

CHAPTER XII

WESTWARD HO

The covered wagon trip to Texas and California.

William Titchenal (born in 1817) and **Sarah Ann Dickason** (born 1818) were both a part of Transcendental Generation, as described in the book *Generations* by Strauss and Howe.

“Speaking of his peers of the 1830s, Ralph Waldo Emerson described the generation as an assortment of, ‘madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers (as in dunking bread), Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-Day Baptists’ — Utopians and sectarians of all stripe. whom Edgar Allen Poe mockingly labeled ‘frogpondium,’ They looked the part, their anti-corset women wearing mannish ‘Bloomers’ and their young men wearing their hair parted in the middle and falling upon their shoulders.

As post crisis babies, Transcendentals took their first breath in welcoming a new era of peace and optimism. They were assured by their hero-leaders and parents that every conflict had been won, every obstacle surmounted. But coming of age, these youngsters erupted in a fury against what Emerson charged, ‘the cultural sterility of their father-built world unable to produce a speech, conversation or thought worth noticing’.”

Of all our ancestors, **William** and **Sarah Ann Titchenal** seem to fit Strauss and Howe’s description of their generation more than other generations. As were others in the Transcendental Generation, they were rebellious of the world, impatient with the politics, and their life and progress in Fort Smith. They wanted to leave Fort Smith, their arguments and troubles behind. They just wanted to get on with their life and to be a part of the future. One way or another, they did those things, they were a part of the Manifest Destiny, the California gold rush, the Civil War and the settling of the west.

Other descriptions of this generation by Strauss and Neil in their book *Generations* further describe the world of **William** and **Sarah** from 1820 to 1890:

As part of Transcendental Generation, **William** and **Sarah**, had the opportunity to read some of the best remembered literature of the nineteenth century — including *The Scarlet Letter*, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Walden*, *The Song of Hiawatha*, *Moby Dick* and *Leaves and Grass*.

They learned new words such as “spiritualism,” “medium”, “rapping,” “séance” , “clairvoyance” and “holy roller” rising Transcendentals delighted in altered states of consciousness. From 1840 on, a large share of their generation believed in psychic phenomena. Including Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, and reformers such as, William Lloyd Garrison and Horace Greely.

As they became adults in the 1830s, U.S. alcohol consumption had climbed to its highest level ever — the equivalent of a quart of whiskey per week for every American over the age of 15.

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William and **Sarah** saw this trend continue into the 1860s while living in the California gold mining country. After moving to Santa Ana, and entering midlife, they joined their generation in a campaign against “Demon Rum” and helped reduced the alcohol consumption.

While **William** and **Sarah** were young, all America, including **William**, cherished the look and sagacity of youth; but as they grew old, Americans respected the look and sagacity of age, the full beard— an enduring symbol of wisdom — came into vogue and As a goldminer, **William** was one of the bearded men of the late 1850s. The beard remained popular among the elderly men, including **William**, in the late 1880s. The next generation of midlifers began adding a mustache (as did his sons, **John Jackson**, William Charles, David Dickason and Samuel Henry) or rejecting it altogether in favor of bushy sideburns.

Both in Fort Smith and Urbana, Ohio, whether their friends were “Abolitionists”, “Southrons” “Mormons”, “Anti-Masons”, their entire generation all agreed, as did **William** and **Sarah**, that each person must act on an inner truth that transcends the sensory world— — a credo immortalized by Emerson in 1842 as “Transcendentalism” and praised by Oliver Wendall Homes as our “Intellectual Declaration of Independence”.

But in Fort Smith, **William** and **Sarah**, lived among southern fire-eaters that refused to apologize for slavery, and instead found virtue in an aggressive empire of chivalry and bondage. **William** and **Sarah** on the other hand like most northerners declared the abolition of slavery to be a higher law than the constitution. By 1848, these attitudes led to many arguments within their family.

In the 1820s and 1830s, **William’s** father, **John R. Titchenal**, and **Sarah’s** father, **Charles Dickason**, experienced an era that promised “the unfolding of the individual man, without hindrance, according to the inward nature of each.” This era encouraged, **John** and **Charles’**, to move into new territories. However, the panic of 1837 dampened such dreams for young men like, **William**.

Fortunately the panic was followed by the fabulous forties, when culturally rising adults like **William Titchenal** and his brothers, **John** and **David**, his brother-in-laws, **William Falconer** and **Jeremiah Hackett**, each pursued their separate paths, mixed with outward pessimism and inward confidence (When **William** joined the Masons, he exhibited this attitude). The generation was called — busy for the present hour — all we do is overdo — so intent on purpose that they had no time for amusement. **William** had the necessary inward confidence and intent of purpose, with no time for amusement, but things had not worked to his satisfaction.

