

Topic: My great grandmothers journey from Arkansas to Oklahoma then finally to Hollister California.

Abstract: My great grandmother lived through almost all the changes that happened in the United States. From the reconstruction, industrialization of our nation, the impact of World War II, all the way to witnessing the Attacks of September 11th. This is a story of the struggles and challenges my grandmother and family overcame and their journey to Hollister California.

Key Words: Hollister, Poliomyelitis (Polio), Reconstruction, Industrialization, Covered Wagon, WWII, San Benito County, Great Depression, Vietnam War

I sit here and remember the times when my great- grandmother was alive, the great times when I would sit “criss-crossed apple sauce” on the floor of her small house, listening intently to the stories of her life. Did I ever think these stories would come in handy at age 11? Probably not, but now when I think about these stories, I learn more about where and how exactly we ended up in this small town of Hollister.

When I was younger I knew the basics of my great-grandmother, her physical attributes, her fragile touch, the things she liked and didn't like but I never knew the background of her life, what had she been through in her past time. It all started in 1920, when she was born in Arkansas. I didn't realize that all of the history I was learning in my classes, my grandmother and her family actually lived through. This truly amazed me, to have the opportunity to know and be able to talk to someone very near and dear to my heart, and hear her outlook on all these significant events in history.

My grandmother witnessed so many changes in her lifetime. I was told that she had poliomyelitis (Polio), which was a very common disease during this time

period. The struggles that people encountered during the 1920 forward were beyond my belief. My grandmother was lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend school, but of course it wasn't an easy trek for her. She had to walk three to four miles a day, rain, shine or snow, which was a very difficult process due to her Polio.

My grandmother lived during the poor era and modern change showed up later in her life. Her brothers and sisters were put to work at a very early age, and their elders had very high expectations of them. They had to pick cotton by hand, before machines were around like they are today. This was a very time consuming and strenuous job, for adults, let alone children. As I sit in my history class in college, I realize that the events I am learning in class such as the reconstruction of our nation and the industrialization of our country, I soon realize my great grandmother took part and witnessed these dramatic changes. For example, she traveled from Bear Creek Arkansas to Oklahoma in a covered wagon. Automobiles were being made at this time but only the high class and white families could afford them.

During the time of World War II is when my grandmother and her family made a big move for a better life. They traveled by train (which was a huge deal, at this time) from Oklahoma to California in 1943. Their final destination was Hollister California, where the next three to four generations would call their "Hometown." I always wondered why they would move to little old' Hollister, and no one had a real answer for me. But I did discover that they were very involved in working with crops and harvesting. This makes sense now why I have lived on an apricot or walnut orchard all my life. Her family picked everything from prunes, walnuts,

strawberries, grapes, and pears to apricots. These farms and orchards were all within San Benito and Santa Clara counties.

Learning about the children and young adults that grew up in this generation, I found out how hardworking, and how many responsibilities each one of them carried. My grandmother's experiences were pure evidence of this type of behavior. Although they didn't have to work in the coal and gold mines during the early 1900's, their type of work was just as important during this era.

As I mentioned before my grandmother experienced all the changes from technology to transportation. There were no televisions, computers and all the modern day electronics when she was growing up. But the beauty of this is that she got to live to see all of this stuff appear and become first hand gadgets, to my generation. She used to tell us how the covered wagons would work, how long it would take to travel only a mile, as well as how hard it was to keep up with the maintainness of the wagon.

Something I learned from people that lived during the hardest times in our nation, such as The Great Depression, World War II, Attack of September 11th, etc, is that since they have witnessed almost everything, they cherish the small things in life. This is what I think we should all admire, because in today's society its all about status, who has what and it almost seems like were just living to be living, and taking for granted the smaller things in life. For example, the people who are fighting for our country, for our freedom, the people who pick fruits and vegetables for us, to make us strong and healthy, those people are overseen in our day-to- day lives. People who lived during the 19th century and early in the 20th century, seemed

to appreciate everything in their lives because their life expectancy was much younger than it is today.

My great grandmother lived through hell and back when it came to the economic downturns of our country. She saw the Great Depression, which was the largest economic fall or depression our country has faced, dating back to the decade preceding World War II. She watched our economy rise and fall over the years and after she passed away, we found out that when the economy started to take a turn downhill they took their money out of the banks and would hide it places around their house. For example, they would hide it in the curtains, or in a box and bury it in their backyard, so that if the economy crashed again they would have spare money to live off of. In my opinion, this was so crazy, yet pretty brilliant, because you never know what will happen.

My great grandmother had four kids of her own, at that time was a normal size for families. Her son was a troop in the Vietnam War, who would tell us crazy stories about war itself, and the type of dramatic effects it made on his life and future. I try and take this into consideration when I think about our troops who are over seas, and how their lives will be forever changed because they are serving for us.

On a more positive note, I remember the stories my great grandma and grandma would tell me about the types of fun activities they would when they weren't working. They would go to the drive in movie theaters and watch the some of the first movies that came out to big screen. She would tell me that when the first "fast food" restaurant opened up in Hollister, I believe it was Foster's Freeze; she

said that they could get 5 hamburgers for under a dollar. They would go to the “sock hops” after high school football games and dance around until they couldn’t walk the next day. I feel like this is something that has never changed in our town, the fad of Friday Night Football games and after game dances. During this time they would do all sorts of dances like the “Jitterbug and Jive.” In fact it was so popular GI’s took the dance overseas when they went to war, dancing with local girls, barmaids, or even each other if it came down to it.

Having lived in the southern states and then moving towards California and the west side of the United States, they have experienced all types of different natural disasters. Such as tornadoes in Arkansas and Oklahoma, and then when they moved west they encountered earthquakes in California. I would be lying to say that they hadn’t been through everything to find a better life. Something else I discovered was that we are Native American Indians, Cherokees to be exact. Unfortunately, I did not get the opportunity to learn about our history within the Native Americans but something I am defiantly interested in learning, especially now that I know how the “New Americans” treated them when they took over their land.

One thing I learned from learning history in a book and learning about history first hand from family members is that never take anything for granted. To live each day to the fullest and work as hard as you can because you never know what this world or God has in store for us.