Mrs. Hattie E. Lee's Story of Her Life in Western Kansas

Edited by Mrs. Raymond Millbrook

This is the story of Harriet Emmaline Upjohn. I was born in 1869 at Sardenia, Ind., where my father was a tanner by trade. At that time the hides were put into vats of water and the bark of certain trees were in those vats to tan the hides. My father died in March, 1870, leaving my mother with four children, my older brothers, Frank and Warren, myself not yet two years old, and the baby Calvin, only three months. Both my grandparents who lived in the country, had large houses and we went to live with my mother’s folks, Grandma and Grandpa Inscho, where I spent the happiest years of my life. I had everything, plenty to eat, nice home, pretty dresses,—everything to make a little girl happy.

But when I was six years old, Tim Armstrong began coming to see my mother, which I resented very much. One day he came to Grandpa Inscho’s and took my mother away. After they left my Grandma said, “Children, come here,” and we all gathered around her rocking chair. She said, “Children, your mother and Armstrong are going to get married today. What will you do about it?” Frank, who was always a peace maker said, “Well, I guess we will have to call him father,” and Warren said, “No sir, I will never call him father.” Calvin and I did not say anything. So that evening when mother came home, Armstrong stopped at the front gate to let mother out and then he had to go up the lane to the barn. We children ran down to the gate to meet them. And Frank said, “Father, can I ride back to the barn with you?” Father said, “Yes, Franky, get in!” Calvin said, “Can I go too?” and Father said, “Yes, Cally, get in.” But Warren and I went up the walk with Mother.

Before Mother was married, she said to Grandma, “I don’t know what to do about Emma’s doll. Tim’s two girls don’t have dolls and I am afraid they will quarrel over this one.” Grandma said, “Don’t give Emma’s doll away.” But Mother gave my doll to my

Mrs. Raymond (Minnie Dubbs) Millbrook, a Detroit, Mich., housewife and part-time assistant editor of The Detroit Society for Genealogical Research Magazine, was herself a former resident of western Kansas. Her history, Ness—Western County—Kansas, published in 1955, has been awarded a certificate of merit from the American Association for State and Local History.

Mrs. Lee wrote her story in a series of letters to Mrs. Leslie Frye of Arnold, Kan., and in response to Mrs. Frye’s interest in the history of western Kansas, gave a great deal of detail on her experiences in that part of the country. The letters were arranged into consecutive narrative and annotated by Mrs. Raymond Millbrook. Mrs. Lee, at 88 years, is still living in Sacramento, Cal.

(114)
cousin, so there went my china doll. I had such nice clothes and shoes and hats and I also had a little parasol. Mary and Lou Armstrong had plain calico dresses and no Sunday shoes or hats. We moved up the road about two miles from Grandpa’s place into a log house. Mother had stored her household goods so they were put in the log house with a kitchen of logs added on. So there were my Mother and my three brothers and Armstrong and his two girls—eight of us all crowded in the log house and strangers to each other. I cried myself sick, I was so homesick. So you see what a tragedy it was to marry again with four children.

My mother and father were young and after we got settled Father and Mother would go somewhere almost every Sunday and they would take Lou and Calvin with them, these being the youngest children. Lou being younger than I but about as big, could wear my nice clothes. My mother would put my nice clothes on her when they would go places which I did not like at all. So one Sunday they were going some where and Mary and I were washing the breakfast dishes. I was growling to Mary about Mother dolling Lou up in my clothes. Father must have heard me for he came out and said, “If you had hurried and got your work done I intended to let you go to your Grandpa’s today but now you can stay at home.” I said, “Oh yes, we can go to Grandpa’s barefooted and in a calico dress but Mother puts my nice clothes and shoes on Lou and takes her with you.” My mother heard me say that and she took my clothes off of Lou and put a calico dress on her and she went barefooted just like the rest of us did and my clothes were never worn again by any one of us. Frank, Warren, Mary, and I never got to go much, we were always left home.

In those days the main crop was corn so that was what my stepfather raised. And the mills that ground the corn were built on the banks of the rivers and the power that ran the big wheel was water power. Father would take four or five sacks of corn to mill and get it back by the miller taking out his toll for grinding. Flour was $14 per small barrel so we lived mostly on cornbread. Mother baked biscuits every morning and if we ate the hot biscuits for breakfast we would have to take corn bread to school for our lunch. We went to town to school as by this time we had moved near Westport, Ind. I was ashamed of my corn bread so would slip out behind the schoolhouse and eat my lunch. I had a close friend whose father had a store and she had such nice lunches. And when I would slip out to eat my lunch Anna would follow and trade me
some of her lunch. I was in the 6th grade and was ready for the 7th in that fall of 1878-1879 that was the end of my schooling.

My stepfather was a soldier in the General Lee war and was never very strong. Frank, my oldest brother, was 11 years old; Warren 15 months younger. They had to do most of the work. We lived in Indiana until 1879 and my grandfather (Inscho) and all his family took the bright idea they would come to Kansas and get homes of their own. So they sold out and came in an emigrant train to Kansas. We all had big baskets of food—I mean clothes baskets—and we ate all our meals on the train. There was a big round stove in the corner of the car where we made our coffee or fried eggs and bacon and made tea. It was a picnic for all the young folks. We got as far as Minneapolis (Kansas) and there my grandfather bought a farm and two of his children stayed there with him. The rest of us shoved on to Wakeeney. And when we arrived at Wakeeney there were more thrills—the way they served our meals at the hotel. And we would stand and gaze at the prairies for we were from a heavy wooded country and we did not know what we were about to get into.

Then my stepfather went with some land agents to hunt a place and he did find one on the bank of the Smoky Hill river 24 miles from Wakeeney. I think we were about four miles from the Cove county line and five miles from the Ness county line. He homesteaded the Forrester Bros. out of the dugout they were living in and we moved into the dugout, 10 x 12, dirt floor, double bunk bed. It was dug back into the hill, a straw roof, no windows. The Forresters went four miles up the river and built themselves a new dugout.

And then we did see hard times. No team. We had to depend on a neighbor four miles away to get our groceries. We would take our order up to our neighbor one day and go back another day to get our groceries. It took the whole family to carry them home—a supply for a week. By that time Frank and Warren got jobs herding sheep. Frank got $30 a month up on the Saline river, Warren got $27 a month herding sheep on the Hackberry for Mr. Cope. Father lived on their wages. There were six of us left in the dugout.

