

[Pat Garrett—Billy the Kid]

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Carrizozo, [N. Mex.?] [Dup (??)]

1528 words.

PIONEER STORY

Pat Garrett-Billy the Kid.

I was born in Grapevine, Texas, in 1877. I was six years old when we left Grapevine in April 1997. My father, Seaborn T. Gray, mother, four children, two boys and two girls, my father's two sisters and their husbands, Mr. and John Lowery and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Manning and three cowboys, Henry Pruitt, Jim Carlisle and Johnnie Ricker were in the party.

Pat Garret was a cousin of my father. He came to Grapevine, Texas to visit us in the early spring of 1883. He had a cattle ranche on Little Creek, which is now part of the old "V" ranche, near Ruidoso, in Lincoln County, New Mexico. He persuaded my father to move to New Mexico and bring his cattle where there was lots of good feed and water and open range. Cousin Pat mapped out the trail we were to travel as he had hunted Buffalo out on the plains and had made the trip several times and knew all the watering places. We traveled in four covered wagons, drawn by two horses to each wagon. One wagon was a chuck wagon and carried the provisions and the cow boys bedding. There was a chuck box in the back of this wagon. The three women did all the cooking. The chuck wagon would stop at each town and load up with provisions to last until we got to the next town. The rest of the wagons did not go thro'ugh the towns as we had two hundred head of cattle and twenty-five 2 head of horses with us. We could only travel about fifteen miles a

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day on account of the horses and cattle having to feed on the way. We camped out in the open each night. The men would take turns standing guard over the camp and the stock each night as the Indians were bad in tho'se days and father was afraid they would come by some night and steal all of our horses and cattle. The families slept in the wagons and the cowboys made their beds on the ground. We used lanterns for lighting and cooked over a camp fire in dutch ovens. The only fresh meat we had were Antelope and Buffalo. They were very plentiful. I remember when we would sight a herd of Buffalo we would drive until they could see us, then the wagons would stop and father would hang a red blanket on the side of one of the wagons. The buffalo would become curious and keep edging up and when they got in shooting range father would get his winchester and pick out a nice fat yearling and kill it. They would skin him and all we took was the hind quarters and the hide. After we reached the plains the only fuel we had was buffalo and cow chips. Every day when we stopped for dinner and at night my oldest brother and I had to take tow sacks and gather the chips. Mother made sour dough biscuits twice a day and corn bread for our noon meal. She baked it in dutch ovens and my brother and I would watch to see if she dropped any of the chip ashes in the bread while baking it, for we tho'ught it was awful to have to use the buffalo and cow chips 3 to cook with. We never saw any Indians or any traces of any on the whole trip out here and we were on the road five months. It was awful dry and hot crossing the plains. We ran out of water one day and we and the stock too suffered terribly from thirst. The cattle would not let us stop to eat dinner or supper. They put their heads down and traveled in a trot most all day. It was after dark when the cattle smelled water and they all struck out in a run for this watering place. It was just about dry when we reached it and we had to drink water from cow tracks that night. When we got up the next morning and saw the kind of water we had been drinking we children all tried to get sick. There was not enough water left in the holes for us to make coffee the next morning so we started on our way looking for fresh water. We drove about two miles when we reached the Canadian River with the nicest clearest water so we camped on the bank of this river for three days and rested ourselves and the stock. Mother and my two aunts did the family washing and the men folks caught lots of nice fish. [????]

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One day while mother was driving along my two brothers and I were playing in the back of the wagon and I fell out. My oldest brother called to mother and said "Mamma, Nellie is out." Mother stopped the wagon and looked back and there I lay in the middle of the road screaming to the top of my lungs. She tho'ught that I was half killed but I was not hurt at all, just scared half to death.

When we reached Fort Sumner, New Mexico the Pecos River was running bank full of the muddiest water. We had to dip it up in 4 barrels and tubs and let it settle before we could use it. We had to lay over there ten days waiting for the river to go down. We camped in an old adobe hut for it was raining when we got there. We got so tired of waiting to cross the river that one morning father decided that we could make it so the cowboys rounded up the cattle and horses and jumped them off in the Pecos River. They swam across with only horns and faces showing but we lost only one cow in crossing. When it came time for the wagons to cross the women folks and we children were awfully scared. The wagons crossed one at a time. One of the cowboys tied a rope to the horn of his saddle and to the tongue of the wagon and guided us across. The water came up to the bed of the wagon and some ran into our wagon. While we were in Fort Sumner waiting to cross the river we visited Billy th Kid's grave. I remember it had a board at the head with his name, age and the date he was killed. He had only been dead two years then.

After leaving Fort Sumner we found wonderful grass and water for the stock. It was about the middle of August and was the rainy season in New Mexico. We were on the road a month from Fort Sumner to Little Creek, New Mexico. We traveled by way of the Jicarilla and Capitan Mountains and crossed the Salado flat which is about eleven miles west of Capitan, New Mexico. We arrived at Pat Garrett's ranche at Little Creek, New Mexico in September 1887. We had been on the road for five months. Mother was 5 so homesick when we first came for we had to sleep in a tent in Pat Garrett's back yard and we ate with the Garrett family until we found a place to live in. When we did find a place to live in it was a log shack and leaked. Mother had an awful time trying to keep our bedding dry

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when it rained or snowed. It was awfully cold the first winter we spent at Little Creek as it is situated at the foot of the White Mountains. We lived there about a year and in 1884 father filed on a homestead on the Salado flat where he raised cattle and fine horses until 1900. That year he sold all his cattle and horses and laid out the town of Capitan, New Mexico.

Father was born in Coosa County, Alabama, October 31, 1851 and died in Capitan, New Mexico, July 23, 1919. Mother was born in Arkansas April 26, 1855 and died in Carrizozo, New Mexico, October 15, 1935. Father's two sisters did not stay very long in New Mexico, they did not like it here so they moved back to Texas and I do not know what ever became of them. The three cowboys stayed with us for a while and then drifted away and I do not know where they went. I was married to William M. Reily October 31, 1894, seven children were born to the union, five girls and two boys. Mr. Reily died in Carrizizi, New Mexico, March 9, 1931.

NARRATOR: Nellie B. Reily, Aged 61 years, Carrizozo, New Mexico.