For many reasons, **William Titchenal** and **Sarah Ann**, were ready to leave Fort Smith in 1848. The discovery of gold in California, gave **William** a serious reason to leave Fort Smith. **William** decided to take his family west and was ready to leave as soon as possible, but **Sarah** was pregnant with another child, due in February 1849. He couldn’t leave until after the baby was born, and both **Sarah** and the child were ready and able travel, which would be spring or later.

Spring would be the right timing for them to travel by covered wagon. **William** knew it would be better to start the trip in early spring so the horses and cattle would find grass to eat along the way.

John Luce was told years later by his grandmother, Margaret Mc Kenney, that her mother, Mary Ellen (Titchenal) Falconer, told her that, “a **Titchenal** led a wagon train to California during

the gold rush days". The only Titchenal she could be talking about, was her brother, **William**.

The delay while waiting for the new baby's birth, gave **William** time to find other people wanting to go to California, and to organize a wagon train. There was a lot to do, as a wagon train leader, **William** would have to check the condition of all the wagons, and the health and ability of the drivers and passengers. He had to be sure everyone had the proper supplies and tools. There weren't many good maps or information on what to expect along the trail, so **William** would have to guess at what they would need.

As a minimum, he knew each wagon would need a cow for milk, chickens for eggs, large barrels for water, flour, salt and dried beef and rifles and ammunition for hunting and protection, blankets, clothing, picks and shovels, hammers and nails, grease for the axles and more.

As it worked out Mary Ellen was born February 18, 1849. Eight weeks after the baby came, **Sarah**, felt she and the baby were strong enough to leave. April 1st was a good time to start the trip, as the grass would be coming up along the trail.

In a wagon loaded with all their possessions, **William** and **Sarah Ann Titchenal**, started on another adventure into the unknown. **Sarah** drove the lead wagon with **William** helping **Sarah** drive from time to time, but most of the time he was riding a horse along side the wagon, or up and down the wagon train.

Their five children were riding inside the wagon, it was easy to drive as it was pulled by oxen and moved slowly. Susan Eliza was eight years old, **John Jackson** was six and both could drive part of the time to relieve **Sarah**. Even their son, William Charles, who was five, could help. Rebecca, was not yet three and couldn't help much. Mary Ellen, was just a few months old and needed a lot of **Sarah's** attention.

William had three or four assistant helpers to search out the trails and keep the wagon train together, so he spent much of his time close to **Sarah's** wagon to help her, if she needed him, but **Sarah** was self-reliant and a good driver, so she didn't need much help.

The trail out of Fort Smith passed through friendly Cherokee and Choctaw Indian Territory as far as Colbert's Ferry over the Red River (Near Dennison, Texas). From there, **William** had two choices: The shorter way went west to Fort Belknap and Fort Chadbourne, following the upper emigrant trail to Fort Bliss (El Paso).

The longer way (which **William** took) passed through more populated country and went to Fort Worth, Waco, Austin and San Antonio, passing through Bell County. From San Antonio the trail followed the lower emigrant trail to Fort Davis and Fort Bliss, Texas.

From Fort Bliss on, both trails were the same, they went into Mexico (after the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 this section of Mexico became part of America) through La Messilla, and Tucson, following the Gila River to Fort Yuma, then through the Anza-Borrego desert up through the Vallecito Mountains and finally to the Pacific Ocean and Los Angeles.

