

Taken from a handwritten journal of Hattie A. Minton (sister of Susan Etta Milner Jackson)

I was born September 21, 1876, four miles west and one mile south of a little inland berg, Modena, Mercer county, Missouri about 165 miles northeast of Kansas City, Missouri. I lived there until I was a year old and then moved to Lyon County, Kansas, which is about 18 miles south of Emporia, Kansas, where my grandfather Henry Milner lived near his three brothers and one sister.

William Milner, my great grandfather, was 89 years old and not able to care for himself. My grandfather, his three brothers, and one sister, took turns caring for their father. We lived there for about four years.

My grandmother Stinnett had a lingering illness which caused my parents to go back to Missouri by covered wagon. We stayed there until after my grandmother and her six year old son passed away; then went back to Lyon County, Kansas, by covered wagon again. Father was farming there in the summer, but clerked in Billie Green's general store in winters in Madison, Greenwood County, Kansas, to have us close to school.

When I was about eight, the Western Kansas free homestead fever hit, so Father and Uncle Ves Barb went to Seward County, Kansas, and filed on 160 acres. When they came back with glowing tales of Seward County, Grandfather, Mr. Hill, Joe Jackson, and Idus Cooper all set out there. All got claims near us.

In January of 1886 a big blizzard claimed lots of cattle, and some people froze to death. Right after the blizzard my father and Uncle Ves Barb chartered two box cars and shipped all our farm implements and household good we had not sold at the sale out to Cimarron town, about 50 miles from our claims, then rented a cabin in Cimarron, unloaded the box cars, put all our things except two wagon loads that had the plows, farm tools, and my father's carpenter chest. Father and Uncle Ves helped each other build sod shanties and batched in the covered wagons. When the shanties were ready, they sent for the families and came to Cimarron to meet us. The two families came by railroad. When we got to Cimarron, they were there to meet us, but another big, cold snow came that night. There were so many of us that we could not afford to stay long at a hotel; so they left Barb's cook stove in the cabin, a couple of beds, and plenty of bedding. There were eleven of us children and our parents who stayed in that little cabin two weeks before we could make the long trek to the claims. The grown folks slept on the two beds. Five boys slept under one bed on a tick filled with straw, and five girls under the other bed on a straw tick. The parents each had a child in bed with them-the babies. It was a nice day to start out. Uncle Ves had their stove, beds, and table and bedding in their wagon, while we had lots of bedding and several 50 pound sacks of flour for the grocery man at Springfield, about four miles the other side of our claims. Both Uncle and Father made a deal to haul freight for people from Cimarron. We camped that night near where Monezuma now is. It was a small camp and all could not get into the two small cabins; I always looked after myself. I took a quilt and curled up on those sacks of flour with all my clothes on. It was near the end of March, and I really thought I would freeze. I have never slept so cold before or since. Our cookstove was up, and they had hauled coal out while they were building the soddies. We arrived there about 4 pm. All went to our shanty while

Uncle Ves put up their stove and bed and then came for his family and put up our beds as father had to take a load of flour on to town, and it was dark before he got home. Neither family had much room to move around in, as we had bushels of shelled corn for horse feed and planting. We had lots of dried apples and peaches, also beans; a few pots of salt, barrel of molasses, flour, meat and some five gallons of corn meal. But we missed eggs, butter, and milk. When Hills got there, they brought two cows. They divided the milk, but not butter for so many. Pa went back to help Grandpap make the trip, as Uncle Ves and Pa had built Grandpap a small frame house. When Grandpap and Pa got back, they had brought chickens, dogs, and milk cows. Our cow was to be fresh in a short time, and how good we cared for that cow. We had her only two weeks, when we tied her out on a long rope; a thunderstorm came up and lightning killed that prized cow.

We children would take our old team when it was not working and fill 452 gal. Barrels with water; and with the help of a hose, we would drive around and drown ground squirrels out of the holes in the ground, then kill and scalp them. We would string the scalps on a wire and let them dry. Next time we went to the county seat, which was Springfield, we could get a penny for each scalp, as that was a way of getting rid of lots of the squirrels that were digging up the corn crop and gardens. We also would drive over the prairie and gather up bleached bones that had been left behind from the blizzard-killed cattle. We could sell the bones for a small price. Even the small price was some help in buying in that desolate country. I was the most lonesome one in all the crowd. I wanted the hills, rocks, streams, and trees.

One of the neighbor boys was killed by lightning. My grandmother was bitten by a rattler and died in twelve hours. There were so many rattlers in 1888. We killed six rattlers on the way home from her funeral, all over six foot long.

After we did get two cows, we had to herd them along with some of the neighbors' cows, as there were no fences and the crops had to be protected. I was a happy but lonesome girl when I was chosen to do the herding, and I got acquainted with some of the Mayo Ranch cowboys. I shall always remember how nice they were to me. I had no pony then, so a spotted cow was my mount. She would stay near me and not mix with the other cows. I always shared my lunch with her and when the melons ripened, I always took melons in a sack over her back and stopped in the shade of an old soddy wall where I and the melons kept cool until they were eaten. We never got much schooling-four month terms in the coldest weather. It was warm in an old soddy basement. We wrapped our feet in pieces of gunny sacks, as we could not afford overshoes. It was a two-mile trek, morning and evening. One of our neighbor men got drunk and drank 2 oz. Of Laudanum, wandered off at night and was found 3 miles away from home dead, two days and nights later.

My mother was Sarah Elizabeth Stinnett Milner. My mother's mother was Harriet Thogmorten Stinnett. McGlothlin was her parent's name. Grandma Stinnett's husband died of blood poisoning after cutting his foot while splitting rails; left her with three small children, six, five and three years of age. For three years, she, my mother (smallest one of the three) and Henry and Jane had a hard time. Then Grandma married a 5th cousin of my grandfather Milner. So both my grandfathers were Milners. Yet my real grandpa was Stinnett. John, Will, Belle, and Lizzie were half uncles and aunts.

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