1. The Armstrong homestead was on the NE 1/4 Sec. 39, Twp. 14 S., R. 25 W., in southwestern Trego county. The farm buildings were north of the river about 150 feet west of where the Ute-Ulster road now crosses the Smoky on a low bridge.

2. The Forrester brothers, Ad, Bob, Steve, and John, had been cattle ranchers in the West since 1874 and had been on the Smoky since 1876. In all that time they never owned any land, always using the public domain for their cattle range. Their peaceful evacuation of their home dugout to this water was quite in contrast to the more violent action, traditional when homesteaders moved in on ranchers.
The winter of 1879 was quite mild and we children went bare-footed all winter. When there was snow we tied rags on our feet when we went outside. Our dugout had a fireplace in one end and an eight-by-ten-inch glass in the homemade door. That was all the light we had. It kept us busy saying, “Get out of my light.” But we got through the winter very nicely.

The next spring we got a team of oxen. It took all day to go to Wakeeney with them and all day to come back so no one went to town but Father. Father plowed and mother planted a big garden and the cowboys all around us bought vegetables and watermelons of us.

When Father got the yoke of oxen, Buck and Bright, I was the oldest one at home and I was the one that helped my stepfather in everything I could do. I was 12 years old. My father would do the plowing and I did the harrowing. You should have seen me walking along besides the oxen with a big whip and heard me say, “Whoa-haw, Bright and Gee, Buck.” Sometimes I would have to run ahead of them and whip them on the nose to make them mind. They seemed to know when noon came. Mother would put a white rag up to let me know when to come to dinner. And sometimes the oxen would start home before Mother would put up the rag. I would do everything in my power to stop them but they would shut their eyes and go down the bank of the river, harrow and all through the water, up the other bank and walk into the yard and stop. Some job, I say!

The place when we came was bare. We planted all the trees that are there now as there was not a tree anywhere. There had been a good sized tree just down the river from our place but it had been used for firewood, leaving only a good sized stump. We did not use the river water at all. Father dug a well the first thing after we got settled. A friend of ours who lived north of us, A. Ferris, was digging a well quite deep and it caved in on him. The neighbors were called but they never got him out.

And the snakes! We had many rattlesnakes and blue racers, bull snakes and hoop snakes. Blue racers would lie in the cliff of rocks and they would go like the wind when they were scared. The rattlesnake lived with the prairie dogs and the bull snake lived wherever they pleased. The antelope were very cunning. They went in droves of 15 or 20 and when the hunter was after them they all ran. They never stopped in a low place but would

3. Fireplaces were very unusual in this country and found only occasionally along the infrequent streams where there was a scattering of timber.
get on a high place where they could watch the hunter. And when they were feeding one of them was on a high place watching and when anyone appeared the one on the high place would give a sharp whistle and they would all run.

In 1880 I think, Mr. Clement Young and family and a bachelor named William Sweeney came from Rock Island, Ill., and settled about a mile from us on Wild Horse creek. Mr. Young was a stone mason and that summer and fall he built for us a stone house, one room, 14 x 20 feet, right beside the dugout. The stone room was on the west end next to the dugout. The stone house had an attic. We used the dugout for a kitchen and then later father built the frame house over the dugout and against the east end of the house.

The year of 1881 the settlers began coming in. That summer the Indians left the territory and did a great deal of damage. A man on a horse came riding through telling us that the Indians were out and to get back. I was so frightened I could neither eat or sleep. But the soldiers from Fort Hays put the Indians back. Two newlyweds took claims near the old Texas trail. They built their sod house on each place near their line. The Texas trail was seven miles west of us. They drove Texas cattle from Texas to Montana and other points north. The Indians traveled the trail going north. One day two Indians came to these two houses and asked for something to eat. They gave them lunch and one of the men of the home had a nice looking hat on his head. One old Indian said, "swap," and took the man's nice hat and put it on his head and put his old dirty hat on the man's head and went away.

In 1881 in the fall father sowed about 20 acres of wheat and he had about one peck of seed left and in the winter of 1881-1882 we had a very deep snow and as the only fuel we had was cow chips we did not have many picked up to burn. So we ran out of cow chips and we burned everything we could get to cook our meals. Then we got out of salt and at last we had not a thing to eat but the seed wheat that was left. We had a coffee mill and mother ground the wheat in the coffee mill. Mother cooked it. We ate it without salt for a few days. Then Bob Forrester came to our place and asked Father how we were getting along.

4. Wild Horse creek heads north of Utica and flows into the Smoky from the south.
5. There were several Indian scares in this area in the early 1880's but there is no record that any large bands came into this country or committed any depredations.
6. The Western Cattle trail at this time ran along just west of the Ness county line up through Gove county to Buffalo Park on the Union Pacific railroad.
Father told him we were out of fuel and eats. Bob told my father to get on the horse behind him and took Father with him to their ranch and gave him a sack of coal, some salt and flour and about one half quarter of beef. He gave him an order for groceries and let him take their team and wagon. So the next day Father went to Wakeeny and got coal and groceries.

In 1882 and 1883 Father got back pay on his pension and built the frame house. By that time the settlers were coming to Kansas fast and they named our place Armstrong Crossing and we took care of all who were taking land in Ness and Lane county. We would have as many as 12 stay over night and in a day or two they would be back again for Wakeeny was the land office.7 The family never lived in the frame house; we used the first stone house and attic to live in as long as I was home. We then had a stove and plenty of coal as my father brought coal for the heater in the frame house. The travelers used our beds or those that had their beds with them would spread their beds on the floor.

The freighters used some covered wagons also open wagons. Some of them had grub boxes and carried their food with them and made coffee, cooked bacon and eggs on the stove in the frame house. Some ate their meals with my mother. They were a very jolly crowd. Some carried their bedding and some slept in our beds. The floors would be covered with beds. My father built a stone stable against the face of the cliff making the face of the cliff as one side. It was large enough to hold six teams of horses. We had plenty of hay so the travelers had a place to put their horses and plenty of hay. The travelers brought their own grain.