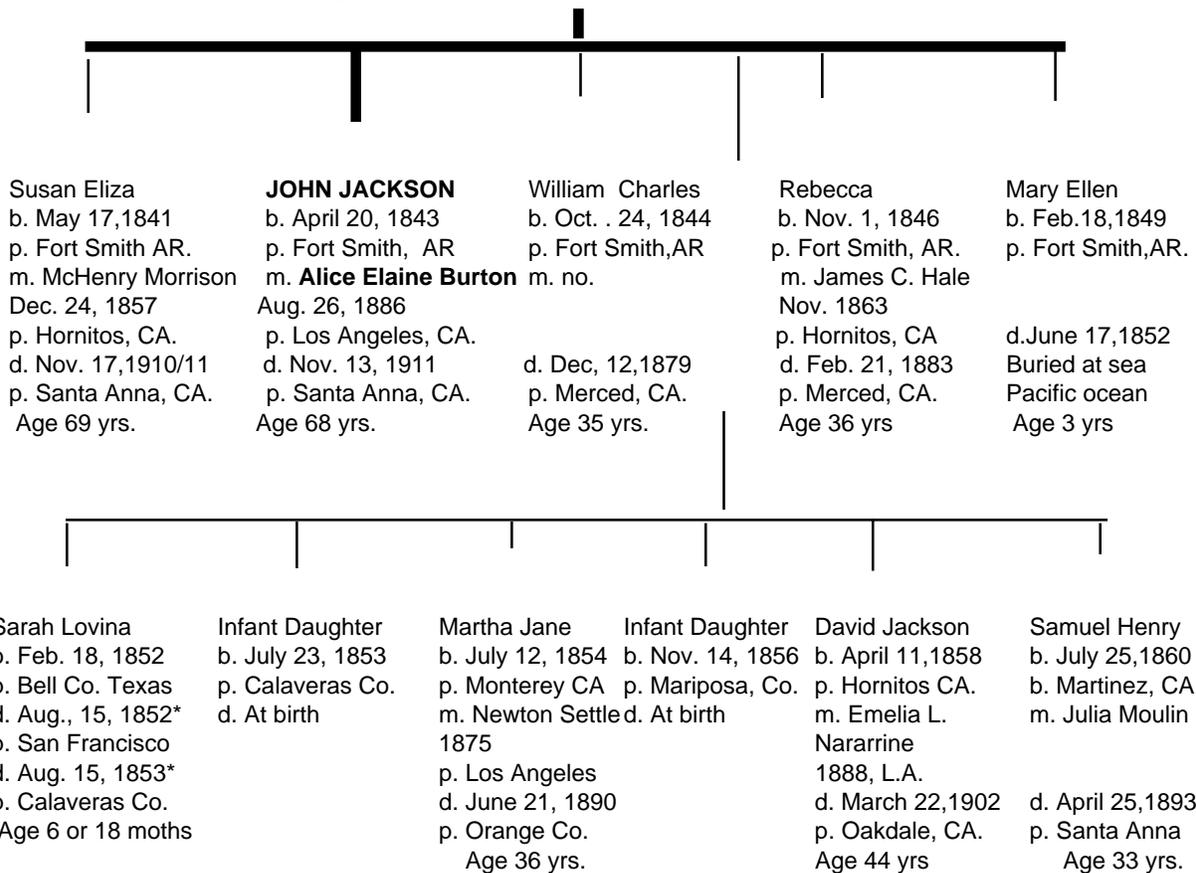
The Family genealogy chart of

WILLIAM HENRY TICHENAL married **SARAH ANN DICKASON**

January 29, 1839 Champaign Co., Ohio

b. January. 2, 1817
p. Harrison Co. WV.
d. Dec, 3, 1891
p. Santa Anna, CA.
Age 74 yrs.

b. Nov. 3, 1818
p. Champaign, Co., OH.
d. Aug. 11, 1895
p. Santa Ana, CA.
Age 77yrs.



*I can't verify where Tim Haidlen got the date 1853, but my family Bible noted her death in 1852

William was anxious to get started, he knew more and more people were traveling the route through Texas to California, as it was the only ice free pass through the Rocky mountains. He had heard a lot about Texas and wanted to see as much of it as possible. He chose the longer route.

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One thing **William** had heard a lot about, from travelers coming through Fort Smith, Arkansas from Texas, were the abundance of “fee” roaming Longhorn cattle in Texas. He wanted to see for himself. The stories about the Longhorn cattle of Texas were legendary. He had seen occasional herds of Longhorn cattle being driven from Texas to markets in the east. Although the cattle drives didn’t become frequent until after the Civil War when the railroads were built.

Information From *The Chisholm Trail* by Wayne Gard,

“The Longhorns were a tough breed. For nearly four centuries they had been adapting themselves in the new world and had learned to survive without the help of human hands. They had been brought to America by Columbus and those who followed him. They had stocked the ranches of the Spanish conquerors in the west, they had grazed in the pastures of frontier missions.

Probably the first cattle to reach Texas were brought in by Francisco de Coronado in 1541. He had left Mexico to find the legendary cities of gold. He brought along herds of cattle, sheep, goats and swine. The animals were intended for food for his men. There were at least five hundred cattle at the start. After they gave up looking for golden cities, the disappointed army left some of the cattle. Most did not survive. Over the following years many others brought and abandoned cattle and horses. On June 22, 1715 a French trader remarked on the abundance of these animals, which he believed the Indians feared to kill. They had increased to thousands of cows, bulls, horses and mares, the whole country is filled with them.

By 1731 the missions ranches were well stocked, and the raising of cattle and sheep was the chief civilian occupation. Many of the Indians in Texas profited by stealing Spanish cattle and selling them in Louisiana. By 1770 the Indians were no longer afraid to kill the horned beasts. The Apaches and Comanches were said to have driven off twenty-two thousand of them in a single raid.

The Cattle continued to multiply faster than they were slaughtered. After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1831, more settlers from the United States filtered into Texas. They brought cattle and other stock from British breeds. On the open range the blending of British and Spanish breeds was inevitable.

