

## The autobiography of Lloyd Colfax Alcorn

I suppose it is presumptuous to assume that the history of my life would be of any interest, yet, an amateur genealogist, such as I, would be delighted to find such a story. Many facts pertinent to the goal of a genealogist may be found in the pages of accounts like this.

I am Lloyd Colfax Alcorn. I was born on the Alcorn farm about one and one-half miles south by west of Imboden, Lawrence County Arkansas, February 16, 1904. I was the eighth son born to James Grant Alcorn and Florence Lee Craig. Two of the sons, David Russel and Melborn died in infancy. This left six sons at home at the time I was born, including me. My older living brothers were, in order of their birth, Maurice Lee, James Oral, Jesse Malvern, Manford Craig and Arja Thomas. I had four brothers and a sister younger than I. They were, in order of their birth, Paul Harold, Arthur Loren, David Early, Anna Florence and Garland Grant. Certain facts of their lives are told in another account.

This account is titled ROBERT ALCORN AND HIS DESCENDENTS.

The house where I was born was a pre-civil war plantation home. It sat upon a red clay bank on the north side of Wayland Creek. Its four pillared porch looked upon the creek and the field beyond. The view stretched to the wooded hills in the background. The old home had lost much of its grandeur, but the large trees which surrounded it, the rows of daffodils which fronted the house and bloomed so profusely in the spring, the creek and the wooded hills beyond, were ever a reminder of the permanence and the beauty of nature, especially in the spring. When I was a child the old slave quarters still stood an easy pace from the kitchen door. My father soon dismantled it and from the lumber he built a chicken house in the space just beyond the old site.

When spring planting time came to the valley through which Wayland Creek ran, the world took on a new life and a new meaning.

Yet, the theme was as old as the world itself. The rebirth, the resurrection of the adornments of nature, were manifest in all the countryside.

Purple violets grew in the fence row by the creek. The blackbirds gathered in the trees to sing and carol. Some were solid black and some were black with gold on their breasts and wings. They fell in swarms from the trees to follow me as I turned the fresh earth with the plow, all the while their fellows chattered from the trees with a din of music. The air was full of the wonderful sounds of early spring. The neighbor farmer exhorting his straining team to greater effort, his young son shouting just for the joy of spring.

I left school about the middle of February 1921 to prepare the soil for spring planting. The land was mellow from the winter freezes, and the plow turned it in lifelike motion. I was young, and the beautiful days of early spring were like a tonic to the exuberant spirit of a carefree youth. I had no worries outside the normal frustrations of little chores that did not measure up to expectations.

The atmosphere was ripe for poetic expressions of the season. So, as I rode the plow, I made rhymes and committed them to memory. This shortened the day, and turned what might have been a drudgery to a pleasure.

The following is a sample of my efforts to express my thoughts.

I love the songs the brisk winds sing,  
That tell the coming of the spring.  
They sing of flowers and warbling birds,  
And meadows green and sunny.

I think I see the buds put out,  
On the leafless tree, or naked sprout.  
Then tenderly infold the drooping limbs  
In garments warm and clean.

They spread their sunny smiles about,  
Upon the gentle breeze,  
'till all the little things come out  
To build among the trees.

I was not the ideal student in school. My deportment lacked much to be desired in cooperation. My independent nature involved me in too many squabbles with my teachers. However, this trait served me well on the playground. No one abused me there. I do not mean to imply my teachers tried to abuse me. They were good to me and probably realized I was like an unbroken colt.

I remember well the Valentine's Day when I was in the fifth grade. The pupils were passing out valentine drawings and expressions of good will, and enjoying the respite from class. I was the only pupil in the whole classroom who did not give, nor receive, a valentine. At the moment I guess I was the loneliest kid in all the world. Mabel Morgan, a girl in my class, saw my embarrassment. She came to my desk and whispered to me that she was making a valentine for me but she hadn't finished it. She told me she would bring it tomorrow. She did bring it the next day. It was beautiful handmade valentine. I kept it many years. Mabel was drowned in Spring River that summer while swimming with her aunt. Her aunt also drowned. So, as I went about my chores, in memory of her kindness, I composed the following lines.

Mabel, sweet Angel now in Heaven,  
For the comfort you have given  
To a lonely one, discarded,  
May God bless your Soul departed.

May He place you, Mabel, near His chair,  
First among the Angels pure and fair.  
If place up there in Heaven be,  
May He give the first to thee.

Most of the rhymes that I composed in those days, of course, have long since been forgotten, as they should be. They served their purpose. This was great exercise for the memory. I became a memory bank for my father. I could remember where he left his tools, and made mental pictures of many things and places that interested me.

This mental picture business can also be distressing at times.

My first day in high school was about par for my encounters with my teachers. I came to school that year almost two months late. My first class that day was in the study hall. It was a privately owned school. It was supported by tuition and the Methodist Church. The superintendent of the school was conducting a class in grammar. He asked for a definition from the grammar book. He got two answers. He sought the consensus of the class on these answers. All the class participated in their choice of the answers except me. I was unsure of the correctness of the answers, and really too dumb to take sides. This infuriated the teacher, and before the whole class and the study hall, he told me in no uncertain terms how contrary and stubborn I was. In my excitement, the correct definition came to my mind. I arose unsteadily to my feet and quoted my answer. He was amazed. He told the class my answer was right. He also knew my problem was fright. From that time on he and I got along beautifully.

These are some of the memories I have retained of the valley where I was raised. I also remember the excitement one dark evening when we tried in vain to hold the front door shut while the wind seemed ready to blow the house away. That was the day a large tornado lay waste to the countryside about three miles away. Its path was about a fourth of a mile wide and everything in its path was destroyed. Houses were crumpled and blown away. Log cabins were left roofless. Large trees lay in a mass of uprooted trunks in the wooded areas. One woman caring for her maid's baby rode her destroyed home about a quarter of a mile. She was sitting in a hovering position with the baby in her lap. Parts of the destroyed house was resting on the back of the chair. Neither the woman nor the child were hurt.

I remember too, the disastrous flu epidemic of 1918. A few of our neighbors did not survive. Our family came thru in good shape.

World War One seemed to slip its ugly tentacles into our family in such a cautious way, it was hard to realize three of us were in grave peril. Maurice Lee was in the Army Field Artillery, James was in the Navy, Jesse Malvern was in the Army Infantry and Manford Craig had just signed to enter Army Officer's Training when the armistice was signed. It was not all joy and sunshine in the valley.

