

[Mollie Grove Smith]

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Mollie Grove Smith[,?]

White Oaks, New Mexico.

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PIONEER STORY.

I have lived in the State of New Mexico for about forty-five years and in Lincoln County about twenty-five years. I was born September 15, 1878, near Memphis Tennessee. My father was J. O. Grove. He was born July 25, 1854 on a farm near Memphis Tennessee. My mother was Mattie Hill and was born September 18, 1856, in Mississippi. I do not remember the place. My mother and father were married in Middleton, Tennessee, October 26, 1873. They moved from Middleton, Tennessee, to Brown County, Texas, in 1878. I was about six weeks old when they moved and had an older sister and brother. My father farmed in Brown County Texas, but they did not like it very well there so in the summer of 1884 they moved to New Mexico.

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There were six of us children then. We moved in a covered wagon and had all of our household goods and a coop or chickens, besides the family. A family by the name of Willis left Texas with us for New Mexico. They also had a covered wagon. I do not remember much about them, they left us when we got to [Pecos?], Texas. I was six years old at that time. I remember that my father and my oldest brother, Herbert, slept on the ground and Mother and the rest of us slept in the wagon. Mother cooked on a camp fire. I remember gathering fuel. After we got on the plains we had to gather cow chips to cook with. We had three horses. I do not know how long it took us to make the trip.

When we got to Pecos, Texas, my father joined two other families who were on their way to New Mexico. One man was named F. M. Evans. He had a wife and ten children and about a hundred 2 head of cattle. The other man was named George Castleberry. He had a wife and seven children. Both traveled in covered wagons. My father and brother, Herbert, helped Mr. Evans to drive his cattle.

We traveled slowly and grazed the cattle along. We came to the Lower [Peneasco?] and to the Upper [Peneasco?] and on to James Canyon where we camped for quite a while. At that time this was in Lincoln County, New Mexico. This was a lovely place to camp with lots of grass and water. My mother told my father that she had found the place where she wanted to live, right there in James Canyon. All three families decided to locate there so each man filed on one hundred and sixty acres. My father homesteaded his one hundred sixty acres to include the spring where we had camped. Mr. Evans located about a mile above us and the Castleberry family about a half mile from Mr. Evans.

Each family got a tent and we lived in these tents for several months until the men got houses built for their families. The houses were built of hand hewn logs with the roof made of boards rived by hand. At first the houses were just one big room with a large fireplace. I remember that my mother cooked on this fireplace and we depended mostly on the fireplace for light as well as warmth. Each man cleared a field and fenced it with split rails. My father cleared about twenty-five acres at first and enlarged his field each year. My

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father planted oats, irish potatoes and all kinds of garden stuff. The grass was about waist high then and my father cut grass hay with a hand scythe, to feed his horses thro'ugh the winter months. I remember that we used to thrash out our seed oats with a pole or flail, as we called it. My mother and we children did most of the work on the farm. Father had good horses and he decided that he could make good money freighting. At first he had only one wagon, 3 but before very long he got another wagon and team and my oldest brother Herbert helped him and drove one of the wagons.

One winter a man by the name of [Groeley?] came thro'ugh by our place looking for a place to winter some cattle. My father had a lot of hay out so he decided to winter these cattle on halves. I do not remember how many of the cattle there were at first but my father got thirty-five head for his share in the spring. We were so proud of tho'se cattle.

After we had been on our homestead for about three years three other families located not far from us, two families named Hunter and one named Holden. That gave us quite a settlement. We had a post office then called Pine Springs and the first [post-mistress?] was Mrs. [Caleb?] Holden. I remember that an Indian carried the mail on horseback. I was just dreadfully afraid of him and he often stopped at our house to warm and sat. I always hid behind Mother's big quilt box until he left. Mother used to knit soaks and mittens and sold them to him for fifty cents a pair.

The men of the settlement built a log school house. I do not remember the name of the first teacher that I went to school to, but he was fat and bald headed. I remember at one time that at one time the Hunter, Holden and Grove family (ours) had a governess by the name of Elvira Kinney. There were sixteen of us that she taught and each family boarded this governess for a week at a time and she would go from one family to the other. Her salary was ten dollars a month and her board. She taught us for two summers.

There was a Baptist preacher in the community that we all called Parson John Hunter. I have often heard my father tell this tale on Parson John. Once just before Christmas when

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my father had gone to Roswell with his freight wagons to haul our Christmas 4 supplies, Parson John joined him with his wagon on the home trip. They had heard that there was a case of smallpox on the road at a store run by a man named Kennedy. Parson John had one of his children along who was sick and the Parson was just sure the child had smallpox. As the wagons neared this store Parson John stood up in his wagon and yelled: "Everybody strike a lope! Everybody lope your teams by this store! Hurry' everybody hurry!" My father tho'ught that was so funny.

