

History and recollections of my Father and Family

By Flora Rash Thompson

My Father and Family:

My Father was born April 24, 1834. He was born in Tennessee, the son of Robert and Sethie Rash, either the third or fourth son. He has five brothers and four sisters. The names of the boys were Dan, John, Lewis, Watson. The names of the girls were Lindy Rash Eller, Caroline Rash Welch, Nancy Rash Lundin, Mandy Rash Jones.

Father left his home in Tennessee when a boy of 15 or 16 years of age, working his way to Keokuk Iowa. The rest of the family coming later where Grandfather and Grandmother lived the rest of their lives. Father was married to Rachael Hammer in Jasper county (December 26, 1856). The following spring 1857 they came with uncle Melvin Rash and his wife to Hardin county. They entered farms from the government \$1.25 an acre. Uncle John coming and entering the farm in between Fathers and Uncle Melvin's, the three farms joining. Uncle Watson the youngest son served in the Civil War (with the Northern Army) was later married and bought land, about ½ mile northwest of the Miller school. Father erected a log house in which they and Uncle Melvin and wife lived in the first year. Uncle Melvin built a house east of Fathers on what is known as Honey creek about 1 mile from Father's. Uncle John building halfway between what is known as "Badger Hill." The house with some remodeling still stands and is owned by his son Arthur Rash. Alva was born December 3rd, 1857 the winter following their coming to Hardin County. Four of us children were born in the log house. Alva, Columbus, Nancy and myself.

A new lumber house was built in 1864 or 65, there was one large room, serving as living room and kitchen a cook stove, replacing the fire place, which served in the old log house, one bedroom downstairs and pantry, one large room upstairs, which was neither lathed or plastered the snow being nearly knee deep when we got out of bed in the morning, after an Iowa blizzard. Bennie was the first to be born in the new house March 25, 1866. A straw shed answered the purpose as a barn for several years. The new barn must have been built in about 1873. Uncle Frank Hammer did the work alone which took the greater part of the summer. Father first hauled his grain to mill to Marengo, and later to Waterloo. He drove oxen the first few years. I recall the first team of horses. Alva and Columbus both worked ox teams in the fields.

White flour and white bread was scarce, part of the grain was taken for pay, for the grinding and enough had to be to last as long as possible because of distance and roads were not as they are today. Later a mill was built at Marshalltown, and later one at Union, Iowa. Which was quite an advantage over the old mill at Union, having been torn down the last 2 or 3 years. Mother used to carry her eggs to Bangor in exchange for groceries and tobacco, walked all three miles there and back and thought nothing of it.

Father raised more of his Tobacco, called long green. He would dry it and rake it in twists. The land was raw prairie when Father and Mother first came to Hardin County.

No fences, trees, just grass. The first fences I remember were called the stake and rider fences. Two posts put in the earth crossing each other then another pole laid on top of this. The cotton wood grove south of the house was planted first, then the apple grove west of the house. Later a grove of maples were put out on the north side of the house, when I was about 16 years old. Uncle Ben and Father planted the maple seeds. The trees still stand. We did not spin wool but Mother carded wool for inside comforters. Took the raw wool and carded it until it was fine enough to lay smooth. We had all our stockings, mittens, and etc. to knit. Uncle Alva was a good knitter and could knit as any woman and taught me how to knit.

Our first school was known as the Sawin school house, which was across the road from where the Miller schoolhouse is still standing. I think the Miller school house was built about 1873, the land being donated by Dan Miller. Here we had church services, Sunday school on Sunday PM most of the time, prayer meeting on Thursday evenings. We had no regular hired preacher and do not think they charged anything for their services. The Quaker preacher was usually preacher as a side issue, and earned his living some other way. Henry Hickman was one that we had more often than most any other. Our social affairs mostly centered around the school house. Literary with interesting debates. Al Mason was often on a debating team at some of these times. Singing school was another, Alva and myself took lessons one winter when Marian Travis taught. My first trip on a train was to Moingona with Mother. I was about four years old. Nancy went also, Bennie a baby in arms. We visited Father's sister, Aunt Nancy Slater. Father took us to Marshalltown, driving a team and wagon.