Just before my twentieth birthday, February 16, 1924, my family left our home to start anew in Andrews county Texas. My mother's health required the move to a drier climate. Two years later a tornado destroyed our old home and the barns.

I was the oldest of the children at home at this time. We came by passenger train. I still remember the lonesome sound of the train as it rushed through the pine woods of Arkansas. I remember the difference in the sound of the wheels as they crossed over the bridges and road crossings. I also remember the stirring wail of the whistle as the engineer warned of the approaching train at all the crossings and at every town along the way.

We arrived in Midland, Texas about three o'clock in the morning on my twentieth birthday. We had been on the road the better part of one evening, that night, the next day and all the following night. We welcomed the rising of the sun, that sixteenth day of February, 1924, with great relief. An eight hundred mile leg of our journey was complete. We had only about thirty miles more to travel.

My father hired a young man with a flat bed truck to take us the rest of the way. Our destination was a farm house near an unused shipping point on an abandoned railroad. The place was called Florey, Texas. It was northwest of Midland by ranch roads from windmill to windmill. The windmills were sometimes miles apart. The road was scarcely a trail. It wound through the ranches staying on the higher, sometimes rockier ground to avoid mud in the wet seasons.

Father and Mother rode in the seat beside the driver with Garland, the youngest child, in his lap. The rest road on the flat bed of the truck on an improvised seat. Paul and I road standing behind the cab most of the way. It was a cool day, but not cold, and the view lay before us and stretched out as far as our eyes could see. Sometimes great herds of horses were disturbed by the passing truck and ran wildly and proudly with their heads and tails held high. This was the twilight time of the importance of the horse as a power source on the farm. A well-proportioned, average-sized, unbroken ranch horse was worth about fifty dollars. Their value was equal to the cow.

A new breed of cattle, the sturdy white-faced cattle of the West, grazed the sparsely vegetated acres of this vast land. Their ferocity toward the predators of their young, especially the coyote and the wolf, was a quality important to the ranchers, as was the excellence of their meat. The herds, though few, were usually composed of great numbers.

We reached our destination without incident, and I returned to Midland with the driver and his truck. My assignment the next day was to show the way for our loaded wagons and the driver of our spare horses.

We assembled the wagons and loaded them at the railroad spur east of Midland. Then we left on what was to be my longest and coldest wagon trip.

We stopped about four miles north of Midland on the Lamesa Road at dusk to decide about camping overnight. While we were pondering this possibility, a cold blizzard of rain, which soon turned to ice, made our decision for us. We did not have camping facilities to withstand the blizzard.

Our unfortunate group resumed our journey into the blizzard and into the night. It was too cold to sit upon the wagons, so we walked beside the wagons using them as a windbreak. The thorns of the cactus and the mesquite punishing us all the while.

I was driving the leading wagon. About two hours after the beginning of the storm, I noticed the horse on the windy side was lagging and not its usual self. When I sought the reason, I found the entire exposed side of the horse was covered with a sheet of ice. I exchanged the position of the horses. I put the horse which had been working on the downwind side in the place of the freezing horse. I instructed the other drivers to do the same. This maneuver allowed the working horse to melt the ice from his side and he regained his former usefulness. As we continued into the storm, the darkness was so intense, I could not see the trailing wagons. About this time the driver of the extra horses overtook me and he told me that the driver of the rear wagon was not with us. I mounted an extra horse and went to find him. I found him sitting beside the road asleep. I awakened him and warned him that he would freeze to death if he did not continue.

Our direction of travel turned more westerly about two o'clock the following morning. The brunt of the storm was now at our backs and its ferocity was diminishing. We welcomed our first opportunity to mount the wagons and rest our thorn-tortured bodies. It was then I first noticed how ghoul-like the ice covered vegetation appeared in the early morning darkness. Nothing seemed real and familiar. I thought perhaps we could be lost. Yet this fear was not enough to prevent my falling asleep. The wear horses kept plodding along, inching their way toward the end of the journey.

Near daybreak we arrived at a windmill and a corral, which I recognized as a landmark on our route. It was about seven miles from home. We watered and fed our teams and let them rest about two hours. We found a jar of fried sausage in the wagon, and warmed the sausage over a small fire. The loaf of bread which we bought in Midland the evening before, and the warm sausage made an excellent breakfast.

We arrived home just before noon. The day was quickly warming to a comfortable temperature. The wagons were quickly unloaded and the horses were turned loose in the pasture. Then the truth of reality came home to me, we were in a house much too small for us and in a stern land that would test our durability.

We began immediately to prepare the land for the summer crops. The land seemed fertile and no plow had ever turned this land before. I remember riding the double disc plow while the snow fell in floating grace upon the upturned land. The soil had sufficient moisture to turn in mellow furrows. This was a time of budding hope forth the greenhorn sod buster, the term experienced natives applied to us. I suppose it was one of the nicer compliments they paid us.

My first experience of being the new boy in a group of inquisitive cowboys happened at the local school house one Sunday when church was about to begin. I suppose it was my untanned skin and the shy behavior which was my normal way that stirred the young cowboy. He was about my age, but weighed probably fifteen pounds more than I. Some were whittling on new pine slivers of wood that lay around the new schoolhouse. I, with nothing better to do, proceeded to do the same. The young cowboy asked to see my knife. I knew the game he was about to play, but I handed him my knife anyway. After trying my knife on his piece of pine he remarked that it was pretty good knife and that he would keep it. My response was that if he did not want me to take it away from him, he should give it back. This, of course, started a scuffle. I immediately worked a hammerlock upon his right arm and when I brought it up behind his back I did not do it gently. While I had him in pain, I informed him that I would turn him loose and that I expected him to give back my knife. Luckily that arrangement suited him. This show of courage on my part resolved any questions the other cowboys had regarding me and I was soon invited to attend the occasional social gatherings at the scattered ranches.

These gatherings were usually held at night and the guitar and the violin held sway and work their way upon the heartstrings of the participants. This influence was like wine on the mood of the revelers and what was lacking in grace was made up in fervor. Cowboys sometimes rode their horses fifty miles to attend these special events. Sometimes it would be near noon the next day before they returned home. The old songs about the cattle drives of times just past, were played and sung and danced to. Times the older ranchers now listening, remembered and participated in. These songs were well-rehearsed stories the younger cowboys loved because they were part of the heritage of this vast region of sand, wind and summer's glaring sun.

