I looked back and the old horse just reared. Both eyes were milky white and looked even larger as he reared in fright at the clatter of hooves on the bridge. He nearly pulled our buggy off the bridge into the river, but the tie rope broke and only the horse went overboard. He hit the water and swam out. Floyd eyed the sun and we agreed it was too low to try to catch the horse and get home before night. Disgusted, he returned for him the next day. The horse was a good plow horse, and Floyd often remarked that he really made a bargain.

## **I JOIN THE CHURCH**

We attended brush arbor meetings near our home on Willow Branch. I was united with the Church of Christ and was baptized in Willow Branch, along with several others. When I went down into the water to be baptized by the Minister I was embarrassed by my small son, Virgin. He thought I was being drowned. He began to cry and throw stones at the preacher.

## **WE MOVE AGAIN**

Floyd like others of his Club was eyeing the vanishing frontier where land was still plentiful and herds could multiply and grow fat. On our way towards the plains we moved to Haskell County. Our girl was born there. The country was quite primitive and many cattle grazed the open range. Nothing happened specifically to

make me remember living there except my daughter's birth and the incident of the washing machine.

Floyd always helped me wash on Monday morning. When the boys were old enough, he taught them to help. I was never without their help on Washday, until my girls were old enough to lend a hand. I think because Floyd involved was putting out a larger rub board. This is the reason he bought me a new fangled washing machine. It was operated by hand and made of wood corrugated on the inside. A levered contraption forced the clothes back and forth over the ribbed inner surface. We were very proud of it but had to keep it by the well and filled with water to keep it from shrinking and falling apart. One day the cows came to the well for water. A nosey old longhorn dipped her head into the washing machine to drink. When she raised her head up her horns caught in the wooden tub. I was startled and angry when I looked out my window toward the well and saw the old cow with my washing machine perched on her head like a strange hat. The cow tried to shake it off but only succeeded in wedging it tighter on her horns. The cow was frightened by the thing on her head and headed for the brush. It took some doing for Floyd and Moon to chase her down and remove the washing machine. It was not much worse for the ware however and stood us in good stead for many years.

## **TEXAS PANHANDLE**

Old timers will remember that the State of Texas made a huge land grant to the X I T. For a grant that covered most of ten counties the X I T gave several million dollars to the State with which they built the Capitol building at Austin. Land in Hanford County, when we decided to push on there, was all railroad and school land and a section of each alternated the other. School land sold for one dollar per acre, Railroad land for two fifty. Grazing was free. In 1903, we chartered a railroad car and shipped our belongings to Channing, the "Jump off" place. The children and I went by coach. We were met at Channing. Tom Moon brought the wagon. December 15, 1903 we left Channing and three days later, arrived at our dugout home on the prairie. We went by Dumas, a settlement of two or three houses and a courthouse. We stopped the second night at the Carson Womble home. I went to school with both Mr. and Mrs. Womble when we were children in Bosque County. It was a thrill to get inside out of the cold and enjoy the warmth of old friends newly found. I was impressed by the appearance of our prairie county. I who, loved the trees, the creeks, and meadows, was amazed and awed by the vastness of our surroundings. It looked like ocean of billowing grass. Our dugout was made comfortable by covering the dirt floor with cotton sacks, ripped open. We cut prairie grass and filled mattress ticks and over these we laid feather beds for our boys who slept in the

dugout attic. Our crude home on the plains was comfortable enough and we fared as well as any anyone who settled on the land in that day.

## **SOD BUSTING**

The first plowing of our land was done with a walking turn plough. Floyd and Tom Moon ploughed fireguards all around our section, dugout and corrals. This deed was well repaid later. Twenty acres of sod was broken the first year and fifty the next year. Floyd planted maize with a walking plow and improvised a planter by punching holes in a large time washbasin. We raised a good maize crop and sold it to Gus Ward in Old Hansford. We planted a garden, which yielded bountifully. We had no water except what we hauled from the Micou farm in barrels. Our watermelons were almost as fine as those raised in Johnson County, to the amazement of all our neighbors.

## **A PRAIRIE FIRE**

Several Years passed uneventfully until a huge prairie fire gave us quite a scare. I do not know how it originated but it started northwest of, some place near Palo Duro Creek. All the men in the area went to the scene with wagons and teams carrying barrels of water and brooms and sacks. They beat at the edge of the fire with wet sacks and brooms trying to bring it under control-or to keep it from spreading.

We were told that our fireguards would split the fire and our place would be safe. Before the fire reached our land we could see swarms of birds going over and a few antelope and rabbits passed by running for their lives. The heat and smoke was bad for a while. When the Fire swept by we looked out to see that our home was like an island of green in a great black ocean. On the west side of our land the fire had come within a few yards of our home. A pall of smoke, from the grass and smoldering cow chips, hung over the prairie for many hours.

## **WE BUILD A SCHOOL**

My Husband (Floyd Wilbanks) and the men of our community pooled funds and labor and bought lumber and built a little schoolhouse. They called it Micou. Our children made quite a spectacle at school for like "Mary and Her little lamb" their pet antelope followed them everywhere they went. Our Youngest daughter, Faye, was about six years old when she started to school at Micou. Each day she tried to run away at recess time to go home to Mama. Hiram, her oldest brother, gave chase one day for about a hundred yards. He roped her with his lariat rope and led her back to school. After that she seemed satisfied and stayed in school. One of the teachers was Miss Trixie Winn, who married our nephew Hix Wilbanks. The teachers

were very popular and soon snapped up by their choice of local boys.

## **A SOCIAL CENTER**

The schoolhouse was the social center of the community. Occasionally church meetings were scheduled there. If baptism was required, Micou's water pond was used. The Literary Society met monthly in the schoolhouse, it was a popular entertainment at that time. The debates were often amusing as one I recall on "which is the most useful, the dish rag or the broom?" It was surprising to hear the many ideas concerning the utility of both. Of course most to them were pretty silly that that's what made it fun.

## **BUFFALO BONES**

Buffalo Bones were scattered over the prairie, and we picked them up by wagonloads. They were hauled on freight trips to Texhoma and sold to an Eastern Fertilizer company. The company bough so many they were piled along the railroad tracks for later shipment (as cars were available). Passengers riding the trains were amazed at the sight of the bones, bleached snow white and shining the bright Texas sunlight.