It wasn’t long before, the Mexican Vaqueros were rivaled by English-speaking Texans. They were beginning to be called cowboys, some were called stock boys, cow herders, or cow divers, eventually the name cowboy stuck.

The Texas revolution caused many Mexican ranchers to flee Texas leaving their herds to roam free. Soon the unclaimed cattle begin to tempt veterans of the Texas revolution. In small bands men set out after the wild brutes. Their activities gave rise to the saying that to become a cowman, a fellow needed only a rope, a branding iron, and the nerve to use them.

The captured cattle was used to start new herds or to replace beef marketed in Louisiana. Some places in Texas wild cattle was so abundant, many hunted the cattle for meat or sport along with buffalo, deer and mustangs.

Cattle raising in Texas was disrupted again by the Mexican war. Approaching troops caused many more Mexicans to flee across the Rio Grande, abandoning their homes and cattle. When these Mexicans came back after the war to claim their homes and live stock, they

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were often treated like trespassers and thieves, despite guarantees in the peace treaty.

The headrights were grants of land, usually for 640 acres, issued by the state of Texas to war veterans. They could be bought and sold, the owner could locate his claim on any land not already occupied or in lawful possession of another. Many of the settlers pounced on land that the Mexicans had improved and used their head rights, plus ligation or intimidation to oust the original owners."



William and others with the wagon train saw the dust from many of these so called "free" cattle herds in the distance. In fact many times they hunted the cattle along the trail for the night's supper. William had been raising hogs and some cattle back in Arkansas. The sight of these large herds roaming free and the thought of rounding them up excited him.

William had heard that "relatives of men killed in battle during the Mexican War could claim the veterans head rights." He had two brothers killed in battle: why not try to claim some property for them? As the wagon train traveled for weeks through barren Texas countryside, he talked to **Sarah** about trying to claim some land and starting to raise cattle again.

Both little Mary Ellen and **Sarah** had been sick much of the trip. **Sarah** wasn't against the idea, in fact she thought stopping and settling, even for a few months or for a few years, would help them both. However, neither **William** or **Sarah** had seen land that they wanted to stop and claim.

By the time they got to Bell County, the valley looked beautiful to them. Many of the other families in the wagon train were complaining of being tired of the trip and were ready to stop. That settled it. William talked it over with the others in the wagon train. Some wanted to continue, others wanted to stay a while in Bell County. The train broke up, **William** stayed, the others joined the first train going on to California.

George Tyler writes in the *History of Bell County 1850*:

"In 1849, the wife of a prominent Texan gave 120 acres of land to Bell County on the condition that a permanent county seat be constructed upon the site. Nolan creek and springs were located within the property. The town was to be named Nolanville (now Belton) for a beautiful, clear mountain stream meandering through it. The stream itself, had been named for Philip Nolan a famous young Irish adventure, who met with a tragic death at the hands of some Spanish soldiers at that site."

In May or June when **William** and **Sarah** entered this valley:

"The valley was still in a wild and lovely state of nature, with groves of small live oak, elm, hackberry, cedar and other trees, dense thickets of dogwood, haw and other brush growth, mustang grape vines climbing over the tree tops and hanging in graceful and

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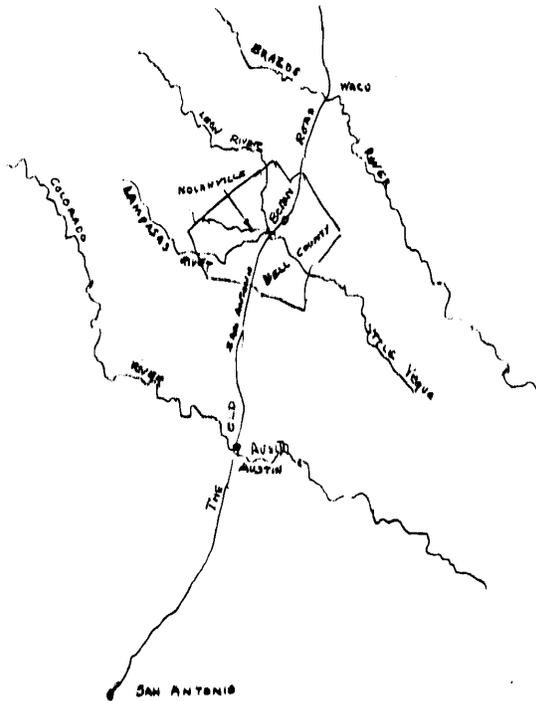
lovely festoons, while luxurious grass [old sedge] as tall as ripe wheat fields waved in the open spaces. All along the creek banks were large trees of walnut, sycamore, willow, pecan, white oak, hackberry, and etc. The landscape was beautiful and inspiring.

