

FOOTPRINTS

By Sally Mystron

"MAGGIE'S STORY" •

In Cyrene, Texas, in 1913, a father died of Typhoid Fever leaving a widow and seven children. This by itself was not unusual for that day and age, but the story that followed is one of adventure and the bravery of a pioneer family.

The mother was 33 year old Effie Hunt and the children were Buford, Flora, Maggie, Ted, Ray, Elisabeth and baby Ruthie. In early 1914, Jase Anderton, Effie's brother, wrote telling her that if she could bring the children by train to Winslow, Arizona, he would help her raise them on his ranch about 25 NE of the tiny town of Payson. This being an offer she couldn't refuse, Effie packed up her large brood and along with three feather beds and a double barreled shotgun, boarded the train in Dallas for the trip west. It took them about a week, give or take a day or two, to reach the railroad town of Winslow. When the train finally chugged into town it was 3:00 in the morning on a cold, cold night in late October. They all sat inside the tiny, drab little depot until dawn waiting for the ride that would take them over the plateau and down the rim to Uncle Jase's place. Albert Nehmeyer and his wife had left their children with Aunt Kate Bowman at the 13 Ranch, so

there would be enough room in the wagon for the Hunt family. The Nehmeyers were also ranchers and neighbors of Uncle Jase and good enough friends to volunteer to pick up the family in Winslow. It was around noon before they pulled out of town and they traveled all afternoon on a wagon trail to a place called Big Tank, where they spent their first full night in Arizona. In Texas, the children had heard wolves many times, but on this night they were serenaded by coyotes which they hadn't heard before. Much to the amusement of the adults, the children scampered back to the safety of the wagon. At dawn of the second day they broke camp and continued down the trail. During the day Albert and Buford walked on either side of the road and shot rabbits for their evening meal, Buford using the trusty shotgun. Late that evening they made camp at a ranch in Cabin Draw. Eventually, they left the desert and climbed into the cedars, and finally into the pines. At dusk they arrived at "Hole-in-the-Ground" (Military Sinkhole) where the wagon became bogged down. "Hole-in-the-Ground" is almost on the edge of the rim, just west of where Woods Canyon Lake is today. As they looked off the edge of the rim, they could see lights flickering in the ranch houses below, and the end of their

journey seemed so close. Deciding that the men could easily come back in a day or two to pick up the wagon, they concluded that if they hiked down the trail they probably could get there much faster. Buford and Ted rode the saddle horse, Effie and Mrs. Nehmeyer each carried one of the babies, and everyone else walked. Suddenly, the sun dropped completely behind the mountain, and immediately it became totally dark. So dark they could barely make out the relative brightness of the trail, and they began to stumble and fall over the large rocks. As they stepped off the large flat rocks that irregularly paved the trail and with one foot dangling in the air, they wondered if that foot would really touch the ground again, or if they were stepping off the edge of the rim. Finally, around midnight they arrived, scratched, scraped, tired, hungry and cold, at the end of the trail which led right up to Uncle Jase's back door.

Uncle Jase's ranch (now known as the Lazy Y Barb and managed by Dick and Sue Lewis) was then and is now a beautiful piece of property. Most ranch houses in that era were one room with a kitchen attached, and Uncle Jase's was no different - "so small if you cussed a cat you'd get a mouthful of fur." As time went on they built a loft for the children and furnished it with

the three feather beds from Texas. They raised beans, potatoes, pumpkins and corn and had plenty of chicken, eggs, and hogs. When they needed something they couldn't raise, they would take a load of beans by wagon to Winslow to sell for two or three cents a pound, and then go shopping at a Real Store. Eventually, Effie remarried a rancher by the name of Tom Hubbard, who had five children (two still at home) and they had a son named Leonard. Then, in 1918, Effie purchased the old Colcord place, which became known as the Hunt Ranch and is now known as Ponderosa Springs. Uncle Jase was riding home alone from Pleasant Valley one day when he apparently had a heart attack, and fell off his horse. He is buried in the little cemetery by the side of Colcord Road, as is little Ruthie, who died very young. The children stayed in the general area and raised families here.

The lady that told me this story is one of the finest ladies I know, great Aunt Maggie Hunt Powers. After leaving the Christopher Creek area she moved to Payson, married, had two daughters - but that's another story. She has been living in Payson 68 or 69 years, now, she's not quite sure which!