The last days of February 1924 slipped quietly by. March came with its wind and evaporated all the moisture from the thirsty land. April came and with its passing, all the promises of a good planting season evaporated. The new pioneers' hope for a first year crop was brutally dashed. Then when the middle of June came and the land was dry and hot, I, and my brothers Paul and Arthur, went to the north plains of Texas to work in the wheat harvest. This was a time before the advent of the self-propelled harvester and thresher. There were two modes of harvesting wheat. The older and now less-used method was the wheat binder. A machine which bound the stalk and the attached heads of wheat into bundles. The bundles were then shocked, or stood butt-end upon the ground and the heads up and were capped by spreading three or four bundles over the upright bundles. This was to protect the shocked wheat from the weather until the heads were dry and the grain would fall easily when the bundles were run through the threshing machine. The wheat binder was drawn by horses, usually three or four. The thresher was motor driven and was stationary. It was usually located at a point where the farmer wanted the wheat straw permanently stacked.

Horse drawn bundle wagons were used to keep a steady supply of bundled wheat on the thresher's feeder belt. Two wagons and two men were usually enough to supply the hungry thresher. Other wagons and men would move up to the thresher as the empty wagons would return to the field for more grain. There were men who stayed in the field to "pitch" wheat to load the wagons while the drivers stacked the bundles neatly and in such a way as to make them easy to unload.

The other method of harvesting was the use of a wheat header. This machine was usually propelled by four horses. The horses were hitched in pairs on either side of a beam with a wheel attached at the remote end. The wheel was operated by a rudder which the driver held between his knees. This was the way the

header was guided. It took a very experienced driver to operate this machine. The headed wheat was conveyed from the machine by a belt to a "header barge" which was driven beside the machine as it progressed around the field. The driver of the "barge" was responsible for loading the headed wheat so as to haul as large a load as possible. He then drove alongside the thresher to unload, as he did in the other type of operation.

One evening in the summer of 1924 as I was returning home across the barren land, before me in the lengthening shadows of dusk, stood the plain and lonely homes of the farmers. I was impressed by the austerity of the view before me. The picture was indelibly imprinted upon my mind. The next day as I cultivated the drought-stricken crop, I composed the following, with my Father's and my Mother's lives in mind.

Here on the wide and open plain,  
The work of man triumphs again.  
Nestled yonder against eh gray,  
Against the haze of parting day,  
Where the desert meets the sown,  
Where the cactus once had grown,  
Like specters dark and grim they stand,  
The homes of those who till the land.  
Their rugged structure speaks the plan,  
The pioneering heart of man.

The heart of him who goes before,  
To break the path and smooth it o'er.  
Who tramps the inhospitable country round  
In search of new and fertile ground.  
While thoughts of freedom prompt sweet dreams,  
Within his reach as oft it seems,  
Like butterflies that flit and play,  
Almost in hand then fly away.

As honking birds which wing their way  
Through the night's mysterious gray,  
To lands of plenty past the dawn  
Where the stream of life flows gently on,  
He toils till darkness blurs his sight,  
That with tomorrow's coming light,  
Will haste the product of his field,  
And find his phantom dreams more real.

'Tis hope that brings him forth each morn,  
to plow the maize or hoe the corn.  
Ah!, well for all that hope was born!  
The rose which grows upon the thorn.  
Yet not for pride of wealth alone,  
Would he, his right of birth disown,  
To wrest his living from the soil,  
'Midst nature's green to dream and toil.

Thus he finds his life's bright star,  
In the fertile lands afar,  
Where nature and the love of God,  
Tug at his heart in the upturned sod.

Another composition in the summer of 1924 was the following.

The sun has set,  
Night is drawing fast the net,  
Imprisoning day throughout the land.  
Children cease to play,  
They 'tend the chores on every hand.  
The plowman wet,  
With undried sweat,  
Relieves his nags of bit and chain,  
And breathes a prayer for needed rain.  
He casts his gaze from tangled chain,  
To crusted maize and withered grain.  
His beseeching eyes,  
Search the distant skies,  
For sign of rain.  
Cloud banks arise off the distant rim,  
And mount the skies.  
The cool, fresh wind,  
Sweeping o'er the plain,  
Bears the sweet scent of falling rain.  
It casts on high,  
Almost to the lowering sky,  
The golden sand.  
Then drift on drift of pouring clouds,  
Send forth the welcome rain,  
And set the flying sands adrift,  
Upon a sea of grain.  
While from his chair,  
Beside the open door,  
The farmer rests in peace.  
Then from the dying embers,  
In his honest heart,  
He takes up hope again.  
He casts from him,  
Those terrible fears and doubt,  
To wallow and to perish,  
In the storm without.

The summer of 1925 was as disappointing as 1924. Again the wheat harvest in the north plains of West Texas provided Arthur, Paul, and me a place to work and earn our way.

At the end of spring term 1925 Arja Thomas left Purdue University. He and Malvern brought a seven passenger "Jeffery" automobile with them to Texas. Manford also came from Los Angeles and brought with him a 1921 "490" Chevrolet roadster. These cars were left with us and they supplied our transportation to obtain supplies from Seminole, Texas, the nearest town, about twenty miles away.

Arja, Paul, Arthur and I strapped a bedroll onto the back of the roadster, we wired a wooden nail keg onto the right fender for an extra seat and we sought work and picked apples in the Pecos Valley of New Mexico. We picked cotton in the fields of the south plains of West Texas. In the spring of 1926 we worked in the oil fields at McCamey, Reagan County, Texas and returned there in the fall and became permanently employed.

Arja and Paul were employed by The Texas Company, and Arthur and I were employed by Dixie Oil Company, a subsidiary of Standard of Indiana.

There in the valley where the night singing birds charmed their listening mates, in this valley which fifty million years ago was the great Permian Sea, we took our places in the long procession of innumerable

hosts from the animal kingdom and the family of man which down through the ages sought out that ancient sea for life support.

Some in their time, when the sea was young, roamed the length and breadth of that vast sea. Ages saw their kind live and die and in another age disappear. When the waters of that great sea were emptied to the oceans by the rising of the land, the remaining waters were trapped and isolated in many shallow seas. Great numbers of marine life and hordes of animals became trapped in the evaporating seas.

The volcanoes which arose to the west of the old sea, the terrific winds which accompanied their eruption, in the remaining ages filled the shallow seas. Torrential rains also fell upon the land and washed millions of tons of sediment over the beds of the old seas. The remains of the inhabitants of the great Permian Sea, including the massive vegetation which grew in the beds of the old seas, were covered. The heat and the pressure of the earth's overburden were sufficient to refine the remains of this great burial ground into petroleum with the passing of millions of years.