Surveyors, chain carriers and others were engaged in surveying and laying off the land. There were neither houses or other people there, the work group camped on the ground and did their own cooking”.

Seeing all of this, **William** and **Sarah** were intrigued with the thought of stopping and becoming one of the first settlers in such a beautiful valley. They stopped and set up their tents to live in Bell County for a while.

George Tyler continues:

“Before the special commissioners had finished laying out the county seat people had been moving in. They built clapboard shanties, log cabins, bush arbors and put up tents.



William wonders if he should try his luck in Bell County Texas

The wilderness begin to disappear. Footpaths, and trails to the springs, stores and other places were soon beaten out.

The first special Commission, held to sell town lots, was on August 26, 1850, the day which Judge Danly qualified his colleagues in the county government. This enabled intending settlers to obtain lots and erect buildings. Joe

Townsend put up a shanty and opened a saloon. Art McCorcle opened a small store, later putting his residence on the second floor. **Mr. William H. Titchenal**, having no house, sold goods from his wagon on the square. Who knows where he went from there?”

Tyler didn't know it, but **William** stayed around for quite a while longer. He was one of the petitioners on a “Petition for a Separate Land District and Land Office for Bell County” filed in Nolansville, December 10, 1851.

William and **Sarah** gave Texas a good try ,staying in Bell County two years or more.

William tried unsuccessfully to get the headrights of his brothers assigned to him. His biography in California said he was in the mercantile business in Texas. He probably started a mercantile store in Nolansville.

Day after day, wagon trains filed along the nearby trail to California. **William** sold supplies to the emigrants passing through and talked to them almost daily. One day in March of 1852, the leader of one of the wagon trains moving west had been injured. He could travel but couldn't continue as the leader for the rest of the trip, as he needed rest and time to heal. He learned **William** had experience as a wagon train leader and asked him if he would consider taking over as the leader for the remainder of the trip to California. He said he could continue on the trip and could help and advise him, but couldn't take the total responsibility as the leader.

This awakened the urge within **William** to go on to California. After two years in Nolanville he was discouraged with the progress he had made. Both he and **Sarah** were unhappy with the unruly growth of the town. Their sixth child, Sarah Lovina, had been born, Feb. 18, 1852. His wife, **Sarah**, felt good and thought she and the new baby, Lovina, could be ready to go on the trip in a week or so.

They waited until the end of March, packed up once more, and set out to join the "Gold Rush" for California... again with a baby only a few months old. This time, Susan Eliza was eleven, **John Jackson** was nine, William Charles was eight, and Rebecca six. The children were old enough to be able to help with many things along the way and make the trip easily, but travel would still be difficult for the family as Mary Ellen was only three and Sarah Lovina just an infant.

The trip to California, overland or sea?

There is some controversy about how they traveled. **William's** first grandson, William H. Titchenal II, wrote in his autobiography for a Santa Ana high school reunion in 1970: He said, "My grandparents sailed to Panama, crossed the Isthmus and came up the coast to San Francisco. A daughter became ill after the Panama crossing (perhaps malaria), died and was buried at sea." [a copy of his autobiography is in the Santa Ana, California public library. (See appendix for copy)]

However, two other pieces of information cause me to believe **William** and **Sarah** traveled overland to California rather than by boat to Panama.

First—in the book, *The History of Orange County*, **W. H. Titchenal (Sr.)** is quoted as saying he "was brought up to the life of a stock raiser. From 1835 to 1852 he followed his calling, but was also in the mercantile business after 1849, in Texas. He came overland through Mexico to the Pacific coast and then by sail to San Francisco, landing, July 9, 1852." **William Titchenal** was also quoted as saying, "he and his wife, **Sarah**, had eleven children, only five of whom are now living." (See appendix for copy)

The author of this book must have secured this quote from **William** directly, sometime after February 21, 1883, when his daughter, Rebecca (Titchenal) Hale, died and before June 1890 when his daughter, Martha Settle died. It was during those seven years that **William** and **Sarah** had only five living children. (namely; [1] Susan E. Titchenal, now Mrs. McHenry Morrison, [2] **John**

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Jackson Titchenal, [3] Martha J. Titchenal, now wife of N.T. Settle, [4] David Dickason Titchenal and [5] Samuel H. Titchenal, proprietor of the candy store in Santa Ana.”

