

Recollections of EMMA ARMINTA (MELTON) MYERS

My Great-Grandmother

Submitted by RICIGS Member Jan McKenzie

Prosperine, Missouri

December, 1936

This book was presented to me by my oldest grandchild, Daisy Wilson McClure with the request that I write for her a sketch of my life. Otherwise it never would have been written. To please her I will jot down a few lines. I feel sure it will be of very little interest and yet you may learn something from it for I am going to take you back 130 years ago.

David Melton, my grandfather, your great, great grandfather, was one of the pioneer settlers in Knox County, Illinois in the year 1810. He lived ten miles from what is now Galesburg and situated close to a little town called Henderson. (P.S. You visited both places the year you were in Illinois, Daisy.) Grandfather lived there the rest of his life. He improved his farm and raised a large family. He died in 1859.

I was born on this farm. I, Emma Arminta Melton, was born January 19, 1861 [in Knox County, Illinois]. From my earliest recollection our home was with grandmother. My father was the youngest child. When grandfather died all of the other children were married and moved away into homes of their own. That left father to look after grandfather's farm and live with grandmother. We lived on that farm for thirteen years. Dear old grandmother, how well I remember her and where her rocking chair used to set. That chair was a sacred shrine to us. Not one of us children ever thought of using it. [That was grandmother's chair and] it always set in the corner by the fireplace.

I think grandmother was very patient and kind for I never remember hearing her speak a cross word and how good it is to think of it now and to say I never did hear a cross word between my father and mother. So my earliest recollection was of a happy childhood home. I never saw my grandfather. He died when my sister Ida was nine months old. I had two sisters and four brothers and many were the happy hours we spent together in the old orchard for grandfather had improved his farm and had built a large old fashioned house with eight rooms and a big fireplace in the living room and a big porch extended clear across the front of the house. There we spent many happy hours and there mother used to set and sew for I was nine years old

when father bought for mother a new sewing machine. Gave ninety five dollars for it. We thought it was a wonder and mother was so proud of it for she had a family of children to sew for and needed it.

[Editor's Note: Ida was three months old when her grandfather died.

Emma had four sisters and four brothers but two of her sisters died young. She also had a half-sister and a half-brother.]

Our schools then were three months fall school, three months winter school and three months in summer. We were of a hard working family, born in us of those pioneer ancestors and were all taught to work. Each one had their own special work that had to be done before and after school hours. The three oldest children in the family were girls so we were taught to help do chores and in busy times light work on the farm. At that time years ago a corn planter was a rare thing in the neighborhood. Every child that was old enough was expected to follow the rows and drop corn by hand until the corn was all planted. My father covered each row with one horse and a little plow he had made for that special purpose. Most all farmers planted their corn that away in those early days. Never in the fall of the year did we start to school until the corn was all picked and in the crib. The fun we used to have seeing who could find the most red ears of corn during the day. How glad we were when the last load of corn was in and we could start in to school. Today I recall those happy, happy school days in the old school house and the road we traveled night and morning. It was with a hop, skip and a jump our feet so young and light passed over the road many times. I think sometimes school days are the happiest days of our childhood days, not a care not a sorrow or trouble and every morning ready to start on the new day just as care free and happy as the day just passed. How good it is so arranged and meant to be that away. If we tried to carry all our burdens in one load, the load would be too heavy. We could not go on. Our all wise heavenly father knew this so if we only try to just bear the burden of the hour he will carry us through for he lays a little of the burden on us every day and makes it so light that we do not feel the weight. But with his help we march bravely on and begin the new day again.

At that time there were six children in the family, three girls and three boys. The three girls in school. How quickly the days flew by. Always ready to be off to school and just as glad to be home at the close of the day and so eager to be off to school again.

With what joy we hailed with delight the news we were to have a new school house only one half mile from the old one. How we watched the building of it and could hardly wait until it was finished. At last it was ready and with our teacher we met for the last time in the old school house, gathered up our books and all marched to

the new school house. We thought it was grand and how proud we were of it, our beautiful new school house painted white with green window shutters. It stood for many years and was then torn down to be replaced with a new modern school house on the same spot. But to me not half so grand as our new school house was.