We in our time, following the destiny of producers of petroleum, exploited the hidden beds of that old sea. We drilled holes into the earth to thousands of feet in depth. We located the petroleum bearing stratus which were formed in the beds of the dying seas. We cased or sealed the holes to their entire depth with tubes of steel. These tubes were assembled and lowered into the earth by connecting individual lengths of pipe to one another until we had lowered an entire leak-proof tube to the depth of the drilled hole. This tube was additionally sealed by pumping a cement and water slurry into the tube. This slurry was then discharged through the bottom end of the tube and carefully left in place as a seal between the drilled hole and the tube. The placement of the seal was accomplished by inserting a plug made of wood, with a piece of canvas belting nailed to it, immediately after the cement slurry. The plug was sized to fit the tube loosely. The canvas belting was slightly larger in order to wipe the cement from the inside walls of the tube. A steel wire line measuring device, with a pressure resisting pack off assembly, was then attached to the tube. A lead weight and the wire line was then free to follow the plug under pressure. Water, or mud-weighted water was then pumped into the tube to force the plug to the desired depth. A wire line metering device indicate the movement and the depth to the plug as it was being forced into place.

This method of plug placement was used in the late 1920 to late 1930 period. As drilling depths increased a method of plug placement was employed which did not require the wire line measuring device. A steel unit known as a float shoe was attached to the bottom end of the first joint of pipe lowered into the drilled hole and another unit known as a float coupling was attached to the top end of the same joint. The interior of these units were drillable and the exterior remained a part of the tube when drilling resumed after the cement seal had hardened. A waiting period of forty-eight to seventy-two hours was usually allowed for the cement seal to harden. The cement seal placement was accomplished prior to the resumption of drilling. It was accomplished in this manner. When the completed tube was lowered to the desired depth and the walls of the drilled hole were conditioned to prevent lost circulation by circulating drilling fluid an optimal time to observe the condition of the drilling fluid and the full flow at the surface, the cement slurry was pumped into the tube. Then a rubber plug was released behind the slurry and was forced down by pumping drilling fluid behind the plug until the plug contacted the float coupling. Sudden increase in surface pressure indicated the contact.

In the late 1920s in the oil fields near McCamey, Texas, cable drilling tools were widely used. The open hole method of completing oil wells prevailed. Gun perforating the steel casing had not been developed. Therefore the steel tube was set before the drill bit reached the oil-producing strata. A smaller bit and string of drilling tools were used to penetrate the oil zone. This method of completion allowed oil to flow to the surface while drilling resumed. The hazard of fire and explosion was always present. Danger was our constant companion while we went about our daily chores. Death was a grim reminder of the price for carelessness.

We bought a tent and slept amid the grease wood vegetation on the leased property of the oil companies. We ate our meals at a nearby cookshack which was operated by an oilfield family. We later moved into a company-owned bunkhouse. We also bought a small shack which we furnished as a kitchen and cooked our own means.

Our pay was five dollars a day for nine hours' work, or more if necessary, or one hundred fifty dollars a month.

One morning in the summer of 1927 my foreman came to the site where his roustabout gang was working. He chose me from the gang and told me to come with him. While we were driving through the oil

property he told me that I was to replace a young man who had been working tour (pronounced "tower") on tank battery number one.

I asked him if the young man had quit. He said, "No, I found him dead on the tanks this morning; he was the victim of hydrogen sulfide gas." We called it "poison gas." This was a very sobering moment. Naturally, I wondered why I was chosen as a replacement. Could it be that I was the most expendable? Or did he think that I was more apt to weather the extra exposure to accidental death? The fact that a young man had lost his life on this job just this morning was of great concern to me. It could also happen to me. I think I worried more about what an accident to me would do to my frail mother. She loved her children dearly. She probably would not survive such a tragedy. On this kind of job a man worked alone. My tour was from midnight to noon. The incidence of inhaling gas around tanks and equipment is about twice as prevalent at night as in the daytime. I suppose this is because the wind is usually calmer at night. A brisk wind will blow the gas away. Also sight is narrowed to about five percent by the use of an electric lantern.

There were only three wells which flowed into this tank battery. The villain of the three was Dixie Oil Col. J. D. Hughes #2. Its production at this time was about 2500 barrels per day. The oil and gas separation equipment was much too small for this enormous volume. Gas seemed to escape everywhere. The tanks also were too small. We filled two at a time to prevent unavoidable overflow. The flow control valves at the tanks were situated at the most hazardous place. It was almost impossible to open or close them without exposure to breathing poisonous gas. In this instance, the valves were close to the pressure relief lids of the tank through which various operations in checking the fluid in the tanks were performed. The high rate of well flow in this instance caused the lids to stand partially open. This allowed gas to vent around the control valves. The operator, in a careless moment, might catch a breath of poisonous gas. This happened to me about a month after I took this job.

It was after midnight on this potentially fateful day that the J. D. Hughes well #2 began its powerful discharge of oil and gas into the two tanks which were open to receive its flow. I was alerted by the loud venting of gas from the separating equipment and the ominous rumble of high volumes of fluid moving through the lines and equipment into the tanks. I knew the tanks would overflow during this surge. I hurriedly picked up my electric lantern and ran to the tank battery. I opened the valves on two other tanks and began closing the valves on the fast-filling tanks. As I closed the valve on the last tank, I was holding my breath. I had carelessly become hurried, and being almost breathless, I caught a breath of gas over the venting lid. Just one breath of poison gas will paralyze the lungs. I felt the effect instantly. I knew that if I survived I would have to get clear of the tank battery. It was dark. I ran across about twelve feet of the tank where I had closed the valves. I luckily located the two 12-inch boards on top of the second tank where the stairway was. As my hands caught the top of the stairway handrail, I thought my lantern went out. I was gasping for breath and losing consciousness. My only thought at the moment was that I must get down the stairway and get clear of the tank battery. Somehow I made the next 25 feet in an unconscious state. The next conscious moment was when I felt someone pick me up.

I may owe my life to this good Samaritan. Maybe it was not by chance that he came along at that moment. He was a short distance away when he saw me. He was on his way from the bunk house to a cook shack which stayed open all night. The cook shack was near the tank battery. After a short period, I was able to complete my tour.

Have learned in later years that the vital organs of the body, when they have ceased to function, must have a shock or sudden movement to restart their normal functions. Not every potential victim of hydrogen sulfide gas reacts to inhaling it as I did. It seems longer exposure to less concentrated gas with air will dull the sense and the victim may stay in the exposed area until he drops in his tracks. This happened to a co-worker of mine twice in 1927. In both instances, I caught him by the armpits and pulled him to an area of fresh air and gave artificial respiration according to the example in my physiology book.