Second—As stated before, **William’s**, sister, Mary Ellen Falconer’s daughter, Margaret would later tell her Fort Smith grandchild, John Luce, that a **Titchenal** led a wagon train to California during the gold rush. (It must have been **William**)

William and **Sarah’s** grandson, William H. Titchenal (II), was only five years old when his grandfather died December 3, 1891 and he was only seven years old when his grandmother died in August 1895. He no doubt heard a lot of stories about his grandparents life and travels, I think he was too young to remember all the details. He may have assumed they took a boat all the way because his grandmother told him (and the family Bible lists) that his aunt [Mary Ellen] died as a small child and was buried at sea. This part may have stuck in his memory.

On the other hand, it seems logical to believe **William H. Titchenal** [Sr] and his sister Mary Ellen were more likely to remember the facts. Therefore, I believe **William** and **Sarah** traveled by wagon to Pacific Coast and then by boat to San Francisco.

The overland trip to California

The history of Orange County quotes **William** as saying, “I came overland through Mexico to the Pacific coast and then by sail to San Francisco.” This makes sense as two very old villages (Tucson, Arizona and La Messilla, New Mexico) were still part of Mexico at the time **William** traveled to California. These two villages were not a part of the U.S.A. until the Gadsden Purchase in 1853. La Messilla had been a resting place for travelers since 1535 (now part of Los Cruces, New Mexico).

La Messilla can still be seen today much as it was in 1852. Aside from these two villages, Fort Bliss (El Paso) and Fort Yuma there was little or nothing between Texas and California. In fact the entire trail wound through barren mountain passes and a harsh desert with little water, and sparsely populated areas plus a few trading posts. They started traveling during the spring, a time when the desert is beautiful but can be very treacherous, with both hot and cold weather, heavy rains and flash floods. Also, the warlike Cammache and Apache still ruled much of the area along with the more or less friendly Pima, Papago and Yuma tribes.

History tells us; between 1840 and 1860 more than 250,000 pioneers tried to cross the plains and desert. Indians killed 365. Emigrants killed 426 Indians. Prior to 1849 most wagons headed west were for Oregon. More than 25,000 headed for the plains, desert and mountains in 1849 alone. In 1850 another 44,000 followed the gold trail. Unfortunately, no letters or journals of **Sarah** or **William** have been found so in order to try to understand what the trip might have been like we have to depend upon other person’s descriptions.

The book, *They Saw The Elephant* by Joann Levy is a collection of letters written by women who made trips to California in Gold Rush days. I have used a few notes from this book to help describe **Sarah** and **William’s** likely trip.

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“The expression “seeing the elephant” characterized the California Gold Rush. Many planning to go announced they were going to see the elephant, Those who turned back said they had seen the elephant, or his tracks or his tail, and that was sufficient.

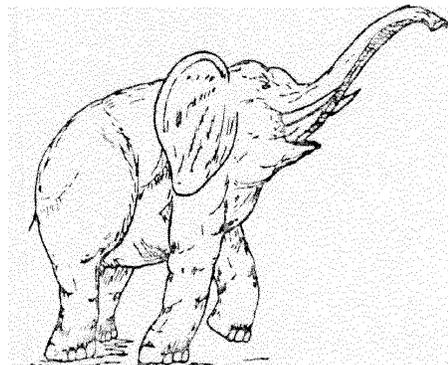
Wagons drivers painted on names like, “Prairie Bird”, or “Have you seen the elephant”. The expression came from a tale current when circus parades featured elephants. The story: A farmer who had never seen an elephant and wanted to see one very much, loaded his wagon with his produce and went to town.

On the way he encountered the circus parade led by the elephant. The farmer was thrilled, the horses were terrified and bolted overturning the wagon and ruining the produce. “I don’t give a hang” the farmer said, “for I have seen the elephant”.

As stated before, **William** and **Sarah’s** did not leave a journal of their trip, so this story of what might have been is based on stories from the book, *They saw The Elephant* :

Before he left Fort Smith, **William** had purchased “The Emigrants Guide to California,” a 1849 best seller by Joseph Ware. It showed routes, distances, water, grass, timber, crossing rivers, and altitude with large maps of routes and the profile of the country, along with full directions for testing and assaying gold and other ores. The wagon leader, William was helping, had the same book, as it was still the best book available. **William** had studied the book many times, therefore they used it for the rest of the trip.

Wagon trains always used the lay over in Nolanville for resupply. With 70 wagons and 120 persons, this was a large train. William and Sarah joined in and helped gather the supplies; They needed a large supply of eggs and chickens as they were cheap. They also carried a large supply of chickens already cooked [as cooked meat would keep for weeks without refrigeration]. Everyone washed all their clothes before starting as they did not know how soon they would have water again.



History tells us they were not alone; in 1852, 50,000 families headed west. Most went from Missouri and down through Santa Fe. But, 16,000 of them took the southern snow-free route out of Fort Smith.