## **HERDS**

The prairie was an open range in the early days. Herds of cattle and horses ranged at will and multiplied and grew fat on the lush prairie grass. A favorite pastime of the young people and of our children, was watching the cowboys bring in horses off the range and bust them. The children had ringside seats on top of the sheds and were safely out of the way of men and horses. Often, the range stock ate the wild loco weeds and as a result we called the "locoed". Horses were rarely used if locoed as they acted very strangely and were not dependable. A locoed cow would fight the other cows and chase anyone who came near them. One day Floyd and I were walking with the children across the prairie to visit a neighbor. A locoed cow chased us into an abandoned dugout nearby. She stood at the door looking down into the dugout as if she were angry enough to come on down and have it out with us. When she wandered away we scuttled out and "lit a shuck" for home. Afterward we went by team or horse, or stayed at home. There were often fights among the bulls on the range. I remember a fight, almost inside our yard that began late in the afternoon. It seemed like their pawing and bellowing shook the ground. Next morning one of the bulls was dead-the victor had gone back to lead the herd.

## **OLD JACK**

We kept a good string of horses and also had a good team of mules. Tom Moon was especially fond of one we called 'Old Jack.' Moon chewed Brown Mule chewing



tobacco and often fed bites of it to Old Jack. I guess Old Jack got the tobacco habit for he loved for Moon to feed him tobacco. The teams were afraid of the cars as they began to pass on the roads. Moon watched for them miles ahead. When he saw a cloud of dust in the distance, he got off the wagon and tied his old red bandana over the load teams eyes. We were very sorry for Moon when he lost Old Jack. We made a shelter of tall fence posts set into the ground to form a barn like structure that had a wire roof covered high with straw. It helped to keep the animals warm but was the end for old Jack. He browsed in the hay one night and caused the top to fall in. Covered with an avalanche of hay, he smothered to death. Moon was heartbroken at losing his tobaccos chewing friend.

## **CUTTING HORSE**

We had a good cutting horse and had forbidden the younger children to ride him. He was a valuable horse and did fine work in cutting out cattle for branding, dehorning or various reasons. Our youngest daughter disobeyed us and rode him after the cows one evening. The horse wheeled suddenly to get a cow back to the big herd. In doing so Faye was thrown against the saddle horn. She never revealed her injury lest we learn of her disobedience. Years later a Doctors exam showed that a rib had been broken. We regretted very much that she had suffered in silence, and that we were unable to help her.

## **CIMARRON**

In 1906 Floyd filed on a quarter section of land in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. He built a small house on the claim, two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. The small children and I went with him to live down the claim. Besides farming and stock raising Floyd used his good team and buggy to advantage while we were in Cimarron. He located settlers on the land. It was an arduous task, as he had to haul them about over the prairie until they were satisfied 'to light'. Often, he brought them home with him for the night and a good meal.

The boys stayed on the farm in Hansford County with Tom Moon and helped take care of things there. Moon's father came from Kansas and spent the winter with them. He was an old time schoolteacher of the "three R's". He taught the boys that winter and he and Moon looked after all their needs. We were lucky indeed to have them with us.

The winter spent in Cimarron was cold with lots of snow. Floyd was out in the weather looking after the horses and cattle almost all the time. He went snow blind. A Mexican neighbor came to help us. He asked me to bring in a tub of snow. In it he placed two Malpie rocks that he had heated on the stove. Floyd lay across the bed with his head over the tub and a sheet spread over it, forming a tent to hold the

steam in. Several hours of this treatment gave him relief. We were grateful for what the man had done and offered to pay him. He would accept nothing but our thanks. Later, he brought us lovely cheese made from goat's milk.

Few settlers lived in Cimarron, yet tramps often came by our place. I suppose they were the flotsam and jetsam that follow a beaten trail. There was a wagon road that led that led south to Channing, Tascosa and Amarillo. They followed the, road from one settlement to another stopped by the way to beg food and lodging. They went first to the man of the house, wherever they could find him, in the field or corral, and ask him for what they needed. The children were afraid of strangers and always hid behind my skirts. When the tramps came by our place their favorite hiding place was the "goat box". To me this was worse than meeting the tramps. The tramps did not mind the odor of the goat box, however, for they knew and loved the goats!

We spent a Christmas in Cimarron that I've never forgotten. I planned a surprise for the children by having Floyd bring me from Texhoma, a large wooden bucket of striped candy. I hid the bucket beneath the bed. On Christmas Eve they each hung a stocking and went to bed. I could hardly wait until they fell asleep to bring forth my treasure. Alas, it was I who had the surprise. The candy was all gone. Next morning they had plain taffy for their Christmas stocking and their Mother was a little tired, and a little wiser.

We had men who were supposed to be an authority on locating water, to test our place for water well. We were told there was little or no sheet water. This was a fallacy. Later, water wells mushroomed all over Cimarron and now they irrigate from underground sources and raise almost anything. Of course we shuttled back and forth between Hansford and Cimarron Counties, whenever possible. We had good teams and a fine buggy. There were miles of open country between the two place that led us across the XIT ranch.

Floyd had a no account dog he wanted to lose, and he and Henry took him along one night on a trip back home from Cimarron. Lobo wolves had been reported by freighters as coming up to their camp sites and were, hard to get rid of without a gun. In the darkness he saw our old dog rolling himself in some carillon. He looked like a big wolf. Floyd whipped up the team. Every time he looked back, the wolf (he thought) was following. He arrived home in Hansford County about sunup. He unharnessed the team, and about that time the old dog trotted up. He was exhausted from following the fast team all night. "He was just a dog in wolf's clothing" As a reward for his perseverance Floyd kept the dog.

## **OUR DUGOUT BURNS**

We were living in Cimarron and our dugout in Hansford County burned. We were still hauling water and there was no way to save it! We salvaged a few of the household furnishings, and since there was no other place else to go we worked over the hens house and move into it. We felt lucky to have its tin roof over our heads. As soon as possible, the men hauled the grain out of our granary to Texhoma and we moved into it, glad for larger quarters. The boys were crushed to lose their small pet coon that they had raised. It followed Hiram about the place and slept in his boot at night for warmth but alas the boot was used by the coon as his waterloo.

## **WE GO HOME TO HANSFORD COUNTY**

We finished the claim and moved home. The day was well remembered because when we got there we learned that Floyd's brother Arthur had Died. He was buried that afternoon at Hansford.

We still have a quarter section of in section in Cimarron. The claim we had was sold In 1922. Floyd went back fairly often to look after business there. Once not long after we left, he came home with the announcement, "somebody stole our house in Cimarron!" We never learned what became of it. Later a settler in Cimarron was asleep in his shack and awoke to find it moving. The robbers were caught napping for not bothering to look inside before they hauled off the shack. They were caught, and the leader was sent to the pen; and their cache revealed a lot of loot and plunder that belonged to the settlers in the country.

## **OUR NEIGHBORS**

The names of many old timers will be recognized as my neighbors are listed: North of us were Johnny O'Laughlin, Harry and Charlie Endicott, L. D. Pierce, Sr., and the Mannie and Ernest Wilbanks and families. West of us were the Micou's, Hazelwood's, Sanders, and Hart's. West of us were the Douglas's, Lackeys, Frizzell's, and John and Frank Dressen with their aged father. Everyone who stopped at old Dressen place stayed to hear his Civil War stories, and was shown the old Confederate rifle that hung on the dugout wall. East of us were the Harris', Long's, Blodgett's, and farther east the Pearson's, Forbes's, Black's and Greever's.