In the early days there was lots of snow fell in the winter months. What fine times we had then slay riding down hill. Our father always made for us a new sled every winter out of seasoned hickory cut from the timber close by. We used it to haul in the wood for a big fireplace. When that was done we would often on moonlight nights get out and coast down a big hill in the pasture and when tired out with coasting go back to the fireplace. We would go pop corn and crack nuts of which we always had an abundance every fall. We would gather and store them in a dry place. There were then hazelnuts, walnuts and hickory nuts and usually a barrel of pop corn in the store house for winter. It was our delight to bring some of our school mates home with us to spend the night.

One winter especially there was so much snow fell and drifted the lanes full in some places and drifted up against the rail fence until it covered the fences and for several weeks we walked on top of snow drifts high as the fence for a mile to school and thought it was great fun and it was cold. But we never seemed to think much about it being cold. We wore heavy shoes and heavy woolen clothes. We raised our own sheep and took the wool to the carding mill. There it was carded into rolls and mother would bring down the old spinning wheel and spin the rolls into yarn. Then every little girl that was big enough was put to work knitting stockings and was supposed to knit two pairs of new wool stockings every winter. I well remember when I first learned to knit. I would knit so tight I could scarcely get the needles through. I would knit awhile and cry awhile. Then mother would help me out by knitting a few rounds and getting it loosened up so I could try again. At that time I was a very little girl just learning. But perseverance conquers all things. I soon learned that I must not draw the thread so tight and many were the pair of mittens and stockings I knit after that. They were stockings then not hose like they wear today. Our heavy wool stockings were our Sunday stockings just the same all winter and had our clean stockings to put on to go to Sunday School every Sunday morning. How glad I am today to know our father and mother always took us to Sunday School and took an active part in the Sunday School and meeting. Our home church was two miles away and in winter father always hitched to the sled and to the spring wagon in summer and took all the family to Meeting and Sunday School, seldom missing unless the bad weather kept us at home.

Father and mother were both members of the Washington Class and were faithful members as long as we lived there. When I was nine years old there was a big revival meeting in our church and I was converted at the meeting. For years we had always gone there to meeting and Sunday School. I can remember when everyone carried their bibles to Sunday School. We had no lesson helps or quarterlies like they use today. We read a chapter from the bible and our teacher would ask questions on it. I have always been so thankful that I was raised by Christian parents. All my life I have tried to live a faithful Christian life. I feel it is a heritage no money can buy and my greatest desire was to raise my own children up to be honest, faithful and true to the cause of Christ. But oh the mistakes I can see as I review my past life, so much of it through ignorance and so much we have to regret and yet I have lots to be thankful for. No mother could ask for a kinder, thoughtful family of children. Not one of them but what would do anything for my comfort or anything I would ask of them. What a comfort it is to me to know this in my declining years.

Grandmother belonged to the United Brethern Church as far back as I can remember. As for grandfather I do not know but I think he must have been a good man for I have often heard grandmother say that grandfather hadn't an enemy that she knew of when he died. My father and mother were Methodist. They were converted in a Methodist Revival meeting and it was the only church near them at that time.

I have often heard grandmother tell that when they were early settlers in Illinois as far as they could see in any direction was high prairie grass and from a distance they could see the tall grass bending and waving and knew that deer were feeding there and all they had to do was go get close enough to get a good shot at them and they had plenty of deer meat. I do not think grandfather ever changed farms after he settled there in his pioneer days, but lived and died on the farm he had made and raised his family on. [Editor's Note: Emma's grandfather, David Melton owned land for 25 years in Indiana before moving to Knox County, Illinois about 1835.]

I can remember today when we were little children in our home my father used to laugh and tell us there were eleven boys in the family and they each had two sisters apiece and make us guess how many children there were in the family. That was some puzzle to us when we were little folks until we caught on to the joke. [Editor's Note: Emma's father had ten brothers and two sisters, so this may have been a joke his father told him when he was a child.]

Grandmother was at that time growing old and she had only one daughter living at her request she sent for Aunt Christeen to come and stay with her the rest of her

days. She only lived a year and a half after Aunt Christeen came and was eighty four years old when she died in April.

[Editor's Note: Emma's grandmother, Catherine [Pfrimmer] Melton, was 81 when she died.]