Nancy was the first to be married, a girl of 15 years. She and Arsulla had a double wedding which was quite an event. The wedding took place at Uncle Melvin's. Nancy was married to Eli Shultz and Arsulla to Joe Davis. The creek was up almost high enough for the horses, but we went in a wagon with the water most to the wagon box.

Many times the creek would rise during the day while in school, so we were unable to get home, sometimes for several days during this time we stayed at Uncle Melvin's, which was one of the best things we ever did. And other times in the spring when the creek was high for a prolonged time, we went to school at Pinhook school belonging to both districts. Della the first grandchild was born the day before her mother was 16 years old Jan. 15. Nancy and Eli with three children later went to Oregon to live. Nancy died in her 29th year leaving five children. She is buried in Oregon.

The following Christmas Bennie came back with the children, Eli staying on for a while. Columbus next to be married, moved on Father's farm in Grant Township, 2 children were born. Alva was married to Clara Davis and left soon for Nebraska, in a covered wagon taking several horses, they took a claim 8 miles from Gordon, one claim called a tree claim, of one set out a certain number of trees, they were given a deed to the land. At one time owning 1100 acres of land. They first lived in a dugout, later built a sod house and through all the hardships, the pioneer did in that day. All their children were born in

that sod house. They later build a new modern house about 1 quarter of a mile upon the main road. I visited them in 1916 and the walls were still standing of the old sod house. They left the farm the following year, 2 boys going into service in the world war. Alva died the summer July 21, 1921. Clara still lives in Gordon has her home.

I was next married, moved into Marshall County where Jessie and Clint were both born. The fall of 1899 we with our two children, Bennie, Jim and Hulda and their two girls Ethel and Leo, went to Oregon. We first went to Eli's near the town of Rainer Oregon. Lewis first worked in a shingle mill for Kenyon Bourne. Later ran an engine for a sawmill. Son Carl was born the following Feb. 28, 1890. When Carl was 10 weeks old I with the three children came back to Iowa, Lewis coming the following fall.

We lived in Hardin County until 1892 and moved to Grundy County. Frank the first to be born in Grundy County, Hazel was also born here. When Hazel was three years old Fall 1896 we moved to Whitten, Iowa. Here Henry and Clarence were born. Henry died at one year and is buried at the Miller cemetery.

Emma who next married to Aaron Weller. First lived on a farm 4 miles north of Father's. Four children were born. Orvie died when about 16 years old and is buried in Iowa Falls. They now live in the town of Ocheyedon, Iowa.

Solon was married to Abbie Rash, 2 children were born. Bertha was next married to Will Swaim, 10 children being born, they live on a farm at Murray, Iowa. Henry was married to Elsie Bucknell 2 children were born, Elsie died in 1926. Henry and children live at New Providence. Andrew died at the hospital at Iowa Falls Sept 15, 1919, is buried in Miller Cemetery. Bennie was married to Maggie Hall 5 children being born, Agnes died at 2 years and one baby in infancy.

The boys always hid eggs 3 or 4 weeks before Easter, then with Uncle Melvin's boys would take them down to the creek and cook what they could eat and waste the rest. Father always found their hiding place.

One time I recall they didn't find them, they dug a hole down in the sloth in the west grove, covered it inside with leaves and covered it up. Father did not find them that time.

About the letter written me by Uncle Thomas Hammer in 1918 (Mother's brother). I knew your father when a young man, and I thought a fine looking man, and liked your father, he had such a pleasant voice. As a young man he was full of fun and quite a joker. He was bright and it was pretty hard to get a joke on him. I could tell you more about your father and others if I had the room in this letter. I also knew your grandfather Rash, now you will think I am getting old, I will be 69 next birthday if I live that long and I feel young, still enjoy swimming and have the Pacific Ocean to swim in.

Father with Bill Heckett and one other man, started to go to California to look for gold, they drove a covered wagon. Took cooking utensils, bedding. And Father took dozens and dozens of eggs. Which was a good thing, as they were unable to buy much in the way

of food. I think this was about 1862 they went as far as Pikes Peak Colorado, they did not find much in the way of gold, bringing home a few nuggets, they were gone about 3 or 4 months. Father traded a team of horses wagon and harness for the 80 acres west of the grove, Mother and Alva both cried over losing the team of horses.