The frame house was built over the dugout and the dugout was used for a cellar to store things away in. We still used the stone room for dining room and kitchen. One night two men hobbled two horses just east of our house and came to the house and asked to stay all night. Father said, yes they could stay, “but leave your gun and revolvers in the dugout.” They told father, “Thanks, we will take care of our guns.” When they were called to supper they

7. The U. S. land office moved to WaKeeny in October, 1879, but settlement to the south and west was not heavy in the early 1880’s. Beginning in 1884 the country filled up in about two years. There was a regular trail from WaKeeny angling across down to Dighton in Lane county and there were many freighters moving goods over this trail that crossed the river at Armstrong Crossing. In the blizzard of January, 1886, a train of six wagons, one driven by a woman, was believed lost between Armstrong Crossing and WaKeeny. It was found later that all had made Armstrong’s safely.—Trego County Tribune, WaKeeny, January 14, 1886. So heavy was the traffic over this trail that at that time that H. L. Hill of Wichita contemplated establishing a stage line between Garden City and Wakeeny, via Dighton.—Ibid., February 25, 1886. The building of the railroads through Ness and Lane counties in 1887 eliminated the need for travel cross-country and the trail fell into disuse. Utica on the Missouri Pacific then became the nearest town to Armstrong’s Crossing.
came in with their guns and revolvers at their belts. The table was setting lengthway in the kitchen so on one side they would have to sit with their backs to the door. Those two men set the guns down behind the door and walked around the table and sat facing the door. Then we knew they were bad men. So father did not sleep much that night. In the morning they paid for their lodging and left. About noon that same day two officers came to our place asking about them. The horses they hobbled were stolen.

When my mother was made postmistress of Gibson Post Office, she had a big bureau with deep drawers and that was the post office. The reason my mother was postmistress was that my step-father could only sign his name with a cross. She said to us children, “Now don’t any of you ever touch the mail if I am out. Wait until I come in.” Well about a year after we had the P. O. Mr. Middleby came for his mail. He got it. And when he read it he said in a very excited tone, “This letter was supposed to have a check for $65.” Mother said. “Give me the envelope and letter and I will send it back to the P. O. Department and they will get it for you. Don’t lay it on anyone until you know who did it.” About a month later, one afternoon, a man came to our place. Mother was not in and he said to me, “Is this the Gibson P. O.? Will you look and see if there is a letter for J. P. Olsen?” I said, “No, my mother will be here in a moment. She is post mistress. We never touch the mail.” He left and we never saw him again. About a week later, the detective caught a man in the Wakeney P. O. He had steamed the letter open, took the check out and sealed it by using a little brush which had been used in green ink. The glue and the ink told the story. Mr. Middleby got his money back and he came and told my mother he was sorry. Later another stone room was built west of the first one and the post office moved into it.

A man and his daughter took a claim five miles south of our place. His name was Cash. He had a spring on his claim. He got some cows and built a house over the spring to keep the milk. They made butter and sold it. As we had only one cow yet, my brother Calvin and I carried eight pounds of butter from Mr. Cash’s place, which I think was in Ness county, five miles and there were no

8. This post office was established December 30, 1880. The application blank, which still remains in the National Archives, requested the name, Armstrong Crossing. This name however was struck out and Gibson inserted. Whether this was done at the instance of other applicants or because the Post Office Department thought Armstrong Crossing was too much like the name of another post office in the state, there is no record. The origin of Gibson is unknown.
9. Joseph Middleby was another of the ranchers who ran his cattle along the Smoky. He became a member of the Forrester pool when it was organized in 1884.
10. Ness City Times, May 13, 1880.—“Mr. Cash, Mr. Casteel and George Steele are talking of going into the dairy business.”
houses on the road the whole five miles. We took a bucket with a wire handle. We would start out early in the morning on Tuesday each week. We went over, ate lunch and started back with the butter. Some days the Texas cattle would be all over the road and we would have to go around them. That would make our road much longer and we would be tired when we got home. We did that all one summer.

A man by the name of Rainey had a claim one mile north of us. In the winter we had a bad blizzard and snow and Mr. Rainey came to our place when the storm began and said he would stay with us through the storm. My father had a big hay stack fenced in. That I think was the year that the cattle men went broke. The cattle came down the river in droves and father and Mr. Rainey got on the horses and drove the cattle on down the river. Such a noise the cattle made; they bawled all round as they were starving. When Mr. Rainey and father came in to drink coffee and get warm, Calvin and I would get on the horses and keep the cattle away from the stack of hay. They would get a bite before we could drive them on. You could hear nothing but the wind and bawling cattle. The snow had drifted deep in the ravines and the cattle would walk off into the drifts and they could not get out so there they died, two or three in a bunch. We skinned them and the settlers skinned them and sold the hides.

Then in 1884 in the spring Father got the bright idea he would take some cattle to herd. And that meant me and Calvin had to herd the cattle; we had to stay with the cattle all day. We had a half barrel of salt at the place where we left the cattle for the night. So we would turn the three or four milk cows toward home and send the dog home with the cows. Then when we got home after the cattle had settled down for the night, there was my stepsister with the milk pails for us to milk the cows. One night she came down with the pails and she said, "Mr. Bingham was here today and he wants Emma to go work for him and Mother wouldn't let you go." I said to Calvin after Louella left, "Well, I will see about this." I was crying. I said, "Cal, I am not going to herd cattle another day." Cal said, "Don’t leave me, Emma." That night I bundled up my few clothes and went out and hid them in the grass on the hillside. The next morning we started out early before the cattle would get on the crops the people had out, with lunch pail and afoot to round up the cattle. I picked up my bundle of clothes and Cal began to cry, "Don’t leave me, Emma."
The Binghams lived about two miles from where we had the cattle. So after I helped Cal round up the cattle, I stood and talked to Cal. Someone had sent a pony down with the cattle and Father was riding it all over the country. I said to Cal, "Don't cry, father will have to let you have the pony to herd the cattle." I left him then and walked about two miles to the Binghams. I walked into their house and Mrs. Bingham said, "Why Emma, where did you come from?" I said, "Home, and I am going to work for you."

So I began my first job away from home. The next day Father helped Cal get the cattle together, then he came up to Binghams. He got there about noon so he ate dinner with the Binghams. When he came in, he said, "Oh here you are Emma." I said, "Yes and I am through herding cattle." When he started home he said, "Well are you going home with me?" I said, "No." He left and that was the last time I ever was home only for a visit.