Many years have passed and I have visited the fine new school house after being absent so long. While visiting my old home in Illinois I found very few of my old schoolmates left. They like myself had moved to distant lands and in homes of their own and many had answered to the roll call. In forty years many, many changes had taken place. My greatest desire after being away so long was to once more see my old home where we had spent our happy childhood days. The house, a part of it was still standing and just think after forty years a few of the old apple trees were yet there. A new house had been built and later on the family sent me a peck of apples off the very trees where I had gathered apples when a child and spent many happy hours in the old orchard.

After that my father moved in the fall to Missouri and our home was always in Missouri after I was fourteen years old. There was my home for the rest of my life except for around twelve years when Dan and I lived with Clarence (in IL) taking care of his two children. There was mother and three girls almost grown when my father took over a hotel in Kirksville, Missouri. We got along fine until scarlet fever got in the hotel. It was brought there by a guest. My sister Viola died and in seven days Gracie, the baby of our family died and all six children had it. All that knew of it were afraid to stop at the hotel as scarlet fever was considered such a contagious disease. When the lease expired we moved to a farm not far from Kirksville, Missouri that my father had bought.

In the spring my sister Ida married Daniel Branstetter. They were married in Kirksville and made their home in Pike County, Missouri. A year and a half later I married Daniel Rufus Myers at Kirksville, Missouri, Adair County the 24 day of February 1878.

I never met any of your grandpa's folks. They all lived in Ohio. For years we corresponded with them for some years, but finally we all quit writing all through carelessness to answer letters as your grandpa always left all the writing for me to do.

On March the 16, 1879 our first baby, Florence came to cheer our home and in June two years and three months later another little girl, Gracie arrived to keep her company. How proud we were and we thought we had two of the sweetest little girls

ever was, like all young fathers and mothers. To us they were perfect and the light of our home. Mother love can see no faults in their own little ones when they are babies. How good that it is so.

We moved from Missouri to Kansas and lived at Nortonville, Kansas where Clarence, Earnest and Mable were born. We lived there for nine years. Then moved to [Laclede County] Missouri where our home has been ever since. Mable was then only four years old. We left Kansas the first of March and moved over land with two teams. The girls driving a span of gray mules. We encountered all kinds of weather; snow, wind and rain on that trip. Poor Florence suffered so with the earache most all the way. I often think if we had know the hardships before us we would have hesitated and pondered well before we started out on such a trip. We were two weeks on the road and how glad we were to get to the end of that journey. It seemed wonderful to us that they planted corn the last of March that year in Missouri.

Our home ever since has been in Missouri over forty years where our children have married and raised up their families. Gracie was the first to leave the home and as years rolled on her first little folks began to grow up. What a joy, what a pleasure it was to see them come driving in on Saturday night to stay over Sunday. We could hardly wait for the time to roll around and then how we hated to see them start back home. Mable was a little girl then and would take a good cry when they started home when Daisy was the baby.

Then Florence and Elmer Willard were married and lived always in Springfield, Missouri but often came home. Elmer was the first to break the family circle [he died] and so much sorrow and trouble entered our home. Time waits for none of us and we all meet with sorrow and trouble. How true it is that man is born to sorrow and trouble and that includes all of us for God is no respecter of persons. How our eyes are blinded to so many things. It is better so or it wouldn't be this away.

A few more years and Daisy is teaching School. Then Homer and next Emma. How proud I was that my three oldest grandchildren were able to teach school. My greatest desire when I was a child ten years old going to school was to be a teacher. Times were so different in those days sixty five years ago. Not one of my schoolmates or any of the young folks in the country or joining neighborhood were educated for teachers. We always looked for our teachers in town. No farmer ever thought it was necessary to send their boys and girls to town to school. It was thought a few months each year in the country school was sufficient to carry them through. We had no graded schools like they have today. If our teacher told us we could read good enough to go into a higher class we were promoted.

So many changes have taken place and our little family of five children are all separated and scattered. Florence in Arkansas, Gracie in Missouri, Clarence, Earnest and Mable in Illinois. Grandchildren in Oklahoma, Illinois, Missouri and California. Some of them in homes of their own and all doing well as far as I know. I have cause to be proud of them all in my declining years.