Good neighbors are the finest assets of any community. Ours were the best. Besides lending setting hens and samples of everlasting yeast, they shared each other's burdens when death, sickness, distress, or any dire need arose. We visited

occasionally and often met at the old time dances. They usually lasted all night when a midnight supper of sandwiches, cake and coffee were served. The young in heart danced while the oldsters talked about current events, dress patterns, and garden seeds.

## **I GO TO THE DOCTOR**

One afternoon, when the men were too busy, the girls and I drove to the Micou farm for water. After filling the barrels we visited awhile. Before starting home, I let the team drink at the tank. The old mare raised her head up from the water and gave it a vigorous shake. As she did so she struck my head and cut a gash above my eye with the bridle. It knocked me daft for a minute, and I spun around about to fall when the girls caught me. They helped me wash blood from my eyes and face. Floyd took me to the doctor at Hansford where the wound was sutured.

## **MONKEY SHINES**

We left the girls at Susie Pierces house, and that night as the children played around a bonfire Faye caught her dress tail afire. Susie saw it at once-and called to her brother Clem to put out the fire. Luckily she was not burned. When we returned the next day, the girls were taking turns riding Flaxie, Clem's saddle pony. Faye had a long switch and was racing Flaxie over the blackberry patch. "What are you doing Faye?" I called to her. "Riding Flaxie Mamma, my dress tail doesn't show when I'm riding the horse!" This was an excuse I knew for monopolizing the mare who was very temperamental., She had once raised Susie off the ground by a braid on top of her head, and also bit Sally, her older sister on the wrist and left a scar for life. But all this did not keep the children off Flaxie's back. They rode the mare anyway and I guess this time Flaxie was too afraid of Faye's switch to do any biting. The men were plowing about a mile from the house. I sent them their lunch in a large tin pail by the little girls on "old bob". I told them "When you get home, it's Faye's turn to churn. Be sure to do It before I return from Ora Pierces" On their return home, a huge whirlwind blew up in front of them. Faye insisted that Spray Ride the horse into it. The horse reared and Faye handed her sister the hammer that hung on the saddle. Spray hit Old Bob between the ears and brought him down but it knocked him out. Spray was crying silly. He ran around in circles for a while. Spray was crying thinking surely she had killed the old horse. "Please don't tell on me Faye, She Begged" Quick to make a bargain, the child replied with "Oh I won't if you will churn for me today." I guess Spray would have churned for her sister the rest of her days had we not learned their secret. The old horse was not hurt, and lived to carry the girls on his back many times after that though probably not into another prairie whirlwind. An Indian man with his mother lived in a covered wagon and worked for

our neighbor, Harry Endicott. He was ill with tuberculosis. Floyd invited him to stop in our yard. He stayed several months till his recovery was enough to return to his home in Tucumcari, New Mexico. Floyd fed his team, and I took many meals to the wagon for the sick man and his aged mother. The Indian had been very good to help our son Hiram when he fell from a scaffold on the Endicott barn that he was helping to build. We hoped in a measure to return his kindness to our son. We prepared for winter by laying in extra provisions

## **WINTER ON THE PRAIRIE**

We prepared for winter by laying in extra provision. We hauled coal from Texhoma in late summer and fall. To supplement the coal we Picked up cow chips an on the prairie and stored them in the shed. The gray ones were best to kindle fires. Though brownies made a quick hot fire. Cow chips burned quickly. Consequently, it took many to keep the house warm, so we gathered them by the wagonloads. Our men dressed for the weather in the open by wearing such items as long underwear, wool sox (two or three pairs) and warm outer garments. They wore boots, and slickers in severely cold weather. 1911-12 was a severely cold winter with swirling snow. The ground was covered with snow until March. The freight wagons could not pull through the snow, and our men took off the wheels of the wagon and buggy and put runners on, so that they could skim over the deep frozen snow. They made pretty sight, I though, dashing over the snow. Hiram, our oldest son who was always so good to help me out in any work about our home was working for Milo Blodgett. The cattle drifted with the storm. He and Mr. Blodgett stayed with them until late afternoon. The cattle wedged in a corner of the fence their backs to the blowing snow. They kept milling. The man left them there near the cap rock and returned the next day to see how they fared. They looked like a moving snowdrift but Mr. Blodgett was very grateful to find them in as good condition as they were. Other cattlemen did not fare so well. Johnny O'loughlin lost many of his cattle. A herd of three hundred head went by our place during the storm in single file towards the cap rocks Most of them fell down the cliff sides and were killed. It seemed that winters were more severe then, but I never saw a funnel cloud in summertime during the early days. We went to the cellar several times each year when a thunderstorm or electrical storm came up. A Barbed wire fence was between our house and the cellar. We made the children lie flat and roll under the fence with-out touching its, an many times we saw balls of fire rolling along the wire.

## **A PLUM HUNT**

We raised the fruit trees In Johnson County. The children accustomed to the prairie, used to shout happily, I like prickly pear apples." They also liked to chew the gum that oozed from cedar posts.

Each summer we took them with us to the old Adobe Walls located on the Turkey Track Ranch south of us in the breaks. We gathered wild grapes and plums and we used to think the fruit valuable for a cleansing laxative, even as a dose of castor oil. We canned the fruit. In the winter it was used for jelly making and cobbler pies.

The plum hunts were like a picnic. We took grub and camping outfit and spent about three days on the trip. The children helped pick plums and grapes, but were usually dismissed from work in late afternoon for a good playtime. They waded in the creeks and slid down sand banks. At night the boys strung a rope from the high limb of a cottonwood tree for a swing. The woods rang with their laughter. Tired of playing, they loved to hear the story about Billy Dixon the Indian scouts who shot an Indian standing on a hill a mile away.

I went on a plum hunt with Ora Pierce. We took the small children with us, as the men were busy in the fields. We gathered all the plums we wanted and wandered upon an apple orchard. A deserted sod house, the old home of Billy Dixon, stood in the middle of the orchard. The trees were loaded with lovely red apples and we told ourselves it wouldn't be wrong to gather a few apples as the place was abandoned. We were laughing and gathering apples into our aprons when a man on horseback rode up and told us that the apples belonged to the Billy Dixon family. He let us keep what we had gathered however and we were very grateful for it was a treat to eat an apple off a tree again, like our old homes in Johnson and Bosque Counties

## **QUICKSAND AND SNAKES**

In later years our young folks often went to the breaks and Canadian River on hunting trips and picnics. When they walked across the river bed they went single file with arms outstretched and hands clasping the shoulder of the one in front. They moved as a unit and felt that they could help each other if they got into difficulty. They agreed to always keep moving and if one started to sink, for that one to fall flat and the others would pull him out. Luckily this strategy did not have to be employed. In later years it amused me to see them take Faye's Victrola along on picnics on the river. The set it down in a safe spot and danced to its music on the sand. The victrola was as popular in its day as the radio of today.