Mother died November 13, 1893, she was 57 years old, had been ailing about 1 year.

Father had a housekeeper for several years, was later married to Della McCullum, he lived to be 81 years old; at this writing has 43 grandchildren, 71 great grandchildren.

- Document undated, but we can set the year as 1932 because she mentions she will be 69 on her next birthday.

Memories of My Grandmother Rachael Hammer Rash By Clint Thompson

She was, as I remember her, a rather fleshy woman. She was always friendly and good natured, and always enjoyed having her grandchildren come to visit.

She was an excellent cook, although, during the times I can remember, she always had plenty of help with the housework – there were always from one to a half-dozen orphans living at her house. One of them I remember well was Della, daughter of Eli Shultz and Nancy E. Rash. Shortly after her mother died, in Oregon, my uncle and hers, Benjamin Rash, who was in Oregon at the time, brought Della and the other children in the family back to my grandfather, Lewis E. Rash's house near Union, Iowa, where all of them remained until Uncle Eli remarried. All, that is, but Della. She stayed on at grandfather's house until she married. She, Della, and my Aunt Bertha J. Rash were about the same age. – Big Spring, Texas, April 3, 1970

Memories of my grandfather, Lewis E. Rash
By Clint Thompson

I remember the first time I ever saw him after I was old enough to remember. Although details of events preceding and following the meeting left no imprint on my memory. Quotations and details of the meeting related by my mother at a later date.

He was in the back yard splitting chunks of wood into cook stove size when Mother, Jessie and I arrived. My brother, Carl, was a baby in arms at the time. Don't know where he was at the time.

After the amenities with mother and Jessie, he looked me over carefully. "Fine boy you've got there," he said. "Is he as good as he looks?"

"Little mischievous at times." Mother said. "Otherwise he is fairly good."

Grandfather grinned broadly and winked at me. And I knew then, young as I was, that I had found a friend.

One of the things that always fascinated me at Grandfather's house was nesting houses for birds in the back yard. During the spring and summer months, they would be occupied by Martins. The reason bird houses and the Martins was that the Martins were deadly enemies of larger chicken-stealing birds such as hawks and owls. The Martins were very swift in flight and would chase the larger birds beyond the range of vision, leaving a cloud of feathers floating in the air behind.

Grandfather's home was always kept well-supplied with stove wood, maple syrup and maple sugar from two large groves of soft-maple trees, one grove south of the house, the other to the west, The two groves must have covered an area of fifteen acres or more.

East of-the house was an apple orchard of an acre or more. The earlier varieties of apples kept the household well supplied with apples for cooking and eating purposes. Later varieties were processed through a juicing press--the juice used for making apple cider--both sweet and hard--apple juice and vinegar. The hard cider was for the men only, the sweet cider for the women and the apple juice for the children. The vinegar was, of course, for culinary uses.

His obituary in the Union Star of Union, Iowa reads, in part, as follows: "Lewis Ellis Rash was born April 24,1834 in Jefferson County, East Tennessee, died October 2, 1912. He was a man of hospitable disposition, never in his life turning any man away from his door hungry or without shelter for the night, or for days as the occasion offered. Thus has

lived and passed a loving husband and father: a pioneer, a quiet friend and neighbor, a respected citizen."

As for me, his grandson... Had I been endowed with the talent of a James Henry Leigh Hunt, I write in his memory, a poem something like this:

About Ben Adhem By James Henry Leigh Hunt

About Ben Adhem (May his tribe increase!)
woke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An Angel writing in a book of gold:
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord,"
"And mine is one?" Said Abou. "Nay not so,"
Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still; and said, "I pray thee then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."
The Angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

The last time I saw Grandfather Rash was at a Fourth of July celebration in Union, Iowa.

He was sitting on a bench watching the athletic events, His beard was then long and white. But he still had the friendly gleam in his eye. We sat and talked until one of his foster sons came by to take him home.

There was one other thing I learned during this, our last visit. Grandfather still had a flare for exploration and adventure--for he seemed very proud of me as the first of his sons or grandsons to break away from the small-town and farming environment and go out into the great world of far-places and adventure.

Big Spring, Texas April 17, 1970