After I left home and went to Mrs. Bingham's near Castle Rock and after I was there four weeks, a friend of Mrs. Bingham came there one Sunday to visit. Mrs. Bingham asked this friend, Mrs. Honnel, if she wanted a girl to help her. "I am through with Emma and she wants work." Mr. Honnel was the depot agent at Collyer about ten miles north of Binghams at the Kansas Pacific. So I went home with the Honnels that evening. That put me 16 miles from home. Collyer was a very small place, the depot, a hotel and store and a few houses. The Honnels lived in part of the depot. I stayed with them about six months and she had a little girl in that time. After I was with them six months Mrs. Honnel came to me one morning and said, "Emma, Mr. Honnel is transferred to Trinidad, Colo.; do you want to go with us?" I said, "No, I want to stay near my brothers." So the next day she went to the hotel and talked with Mrs. Birkland, who had come to Collyer and took over the hotel on account of her son's health. Eddie was very frail. They came from Chicago. Mrs. Birkland wanted me to come to the hotel as a waitress. So when the Honnels moved I went to the hotel. Everyone was good to me. The Birklands had a daughter about 18 years old, a very nice person. Eddie was 16. Mrs. Birkland told me what I was expected to do and she said, "Emma don't talk to the people who come to eat. Just take their order, keep the silver bright and the dining room clean." So I became a waitress and all this time I was working for two dollars a week.

This I must tell. Mrs. Birkland had on a sideboard a cotton
chicken in a half of an egg shell, very cute. One morning two men came in for breakfast. I took their order—one man, ham and eggs, eggs turned over. The other man said, "Hot cakes, ham and eggs with a chicken in it." I went out and told the cook the order but did not order an egg for the man who wanted a chicken in his egg. When I got the order I went in the dining room and picked up the cotton chicken from the side board. I placed the first order, then I set the other order down with the cotton chicken. He said as I was leaving the dining room, "Hell, can you beat that." He got no egg for being smart.

I stayed all summer and Eddie died and the Birklands went back to Chicago. Then I went to Wakeeney and went to the hotel where we stayed when we came to Kansas—their name was Escher.11 I stayed a few days at the hotel then Mrs. Escher and I walked down town and met Mrs. Millard talking to a neighbor at the gate. We talked awhile then Mrs. Escher said to Mrs. Millard, "I hear you want a dining room girl." "Oh yes, I need a girl," she said. "Take Emma, she wants work." Mrs. Millard said she would like to have me. Mr. Millard was postmaster at Wakeeney but the third class post office did not pay well so Mrs. Millard had a private boarding house. I stayed there about eight months and she was very nice to me. A new post master relieved Mr. Millard.

From there I went to Frank Ellsworth two miles west of Wakeeney. We used to herd his cattle when I was herding. He took me out and his wife was all dressed up in a blue dress and looked very nice. She took me up stairs to my room and she said, "Now on Monday I want the washing done, on Tuesday you iron with your house work, on Wednesday you do all the mending, on Thursday you can have the afternoon off. Then we went to the kitchen and she showed me where I would find things and what she wanted for supper. I felt like a fly in the soup. Then she said, "See that little window and the caster on the table?" "Yes." "When we come in the dining room I will ring that little bell on the caster. You set the things in the window and I will put them on the table. We don't allow our servants in the dining room after Mr. Ellsworth comes to the table." So I got supper and called them and then got a plate and went to eating my supper. The little bell rang but I kept on eating. She came to the door and said, "Did you hear the bell?" I said, "Yes, but I am eating." Then I put

11. "Joe Escher, who for so many years ran the hotel on the hill north of the city, was a hero of Andersonville prison in its worst form and carried ever with him the marks." —Western Kansas World, Wakeeney, March 7, 1929.
the grub in the window and we all had our supper. Then I washed
the dishes and cleaned the kitchen, went upstairs and got my suit-
case and went down and asked Mr. Ellsworth to take me back
to town again. He took me and gave me 50 cents for my work.
I went back to the hotel in Wakeeney and in a few days a man
came and asked me to go out 3½ miles north of town to cook on
a sheep ranch. His name was Ostrander and he was from New
York. He was a bad egg and his two old maid sisters who were
millionaires, bought a ranch out there and got sheep and sent
Ostrander out on the ranch. He had a wife, a very nice woman,
and one child. Of course the wife had a girl to do the work as
she did not know much about housework. I went out there to
work for two dollars a week. The work was very hard, wash on
the washboard, iron with a heavy iron on the table, nothing con-
venient.
One morning Mrs. Ostrander came into the kitchen and told me
these two old aunts were coming to spend the summer and she
wanted me to be very nice to them. Well, the old maids came one
morning but Aunt Jane came out to the ranch and Aunt Ann stayed
in Wakeeney at the hotel. When evening came I put supper on
the table and called them. Sam, the herder, had been eating with
the family so Sam and I went to the table with the family. Old Aunt
Jane said, "I object to eating with the servants." So Sam and I ate
at the kitchen table. After supper Aunt Jane went to her room. I
went to Mrs. Ostrander and said, "If you keep that old maid around
here I am leaving." She said, "Emma don't leave us. If you will
stay I will give you three dollars a week and you and Sam will eat
with us." So she talked to Aunt Jane and told her she was in Kan-
sas, not in New York and if she would be nice to her help they
would stay. Otherwise they would leave. Then she told me to
set the table for all of us. When it came to washing I had to do the
family wash on the washboard. But Jane informed me that she did
not want her washing done on the washboard, to do it with my
hands. I went to Mrs. Ostrander and said, "Now this is too much."
She said, "Emma, you wash her things on the washboard—she will
never know the difference." I said, "She makes me too much work."
She said, "Emma, I will give you $4.00 if you will stay." Aunt Jane
would not ride to town either with the servants. Mr. Ostrander
would drive Aunt Jane to town, then come back and get Mrs.
Ostrander and the baby and me. And so I waded through the sum-
mer with the Ostranders.
I think the man's name was Donald. He was visiting the Ostrander's and he was Mr. Ostrander's nephew from New York. He told Sam the herder that he would watch the sheep for him one afternoon while Sam went to town. So he took the gun and a piccolo and the dog and went out to herd the sheep. In the evening he brought the sheep over on the hillside and stood opposite the house and played a piece on the piccolo and then put his hand over the muzzle of the gun with the stock on the ground. He snapped his finger at the dog; the dog jumped up and when his feet slid down the barrel of the gun, the gun went off and hurt his hand so bad the Dr. had to take the hand off. So I had plenty to do. I wrote Don's letters to his girl and carried him food and water besides my work. When the doctor said he could go home, that morning when he left, he came out into the kitchen where I was washing dishes and said, "Emma I am leaving but I never will forget the little brown eyed girl I met out in Kansas. Thank you so much for helping me out. Here is $10 for you."