## **PRAIRIE WILDLIFE**

There were antelope on the plains. Our boys chased them on motorcycles and captured them at various times. The baby antelopes were fed from a bottle with a goose quill nipple. They were lovable pets and followed us about the farm. Bird life consisted of the mockingbirds bull bats, meadowlarks, a few owls, hawks, buzzards, and eagles. Coyotes were plentiful and I can never forget how aerie they sounded on

an early winter morning. They were worse during the winter when food was not available. They sometimes came close to the house to catch our chickens or young pigs. Henry and Lawrence once made a trip to the Black Community on a motorcycle. They jumped an antelope and chased him across the prairie. The motorcycle turned over when it struck some rough cow trails in the grass. Henry's nose hit the handlebars and a long gash was out across his nose and lower face. Regardless of the injury they righted the motorcycle and rode on. Arriving at their destination, the lady of the house washed off the blood and applied Iodine to the cut. It healed well but left a scar.

## **RATTLERS**

Rattlers abounded in the prairie grass. They were often found in plowing sod. Sometimes they crawled into dugouts and granaries. Hiram was the champion snake killer in our family. He always wore high-topped and high-heeled boots. His favorite method was stomping their heads off with his boot heels. The big snakes were killed likewise after he stunned them by pulling, off his boots and throwing them at them. When the snakes were dead he left them lying belly up in the grass or better still hanging them in like manner over a barbed wire fence. This procedure was supposed to bring rain. I thought my observation more like—that if the wind blew from the East for three days straight it would rain.

Tom Coble Veteran Cowman of the plains often told of an experience with rattlesnakes, when he lived in his dugout under the cap rock at the head of Adobe Creek.

He had wanted his Uncle Andrew to visit him. Mr. Coble met him and together they arrived at the dugout about dark. They had matches but no oil for the lamp. During the night his cousin nephew put his hand against the wall of the dugout and was bitten by a rattler. Cobles, by match light, laid open his uncle's thumb & sucked the poison from the wound as well as he could. It was morning (raining?) outside and the two men spent the remainder of the night in the dugout and the snakes. When daylight came Mr. Coble pulled the rocks by the wall and killed two rattlers, but the best part he says was his uncle's recovery from the rattlesnake bite.

## **OUR FIRST HOUSE**

The men it seemed, were always busy plowing and putting in and harvesting crops and seeing after our stock. The building of a house and digging a well were put off until a more convenient time A woman loves a house. A man's love is his land. The bible says "prepare they work and afterwards build thine house." The pioneer was prudent in that respect. After they had searched the ground for a foothold and

were securely grounded they let down roots and branched out. Today many fine homes have supplanted the dugouts in Hansford County.

I was very proud of my now house. It was small but furnished substantially and comfortably. Among the things salvaged from our dugout was a dining table that was my pride and joy. It was made of Oak and underneath was an inscription F D Wilbanks, Channing, Texas.

My small children often lay on the floor-beneath the table and read aloud the address there. "Mamas we don't live at Channing why is it written there?" So they wondered about the sign on our table and why it was written there. Channing was a place of disembarkment for our name. I guess it the sign on the underside of the table just stayed there until the old table fell into disuse.

In 1911 Charlie Day drilled a water well on the homestead. When it was almost finished a neighbor rode up on horseback. Fannie told us that Sheriff Bob Martin was killed in the line of duty the night before. Our men dropped everything and went to Hansford to see if they could do anything, to help in any way.

The Panhandle Area was saddened by the passing of Sheriff Martin. He was a fine man, a good peace officer, and a wonderful father. The funeral procession, composed of many wagons, buggies, and horsebackers, wended its way over the dusty "Hansford to Ochiltree" wagon road that led by the Black School house and cemetery. The funeral service, assisted by the Masonic Lodge, was conducted in the school house and the remains laid to rest in the old school yard cemetery. Bob Martin's loyal service to our county is remembered still by his old friends and neighbors who wished that some sort of memorial might perpetuate the name of a good and faithful public servant who gave his life trying to help in the cause of law and order.

## **CHICK COOP CARRIAGE**

Soon after Charlie Day dug our well Floyd bought a water well drill machine. He drilled a well for A.F. Garner on the old Garner place, southwest of us. Lawrence and Earl LaFon, a boy hired to work on the farm, helped drill the well. Their only way to get home for the weekend was in an old buddy built up and covered with wire mesh to form a chicken coop. It was not equipped with a tongue or shafts, but was used to trail when we freighted our chickens to Texhoma. It was filled with camping equipment. Lawrence let Earl drive and opened the gates. He cautioned early not to let the buggy roll again the horses' hocks.

Lawrence got out to open a gate and Earl started to drive through. The buddy rolled again the horses legs and they took off in a run. Earl yelled and sawed on the lines.



He managed to pull them into circle but the speed and rough prairie turned the buggy coop over. Lawrence says, "It looked like our old buggy just exploded. Earl went one way and pots, pans, and other artillery went every other way." They both walked home. Earl's feet already sore were covered with blisters. He was glad to discard the new shoes he was wearing. He was glad to discard the new shoes he was wearing and return to his old reliable boots. A good foot soaking and Raleigh's liniment and salve application soothed his spirits as well as his sore feet.

## **OLD BILLY**

We had a goatherd on the farm. We called the leader "Old Billy" He was a fine goat, a great pet, and full of mischief. The family knew how to copy with him but the neighbors were afraid of him. We "just had to live with Old Billy" as one often speaks concerning a problem like an illness or an ever present evil of some kind. He often embarrasses me by his antics

## **OLD BILLY Vs. COUSIN MOLLY**

Cousin Molly a blind spinster cousin of Floyd's, Came to visit us each summer. She was somewhat eccentric and middle-aged, not too adaptable in the home with children, let alone goats. Our girls led her about the place and to the little house at the back. Frequently, it seemed, Billy gave chase. The girls ran away and left Cousin Molly in the little house alone with Billing Standing guard at her door. Every little bit he butted the walls and shook up the place. As he did so, she let out a loud scream. Floyd would rescue her from the belligerent goat with a larger club.