Poison gas in this area of West Texas killed more men than were killed by moving machinery and explosions. I had two other close experiences with poison gas in the remaining 37 years of oil field work. I became, in later years, a production foreman and was responsible also for lease equipment construction. During these years I relied upon the experiences of the past to guide me in devising equipment and construction design to promote the safety of the operating personnel. At the time of the close experience with poison gas I described above, the production of the wells on the Dixie Oil Co. lease was in steep decline. It was not long afterward that the pumper or operator could be more relaxed. We installed a small electric plant to supply electricity for the lease office and three residences on the lease. Our doghouse, or

very small office where we kept books of posted production, was also supplied with electricity. The man on tour was responsible for the continuous operation of the plant.

I shortened the long nights by reading paperback novels, and on infrequent occasions composed short poems. One cool, quiet moonlit night in the summer of 1927 I heard a lovely bird burst into song. To me his singing was the only sound in the whole valley. After listening to his song, I composed the following lines:

What in the Soul of man  
Thrills to the song of birds?  
Tonight by the desert moon  
A nameless warbler of the desert  
Tweedles his love to the world,  
And my heart responds to his song.  
In the beginning was the scheme thing?  
And the bird, my fellow in the act,  
Sings his part in the role of life  
As I am acting mine.  
So, He the Master of life,  
Made my soul in His way.  
He taught my heart to sing  
And thrill to the mood of the bird.

Soon production declined in the area of McCamey, Texas, and the great oil field of East Texas was discovered by a "wildcatter" named "Dad" Joiner. Men were being transferred from West Texas to East Texas. My gang pusher, Charley Walters, and family were moving to East Texas. I said good-bye to him and his family on the street in McCamey, Texas. He and Mrs. Walters were especially friendly toward me. The picture of them and their little six-year-old daughter saying good-bye there on the street moved me to write the following lines:

### **To a Little Girl**

As the bud precedes the flower  
And passing minutes count the hour  
So childhood, bursting with joy incomplete,  
Throws itself at girlhood's feet.  
And girlhood, with all its mirth and boundless joy,  
Its sorrow, and all its mystery  
Creates the woman you are to be.  
I stood at swollen river's edge  
Where it hurled itself from a rocky ledge,  
And tore with maddened fury from its bank,  
Uprooted trees and bushes tall and rank.  
I thought as I watched its swift, receding waves  
How like man, when his own life he braves,  
This tranquil stream of yesterday  
Now fighting madly on its way,  
The tiny streams that are the river's source  
Supply for it, its gushing life and force  
And treacherous currents by calm beguiled  
And furnish, too, its fury mad and wild.  
Then let your girlhood build your future so  
That where you walk another may in safety go,  
For our lives, like little streams,  
Outgrow themselves and flood another's dreams.

## A Plowing Poem

I love the song the brisk winds sing  
That tell the coming of the spring.  
They sing of flowers and warbling birds  
And meadows green and sunny.  
I think I see the buds put out  
On leafless tree or naked sprout  
And tenderly enfold their drooping limbs  
At first exposed to cold  
In garments warm and clean,  
Then spread their sunny smiles about  
'Til all the little things come out  
to build among the trees.

About Mother

There's a place that is vacant and an empty chair  
In a house that is lonely still,  
For a wife and a mother is buried there,  
Beneath the sod on that distant hill.

As she died, her soul ascended into heaven,  
And as waters from the sea hurries on  
To the source from whence it was taken,  
So, a wife and a mother has gone.

Those whom she left, who fondly remember  
Her goodness, her gentleness, and the depth of her love,  
Shall receive her blessing, gentle, as the dews of September,  
Refreshed, as she rests in the home of her savior above.

**(Untitled, 1924)**

The sun has set,  
Night is drawing fast the net  
Imprisoning day thru out the land.  
Children cease to play,  
They tend the chores on every hand.

The plowman wet,  
With undried sweat,  
Relieves his nags of bit and chain  
And breathes a prayer for needed rain.  
He casts his gaze  
From tumbled chain  
To crusted maize  
And withered grain.  
His beseeching eyes  
Search the lowering skies  
For sign of rain.

Cloud banks arise,  
From out the western sea

And mount the skies.  
The cool, fresh wind  
Sweeping o'er the plain  
Bears the sweet scent  
Of falling rain  
And casts on high  
Almost to the darkened sky  
The golden sand.  
Then drift on drift  
Of pouring clouds  
Send forth the welcome rain,  
And set the flying sand adrift  
Upon a sea of grain.

While from his chair  
Beside the open door  
The farmer rests in peace,  
Then from the dying embers  
In his honest heart,  
He takes up hope again  
And casts from him  
His terrible fears and doubt  
To wallow and to perish  
In the storm without.

**Thursday night**  
**Nov. 2, 1934**  
**Penwell, Texas**

Dearest Elsie,  
How I miss your presence, sweet,  
And the patter of little feet,  
In this silent, lamp-lit room.  
Oh, it's silent, cold with gloom!  
The wind, never-ceasing yaps  
On my door. I think perhaps  
'Tis you, walking on the floor.  
Soft taps I hear upon the door,  
Then I turn in glad surprise,  
But the pleasure in me dies,  
When I see before my eyes  
Not the form I hoped to see,  
But the word "eternity!"  
Oh, my Muse has failed me so,  
And I chide her lest she go  
Leaving this upon the sheet  
Instead of phrases soft and sweet.  
In my heart's a hidden scroll  
That you love must yet unfold.  
'Tis written only for you to see,  
The All in All you mean to me.  
Again you walk upon the floor  
And gently tap at the door  
I turn in glad surprise

There you stand before my eyes!  
Not the word "eternity."  
With out-stretched arms inviting me  
You are mine eternally!  
With love,  
Lloyd.

The lonely vigil I kept during those long nights was conducive to wanderings of the mind and fanciful excursions into poetical expression. Another example is the following:

As I stand in the darkness here tonight,  
Watching the shadows blend with the light,  
As it falls through the door from the lamp within  
I think of things as they might have been.

And my little house out here in the hills  
Loses the shadows that are vales and rills  
And transplants itself in a land afar  
Where the plains are wide and the oil wells are.

And in the light she's standing there,  
Her thoughtful face a gentle stare.  
She's standing in the light within the door  
Watching me leave to return no more.

