



To Texas In A Covered Wagon

A year or so ago I wrote about Henry **Vandyke** of Blair township and some of the history and family adventures he had recorded in the early 1900's. He told of his family making the trip from North Carolina to Indiana and eventually to Clay County, Illinois.

Sumner **Vandyke**, grandson of Henry and son of John T. and Emma **Vandyke**, married the former Lola **Beal**, daughter of John Denny and Jane **Kincaid Beal**. Lola has given the library another record of the family's adventures, telling of a trip to Texas her family made in 1898. This gives us much insight into the times and conditions of that era.

Today, for such a trip, we would rather travel by automobile or airplane, but that option was not open to the family in 1898. The **Beals** made their trip by covered wagon.

The following is the story as told by Lola **Beal Vandyke**.....

"In the year of 1898, my parents decided to make the trip to the far away state of Texas, to be made in a covered wagon. We were to visit my mother's brother, who resided in Bonham, Texas.

My father was the late John Denny **Beal**, my mother was Jane **Kincaid Beal**. We lived near Hord, in Blair Township, Clay County, Illinois.

Much planning and work went into preparation for this enormous undertaking. Father and the other menfolk worked for weeks getting the wagons in safe condition and loading them with the necessary articles we would need, cooking equipment, clothing, feather beds, comforters, and such food as would not spoil. The wagons were securely covered with heavy canvas over the strong bows that my father had made. Our horses were strong, gentle, intelligent animals, well groomed and raring to go, named Nellie and Booger.

Our wagon party consisted of our family, mother, dad, brother, two sisters, and myself. The **Meeks** family, Jesse, his wife, three daughters, three sons and their nephew named Bill **Craig**. Also along was my great Uncle, Jeremiah **Ooton**, making fifteen in the party. Uncle Jerry, as we called him, wanted to go along so he purchased a new buggy and a good horse. The old fellow was a Civil War Veteran and he enjoyed this trip as much, if not more, than any of our group.

The **Meeks** family and my parents held an auction sale April 27, 1898. The **Meeks** family sold all their possessions, as they planned to make their home in Texas where Mrs. **Meeks**' brother-in-law (married to my mother's sister) lived. My parents stored three rooms of household goods in our upstairs, and rented the downstairs to some friends.

Early in the morning of April 28, 1898, we pulled out for Texas. Needless to say, the roads were dusty or muddy. Improved roads were unheard of then. That day at noon we cooked our dinner where the Red Brush Church now stands.

We made camp that first night just west of Flora, Illinois, near a schoolhouse. This meant setting up the tents for sleeping and cooking supper. Bread could not be purchased then as it is now, so it had to be baked for every meal. Mother and Mrs.

Meeks did the cooking. Mother made the biscuits out of water, flour, baking powder and bacon grease. Biscuits were put in a large iron skillet with legs on it, called a