The girls like to swing in the big swings their brothers made for them in the Barn, hung from the rafters. Billy was their antagonist in this also. All went well until he arrived on the scene. Then they took to the ladders that led up the granary wall to the wheat bins. The boys, however, did not mind his cooperation and would swing over him and give him a kick as they went by. I think he liked playing more than anything else. One day I was shoved and surprised at the sudden explosion of the heating stove. It seemed that Henry in playing with Billy, had aroused his ire. In order to escape the goat's horns he ran into the house-- Billy at his heels. Henry dodged the goat but Billy's head hit the stove like a battering ram. Henry made himself useful in cleaning up the ashes and soot. I could only be thankful that there was no fire in the stove. The boards on the southwest corner of the house were worn and battered by Billy's old iron head. When not busy with his family duties he liked to stand and butt the house until someone came out to feed or play with him.

## **BILLY RATES A PIANO AND GOES TO POT**

Mischievous Billy and a few nannies were traded to Jim Poarch near the Caprock for their piano. He had tuned it by the monkey wrench but Floyd got B. F. Garst to tune it properly and for many years it was a source of great pleasure to our family and friends. Poor Billy's famous for his pranks and beloved by our family did not last long at, the now home. One afternoon while Mrs. Poarch was away from home he butted the Poarch boy down. Angered and scared, the boy's Mother shot the goat. Mr. Poarch arrived shortly afterward and dressed Old Billy for cooking. While a part of him roasted in the oven, Virgil and Floyd passed by enroute home from the Cap Rock. They were invited to stay and eat and did so. Learning that it was Old Billy, in the pot they couldn't eat the meat, though it had smelled appetizingly good, a half-mile back on the road. Once when cousin Molly was with us, she showed us her adaptability to goats and children, her visits were almost stopped by an incident that follows: The two little girls climbed up to the rafters one evening while their dad was playing an old folk song on the fiddle. It went like this: "some one stole my coon dog, wish they would bring him back, he chased the big dog over the fence and the little dogs through the crack." I was startled to hear them chime from their lofty perch, an improvisation of their own. "Somebody stole our cousin Molly, wish they would bring her back, she ran Aunt Rhoda (Floyd's sister-in-law) over the fence and our Susan through the crack" Cousin Molly was deeply sensitive and though I was sure the little girls meant no harm by the new rhyme, they were hauled down from their perch and spanked soundly to teach them better manners but mainly to prove that their antic was not coached.

Blind Cousin Molly liked to primp and seemed to know quite a bit about the value of gems, One day Faye was showing her a five dollar imitation sapphire that Lawrence had given her. Learning how much it cost she handed it back to the crestfallen child, with the remark, "here take its that's no sapphire!" She kept her trinkets cached neatly away in a cigar box--with a supply of peppermint candy kept hidden-from the small fry. Their mouths watered as they watched her nibble on the candy sticks.

## **TEXOHOMA OKALAHOMA TRIPS**

We traded some at old Hansford, the County seat that was about ten miles west of us, and at Texhoma the railroad town. We hauled our grain there. Naturally we loaded up with needed supplies for the return trip. The main items freighted were coal, kerosene, and bulk groceries. I went there once or twice each year to shop for the things that women like and need about the home.

I remember one of these trips well. I took the two girls with us to have pictures made. Aunt Faye wanted to get her hair cut. It was blonds and hung, to her waist. The girls prepared for the trip by flipping wheatbirds on the barbed wire fences. During the heat of the day the birds sat in the shade of the posts and were easy to flip. For the trip we had fifty wheatbird breasts fried for lunch. When we got to Texhoma I had a sick headache (I guess from eating too much bird). However, we got the pictures made, but when Faye got into the barber's chair the barber refused to cut her lovely hair. Her trip was spoiled but inwardly I was glad to continue braiding her hair!

"Homecoming" from the railroad was an event with the children. When Floyd and Moon were near home we used to put our ear to the ground, Indian style, and listen for the horses' hooves, in the darkness. When atmospheric conditions were rights we could hear Tom Moon singing the old trail songs a mile away.

We traded some with peddlers too who traveled about the country in their hacks. Albert Ruffin, a young Syrian from Texhoma drove a pair of little mules to his hack and often spent the night with us. We got supplies of small "notions" from him. Mr. Cooksey, the Rawleigh man, brought us medicines and fragrant cosmetics that were a great help in concealing our sunburned and leathery skins. It was nice to switch from homemade lye soap to complexion soap and Shampoo and such items were guarded from waste and used sparingly.

In regard to the paddlers' medicines I remember an incident quite vividly that gave me quite a scare. L. D. Pierces' grandson, Valney Fisher, spent a night with us. Valney was an avid eater and during the night he cried with a tummy ache. I gave him a medicine I though was a colic remedy. It made Valney act very peculiar. He staggered around in circles for a while. However, he soon got all right and went to sleep. They used to include an inscription on the labels, "Good for man or beast"--which you don't see any more, it seems. I had given Valney horse colic remedy!

A German Peddler made rounds and fitted patrons with spectacles. My first glasses were bought from him and I thought they did very well.

Freighting was hazardous in winter and sometimes freighters met with fatal accidents. Two of our local men met death on the road. Old timers remember Johnny Opelt and later Lute Walker who were killed in freighting accident on the way to Texhoma. Occasionally the freighters got frost bitten fingers, feet and ears. It was not uncommon in winter to get out of a bad roll covered with snow. In spite of the hardships of freighting there was the lighter side also. Once Floyd and Hiram were on the road with L. D. Pierce Sr., and his son LD Jr. both of whom we had known for many years in Johnson and Bosque Counties. After supper at the campsite the men

laughed and told tales and before turning in for the night, told a whopping big ghost tale. Later when the men were asleep, the boys decided to play a prank on them, Clanging trace chains against the wagon wheels racing around and giving out eerie screams they brought their dad's heads up against the running gear of the wagon with a bang. The men under the wagon rubbed their foolish heads sheepishly when they learned it was just ghosts on the prowl.

## **COLORADO TRIP**

Later when we got our first Model T Floyd and our boys went to Colorado on a land-scouting trip. It was spring and the morning they left was cold and misty. At Coldwater Draw, the snow was falling heavily. The men decided to stop until the weather cleared. A farmer gave them permission to stay in his barn. The cold increased and the men were concerned about spending the night in the cold barn. They got permission to take possession of a small shack in the man's yard. An old cook stove that set in the yard was hauled into the shack. They gathered loose scraps of post and lumber and built a fire in the stove. The smoke was bad but better than the bitter cold in the barn, they thought, and the Next morning, the sun was out and the men went on their way, glad to get out of the smokey shack.

They traveled over rough country and steep mountain roads on their trip. They often said had it not been for the high good humor and laughing banter of Mr. Pierce on the trip, the trip would have been very uncomfortable and boresome, but he made it fun, whenever he was present.