Did her heart, like mine, beat slow with pain,  
And regret that fate should put us twain?  
Does she think of me as she thought then?  
Or dream of things as they might have been?

Vain are dreams that fill my days.  
And vain is the vision in the light's bright rays.  
But on through the years my life will grow,  
Better and sweeter for these I know.

Now the light on her hair has lost its sheen  
And shadows take the place where stood Pauline  
And my little house out here in the hills  
Claims again its vales and rills.

But my heart's astray in a land afar  
Where the plains are wide and the oil wells are.

Another example of my efforts to dispel the effects of those lonely house is the following. By way of explaining the setting of the following lines, there was a single grave beside the road near our orchard on the old farm in Arkansas. The grave was there when my father bought the place in 1903. As I grew up, I had the impression that this was the grave of Mollie Pratt, the young daughter of Mr. Pratt from whom Father bought the farm. Mollie's name was immortalized each spring in our front yard by the blooming of luxuriant daffodils which spelled out her name.

Here you lie, beside the road,  
Beneath the tall cedar's shade  
The mute stones in disarray,  
Weeds grown tall, unstayed.

The aged evergreen quietly marks the place,  
The span of time, decades since your face  
Adorned the family circle.  
There's none to tell how the trembling hand  
Of him, who in his grief,  
Marked this, your plot of land.  
How from its natural site  
He dug the living evergreen,  
And put it near your head,  
To stand a sentinel, to forever shade  
You from the summer's boiling sun,  
A bed he made, and planned it well.  
You would have the living evergreen to see  
In the dark, cold rainy winter days to be.  
Now the aged tree, marked by drought  
And scars of time, soon shall die,  
And in mourning fall across your bed.  
Thus an unknown grave  
Shall forever by your resting place.  
There'll be none to tell  
As the immortal poet wrote,  
"When the first clod fell  
on your new made coffin lid,  
some broken heart wept tears of blood."  
"But what if men forget  
The greave where you were laid?  
Nor yet, in their fondest dreams appear  
Your once smiling visage?  
They too, must feel the pangs of death  
And like yourself be mourned  
And laid in the cold earth and forgotten  
And unsuspecting lads plow o'er their graves."  
"But when the dead's last hour shall come,  
And prince and peasant, lying side by side,  
Must be awakened for their reward,  
The Spirit of the Lord shall pierce this humble grave,  
As gladly as to burst the vaulted roof  
Of a more magnificent sepulcher  
Or to open the golden tombs of mighty kings."

The lines in quotation marks were quoted from memory and may be in some instances in error. Nor can I recall the name of the poet I quote.

But I have wandered far from my original intent to relate the experiences of my life. I have acted like young boys who, at late milking time, sent to the pasture to bring in the cows, go chasing after fireflies instead. Or, like the Alcorn boys, neglecting their cotton-hoeing chores, mirror their eager faces in a quiet spring-fed woodland pool to vainly trace the lightning-fast zigzag path of frightened water bugs. Yet these excursions into poetic expression brightened what might have been a dull existence, just as the sudden freshets of a summer stream temporarily wash the thirsty land.

On April 1, 1929, I left my oil field job and McCamey, Texas, and went to San Angelo, Texas. I intended to visit my brother Arja Thomas in San Angelo and then go to Omaha, Nebraska, to train as an airplane mechanic. This interest in airplanes seemed to awaken in Tommy a venturesome spirit. We spent some time at the San Angelo airport. It was a small county airport where private barnstorming activities were in progress. We rode in a small biplane with a World War I battlefield pilot. We told him of our interest in airplanes. He

told us if we would come to his base in San Antonio, Texas, he would sell us an airplane and teach us to fly it.

That seemed to me to be a good idea, so the next week we went to San Antonio to further explore the proposition. Our friend, the pilot, was not there. He was on another barnstorming trip. We were at a loss of new ideas. As we were walking on Commerce Street in San Antonio, Tommy was expressing his level-headed opinions about our proposed airplane venture. He said, "Lloyd, we have no more use for an airplane than we have for that pool table there." He pointed to a pool table in Ed Freidrick Mfg. Co. show window. His level-headedness penetrated the euphoria in my brain about airplanes. I caught him by the arm and said, "You are right." I said, "Let's look at the pool table." We went inside and within thirty minutes bought eight pool tables. The cost was \$2400. Now this unexpected turn of events left us somewhat bewildered as to the final outcome of such hasty action. We told our new-found supplier to hold the tables in storage until we called him, and went to San Angelo.

The next week we scouted the busiest streets of San Angelo for a possible location for our pool tables. We located one on North Chadbourn Street at Chadbourn and College intersection. We prepared the building for the tables and called our supplier. This put us into business and in direct conflict with the County Attorney's office. Things were not what they seemed. Everyone who wished was operating pool recreation halls. To our surprise the County Attorney advised us it was unlawful, and cited the law to us. This was our first introduction to the vagaries of law and the sometimes shadowy contrivances of people who administer the law. We informed the County Attorney that since we had innocently invested our money, we were forced to continue to operate until we could recover our investment.

He really was not interested in closing our establishment. He was establishing a base from which to occasionally fine us \$48.70 for operating an unlawful establishment. We did not have any sale of drinks or food at our establishment. There was a café and a drug store next door. That seemed a fair setup to us.

This exclusion of drinks and food assured us of a place of reasonable cleanliness. We survived the summer months of 1929 in our place of business and fall brought us a comfortable return of our investment.

It was in the fall of 1929 that my life took a new, happier and more responsible turn. I met Elsie Marguerite Martin. We were inseparable for the next few months. Rather I should say we have been inseparable these fifty-one years. I had a good car and sufficient money to buy gasoline and cold soft drinks. We visited all the outlying towns and villages and learned all historical places and heard the folklore tales that were native to the area. Mr. David Davis Martin, Elsie's father, knew them well, and he was a good story teller. He was a neighbor to the Ketchum brothers and their friends.

The Ketchum gang was a notorious outlaw gang whose main source of income was from train and bank robberies. Their home base was Knickerbocker, Texas, a village near San Angelo. They did not ply their trade in that area, but rather confined their operations to faraway places such as New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming. Thus Knickerbocker, their home, was a place of security and where they squandered their new-found wealth. After a time, the Sheriff of Tom Green County was alerted that a robber gang with a price on their heads was based in his county.