While I was home we never went to picnics. My only pleasure was the dances and there were not many of them. I can call to memory any dance I attended. That was the summer I was 15 and I left home that fall. I was called a very good dancer and I always had partners to dance. I took prizes twice for being the nicest dancer on the floor—for keeping time with the music and for smoothness. I was counted nice looking and I sang like a bird and they said I was the life of the dances. I always threw off care and trouble by singing.

In the old days we went to dances at private homes. The place where we went they would prepare a midnight lunch. They would send out word there was to be a dance at Mr. Wheatcroft's and as you know that was in Lane county. Josh and Jim were young then. So about three o'clock in the afternoon the cowboys would begin coming for their girl friends. Will Olive drove his mother's horses and buggy. So about that time he would drive into our yard. I would soon be in the buggy and away we would go to the dance. We had to go early and stay at the dance until morning as it was not safe to travel after dark. There were no good roads and very few houses and it was easy to get lost. So we would dance until we got tired and then we would sit around and sing and joke. We sang the old songs such as "After the Ball is Over" and "Barney McCoy," "Maggie" and many other songs and some religious songs. Allie Smith was one of our men who played for the dances. He lived in
Utica. I think we had better times than the young folks do today. The polka, waltz, quadrille and fireman’s dance were really danced to the music.

Will Olive was my date—we went to dances together. Then he went to Wakeeney, got in a drunken fight and shot a man. The man lived 18 days and died.12 The officers went out to the ranch after Will. He knew they were after him and he hid in the attic. After the officers left he got on a horse and started for Texas. Later on we heard he was killed in a fight. Mrs. Olive was a very nice lady and she liked me and took me with her a few times to Collyer where they did their shopping. I did think Will Olive was quite nice until he got in trouble in Wakeeney and that was the end of our courtship. I was then as I am now, a good girl and I have no use for anyone who drinks liquor.

But the half will never be told. When a child is out in the world to make her own living, no one knows what a hard time she has. No one can tell the hardships I went through; carry water from the well, rub the clothes on a wash board and keep the house work up. And some were so unreasonable; they never thought a young girl ever got tired. I made my clothes by hand by sewing after I went to my room. They did not sell patterns then. I ripped up an old dress that fit me nicely and pressed it and that was my pattern. I added on the drapes and trimming. My wedding dress I made it all by hand after I got through with my housework. We did not wear corsets those days; we sewed stays in the seams of our waist. I made it and had my picture taken in it while I was still at my grandmothers.

In the fall I was 17, I quit my job and went home for two weeks on a visit. Then I went to Delphos, Ottawa Co., where my grandparents were living to do Grandma’s work for her at $2 a week. I had a very nice time at Grandma Inschos with other relations. I went to church out in the schoolhouse close where my grandparents lived on a farm. I soon got acquainted and found me a very nice man two months older than I. We went together for about eight months and we were talking of getting married. He and I joined the Methodist Church on probation. This man was of a T. B. family.

One day my grandma said to me, “Emma are you and Will expecting to marry?” I said, “Oh, it is not certain but I think Will is pretty nice.” Grandma said, “Emma you think twice before you

12. Will Olive was the son of I. P. Olive, another member of the Forrester pool. While drunk young Olive shot George D. Harrison, a cowboy friend, on April 10, 1886. The wounded man died, April 25.—*Trego County Tribune*, April 15, 29, 1886.
marry Will. You know his mother and two sisters died of T. B. and
his brother Sam is bedfast with T. B. Now you don't want to bring
trouble on your family so be careful.” Well I had not thought of
that, so I lay awake thinking it over. In a few days Will came to
take me for a ride and while we were riding along Will said to me,
“Emma, if we get married, we will have to take Sam and care for
him.” I said, “Will, I am not going to get married and take an in-
valid in my home to take care of.” Of course that was the first
trouble with us and so in August before I was 18 I broke off from
Will.

I went home on a two-week visit and met Charley Lee[^13] where he was then postmaster at the Gibson post office. At once
he began to try to go with me. I stayed two weeks and went
back to my Grandma’s. Charley wrote to me and we corresponded
and he asked me to marry him. I got ready Christmas, went home
and we were married February 25, 1888. I was 19 years old.
Bob and Jessie Benson came that same spring and homesteaded
a piece of land and as they did not have much to do they were
down to the post office nearly every day and we played croquet.
So we had a very nice summer. Bob and Jessie only had to live
on their claim six months and proved up,[^14] then they went to
Wamego, Kan. Charley gave up the Gibson post office and went
down to New Mexico to work. I stayed with my mother. Charley
came back in November and Jessie was born the 26th of December
and I called her Jessie for Jessie Benson.

The next spring we went to Wamego and Mr. Lee worked as
bookkeeper at the depot. We were in Wamego until 1890 and
we left there in the spring and went to Denver and in that same
year in July our twins were born, girls Maudie and Myrtle. They
did not live but a few days. Our first boy, William, was born
on February 25, 1892, and in the summer we moved back to Iona,
Kan., and December 26, 1894, our second boy, Roscoe, was born.
Then Charley rented a farm three miles south of Jewell City and
there our third boy, Warren, was born in August, 1896. On June
30, 1898, the fourth girl, Ella, was born.

Charley was a man that would not stay long in one place. Al-
though he had a good education, high school and was a graduate
of Davenport Business College he never tried much book work.

[^13]: Charley Lee with his brother had first settled on land in eastern Lane county. They
got quite a bunch of cattle together only to have them all destroyed by one of the blizzards
that swept the plains.

[^14]: This must have been a pre-emption rather than a homestead, since only six months
residence was required.
He always wanted to farm. Mr. Lee taught singing by notes. He also played the violin and I started Jessie taking lessons at seven years of age. We had an organ that we practiced on. After we moved to Trego I sent her to her Aunt Ella to stay all summer and she went two terms at the Kansas Wesleyan Music School and she taught music later to help herself.

Charley wanted to go to Trego county, Kansas, but I said, “No, I won’t go to Trego county until they get schools and churches there.” We stayed in Jewell county, three miles from Jewell City, Kan., and there Jessie started her first year of school. We lived there until 1900. Then they wrote that there was a school and a church so Charley started for Trego county. We went by wagon and drove through. We got there in August, 1900, and put the children in the Gibson school near my folks and we moved into Geo. Young’s sod house on the Wild Horse.