## **A VISIT TO IDAHO**

In 1908 Floyd took the girls and me to Guymon in the buggy where we entrained for Idaho to visit my family. I had not seen them since they had left Bosque County, years before. I had not seen them since. We corresponded however and I had learned that my sister was married to a Congressman who later became Secretary of the Interior under President Wilson. My brother, Will, was sheriff in Wisner, Idaho for about twenty years,

I was looking forward to the trip that offered the change from a jolting wagon and prairie trails, but the train trip also had its drawbacks. The girls were excited and pleased with everything especially the fruit vendor's basket. They asked for so many bananas that I was embarrassed. Vainly I tried to divert their attention to the lovely boxed lunch brought along. They were thrilled over the mountains and scenery, but that faded too. I caught Spray with her hands spread over her face and heard her say peevishly, "I'm tired or mountains I want to some

place." She meant of course the unlimited vista of the plains. Mother met us at the station in Boise in her electric car. She lived in a nice two story home and the children ran up and down the stairs in high glee. They had their first taste of different foods and their first taste of ice cream cones. They saw their first movie in Idaho. The movie fare was five cents.

## **PICKING COTTON**

My boys tell me there was no sense in this trip, but to Floyd and me it made sense. We had good crops, horses, and cattle but needed cash to hold onto our land. We lead "man power" a so Floyd loaded us into the wagon for a trip to Fredrick Oklahoma to pick cotton. I remember the trip well. We crossed the Canadian river and it was up slightly. Milo Blodgett, our neighbor, was at the crossing. He tied his lariat rope from our neck yoke to his saddle horn and helped us across the river. We camped for the night near the river. A half hour later the river crested with a trembling roar that brought down old limbs and trash in its wake. I was deeply thankful we had escaped. We returned from the cotton field with five hundred dollars in cash. I mention this fact because it was important in our stay on the plains. When a thing seemed necessary to do we just did it and didn't waste much time worrying and talking about its.

## **GOODWELL**

We moved to Goodwell in 1911 to send our children to school. We moved into a four-room house and soon our home was the meeting place of many young people. Our niece Lonnie Wilbanks came from Cleburne and stayed in our home and attended school the first year. Other Hansford County Kids: Clem Pierce, Vina, Josie, and Eva Cator, Ruth Dressen, Gladys Caldwell, and Wanda Wilbanks also were attending the school and often visited our home there. (Editors note: Eva Cator married Clem Pierces brother Allen Pierce. The author of this biography Susie Dacus was their sister. And as pointed out in preface to this biography LD Pierce's first wife Susannah Lott was sister to Susan Bowen Wilbanks Mother, Mary Jane Lott Bowden. All these folks were neighbors)

The first day of school, Faye told her teacher that she thought she was in the third grade instead of second. The teacher gave her three arithmetic problems to work and advanced her to third grade. Later on, we were very proud of Spray. She won a spelling contest and got to go to Guymon to the Interscholastic League Meet. The girls took piano lessons and their brothers used to tease them, that Old Billy had taught them to play the piano. We returned to the farm each summer. After several years the boys decided they had enough schooling and dropped out. We boarded the girls at school until they finished.

## **HAPPY TIMES**

This era for the girls was the happiest time in their lives, they say. They were growing up with the opportunity to be with young people of their own age. Faye was made happy by being voted the most popular girl in school. For her prize, a Goodwell drugstore gave her an upright Victrola, and records which she still has today.

Our boy, Virgil had his motorcycle at Goodwell. Once I had a choice of riding home with him on the motorcycle or going home by wagon, which was a day and a half's journey. I rode the motorcycle and still remember how sore my muscles were and how I hobbled stiffly about for several days. I believe it was a worse muscle soreness than from riding horseback.

The children remind me of the changes that occurred in our mode of travel during our Goodwell stay. We went there by covered wagon and commuted back and forth by motorcycle and buggy.

## **VIRGIL MARRIES**

Other changes came too. Virgil met and married Nellie Lynch at Goodwell College. She was a lovely and beautiful girl and they were happily married until tragedy separated them in death. Virgil and Nellie had no children of their own. When her sister died and left an infant daughter, they took baby Margaret and loved and reared her as their own. Virgil is now married to Hazel and they live in Hansford County where oil wells were recently found on his land.

## **HORSELESS CARRIAGE**

The Model T changed our lives. It made our world smaller and it was fun seeing the oldsters learn to drive. One old fellow, a confederate veteran, amused us by hollering "God" or "Haw" or "Whoa."! He went through a wire gate once yelling "Whoa"! He forgot to put his foot on the broke.

## **CIRCUS**

We rarely saw a Circus in the old days. Shortly before World War I, our families and the Ernest Wilbanks families went to Guymon in our now cars. When we got to the Cold Water draw it was up and washing over the bridge. The boys were anxious to get across. They put the two couples and the girls-in one car-while the others pushed. One of the boys steered the first car over while the others pushed. They secured a briat rope from the rear end of the car already across to the one we were in. They pulled us across with the boys pushing again. It was a bit scary,

but the next day when we returned home to water had receded in the draw about normal.

## **PRANKS**

Our nephew, Hix Wilbanks, was the Sheriff of Hansford County, and I remember once how he took care of one of my pranksters. My children loved to play pranks on the family. They dressed up dummies and put them in my bed to scare me and often tied each other's pants legs together and hid our clothes. Hiram's prank backfired though when he dressed up in a bonnet as Mother Hubbard in an effort to give us a bit of humor and excitement. It was reported that a woman was wandering about over the countryside, and for everyone to be on the lookout for her. If seen, they were to report to the sheriffs' office at Old Hansford immediately.

The Sheriff drove up on Hiram about a quarter of a mile from the house as he sauntered along toward us thinking, "Boy I'm gonna have some fun out Ma and the girls. They will think I'm the woman that's roaming around". As the Model T rolled to a stop, the Sheriff opened the rear door said: "Get In Lady!" Hiram astonished, stammered, "I ain't no lady, I'm just Hiram Wilbanks". Hiram was only too happy to comply. We had a lot of fun teasing Hiram about his prank for a long time. I think it was his last try.

Newcomers or tenderfeet were sometimes taken on snipe hunts or "badger fights", where they were allowed to pull the string that yanked the badger out. Newlyweds were chivareed. If the couple invited the guests in for refreshments, all went well. If not, the groom might be thrown into the pond.

Masquerade dances and play parties were usually held on Halloween and Mrs. J.H. Buchanan and Mrs. Sally Clark were chief party givers.

I think trick or treat the young folk practice now is much better than once favorite pranks of turning over outdoor toilets, changing the wheels of the buggies and wagons and putting the saddles on backward for unsuspecting individuals. Sometimes a cocklebur under a saddle blanket made the horse buck when the rider mounted. One year the boys at Old Hansford managed to place an old buggy on the porch roof of the bank building. (I am reminded of the prank, when I see an antique shop with a buggy or sleigh so placed as a signpost) The Old Hansford kids were normal mischievous boys.