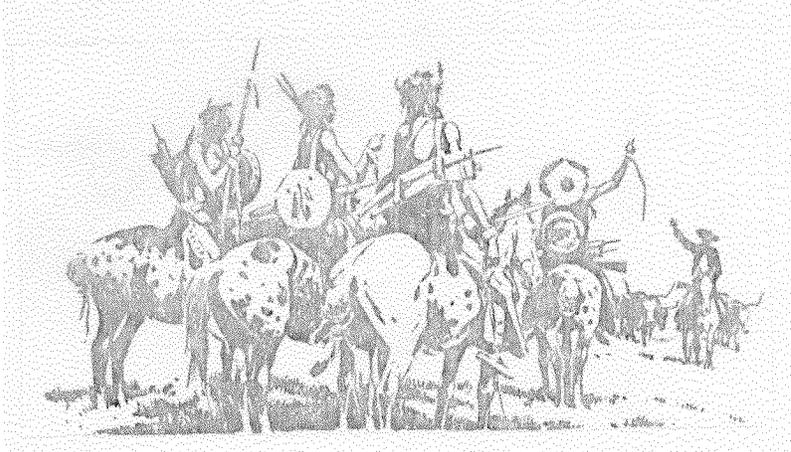
Even though fewer emigrant took the southern route that year, it seemed to **William** and **Sarah** as if everybody was on this trail. On the hills where they could see long stretch of desert in front of them, they could see long trains of white topped wagons for many miles ahead. When they were near they could see all manner of conveyances, on horse back and on foot.

William thought of how many more wagon trains he had watched as they passed through Bell County in the two years he had lived there. He worried that he may have waited too long to start. If just one tenth of them were in the gold country already, nothing will be left for them.

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The Cherokee and Creek Indians they had known in Fort Smith and in the adjacent Indian Territory were fully clothed and civilized. The first Indians they saw in the desert seemed civilized but looked savage. They were nude except for a band of feathers around their heads, a throw over their shoulders and a strap around their loins. They looked even more savage as they whooped and hollered

as they rode around the wagon train yelling and raising their arms wildly.



However **William** and **Sarah's** fright was soon dispelled after the Indians offered to shoot arrows for 5¢ to 10¢ and ride their ponies in a manner only an Indian can.

Their wagon train traveled at night to avoid the heat. Once they took the wrong trail,

and had to turn back and retrace their steps. Yoked oxen pull at about two miles an hour. When the oxen were weakened from hunger and thirst and wagons were sinking deep in the soft sand, even that slow pace slacked.

Things the emigrants thought they could do without littered the trail's length as emigrants lightened loads too heavy to pull. Starving, thirst-crazed, and frightened for their lives, they dumped possessions and treasures they had laboriously hauled for months.

For weeks they had seen abandoned property and animals dead or dying. but on these sandy stretches the scene was double or triple. Horses, mules, and oxen suffering from heat, thirst and starvation, staggered along until they fell over. Both sides of the road was lined with dead animals and abandoned wagons. Around them were strewn yokes, chains, harnesses, guns, tools, bedding, clothing, cooking-utensils and many other articles. Some owners left everything except what could be carried on their backs, and hurried to save themselves.

The wagon train stopped for several days in La Messilla for supplies and rest then started the long trip through the desert and mountains to Tucson. A few days out of La Messilla, they had some particularly scary experiences.

Before we left we filled our canteens with water at the last camping place. The water was brackish, but there was no other. It was night, the children were in bed, **Sarah** was driving, **William** walked along side. The sand was deep, the wagons dragged along slowly. Toward midnight it rained. The oxen showed signs of exhaustion and what little water we had was given to those most in need. Then we ran into some steep hills and mountains.

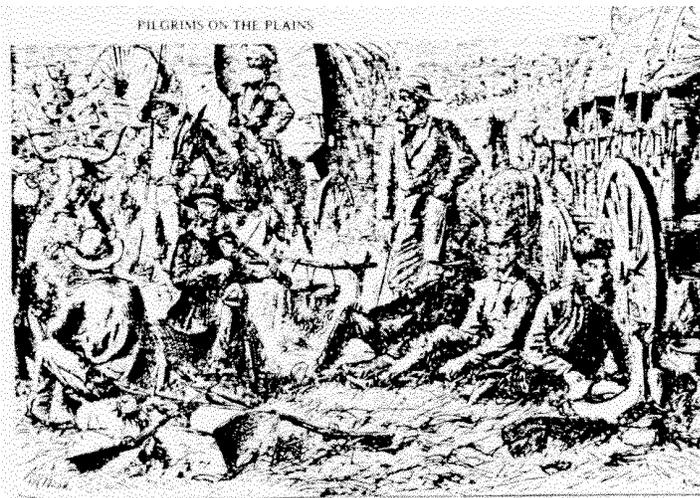
At the steep hill, the train was stopped while a dozen yoke of oxen (borrowed from other wagons) were hitched to one wagon. With hard pulling it reached the top. After all the wagons were

over, it took more time to prepare to go down, which was more dangerous than going up as the mountain was very steep. One oxen was hitched to the front and heavy chains were fastened on behind the wagon. Then as many men as could would hold the wagon back to keep it from running down the hill and killing the oxen. One wagon went at a time, it took almost a week to get the wagons up and down just one mountain. All the women and children and men had to walk all of the way down the hill.

