

Sunlight and Shadows

Etta Lindsey Allen





1917

*Lindsey family in Tennessee prior to boarding the train for
the move to Texas*

*Back Row L to R Allie, Dick, Laura, Paul, Melvia
Front row L to R Ed, Jim Dick, Evia, Etta, Maude*

Chapter 7

The Move

Shortly after the birth of Paul, Laura began to notice a restlessness in Dick. He worked unceasing on the farm, but barely eked out a living for his large family. The children that were big enough also worked in the fields, when they were not in school. Ellis had gone as far as he could in education in the little country school. He now wanted to go to college, and with the help of his teacher, he had learned that he could enter the college at Chillicothe, Missouri. The college had offered him a position that would enable him to pay for his room, board and tuition. Dick and Laura would help as much as they were able.

Laura dreaded to see her son leave home, the first to leave the nest. There were two things though, that she believed in wholeheartedly, and that was that her children get an education and that they be brought up in a religious way. She and Dick were staunch members of the Church of Christ and every Sunday they loaded their brood into the wagon and made the trip to the small country church. Saturday was spent in preparation for Sunday. The children polished their shoes and their "Sunday clothes" were pressed by irons heated on the wood stove. The house was cleaned from top to bottom, the plank floors were scrubbed with lye water until they were white. Laura baked pies and cakes, for every Sunday some neighbor family would come home with them to spend the day. The

tin wash tubs were brought in and everyone washed their hair and bathed

Finally the day came for Ell's departure. Sadly, Laura washed and pressed his clothes. As he rode away with Dick, in the wagon to catch the train in Lexington, Laura stood on the porch and waved goodbye to her fifteen year old son who was going out into the world. She knew that she would miss him, but she also knew that someday he would make her proud of him.

After Ell's departure for college, Dick became more discouraged than ever. He went to visit his sister Alice and her husband, Lige Meadors, who with their five sons lived in the adjoining community of Saltillo. Their daughter and her husband and their oldest son and his wife also lived there. Lige told Dick that he had received a letter from his sister, who with her husband and children had moved to Sweeny, Texas. He told Dick that she wrote of the mild climate and the plentiful work that was to be found there. She also wrote that Sweeny had a far better school. Lige told Dick that he was selling his farm and was going to move to Texas. He urged Dick to do the same.

When Dick returned home he told Laura what Lige had said. Laura saw at once that Dick wanted to make the move. Her heart sank and she was filled with apprehension. She did not want to leave her beloved Tennessee and the house she came to as a bride and where all of their children had been born. She had never been out of the hills. All of her friends and relatives were here.

The time came to reap the crops, and the harvest was poor. Realizing that the farm would hardly support the family, and that the children would have a better chance for an education, she reluctantly told Dick to sell the farm and that they would make the move.

The farm was sold, the packing was done and the day came for them to meet the Meadors family at the depot in Lexington to board the train for Texas.

Silently Laura said a sad farewell to the little grave on the hillside and to her beloved Tennessee and went to face another challenge in her life.

Laughing, they jumped on the seats, played hide and seek and other boisterous games. Alice was a gentle woman and after one or two rounds she gave up. Laura tried to cheer meekly, but the children were too excited and she too soon became resigned.

Laura and Alice had prepared big baskets of fried chicken, peas, cakes and other delicious food for the families to eat on their journey. Even this did not tempt the children for long and all day they continued to play and shout. Laura, who never dreamed that she would admit it, fervently stated that she would be glad when they reached Texas.

Soon the long day was over and the children, worn out, were sleeping. Laura, though tired, could not sleep as her mind was in turmoil with doubts and fears. As she listened to the clackety-clackety of the train's wheels and



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Chapter 8 The Train to Texas

When Dick and Laura with their eight children reached the depot, they found Lige, Alice and their five sons waiting for them. None of the two families had ever ridden on a train before. In fact, the children had never seen one, and when it pulled into the station, puffing and blowing smoke, they stood and gazed in fright and awe.

Unfortunately this did not last long, for as soon as they were on the train the children became like wild Indians. The two families occupied one whole car. Soon the children were racing up and down shouting and laughing. They jumped on the seats, played hide and seek and other boisterous games. Alice was a gentle woman and after one or two reprimands, she gave up. Laura tried sterner measures, but the children were too excited and she too soon became resigned.

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heard its lonesome whistle shrill through the night, she wondered if they had made the right decision. How would she and her children adjust to living in a town when they had always lived in the country? What would their new life be like? Finally deciding that now there was no turning back she fell into an exhausted sleep.

The next day the train pulled into the little town of Sweeny, Texas. The Lindsey's and Meador's and their brood disembarked, leaving behind the car they had occupied in shambles.

The conductor breathed a sigh of relief and knew that he would long remember when the Lindsey's and Meador's rode his train to Texas.

Thus in November of 1917, the Lindsey family began a new era in their life.

Chapter 9 Settling in Texas

In 1917, the town of Sweeny was only a small community. Main Street consisted of two general stores, a post office and a depot. The street was dirt, which became a sea of mud when it rained, therefore there were sidewalks made of planks. Cows roamed the streets, along with dogs and chickens. The main sources that supported the town were cotton, truck farming and a saw mill. There was a packing house, which was a long shed, where the mustard turnip greens were washed and prepared to be sold. Also there were fields of green beans.

Dick bought a small white frame house located about two blocks from Main Street, a block from the two story brick school, and the church was a short distance further. Lige settled his family in a house at the end of the same street.

The next few weeks were busy, getting settled and enrolling all of the children except Etta, Evia and Paul in school. Though occupied, Laura was homesick for the rolling hills of her native Tennessee. She could not get used to this tropical coastal land, with the green foliage and the gray moss that hung from the trees. She missed her kinfolk and her friends. In spite of this, she set about making a home for the family. She was thankful for the school and church being so near. Also, relieved to learn that the man that owned one of the stores was a doctor and had an office over the store.

Dick seemed satisfied. He bought a few acres of land on the edge of town, and would plant corn and cotton. He was happy to find the soil was black and rich, so different from the sandy, clay soil in Tennessee. He and the older children started immediately to clear the land of the trees and palmettos that grew so thick. By spring, he would be ready to plant.

By winter the Lindsey family was settled. The children had adjusted quickly and enjoyed the freedom from the chores that they had in Tennessee.

Dick bought a cow and chickens and plowed a spot near the house for a winter garden, which was impossible to have in the cold winters of Tennessee.

The family attended church, where they made friends. Laura enjoyed living close to a store. Here in this warm climate there was no need of the hard work of preparing for a cold winter.

Thus the Lindsey's began their life in Sweeny, Texas and soon became a part of the community.