## **WORLD WAR I**

We had two sons in service for their country. We took them to Guymon where they entrained for camp. Henry was soon on board a troop ship bound for France. He saw many of his comrades buried at sea as a result of the great flu epidemic.

Lawrence was stationed at Austin for the duration and was very ill with the dreaded

flu. Each day I breathed a prayer for my boys' safe return.

## **HOME FRONT**

We formed a home front by buying Liberty Bonds and working, short handed to produce good crops of grain and cattle. We were rationed on flour, sugar, and meal, and felt no hardship in our war effort. The main thing was to get the boys home again as soon as possible.

The Girls pitched in. They learned to start the Model T without cranking it. One, on horseback, pulled, the car off by a lariat rope tied to the saddle horn. Another steered. Arriving at Old Hansford for supplies, they learned to park the car on a sandy knoll in front of S.B. Hale's drug store. When we were ready to go home Mr. Hale came out and help the girls push the car off the knoll to start it.

During severe cold spells in the winter, we hauled cake to the cattle. We lost many of our cows during the winter of 1918. The girl's helped feed the cattle and tail up the weak ones. They helped Floyd skin the dead cows and store the hides for sale later. It was a great day for us when the war ended and our boys were safely home again. Hearts were filled with thanksgiving. The boys took up again where they left off and it was not long, it seemed, until life slipped again into the normal groove. They brought a new threshing machine and harvested some good crops at home for as many neighbors as possible.

## **OUR GIRLS GROW UP**

Without realizing it perhaps, our children were grown up. The boys were home from the service and our girls were attracting beaux. Spray wanted to attend the races at Dalhart with a boy friend and we gave her permission. She was stricken suddenly ill with appendicitis on the trip and was rushed to a hospital. When the message came on the telephone, Fay and I were alone at Goodwell. I asked a neighbor, Fran Sewell, to take me to my girl. His car stalled at Texhoma and a banker there, took Fay and I to Dalhart. Dr Dawson operated on Spray early the next morning and she made a splendid recovery

## **SPRAY MARRIES**

Bill and Denzil Bradford, owned the telephone company at Old Hansford. They were recently home from the war. Spray and Bill became sweethearts. I was not surprised when the question of marriage came our way. They were married at Perryton, Texas, and lived for a short time at Old Hansford.

As soon as the Sante Fe Railroad finished the extension from Shattuck, Oklahoma, Old Hansford started moving to the new town site. Spray was the first



woman resident of Spearman. They lived in their telephone building. She was the first woman resident of Spearman. She relates the early broadcasts. The first program they received was a broadcast from the Missouri State Penitentiary!

Their son Glenn, now thirty-seven years old and recently married was our first grandson.

Spray and Bill moved to Tulsa in the 1930's where they have resided since then. Recently they purchased a farm near Tulsa and are enjoying farm life and its measure of freedom.

## **NEW HOME IN TOWN**

For several years Floyd bought lumber at Texhoma while freighting. He stored it under the house on the farm. When the new town site was opened up he bought lots for a future home in the town of Spearman. When Old Hansford moved to Spearman our men folk stayed in the new town so much that I was often left alone on the farm. I was glad when Floyd decided to build our new home. Our new home was built of concrete blocks decorated by broken segments of stone protruding from the cement. The rocks were hauled from the hills on the Palo Duro creek on the Steele ranch. They run a certain quota of concrete blocks daily until enough were made for the house. When the blocks were finished Floyd hired Tom Kerr, Amarillo contractor to build the house. When the house was finished, it contained four bedrooms, a huge living room, a large kitchen and bathroom. It had a lovely Porch on two sides that formed an L shape. French windows opened onto the porch, and were a favorite with the young folks at the parties, whom I suppose liked to sit in them and hold hands.

I was more thrilled over my beautiful floor in the living room than anything about the home, I think. It was made of beautiful oak in a pattern that started in a small square in the center and laid outward around the square. Each time I looked at it I think I remember our first home on the plains and how I sewed cotton sacks together and covered the dirt floor of our dugout.

## **HOUSE WARMING**

Floyd invited the local young people and everyone else who wanted to come, to our new house for a house warming. It was the custom to dance. I could hardly stand to think of anyone dancing on my new floor and did not relish the thought at all.

That night of the dance was cold and foggy. The streets were unpaved. The men lined the walls of my new house and rested their feet against the new paint. The next day I wept to see the ruined calls. This made Floyd furious. The next week he announced another dance. I was surprised to and hurt but he offered no

explanation. (It was his custom to try to please me).

When our house was filled again with the delighted merry makers, Floyd got down his old fiddle and told our Faye that he wanted her to second for him on the piano. Jim Taylor and Clem Pierce usually furnished the music for local dances at that time, and this act was another surprise but I was still in for more. He then announced, "Boys, this dance will cost you one dollar per couple." He put his hat on the table and the boys stepped forward and put their money in the hat. They danced to his music as happily as if it were on the house. At midnight I served the usual cake and coffee and sandwiches. In the wee hours of the morning Floyd played "Home Sweet Home" and our guests disappeared. Floyd handed me the hatful of money and said, "Now Susan, get your walls repainted". Then I understood that his surprises were just his way of getting even with the boys for ruining my walls. I think the young folk just thought, "Mr. Wilbanks just wanted to show them all that he could still fiddle."

I could not help but see that times and people were changing for the entire better. The young people behaved well at our dances. The local boys looked up the boys who were new in our locality and if they were what they considered the right sort, took them around to where the girls were seated and introduced them. I never much cared for dancing when I was a girl but did go to the square dances once in a while.

I remember a dance long ago that was being disrupted by a cowboy who had too much to drink and kept yelling "Bootee, bootee, who'se got the bootees?" Everyone was getting tired of him and his nosily yelling. Finally, Floyd laid down his fiddle and pulled out his gun and shot into the rafters. After the smoke cleared away, the cowpoke was nowhere to be found and everyone had a big laugh at Floyd, when he said disgustingly "Now, who'se got the bootees"?

I was surprised by a visit of my brother from Idaho as we were finishing the house. He arrived in time to help us move in and help clean up about the place. He like the country and people very much, and planned to move to the Panhandle later. He returned another year and helped during harvest. His wife died and his plans of moving to Texas were changed.

## **LAWRENCE MARRIES**

Not long after we moved into town, Lawrence brought home a lovely bride from Oklahoma. He and Virus lived on the old homestead for many years before moving into Spearman, where they now have a lovely home. Our children, like fledglings leaving the nest, were soon trying their wings in a life of their own.