The New Mexico and Arizona trail was shorter than the one through Santa Fe, but was considered more perilous. It went through Apache territory, and the Apaches periodically raided the trains and Mexican villages between La Messilla and Tucson. However, many times the wagon trains followed this trail to California practically without incident.

I think **William** and **Sarah's** trip may have been without major incidents, but even without Apache harassment the trip was a hardship. The alkaline dust clouds of the desert were suffocating, blinding and irritating to the throat. The mirages tantalized them, and the water was unfit to drink.

Animals that were overcome with heat or exhaustion had to be killed and eaten. Because of shortage of feed for the animals and the frequent need to rest them, the only way to get through was to travel slowly in the cool of the day (evening), save the animals as much as possible, stopping at every little grass they could find. The dust was insufferable,



generally six to twelve inches deep, and it was impossible for the wagons to travel closer than fifty yards from each other.

William and **Sarah** heard many stories of the tragedies that befell some of the travelers who made the trip before them. One such story from the book, "*They saw The Elephant*":

"In the fall of 1849 Apaches attacked one train at present day New Mexico's point of rocks. They killed a Mr. White with his teamsters and

carried away his wife and young daughter. Kit Carson and others pursued the raiders overtaking the Indians camp and found Mrs White's body, but not her daughter.

May 8 1850 the Oatmans along with Ira Thompson and family forming a train of thirty wagons and one hundred and fifty people. The first weeks were fun filled with a lot of young carefree people. It was a continuous picnic with excitement. In the evenings they gathered about camp fires and played games or told stories or danced. Many evenings gave out with the strains of 'Money Musk' and 'Zip Coon' as the young folk danced in the light of their camp fire and lard burning lamps. Often during the day time halts, they ran races or made swings. There was plenty of frolic.

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But the long months depleted the animals strength. The train separated as families moved ahead or stayed behind to rest and recruit their stock. Seven families followed a new trail lightly blazed by solders from near present day Las Vegas. From here to Tucson, they suffered for bread. Each person was allowed but a biscuit and half a day. They tried to eat hawks but some got sick when they drank soup made from coyote meat.

After seven months they reached Tucson. They rested several weeks. The Oatmans went on alone. They started for Yuma. Near the Gila river, they reached a hill so steep it was impossible to draw up loaded wagons. While the wagons were being carried up the hill, Mrs Oatman was seized with pains of childbirth. During the anxiety for her comfort, no one noticed the approach of seventeen Apache braves who seated themselves in a circle around the little family.

The chief let out a war-cry and struck Mrs Oatman on the head. Leronzo, a boy of fourteen, tried to help but before he could move a knife slashed his scalp off and he fell unconscious. The next morning he walked three miles back to meet the others. The men discovered the tragic scene of Royce Oatman, his wife and new born baby, two daughters, and a five year old son. Two daughters, Olive [twelve], and Mary Ann [seven] were missing. The captors later sold the girls to Mohoves and Mary Ann died in their village. Americans ransomed Olive at Fort Yuma in 1856".

Even though this route was snow free, the desert barred the way. Several stretches of the trail were over 50 miles long without grass or water, some all the way on a bed of sand. One advantage of the desert was a general absence of disease. In general the emigrants were remarkably healthy on this road with comparatively few deaths.

Three year old Mary Ellen Titchenal wasn't so lucky. She may have been a sickly girl from the from the time she was born, she may have bitten by a snake or stung by an insect, or she may have eaten some bad food or water while in the desert. Whatever happened, she was very sick when the wagon train got to Los Angeles. **William** and **Sarah** decided leave the wagon train and seek help in the village.

They were disappointed in Los Angeles. It had been incorporated in 1850 and called itself "The Queen of Cow Country," but it wasn't a queen. The town and people were in complete disorder. It was a small village of less than 1500 people. It had a reputation for toughness greater than any other village on the west coast.

The original "*gentile Californios*" had been overwhelmed by what was described "as the lowest drunkards and gamblers of the country." Murders were frequent, justice was slow and doctors non existent or drunk. In May or June 1852, by the time **William** and his family arrived, the rate of violence had increased to a murder a day.



Los Angeles about 1847