August 15, 1934 your grandfather died and was buried in Prosperine Cemetery, Laclede County, Missouri. I have lived with Gracie, occupying my two rooms that we had built on and had lived in for seven years. It seems more like home as we had lived there so long and that was where your grandfather spent his last days. In July, 1936 I was granted the old age pension. Ten dollars a month.

This brings us to January 19, 1937, my birthday. I am starting on another new year and am wondering what the new year has in store for me. I feel like my last days have been days of peace and kindness have attended me all along the way. Not a cross word or a dissenting voice do I hear. Not one of my children but what would do anything for me I would ask.

Clarence is now in Wyoming. Went mostly for his health to try to get rid of a cough that bothers him every winter. Went in December, 1936 and is there to start in the new year, 1937. He came to visit us in July before he left for Wyoming. He is the only one so far away but if he gets rid of the cough that bothered him so he will be well paid for going.

Now I feel like I am just waiting for the call for I have lived seventy five years and all have been busy years. As time marches on I find at seventy five years if your home is broken up your interest will fail. You will feel that there is not much for you to live for. Only be faithful and live every day so that when the summons comes I shall be ready and waiting. Death has no horrors for me for I will not go alone. For Jesus says in the 23 Psalm I will go with you. His promises never fail.

Clarence and Mae visited us in 1936 and left for Wyoming in December, 1936. Lloyd and Clarence farmed together in the summer of 1938.

Mable, Ralph and Rachel visited us for a week in July, 1938. My grandson, Forest Clifton and wife visited us in the fall of 1938. I went home with them to Harper, Iowa the 23 August and visited in Freda, Ralph and Vera's homes all in Moline. From there Ralph and Rachel took me to my son Earnest's home. There I saw Charlie, my only living brother and his boy, Wayne Melton, wife and two children.

Earnest took me to Rio Cemetery to see Melzie's grave, then to Old Baptist Cemetery where my mother's sister and a little sister are buried. I have known this old cemetery as long as I can remember and I am seventy seven years old and how much older it is I do not know. My grandfather and grandmother both lie there and grandfather was buried there before I was born. I also was at my brother, Orlan's old home. Now his daughter, Fay Frits and Raymond own the old home since Orlan and Lizzie have passed on. I arrived home 23 September. Was gone a month and had a fine visit. Was treated royally by everyone. It will be something to remember the rest of my days and today is the first day of the new year, 1939. I am wondering what is in store for me this year. Came back from Galesburg on the train to Lebanon, Missouri where Florence and John met me and took me to their home. I stayed a few days and they brought me home.

Now this is New Year's Day and January 19, 1939 I will be starting on my seventy eighth year.

Another year has gone and I am close to eighty years old. Have been sick ever since September. Have not been able to walk across the floor without Gracie's help and it is now the very last week in March. No one could have been better or kinder to take care of me than she has and not a cross word. I have been glad to give her my pension check since September and I feel it hasn't been enough to half pay her for the good care she has given me. I feel I have been wonderfully blest for her good care. I think her care saved my life last fall and here it is the eleventh of May and I have just got able to go across the floor alone with the aid of a cane. Am gaining every day and hope to be well soon now. It has been a long hard winter.

1940. The years pass and I am still here and this is November. I have never seen a well day. 1940 has passed and soon will be 1941 and January 19 I will be eighty years old and have never got well. I have often thought I was almost well and then something else would set in to keep me down and this time Dr. Claiborne said must be pleurisy pain. It has lasted for over a month until it would rack my whole body and has been in my back until I could scarcely move and for a month I could not turn over in bed or hardly get up when I lie down to rest, but am much better and I hope never to have to go through with such pain again. I am able to wait on myself to a great extent now and can get around with the aid of a cane to keep me from falling and go to the table to eat. It takes very little to do me in. Daisy, I want you to take your book when you come for I can scarcely hold my pen to write. I think several of the dates may not be correct for ever since I am sick I can not remember so many things. I am so thankful my mind has stayed with me to the end. I think very likely I will go home before the winter is over. I am so tired sometimes I think it will be a

blessed relief to go. I have no fears about going for Jesus tells us so often he will be with us and I feel he will.