## **FAYE MARRIES**

My baby has grown up. I was reluctant to see the change in Faye. She was our tomboy and had led us a merry chase on the farm with her escapades. We could not keep her off the horses. She rode well and usually like the wind. She learned to swoop from the saddle and pick prairie flowers. In winter, she was often seen forcing her saddle horse onto the ice of the frozen lakes in our neighborhood. I tried to keep her long golden hair braided and a sunbonnet on her head but she discarded the bonnet when out of sight and her hair was soon streaming in the wind as she raced over the prairie. Years later, on a visit to Idaho, my mother talked her into dying her hair black. It was the rage then, to dye one's hair black. The result was very disappointing, and we were glad when the black turned to gold again. I was surprised when she fell in love and I could hardly believe it, until furnished with what I thought was proof. Ike had a convertible car and was taking care of five sections of his father's land near Morse, Texas. She liked the car, I thought. One day, however, he came to call on her and there was no top on his convertible. The goats on their farm ate the top off. Faye did not seem to notice the change. I realized that this courtship was going to be different, and my theory proved correct. They were married in our home by County Judge King, not long after that.

They have operated cafes in different towns. They farmed for several years during the depression. Later, in Amarillo, they operated a café and an apartment building. While they were running a café in Dalhart during the war they made a special effort to make the service men stationed at the airbase feel at home in their place. A bomber fell near the air base and their place swarmed with airmen. It was during the winter and very cold. They kept the café open all night and served hot coffee and doughnuts to the Air Force boys.

## **SWEETHEART OF THE AIRBASE**

Later the airbase surprised them by electing her sweetheart of the base. A special car took her to the base and she entered the auditorium a cry went up "Here comes our Faye." She was given a standing ovation. We were all very glad for Faye.

## **HENRY MARRIES**

Before World War II, Henry married Beatrice Walker from Perryton Texas. He moved to Dumas on two sections of land purchased for fifteen dollars per acre. He has prospered in Moore County, and has three lovely children. The eldest, a son, has presented me with a great granddaughter, my first great grandchild. He has a daughter Jane, and another son whom they named after my husband Floyd. Needless to say this pleased me greatly.

## **DUST STORMS**

There was not much prairie left when Spearman was built. What there was left soon disappeared altogether. The land was under cultivation field to field. The thirties were ushered in with poor yield and poor prices for our wheat. Drought caused the barren fields to blow. It was a crucial test of our faith, in the land that we first viewed as an ocean of billowing grass with myriad of wild prairie flowers growing abundantly in springtime. We had torn the lush roots the soil to scoop out a home. Now it was the scene of swirling, blinding dust that stung our faces and lifted into our homes like flour. We planted but did not reap. If the seed germinated, the tender blades were soon blackened and curled by the lashing dust.

## **CLOUDS APPEAR**

War clouds loomed on the horizon giant like. Italy was in Ethiopia threatening the peace of the world and Hitler was parading his Storm Troops and casting hungry eyes about for more territory. Unemployment swamped our nation. The government helped out by creating the OCC and WPA, We rented out our spare bedrooms and served special dinners at the request of numerous friends and businessmen. It was a profitable pastime for us, as all of our children were gone except our old bachelor son, Hiram and Tom Moon lived with us till he died. (He was the boy who came to work for us and stayed fifty-three years until he died). Rain clouds also came again and our land again produced bountifully. Good yield and good prices helped erase the horrors of the dust storms. On the heels of prosperity another came another World War—worse than the first—if possible.

## **WORLD WAR II**

As in World War I we bought war bonds to help in the war effort. Our daughter Spray, and son Glen, worked for Douglas Aircraft at Tulsa, Oklahoma. Later, during the war Glen served thirty-six months in the Air Corps. Luckily good crops were harvested over the nation. We were rationed on meat, sugar, shoes and tires and a few other items some things were scarcer too, but on the whole no one suffered any real hardship. Many of our women worked in factories and Ordnance Plant to help win the war foreign battlefields, some of our old friends and neighbors' sons died in foreign battlefields. We were thankful when Global victories brought Peace again to the world. Please God that it shall be preserved.

## **GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY**

Floyd and I celebrated our fiftieth anniversary March 18, 1940. A reception was held in our home in Spearman, Several hundred people came from over the Golden Spread to offer their congratulations; Bill Miller surprised us by having the High School Band march from the school and play "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" on our front lawn. It pleased us very much and Floyd invited the whole band in to sample the wedding cake and punch. J. D. Wilbanks, our nephew, and Bruce Sheets beloved local druggist came in the afternoon and made pictures of us. It was a gala day for us with all our children at home and the many old friends and neighbors.

A lovely dinner was prepared and served, and the house seemed to overflow with beautiful flowers and gifts. I remembered a day long ago when I stood before the Minister with my handsome young Lochinvar, and said, "I do". I meant it for life. I remembered stills the mischievous gleam in his eyes as he lifted them to the low hanging sun as we rode in the back of the wagon with our folks to church in the late afternoon.

## **DEATH COMES**

In the after our golden wedding anniversary, Floyd suffered a slight stroke. His health declined until he had a massive stroke that took his life November 23, 1942. My family helped me to adjust to my great loss and the change it brought in life by their love and unselfish devotion. They have all made me feel loved and wanted. They spoil me perhaps but I repeat, "I love it" .

## **GOODBYES**

My sister Mollie Selle, twice paid me a visit at my home in Spearman. The first visit was several years before Floyd's death, and she visited once afterwards. During her last visit I can't forget how thrilled she was when Faye killed a Coyote. We took her in the car with us to visit A Henry and family near Dumas. A coyote ran across an open field and Faye gave chase in the car and shot it with a 22 rifle. Sister Mollie was as thrilled as if she had shot it herself. When her visit was concluded, we took her to the air terminal in Amarillo. Before entering the plane she turned and waved at me. "This is the last time", I thought as I returned her goodbye and watched while the plane roared down the runway, arose and soared away into blue nothingness. I remembered the time in Bosque County when the covered wagon pulled away from the old homestead taking my mother and family away. I experienced the same feeling of loss and loneliness. I was glad when Faye broke my chain of thought by saying "Com on, Mamma, let's get home before dark." Sister Mollie died several years later. I never saw her again.

New trends are developed in almost every phase of life. Farming has changed in Hansford County and for the better. The good water, from great depth, that we were so fortunate to Possess in the beginning, is now channeled for irrigation purposes. Four hundred acres on the home place are irrigated now with Pumps operated by natural gas pumped across the road from a gas line. An oil well was drilled on our firm. Unlike our son Virgil who got a producer on his place, our well was plugged up as a dry hole.

The question was once bandied among old friends is what would you buy First, if you struck oil?" One old friend from a wooded country said "I want a now axe". She forgot that an axe was not necessary in our country to chop cow chips. I don't have many needs any more, and haven't the slightest idea what I would buy first, like we used to joke about, But like those who live in hopes, I think it would be fun to just stick around for awhile and see what happens next In our ever changing world-maybe my next oil well won't be a dry hole.

**THE END**