In 1902 Esther was born and in 1904 Lillian was born. There were seven children to feed, clothe and care for. I washed on a washboard, ironed with an old-fashioned iron. I milked, worked in the garden and raised hundreds of chickens. Our well was 72 feet deep. At first we drew water over a pulley for our stock. When Charley was away the children and I pulled the water up and then when the stock got through drinking we began filling the half barrels again. If we let the water run low and then the stock came in for water it seemed they could never get enough water. Those were tough times.

My mother always took care of us when we were sick children out on the Smoky and then when I was married I got old Dr. Chase’s doctor book and took care of my family. When they got the flu or hard colds I would give them the first thing castor oil; keep tab on their temperature and, if a cold or cough, put lard, a few drops of turpentine and coal oil in the warm lard; wring a piece of flannel in the grease and put it on their lungs and breast and keep them in bed until the fever went down. They always called me the turpentine doctor.

In baby cases I could always go to my doctor book to find out what to do. I learned how to sterilize the things I used and when I cut the cord I browned the gauze in the oven before I put it on the baby. We had a telephone and I was called out many times in the night and took a fast ride through the hills and hollers to get to the patient. I nursed my neighbors for the love of them and all free. We were all poor together and when
Mrs. Charley (Hattie) Lee, 19, in her wedding dress (1888), which she made by hand. (See p. 126.)
anyone came for me I went day or night. I loved every one and they had faith in me. I was always so cheerful.

Sam Robinson came one night and wanted me to go with him, his wife was sick. The baby came bottom first. I called for a doctor as soon as I got on the job at 10 o'clock. Hall Robinson went for the doctor and we hung out a lantern so he could find the place. But we waited all night, the doctor did not get there until daylight the next day. The little boy was born dead and in eight days Mrs. Robinson died.

Then not long after I came off that case I got a phone call from Mrs. John Smith. "Say Mrs. Lee can you come over, I am afraid we are going to lose Delburt." Away I went to John Smiths. I stayed four days and he died the next day after I went over. Poor little Delburt! I laid him out and kept him packed in ice and stayed at the house while they went to the funeral, got supper for the family, cleaned up the house. After supper I hitched to the cart and went home.

My uncle and aunt, J. B. Inscho, came to visit us and on Sunday we all went to my mother's. We got home about dark. (We were living on the Brown place then.) The phone rang and Mrs. Barber said, "Mrs. Lee, something is wrong at Henry's." Just then Emily Henry said, "Oh Mrs. Lee will you come over? Mama died this afternoon." So we hitched the horse to the cart and away I went to help out. Mrs. Henry was still warm. I laid her out. Mr. Henry and I put her on a board in front of the window and I stayed there three or four days. I kept wet cloths on her face to keep her nice. I was up all night watching her and getting the clothes ready for the family to wear to the funeral. Again I stayed behind and cleaned house and got supper.

One night Mr. Ed. Frye came to our door about 10 o'clock and said, "Mrs. Lee, Claud ran a nail in his foot and it is hurting him so he can't sleep. What would you do?" I said, "Make a big bread and milk poultice. Put one half teaspoon turpentine in it and put it all around the foot as hot as he can stand it." He said, "I don't know whether I have any turpentine." So I gave him a little bottle and Claud got OK.

In 1901 we bought 160 acres of school land over one mile from the Ness county line next to George McNinch and there we lived for nine years. We had many ups and downs while living

---

15. This first land that the Lees owned was the NW¼ Sec. 36, Twp. 15 S, R. 25 W, in Treco county. Now owned by Harold McNinch, the house stands just where the Lee's soddy stood.
there. In July, 1902, the children were playing out and Will ran in and said, "Oh, Mother get into the cave quick a bad storm is coming." I closed the house and we ran to the cave dug in the bank of the slough. Esther was six months old. Charley was away from home. There was only a screen door on the cave—it was just a small place near the well to keep our cream and butter cool. After we got into the cave the storm hit and blew off the roof of our sod house and ruined everything. Jessie's little rocking chair fell down in front of the cave and Jessie, who was 14 years, began to scream. I said, "Jessie, don't cry, don't you know Jesus said I will go with you all the way." And then we began saying the Lord's prayer. The next thing we saw was the water and hail coming down the ravine. The hail made the side of the ravine look like a stone bank. Then I said, "We have to get out of here. Jessie you take Ella; Will and Roscoe take Warren and we will find some place to shelter us." Jessie went out crying, Roscoe took Warren's hand and Will took Ella's hand and we marched out into the rain and hail. I turned Esther's face down over my arm and covered her with my apron. The only place left to go was the door to the hen house—it was all gone but the doorway as the cyclone had blown it away. We got under the doorway and we were very cold. After about an hour it got better and then we did not know what to do. There was an old trunk out side the house where I kept clean rags and old worn out clothes. I said, "Will, go to that trunk and get some dry clothes and go get Mr. William Henry." Will went to the old trunk and put on his father's old white shirt with the stiff bosom on his back and an old pair of pants and ran barefooted to Mr. Henry's place through the hail and water.

Mr. Henry hitched his team to the wagon and came after the rest of us. We were so glad to get in a house and where there was a fire. We stayed at Mr. Henry's all night and the next day Mr. Ed Frye came over and took us to his place as they had more room. Oh how thankful I am that we had such nice neighbors! I shall never forget the kindness Mr. Frye and Mr. Henry showed us. All the phones were out of order. Mr. Henry went to my mother's place the next morning after the storm and told Charley what happened so he got home after the storm. Then Mr. Frye and other neighbors came and plowed sod and built up the walls of our house again. Charley went to Utica and got more lumber and windows and in a few days we were back in our home. How many would go through the hardships we went through!
I sewed rags and made two rag carpets to cover the two floors of our sod house. After hoeing in the garden, helping milk the cows and taking care of the family I would sew rags together. I sat up many a night sewing the rags together on the machine and the next day the children would cut and roll them into balls. Then I would take them to the weaver and she would make my carpet. I made two 20-yard strips of carpet. They were one-yard wide and I would cut them into four strips five yards long and sew them together. When it was finished I would have a carpet 12 feet wide and 15 feet long and it just fit my two rooms.