And now I turn your book over to you, Daisy.

Gold Bar

Daisy wrote the following at the bottom of the last page:

My dear grandmother died May 15, 1941. She was buried by grandpa's side in Prosperine Cemetery. God bless her. We loved her so.

Daisy

The following names and dates were written by Grandma Myers as she had written them in this same book on the back of pages.

Hugh McClure was born December 23, 1887
Daisy Wilson McClure was born June 13, 1899
Emma Beck was born November 15, 1903
Homer Wilson was born July 14, 1901
Lloyd Wilson was born December 11, 1911
Gordon Wilson was born May 10, 1913
Helen Wilson was born March 10, 1917

Jessie Melton, wife of Seth Melton died 1920 in Wyoming. Burial was in Wyoming at Thermopolis.

Seth Melton, husband of Jessie Melton died in Wyoming. Burial was in Thermopolis, Wyoming May 25, 1928.

Daniel Rufus Myers and Emma Armintia Melton were married February 24 at Kirksville, Mo. 1877.

Florence May Myers born March 16, 1879.
Gracie Verlinda Myers born June 27, 1881.
Clarence Roy Myers born March 12, 1884.
Henry Earnest Myers born January 1, 1887.
Mable Lillian Myers born February 26, 1890.

Ida May Branstetter died at Louisiana, Mo. hospital March 22, 1937. Age 77 years 22 days. Born May 30, 1859 in Knox Co. Ill.

[Editor's Note: Ida born April 1859 per 1900 Census and their family bible.]

Melza Viola Myers died July 1 in Springfield hospital, 17 years old lacking 3 days. Born July 4, 1906. Burial was in Rio Cemetery July 3 Knox Co. Ill.

Orland Melton died 2 day of December 1924, husband of Lizzie Melton. Burial was in Rio Cemetery.

[Editor's Note: IL death certificate gives death date as December 1 1924. He was moved to Old Baptist Cemetery, Rio, IL at his wife's request.]

Lizzie Melton died April 2, 1937 burial was in Old Baptist Cemetery, Rio, Ill.

Elmer Melton died February 3, 1931 burial was in Ellisville Cemetery, Knox Co. Ill

On the 6 day of September Mable's boy, Fred Clifton was killed in car accident on his 18 birthday 1936. Was buried 9 of September at Moline, Ill. in Vallhalla Cemetery.

[Editor's Note: Vallhalla Cemetery was renamed Moline Memorial Park Cemetery.]

Elmer Willard died 21 day of November 1908 at his wife, Florence parents at Sleeper, Mo. Laclede Co. after an illness of several months. He was fireman on the Frisco R.R. at Springfield, Mo. Age 35 years. Burial was in Holman Cemetery near Sleeper, Mo., Laclede Co.

Lizzie Melton wife of Orland Melton died April 2, 1937. Burial was in Old Baptist Cemetery close to Rio. (by her last request) her father and mother buried there and ask for Orlan to be removed to there from Rio Cem.

Harry Alvin Wilson born August 4, 1907 died June 7, 1909 burial was in Prosperine Cemetery, Laclede County, Mo.

Ruth Ople Wilson was born July 7, 1910 died July 12, 1910 burial in Prosperine Cemetery, Laclede County, Mo.

David Melton died August 19, 1859. Catherine Melton born 1788 died April, 1872

Isaac Melton born August 28, 1839 died April 4, 1880 Almira McCartney born January 16, 1838 died August 29, 1880 (Melton) [Editor's Note: Isaac married twice in 1882, and his tombstone gives his death date as April 3, 1894. His first wife's name was Amanda (rather than Almira) on her marriage certificate and on Census records]

Charles E. Wilson born August 1, 1876 died July 24, 1957 Gracie Verlinda Myers Wilson born June 29, 1881 died January 24, 1948

Gold Bar

This account was provided to me by Daisy Wilson's daughter, Retta Lawson.

Thank you so much Retta!

It was retyped from a typed transcript on September 18, 1989 by J.L. McKenzie.

Mispellings and grammatical errors were not corrected

as it is not known if they were made by the author or the original typist.

[Remarks in brackets like this were added by me for explanation.]