They were no longer secure at home, but returned clandestinely at times. Their hideouts became the outlaws' hardships for they were not safe at any place. Caves in the Guadeloupe and the Rocky Mountains became their homes. Even these were not secure, for the hunters of the hunted were never idle and one by one the outlaw gang met violent death until only two Ketchum brothers survived. They were engaged in battle while committing a train robbery. One was killed and Tom Ketchum, the leader, was captured and sent to prison for life.

Another story of the area concerned a fierce, nomadic Comanche Indian Tribe.

Along Dove Creek above Knickerbocker is an outstanding rocky hill with its steep, bluff-like west side standing as a promontory above the tree-lined winding path of Dove Creek. It still retains its wild, mysterious aura. The hill is known as War Whoop Mountain in folklore.

Here, as the old-timers' story goes, a proud Comanche Indian chief and tribe stood their ground against a detachment of United States Army men from Fort Chadbourne, Texas. Fort Chadbourne was an army post beside the south bank of the North Concho River on the outskirts of San Angelo, Texas.

The mountain was fiercely contested and losses were heavy on both sides. The Indians occupied the crest of the mountain and were on the defensive. The Indian chief's daughter was killed during the heat of the battle, and when nightfall came as the two sides warily but quietly stood their ground, the Indian chief buried his daughter, who wore a jewel-studded gold breastplate, in a small cave atop the mountain. He

sealed the cave and left only a subtle marking to commemorate his daughter. Then in the small hours of the morning the Indians one by one retreated down the bluff into the heavily-wooded area by Dove Creek and silently escaped their foe. The story of the burial of the princess, according to legend, was told by a Comanche Indian who years later appeared in the neighborhood of War Whoop Mountain. Did he tell an actual story or did he want to continue the torment of the greedy white man? Seventy-five years later, when I visited the mountain, it bore many signs of fortune hunters who sought the grave site of the Indian princess.

Then, there was another tale of buried wealth. It concerned bars of pure gold which were part of the treasury of Mexico. You could title the story, "Maximilian's Gold." Its setting is in Castle Gap, a prominent east-west pass between very rough terrain about halfway from Crane, Texas, to McCamey, Texas. The story goes that when Maximilian, the Emperor of Mexico, was forced to flee his country because of the success of the insurgents who overthrew him, he looted the treasury and fled north to the rough, uninhabited terrain along the Rio Grande on the Texas border. He hoped perhaps by this route to reach New Orleans. Here at Castle Gap he was overtaken and during a losing battle he buried the treasure that he carried. According to the story, it was never recovered. The scars that exist in Castle Gap bear mute testimony to the belief of some that the story is true. I visited the Gap in 1927. I was employed just three miles away in another gold-seeking venture. It was "black gold."

These stories of folklore furnish a proper atmosphere for the recounting of the genealogy of Elsie Marguerite Martin.

On one side of her genealogical background is the Martin family, some of whom lost their lives and homes in Georgia because of the Civil War and some of whom came west to Texas to begin again. On the other side, the maternal side, is the sad and sorrowful story of the Cherokee Indian tribes of Georgia, who were persecuted and deprived of their ancestral land and homes during the Andrew Jackson administration of the United States government.

The story reveals how some came to Texas where the nomadic, savage Comanche Indian tribes lay claim to the vast plains, the Hill Country, and the Piney Woods of Texas. Here in North Texas and the Piney Woods, the Cherokee Indians undertook to establish a new nation. They prospered for a while and helped Sam Houston and his army gain Texas independence from Mexico. Then again, unfounded mistrust of the Cherokee Indians by the white man resulted in strife and misery to the Indians and most were driven into Oklahoma.

Ghost voices of a wronged and deprived people cry out in anguish from the pages of history, and we cry with them.

Also on the maternal side of Elsie Martin's ancestry is the interesting story of Joseph Baker, Elsie's great-grandfather. Joseph Baker was a son of a wealthy Georgia planter whose grandfather settled in Maryland in the early 1700s. Joseph Baker's family disowned him when he married a Cherokee Indian girl. It is said that Joseph was of Dutch ancestry. When Joseph married Toppo Jones, a daughter of a tribal chieftain of the Cherokee Indian Nation, he cast his lot with his adopted people.

All this bitterness was the result of the struggle between the white settlers and the Cherokee Indians over land and living space. Mr. Jones, the Cherokee chieftain, apparently renounced his Indian name and took the name of Jones to smooth his association with the white people. It was all to no avail. Greed prevailed and Mr. Jones, his wife and family, including Joseph Baker and Toppo Jones Baker and their three small children, decided to move westward. This was about 1850.

They apparently settled for a time in a small community called Cherokee, near Tuscumbie, Alabama. Toppo Jones Baker died and was buried here in 1851. It is not known why Toppo died. Martha, her oldest child, was about ten years old. Martha told how she, her mother, and her small brother and sister lay hiding in a ditch all night while a band of Indians raided their cabin home. This raid apparently took place in Alabama.

The next move of Mr. Jones, his family and Joseph Baker and his motherless children was to Lamar County, Texas. This move took place about 1852. Martha told of living here with her grandparents and it was in this county that Martha married Orien Atkins in 1861. It appears that Mr. and Mrs. Jones died before Martha married Orien Atkins. Orien brought his new bride to Whitewright, Grayson County, Texas. However, I think their farm was in Fannin County, just across the county line from Whitewright. Here their first child, Sarah, was born in 1864.

Joseph Baker, after his children married, perhaps with his Indian brothers-in-law left Lamar County, Texas, and went to San Jose, California. Joseph died and was buried there in 1868.

Orien Atkins and his wife Martha lived in Fannin County about a year. Then they moved to Bexar County, Texas, in 1865 before Tom Green County was formed from Bexar County. A short while afterwards Tom Green County was formed. They ranched in Lipan Flat, an area by today's map about ten miles south of San Angelo, Tom Green County. It was here in Lipan Flat along the Kickapoo Creek where their first son, John, was born, March 16, 1866. He died about 1945.

Orien Atkins supplied meat for the soldiers at Fort Concho; he sometimes supplemented buffalo meat for beef. This was about 1870. Orien and Martha saved the wool from the buffalos and they made a mattress for their bed of buffalo wool. This mattress of buffalo wool was renovated by Western Mattress Company of San Angelo for Elsie about 1968. It now is on one of our beds.