About 1906 the St. Elizabeth church was built. Charles M. Bell donated the land. When it was finished we had Rev. Vanderlip as pastor. He preached at Bethel church at eleven o’clock and at the St. Elizabeth at two o’clock. Jessie was organist and leader of the choir. Charley was superintendent. We had a good faithful crowd. We could always depend on Mr. Frye’s family to be there, they never failed. I was the head of all programs. Living so far apart I could not get all the children together to practice so I would get Claud, Leslie and Carl Frye, Robert, Alice and Gertrude Upjohn, Don and Emily Henry and also Jessie, Roscoe and Warren Lee. We would give the church a good program.

In 1906 we built the High Point schoolhouse and it was so late in getting ready we could only have a three-month school that year. So I said I was going to move to Utica and put the children in school for nine months. That was Will’s last year in grammar school and I wanted him to graduate. Mr. Tom Nuttle rented me the building just north of the depot. I moved into Utica that fall. The neighbors said I could not make a living but after we got there I went to work sewing, and washing for other people. I had two boarders and I did washing for Mr. Earl Hoffer, editor of the Utica paper. And Will got $5.00 a week helping Mr. Hoffer in his office.

We made a good living and had a very pleasant winter. The summer of 1907 we sent Will to Wakeeny to Normal and he got a third-grade certificate for teaching school. In April, 1910, Glen Owen and Jessie were married. We put on a big wedding but it

16. St. Elizabeth church was located on the SW\(\frac{1}{4}\) of the NW\(\frac{1}{4}\) Sec. 15, Twp. 15 S, R. 25 W, Trego county. Chas. Bell of the Sweetwater ranch gave the land and the church was named for his mother, Mary Elizabeth Bell. The church was a frame building about 26 x 40 feet. Well attended services were held until the early 1920’s. Later the building was moved and sold and then torn down.

17. When the Lees and other families moved into the west part of the Pleasant Hill school district, the district was divided and a new district formed called High Point as it was on one of the high points of the county. The schoolhouse was on land owned by William Henry, NE corner of NE\(\frac{1}{4}\) Sec. 26, Twp. 15 S, R. 25 W. There is no longer a school there.

18. Earl Hoffer was editor of the Utica Enterprise.
was a sad day for me as she was my oldest child, now leaving me. By then we had left our old sod house and moved into Mr. Brown's frame house. We had to leave the sod house as the rats were so bad in the sod walls of the house.

In August, 1910, Esther took sick and we called Dr. Atwood. A few days later her appendix broke. Dr. Atwood told me we must get her to the hospital right away. So we wrapped Esther in a sheet, took a pillow and went in Dr. Atwood's car to his house in town. We put her on the doctor's bed and waited until two o'clock in the morning and took the train out for Great Bend hospital. We had to change somewhere down the line and while we waited the doctor phoned the hospital to be at the depot with the ambulance.19

We got to the hospital at ten o'clock and the doctors took the bandage off her bowels and said, "What did this?" I said I bathed her with turpentine and blistered her. We went to the operating room and when I left Esther cried. And soon a nurse came and said, "Mrs. Lee, you will have to stay with Esther until we get her asleep." She put a white apron on me and tied a white cloth on my head and took me back to the operating room. Little Esther was so glad to see me there. I took her little hand and said to her, "Now you have a boil in your side and we brought you down to have it opened. You be a nice little girl, I will stay with you." They opened her bowels and the pus ran out on the table. The doctors shook their heads. I was praying all the time. The doctors fixed her up and they rolled her out to her room. One doctor said to me, "Mrs. Lee, we expected to find her bowels all full of gangrene but there was none and the only reason I know is you used the turpen-tine. I think she will be all right."

I then went to the room and stayed by little Esther. That night I slept on the floor beside her bed. She was in a ward with four other persons. I had to stay with her for three weeks as she would not let me leave her only at night. I had a room close by. I went in the hospital at seven in the morning and left at six at night. I waited on the other patients, combed their hair and I just cared for that room and the hospital gave me my meals for my service.

At the end of three weeks the doctor told me I could take Esther home so I wrote to the folks for one of them to come and carry Esther for me. So Will came to Great Bend and the next day we started for home. We got to Utica about five in the evening and it seemed the whole town was out to meet us. Charley could not take

19. This transfer point was Hoisington, from which point a train formerly ran to Great Bend.
us home that evening so we stayed all night at John Smith’s home and the next day Charley came and took us home. Esther was very weak and the doctor said not to let her be on her feet before ten days, so we carried her from place to place.

Then the 23rd of September we had our sale. We sold the farm and all the cattle, horses and chickens and farm machinery but one team and the boys’ horse and buggy. We rented a place in Arnold of Mr. N. S. Ream and the family moved to Arnold. Charley had to husk the corn which took him a couple of months. I started a restaurant. The house had four bed rooms, dining room and kitchen. I had two roomers and boarders, Hilda Preston and Laura Stewart. I gave Cora Giess her dinner and Guy Luckey took his meals with us. That was the first taste of life for the Lee family, we all enjoyed that winter very much. We would get together and work out a program for the Literary. One time we were going to have the animal song, “We Went to the Animal Fair.” At the same time Guy Luckey and my three boys were practicing a number out in the lumber yard and would not tell us what it was. Will said, “Mama, put our number on just ahead of yours.” So I did and when we went to the Literary that night and called for the boys’ song what did they sing but the animal song. It almost spoiled our program.

About Christmas of 1910, we decided we were going to California where my children could get a better education. Reams had been talking California all winter, so we had our sales together. I wrote to Will, Glenn and Jessie. Did they want to go? Of course, they said yes. We packed a big box that weighed 500 pounds with the last of our things and that big box went on our tickets. We bought 11 tickets—ten whole ones and one-half ticket and I wrote Glenn and Jessie to meet us in Pueblo April 1, 1911.

We had a day stop over at Salt Lake City. We got off the train and went to the hotel, cleaned up and took a sight-seeing bus and rode for two or three hours. The next day about noon we went to the train. There was another family from Colorado on the train and their family and ours and two or three men were the only people on the train. It was the first train out of Salt Lake City on the D. R. G. railroad that spring. We had a nice time on the train but had to wait eight hours one time until the snow slide could be cleared off and another time six hours. On the 8th of April about two in the morning we landed in Oroville and there the train stopped 30 minutes to let us get something to eat and some coffee. We had been on the train so long we ran out of food. Then about
two in the afternoon we got into Oakland. I felt like I was in the Garden of Eden, everything full of bloom, everything so green and pretty.

