

## [Mrs. Pinkie Bourne Skinner]

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[Carrizozo?], N. Mex.

1642 words. PIONEER STORY

As told by Mrs. Pinkie Bourne Skinner.

I was born in Independence, Virginia in the year 1858. On October 21, 1938, it will be fifty seven years since I came to Lincoln County, New Mexico, and I have lived in this county ever since.

My father was L. W. Bourne, and my mother whose maiden name was Fulton, were born in Richmond, Virginia. Father was a farmer. He wanted to go to Texas so he sold out and we left Independence, Virginia in 1869. My father, mother and their six children, three boys and three girls, traveled by train to Memphis, Tennessee and from there we went by boat. We went down the Mississippi River on a boat named the "The Great Mississippi" to the Red River where we changed to a boat named "Erie No. 9" and traveled up the Red River to Shreveport, Louisiana. From there we went on an old stage coach to Jefferson, Texas, in the eastern part of Texas, just across the line from Louisiana. While at Jefferson father met some cotton freighters who were going to Black Jack Grove, Texas, which was our destination. Father had a brother who lived there. We traveled with the freighters and had a hard dry trip but we did not have to worry about the cooking as the men folks did all the work. We traveled in big old freight wagons drawn by mules.

After arriving in Black Jack Grove father went into the store business, we stayed there about a year and a half then moved to Stephenville, Texas. While living in Stephenville I met John H. Skinner and married him in December 1873. I was fifteen years old. We rode

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horse back out to Squire Johnathan Belcher's house and he married us while we sat on our horses. Mr. Skinner was living on a farm when we married. He farmed and also raised a few cattle and horses. Soon after I married, my father and mother left Stephenville and moved to Oak Creek, Texas, about forty miles east of Big Springs, Texas. The Texas and Pacific Railroad Company was building thro'ugh there to Big Springs and father and my two brothers went there trying to get work, as wages on the farms in tho'se days were not very much. A married man with a team was paid fifteen dollars a month and single men only ten dollars, working from sun up to sun down.

They staid here only a short while. They heard of the gold strike on the Bonito River in Lincoln County, New Mexico, and father, mother, three brothers and two sisters left Oak Creek, Texas, in the spring of 1881. They reached the Bonito sometime in May and found plenty of work. They wrote back for Mr. Skinner and me to come out as they found work plentiful and such a beautiful country to live in.

When we received this letter we were living about ten miles east of Colorado City, Texas, on the Jim Ned River, so we loaded up what few clothes, and bedding, and provisions we had in our wagon drawn by two horses, and left for New Mexico in September, 1881. We had one boy and one girl at this time. A young boy by the name of Milburn Mackey came down to see us the night before we left and wanted to come with us so we brought him along. Mr. Skinner and Milburn slept on the ground and the two children and I slept in the wagon as we were afraid of snakes. We made our sour dough biscuits and cooked them in a dutch oven, using soda as there wasn't any baking powder in tho'se days. We used buffalo and cow chips to cook with and the only light we had was the camp fire as we had no candles. Some nights when we camped where there was a lot of cactus growing we would gather the dried cactus stalks and burn them.

The first town of any size that we stopped in was Ballinger, Texas. We stocked up on provisions there. We crossed the Colorado River at Ballinger at a ford. The water was so swift we came near getting drowned in making the crossing. It was a very hot dry trip from

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there to San Angelo, Texas, where we struck the Concho River and laid over a day to rest. After leaving the Concho River we struck the plains country and it was so dry and hot that we drove late into the night to get to water for our horses. We carried our drinking water in kegs tied to the out side of the wagon and always had plenty from one watering place to the next. The only fresh meat that we had on the trip was wild ducks that we killed in the rivers and fresh fish that the men caught when we camped on the Concho and Pecos Rivers. We saw quite a few buffalo and antelope but they were always too far away for us to shoot at. We were always on the lookout for Indians and robbers for we had been warned on leaving San Angelo that there was a lot of Indians on the plains. When we got to the Netherlan Rancho they told us to look out for robbers up the Seven Rivers country and we were scared to death. We didn't have 4 a bit of trouble tho'ugh and didn't see an Indian until we reached the Bonito, in New Mexico.

We crossed the Pecos River at Pecos City. It was up so high that we crossed on a ferry boat pulled across by a rope. We left Pecos and traveled almost due north, we passed Roswell, New Mexico to the north and came by the Netherlan Rancho, which was just below the Cottonwoods and also by Seven Rivers, New Mexico. All of theses places were in Lincoln County in tho'se days. After leaving Pecos City, Texas, the road was nothing more than a cow trail all the way to the Bonito River. We crossed the Hondo River just below the Border Hill and when we came down the Border Hill, Mr. Skinner and the boy who was with us had to stand on the upper side of the wagon to keep it from turning over and I had to drive the wagon down the hill. I was so scared and I wondered what kind of a country we were coming to. We came on up the Hondo River towhat is now the town of Hondo, New Mexico, where we struck the Rio Bonito and on up to Lincoln, New Mexico, where we saw our first adobe houses.

The Lincoln County War had not been over very long and Billy the Kid had been killed only about three months before. We went thro'ugh Fort Stanton, which was a military post in tho'se days, passed by the old Brewery, which was between Fort Stanton and Angus, and on to a mining settlement which was later called Bonito City. I was so glad to get to where

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my mother and father were. When we landed on the Bonito Mr. Skinner had only thirty-five cents in his pocket and that was every cent we had. The 5 first job he got after arriving there was hauling some supplies for some miners. The miners had gone to White Oaks for supplies with a burro team and on the way back the burros got away from them and they were left a foot so they came for Mr. Skinner to haul their supplies about ten miles and they gave him five dollars. We tho'ught that was a lot of money for a little work.

There was plenty of work in the mines and lots of miners coming in every day. It soon grew to be a big camp and they named it Bonito City. we got our mail at White Oaks, New Mexico, about once a month. Later on we got our mail at Fort Stanton and got it oftener. One of the miners would ride horse back to the Fort and get the mail for the whole camp. My mother, one other woman, (I have forgotten her name) and myself were the only women in camp the first winter we were there. Just before Christmas in 1881, father, my two brothers and Mr. Skinner went hunting and killed fifteen wild turkeys and took them to Fort Stanton and sold them for twenty five dollars, we had such a happy Christmas.

We lived in a little old log cabin on the Bonito and it was chinked up with mud. When the mud dried some of it fell out and left holes between the logs. One day while I was cooking dinner I felt some one looking at me thro'ugh one of these holes, when I went over to investigate, I found several Indians had been peeping thro'ugh the holes at me. They never did molest anyone around the camp, but we were always afraid of them 6 for we didn't know when they would go on the war-path. Soon after landing on the Bonito River we took up a homestead near the camp, proved up on it and got our patent. We lived on this homestead until 1906 when we sold out to the Railroad Company and moved to [Carrisoso?], New Mexico. Mr. Skinner died in [Carrisoso?] in 1925 at the age of 72 years. I am now living with my daughter, Mrs. A.B. [Sumwalt?] at Nogal, New Mexico. I have thirty five grandchildren and thirty eight great grandchildren now living. Counting the in-law and all we have over a hundred members in our family.

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NARRATOR: Mrs. Pinkie Bourne Skinner, Nogal, New Mexico, Aged 80.