Orien and Martha also lived in Ben Ficklin, a small village on the south side of the Main Concho River, below the juncture of the Middle Concho with Spring Creek and the South Concho River. They lived here when these rivers flooded and destroyed Ben Ficklin. All that remains of the community is the cemetery which is now in the southwest part of San Angelo. When Ben Ficklin washed away, the town site of San Angelo was laid out on the north side of the North Concho River opposite Fort Concho, which was situated on the south side of the river near the juncture of the North and the Main Concho rivers. Orien had a slaughter pen north of San Angelo. This area is now part of the city of San Angelo.

Orien's and Martha's children were, in order of their birth, Sarah, born in Fannin County; John, the first white child born in Tom Green County; Mary; Walter; David; and Lillie Angelina, Elsie's mother. Lillie Angelina was born at Ben Ficklin, January 26, 1877. Her father, Orien, died of pneumonia July 24, 1877, after a buffalo hunt, when Lillie was six months old. Martha made gloves of cowhide and deerhide for the soldiers at the fort to support her family and then bought a small farm at Knickerbocker. The farm was across Dove Creek from Knickerbocker. It was about a mile north of the village.

Martha Mary Baker Atkins supported her children on the farm by raising vegetables, selling butter, and sewing for ladies of the village. Her oldest child, Sarah, was about thirteen years old, and John, her oldest boy was about eleven. Her heritage of stoicism and endurance from her Cherokee Indian mother and the neat and genteel heritage from her father's Dutch ancestry, combined with the hard life of a frontier woman, developed in Martha an unusual person of high character and personal pride of appearance. Martha died in August 1923. She was buried in the Mark Ryan cemetery plot in the Fort Stockton cemetery.

Orien Atkins was buried in the old San Angelo cemetery which was later converted to a playground for the San Angelo High School. His grave site apparently was never relocated. Sarah "Sally" Baker, Martha's only sister, married Virgil Ryan, older brother of Mark Ryan. Their last years were spent near Knickerbocker. Their graves are believed to be in the Knickerbocker cemetery. Jeff Baker, Martha's only brother, remained in Fannin County.

Orien Atkins' father, Jacob Atkins, died near Fayetteville, Arkansas. Orien's mother, Cynthia Ann Bixley Atkins, died in Kansas.

Sarah Atkins married Polk Baze. They built their home in Knickerbocker of native stone. The home still stands and is occupied. Their children were Grace, Nettie, and Roxie.

John Atkins married Maud Duncan. Their children were Anise, Mackinley, Aubrey, and Edith. There were others who died in infancy.

Mary Atkins married Mark Ryan. Their home was in Fort Stockton, Texas. Their children were Ladonia, Geneva, Lela, Gertrude, Florence, Ben, Lawrence, Virgil, Wayne, and Lillie, who died young. Walter Atkins married Pearl Gallemore. They lived and raised their children near Christoval, a town about sixteen miles south of San Angelo, on the South Concho River. It is about eight miles from Knickerbocker. Their children were George, Nova, Blake, Ted, Orien, Kathleen, Mary, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Ruth.

David Atkins married Sabrina Banner. They had one child, Ruby.

Lillie Atkins married David Martin. Their children were Ida, Claude, Agnes, Cecil, Archie, Clarence, Elsie, and Lillie.

Many of the descendants of Orien and Martha are buried in the Knickerbocker cemetery.

The story of the tragic events which cursed the life of David Atkins reveals the raw temperament and violent mood of the times after the Civil War. His was a story of a young man in his early twenties with a wife and a little baby. He was caught up in the mood of the times in a moment of thoughtless bravado.

One evening at a local dance while he was dancing with a young woman, a young friend excitedly told him the young woman's boyfriend had threatened to kill him. He saw the angry young man approaching the

door from the outside with a gun in his hand. He shot at David. David jumped behind the door, pulled his gun and shot through the door. He killed the young man on the outside.

Instead of relying on the court to exonerate him, he left home and became a hunted outlaw. He shared the hiding places of the Ketchum gang. He did not participate in their robbery activities. He shipped out to South Africa and fought in the Boer War. When he returned, many years had elapsed since he had become an outlaw. He was an older and a wiser man. He contacted the sheriff of Tom Green County and turned himself in. All his records had been destroyed. There was no charge against him. Yet he insisted on clearing his name. A trial was held and he was convicted of manslaughter on his own testimony and sent to prison. When he was released years later, he was a homeless, broken old man.

The Martin family, the paternal side of Elsie's genealogical background, were of Scotch-Irish descent. Elsie's great-grandfather came to America from Ireland in the early 1800s. Her grandfather, Daniel Martin, was born in Rome, Georgia, November 7, 1832. He married Emily Fitzpatrick in Rome, Georgia, February 4, 1857. They had four children: Wilkerson Z; Francis Asbury; David Davis, Elsie's father, born October 30, 1860; and Lindsay, their youngest child.

Elsie's grandfather, Daniel Martin, rode away from his farm on his horse in 1863 to join a regiment of Tennessee volunteers to the army of the Confederacy. He apparently was never registered as a Tennessee volunteer. (We could find no record of his enlistment.) About three weeks afterward, two Southern soldiers appeared at his wife's home and reported that he had died of dysentery while they were bringing him home. They buried him beside the road where he died. His widow, Emily Fitzpatrick Martin, took her family of small children and went to live with her father. He was a farmer. Mr. Fitzpatrick had recently lost his wife. Then the failure of the Confederate Army to establish the legitimacy of The Confederate States of America brought untold hardship upon the majority of Southern people. The Martins and the Fitzpatricks were dispossessed of their homes in Georgia, and they started west as many others did during that terrible holocaust.

They spent several years in Tennessee. Then the Martins settled in Mansfield, Texas, near Fort Worth. Emily Fitzpatrick Martin died here. She was buried in the Mansfield cemetery in 1884. Emily's death left the Martin young men without ties and they scattered and came farther west. David Martin, Elsie's father, went to California by train. The train was attacked by a band of Indians. The train crew ignored the attack, saying that the best way to deal with this situation was to pretend it didn't happen. The Indians would probably be discouraged and would not make another try. David returned from California within a year and settled at Knickerbocker.

Wilkerson Martin never married. Francis Asbury married Sally Gipson. Their children were Walter, Era, Leoda, Oscar, Earl, Lester, Arvey, and Audis. David Davis married Lillie Angelina Atkins. Lindsey married Laura Gipson. Their children were Lottie, Mina, Otim, Clinton, and Clyde.

David Martin met and married Lillie Atkins at Knickerbocker. They were married June 17, 1891. He and his brother Wilkerson and his brother-in-law John Atkins drilled water wells and farmed in the area for many years. It was during these years that the Ketchum gang made their headquarters at the Ketchum home in Knickerbocker.