

Written for the Augsburg Reunion
June 12, 1965.

Moving to Texas

1918 was an eventful year for me. In March I acquired a baby brother. Since I already had five sisters, this was quite an event and a pleasant surprise. In May just before my 17th birthday I graduated from High School. Then I got a real shock, my parents decided to sell out in Illinois and move to Texas; and not only us, but Uncle Amos and his family were moving also. I thought Texas was the end of the world at that time.

There was a tremendous amount of work involved in arranging for sales to dispose of the farm machinery, the livestock, and the household goods that they decided not to take. My father also sold an 80 acre farm.

Finally, everything was loaded on the railroad car that had been chartered, including Uncle Amos's Oakland and our Buick. We stayed with relatives a few days after our things had been shipped. Blanche was teaching her first year of school and didn't come with us. When we were saying our goodbyes to everyone, Uncle Joe told us that he expected us to come back to see them. Whereupon Berniece told him, "Oh, we're coming back to the United States someday."

When we boarded the train, there were 9 children ranging from Zella who was 12 to John who was 9 months old. Since we were on the train 2 days and a night, can't you just imagine the countless trips to the water cooler and the rest room? ~~Errr~~ Perhaps my memory is poor, but I can't remember any tears at all.

When we pulled into the Houston terminal, there were icicles hanging from everything and I remember saying, "If this is the 'sunny south' I'd just as soon have the north."

Dad and Uncle Amos took us to the Brazos Hotel where we expected to stay only a night or two. As it turned out the freight car with our household goods didn't arrive for a week or more. By that time some of the little ones in our family had the Flu so Uncle Amos and his family arrived in Sweeney several days before we did. As soon

as Mother could spare me Dad brought me to Sweeny to help him get the house in order.

On the way down on the train Dad went to the smoker and very soon a gentleman came and introduced himself to me and asked if he could sit with me awhile. That was my introduction to Jim Reynolds, who told me about Sweeny and then read poetry to me the rest of the way to Sweeny. He had written the poetry himself and it wasn't bad, either. I wonder how many people in Sweeny knew he had that hobby. Years later he wrote a poem for Jeann when she graduated and sent it to her along with a ten dollar bill.

It was midnight when we reached Sweeny. There was no street lights. Pa Sigel and Uncle Ames met us at the depot. There were no sidewalks either and since it had rained, I went slipping and sliding along with the men in the glow from a kerosene lantern the 6 blocks to where Uncle Ames lived.

At that time there was three grocery stores - Smiths, Reynolds, Schadlers, a dry goods store - Dr. Arringtons, a restaurant, a lumber yard, and 2 churches, the Baptist and the Church of Christ.

Our Buick and Uncle Ames's Oakland made a total of 4 cars in Sweeny. Mr Frank Orr had one and Dr. Eades had one. Clyde's folks also had a car, but they lived out at Degtown. The Martins and the Wesley's had cars but they lived still farther out in the country.

Sweeny seemed to me quite strange at first. I had never been in a town before where there were no sidewalks and street lights. Also, I had never seen a house that didn't have plastered walls and cellars under the houses. I had never been in a church where the dogs went to church, too.

Still everyone was very friendly. The first time that I went to the post office, every man and boy that I met tipped his hat to me whether I had met him or not. That is a custom that has gone out of style since wearing hats has gone out of style.

I think that our 2 families must have created quite a stir in Sweeny. Mrs. Randolph Smith told me recently how everyone that was at the store or in that end of town watched the ~~unloading~~ unloading of our freight car. Finally, someone said, "Yeah, they're damn Yankees sure enough." Someone else said, "How can you tell"? The answer was, "They've got a washing machine." We had the first gasoline powered washing machines in Sweeny. Perhaps they were the only 2 ever here. I don't remember anyone else ever having one. I hope I've given you a picture of Sweeny in 1919.

Aunt Blanche came down & was married in the old
Village home (then owned by the Rees) in 1919. Went to Edinboro
on Honeymoon and then back to Ill. Mom finished out year
of teaching for Aunt Blanche in Sweeney. 1920-1921 Mom went
to Ill. to visit Blanche and taught school Oak Grove school
west of Hazel Dale. Returned to Sweeney and taught 2 yrs -
Went to Clute for 2 yrs to teach because money was better
\$115 at Clute to \$80 at Sweeney -