There was no doctor in the settlement. I remember once that my brother Luther got very sick and we did not know what was the matter with him. My mother and a neighbor woman took Luther and went to the [Mescalero?] Indian Reservation to a doctor. When they got there they found that the doctor was a negro. My mother was horrified but the baby was so sick that she decided to let the doctor prescribe. The doctor said that Luther had bone [erisipilas?] and that the bones would work out of his foot. Sure enough they did and my brother is crippled in that foot to this day. My mother was the mid-wife in our community and often was called on to doctor the minor ailments in the settlement.

As we children got older my mother worried about not having better school advantages for us so she decided to move to Las Cruces and send us to school. We lived there for three years.

When my father was freighting I used to go with him once in a while on his trips. I remember once that my oldest sister Olga and I went with father to White Oaks. Father had oats, potatoes, garden stuffs, butter and eggs, to trade for groceries and clothes. One of the merchants where Father traded gave Olga and me each a little breast pin. We tho'ught they were the 5 grandest things and were very proud of them indeed. We tho'ught that White Oaks was the biggest city in the world. Another time I went with my father to El Paso. I saw my firststreet cars there. We went into a restaurant to sat and I went with my father into a small room to wash up. I saw a big fat chinaman standing behind a door pulling a rope. I could not imagine what he was doing and was very frightened. Afterwards

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I found out that the rope that he was pulling operated some fans over the tables in the restaurant.

There were ten of us children, Olga, Herbert and Mollie, born in Tennessee, Sissala, Jimmie and Willie, born in Brown County, Texas, John, Howard and Luther, born in James Canyon, New Mexico, and Eppie Jean, born in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Seven of us are still living.

In 1895 my father sold his place in James Canyon to Colonel J. E. Edgington, who was head of the New Mexico Military Institute at Roswell, New Mexico. We moved back to Texas and lived at Sipe Springs, [Comanchie?] County, Texas.

I was married in January, 1898, to William Lee Smith. We have two sons, Leo and Orris, both born in Sipe Springs, Texas.

In 1900 my husband and I left Sipe Springs, Texas, and moved back to New Mexico. We lived in James Canyon, in the same house that my father had built on his homestead and had lived in for eleven years. We rented the place from Colonel Edgington and farmed it for five years. In 1905 my husband went to work for the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad Company and we moved to Alamogordo, New Mexico. My husband ran on the mountain division from Alamogordo to Cloudcroft, New Mexico. On March 19, 1924, a log rolled off a flat car and hurt him very badly, injuring his back. He had to give up working on the railroad and was sent by the railroad company to Carrizozo, New Mexico, as caretaker for the railroad club house at Carrizozo. We lived in Carrizozo for eighteen months, but Mr. Smith was very dissatisfied so we leased a ranch about eight miles from White Oaks, New Mexico, and lived there for five years. In 1932 we moved into the village of White Oaks and are still living there.

Edward W. Grove, who was president of the Paris Medicine Company of Saint Louis, Missouri, and who put out Grove's Chill Tonic and Grove's Laxative Bromo-quinine, on the market, is a first cousin of my father. I have a letter dated December 23, 1913, from

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Edward W. Grove to my father in which he sent a check to my father for \$100.00, an a Christmas gift.

My father and mother moved from Sipe Springs, Texas, to German, Texas, in 1910 and they were living at Gorman when they died. Father died on March 3, 1936, and Mother died September 3, 1938. Of the seven children left, I am the only one who lives in New Mexico. The others all live in Texas.

NARRATOR: Mollie Grove Smith, Aged 60 years. White Oaks, New Mexico.

Edith L. Crawford,

Carrizozo, New Mexico.

CORRECTIONS ON PIONEER STORY OF

MOLLIE GROVE SMITH.

MAR 16 1939 [2nd?]

Page 4. Paragraph 3. We moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico, in August, 1891.

Page 6. Paragraph 2. I have a latter dated December 23, 1913, from Edward W. Grove to my father in which he sent my father a check for \$100.00 for a Christmas gift. This Edward W. Grove was president of the Paris Medicine Company of Saint Louis, Missouri, and was a very wealthy man. He was my father's first cousin and visited in our home once in a while. I do not know just how many checks he sent to my father at different times but the total amount was rather large.