We got room in a hotel for the night and the next day Charley and I started out to get some place to live. We went to several real estate offices and the first thing they would ask was, "Have you any young children?" We told them we had two girls seven and nine years and the man would say, "We can't rent to you with small children." Along in the afternoon I got mad. I said, "What do you want us to do with those little girls, throw them in the bay?" Then he said, "I am sorry lady but we have a four room duplex if you would like that." I said, "We can't stay in a hotel with this crowd," so he rented us the duplex at $25 a month.

Charley and I went to a second-hand store and bought a three-burner gas plate, three bedsteads and a bureau and the man delivered them to the duplex. Charley went to the depot and got a man to take our baggage to the duplex. I went to the store to buy our groceries. I walked in and said, "I would like five loaves of bread, one peck of potatoes." He said, "We sell our potatoes by the pound." When I asked him what was the price of anything, he would say two bits or four bits. I was stumped again. Well I got my groceries and gave him a $20 bill and he ran to the back of the store to see the manager if the bill was good. At last he came back and gave me my change in gold. It was the first time I had seen gold money. And from that time for several years there was nothing but gold, except when someone came from the East. And there were no pennies. If your bill was 42 cents you would pay 40 cents but if it was 45 cents they would get the 45 cents.

Everything was so different from what we were used to that it took a few weeks to get adjusted. Two Sundays we went on the ferry boat to San Francisco and spent the day in Golden Gate Park—a wonderful place to spend the day. It was the first time we had been on a big boat. The children went from top to bottom looking at everything. And what a day they had in the park. There were flowers from almost every nation and in the zoo all kinds of animals. That evening we were so tired we could hardly get home, leave the ferry building, catch a train and ride a long ways across Oakland.

We stayed one month in Oakland, then we went to Hollister, where there was plenty of work for all of us. We got to Hollister the 12th of May. At Hollister there was the largest hay barn in
California so Charley came in one day and said, "Hattie, I am going out in the fields to work in the hay—give me a comfort and pillow." About two hours later Will came and got a comfort and a pillow and so on until all my men and pillows had gone to the hay field.

The 27th of May my first grandbaby was born. I took care of Jessie and baby until she was able to take care of herself. Then the three girls, Ella, Esther and Lillian and myself went out to Mr. Richinsons and went to cutting apricots. We got 10 cents a 40-lb. box. Ella and I cut cots and the two little girls made $1.00 a piece taking care of the small children the women had to bring with them. We soon got so we could cut 20 boxes a day and by me helping Ella some she would cut 20 boxes. We worked in the cots about two weeks.

The boss came to me and said, "Mrs. Lee, will you go out in the yard and double trays?" When the first cots are half dry they dump the apricots, two trays on one so as to get more trays for the cutting shed. I said, "How much are you paying?" The boss said, "I will give $2.75 per day and furnish a boy to help." So I put on my big hat, went out in the yard and doubled trays. I stayed at that until the cot season was over. The apple harvest came next. The boss asked me to sort apples. He had sold the apples to a packer in San Jose. The way we sorted apples was a board with three holes in it, big, medium, and small. I sat all day poking apples at those holes. A boy set the box of apples on the table and took them away. I sorted apples about two weeks at $2.75 per day.

All this time the boys were working in the orchard too. Next came prunes. They are dipped in hot lye water and put on trays. When they were dry about half and were well wrinkled the Boss put me to doubling trays again. And at last the pears came and then I sorted pears the same as apples.

While we were busy in the fruit Charley went with a land agent over in Stanislaw county at Patterson and bought ten acres of land two miles from the town. We bought a team, harness and wagon and drove through a range of mountains to Patterson. It took us two days. Now we were in the San Joaquin valley. Patterson was a Spanish land grant and Thomas Patterson inherited it from his father. So in 1910 he started and laid out Patterson. There were 13,000 acres in the grant.

So we landed there September 19, 1911. It was a new place. There were few houses there. They were building the grammar
school, putting side walks and water lines. And there was plenty of work. I told Charley I had enough of building up new places and I would not move onto the ten acres and live in a tent all through the rainy season while we built something to call home. So we rented a building and started a restaurant. The building was 30 x 32 feet with a partition across the back for the kitchen and a washroom and toilet in the corner of the back. So we went to work. We were close to the Standard Oil station pipe line. There was a crew of 20 working at the station. The crew signed up with us. There were about 20 other men came to our restaurant besides my family and transients. Roscoe and a girl I hired, waited on tables and kept the dining room nice. Ella and Esther and Lillian washed dishes and I did the cooking. We served short orders for breakfast and family style dinner and supper. Will got a job in the lumber yard and he paid his board too. And as my other men folks worked they paid their board also. They kept their beet wages but paid board. I took care of their clothes and they slept at home. We had two tents in the back to sleep in. We made good money. Charley kept books and ran errands.

But in March, 1914, I got quite ill and had to go to Modesto hospital. I had a fibroid tumor and the doctor said it would go to cancer if it was not removed. So I had a major operation and was in the hospital six weeks. I had to lie low that summer. When I came out and got strong enough to look around I sold the restaurant to a Mrs. Martha Bishop and we went into a brand new house, all modern, seven rooms, bath, toilet and two lots and there we stayed until 1945.

I had a bad heart attack in 1931 and was in the hospital from April to September. Charley rented an apartment in Modesto and came out to the hospital every night. He would spend the hour reading the paper to me. And then in 1935 Charley got so he could not swallow (pipe cancer). I rode around in a wheel chair and tried to do things for him. He got so thin his bones almost rattled but he was so patient and good. He bore his suffering alone and never complained. He was 81 on December 9, 1935, and died January 9, 1936. Roscoe died of liver trouble in 1945.

I am so glad we came to California. The children finished their schooling and three graduated from high school and all have nice homes and good jobs. I live with Jessie and Will, and Warren lives nearby on the same acre of land in Sacramento. Both houses are
modern, everything nice. I expect to spend the rest of my life here. I have been a Christian for 67 years and kept my children in the church and I have a fine family and I am so proud of them.

Now you have a part of my life and I hope there will be a few stars in my crown when I get to heaven. And the one thing I regret is that I should have been a man. Mr. Lee and I lived together 48 years. He was a very kind and gentle man, whom everyone liked and respected, a perfect gentleman. And when I pass on I will be shipped back to Patterson and laid beside him. I have my lot there. So this is the end of my life story.