

Genealogy

The Story of an Old-Time Hoosier

*Contributed by Mrs. W. D. Newsom**

Rachel Harness Whitman, wife of Matthew Rogers Luce, on August 23, 1916, wrote an account for her grandchildren of the journey which the Luce family made to Texas in 1849. Her father-in-law had decided to make the trip by water and so on October 1, 1849, the Luce family of ten started out from Newburgh, Indiana, on the Ohio River. At the first town in Texas, which was Greenville, they met a family from Evansville, Indiana. After a short stay with these Hoosiers, they went on to Seguin where they arrived on March 4, 1850. For the summer the Luce family moved to a small colony on the Cibolo River and in the fall settled at Lockhart, Texas.

In the year of 1849 quite a number of citizens of Warrick County, Indiana, made up their minds to move to Texas, and as my father-in-law, Abner Luce, Sr., had visited Texas twice to look over the country to see if it would do to move to, of course they all came to him, and as he was delighted with the country they all sold out to come in that year. A long train of wagons started with banners up for Texas.

My father-in-law could not get off till later and was coming by water, the leaders of this crowd agreed to meet at Seguin, Texas. They begged Father Luce to send all the ladies with them but he would not agree to it, and he regretted very much before we got here that he had not consented to it.

On the first of October 1849 we all pushed out from Newburgh, Indiana, on the Ohio River. There were no immigrants in the crowd, just Father Luce and his family consisting of his sons, Matthew R., Sam, Frank and David, all grown, and Lafayette, twelve years old—and the ladies were myself, my mother-in-law, and Misses Elizabeth and Ariminta Luce.

As Father had three what we called flat bottomed boats he hired several hands to come with us. We had one colored servant. I had one baby, who is now Mrs. A. A. Ellison of San Antonio, Texas. She and myself are the only living ones of our crowd that left for Texas.

Father and sons had one boat load of livestock and produce. When we went down to New Orleans to sell it he rented a field to turn his horses into and left us at a place called Gainslanding, several miles below the mouth of Red River. He had bought about one hundred head of the finest horses he could find on which he lost money. He thought he would fill this country with fine horses but the people preferred their Texas ponies and there was no sale for fine horses.

* Mrs. W. D. Newsom of Lockhart, Texas, is a granddaughter of Matthew Rogers Luce and Rachel Harness (Whitman) Luce.

Father Luce made the town of Newburgh, Indiana. In early times he settled there and the place was called Sprinklesburg. Father laid off a new town and called it Newburgh. He was a leading citizen of that place and when the news went round that we were going to start for Texas, many were the friends and kin folks to see us off. I think every one near there was on the bank of the Ohio River to wave us a farewell. We could see for three miles then the river made a turn and they were still standing there. It looked like a white cloud, waving a last farewell.

We had a pleasant trip down the Ohio River and down the Mississippi River. Sometimes steamboats knew who we were and would come near to wave us goodbye. As well as I remember, before we stopped at Gainslanding they paid off three Captains, one hundred dollars apiece, and they took a steamboat and went back.

Father Luce took two hands and David and went on down with the stock boat and we lived in our boat for six weeks. There were rich people there and the old planters were acquainted with Father and he told them he left us in their care. We certainly had a gay time. I saw more champaign drunk than I ever did before, most too much. Some of their cakes were baked in New York. We went to a party nearly every night and there I did my last dancing. My husband did not dance but he would hold the baby and let me dance. A lady said: "I know why your husband is so kind to you. He knows he is taking you where you will never see anything but Indians."

Well, Father came back. He took the horses and put them back in the boat then tied the boat to our boat and hired a steamboat back to the mouth of Red River, as flatboats do not run up stream. When we got to the mouth of Red River they took two of the horses out of the boat and as the river had a levee on each side and a flat road on top, they tied our boat and the horses' boat together, put a horse on each levee and tied them to our boats with ropes and we started up stream. We traveled fast as the horses were wanting out. They fairly ran and we went a little faster than we liked but each horse had a young man to ride on his back to keep him from going too fast. We went back that way until we got to Bayou Lafouch, then they put their horses in the boats again, and all the men got on the boats with spikes to keep us from striking shore, and started down that Bayou like a hericane. The river was very high and running swiftly and the people along the shore did not know what it meant. The hired men said that it was the most dangerous piece of work they had ever seen.

We got to a big plantation in Louisiana where there was what was called a Texas Road. Father and sons had prepared for our trip on land by bringing along four wagons that had never been put together. One was a four horse wagon and one buggy with double covers and new harness, and everything new right from the shop. They took the wagons off the boats and it took the men quite a while to put them all up, to put on the bows and covers which were made in New York. They were made so that not a drop of rain could get in. The people said they had never seen such a turn out before. It was a pretty, warm afternoon when they got everything ready to start. They concluded to go out as far as they could that evening to see how the horses would go. They went pitching.

The four horse wagon was the baggage wagon, it had our tent in it. We got out eight or ten miles and put up our tent for the night, for the men to sleep in. The ladies slept in the wagons. When we got up the next morning it was raining and it rained for twenty-one days. I do not mean all the time, but showers every day.

We were in the pine woods and had to stay in the road or we would mire up. We finally got to the Sabine River and each one wanted to be the first one to cross and say they were the first to be in Texas.

The Sabine was high. All the bottoms were covered with water. We had to be ferried five miles; that is, we got into the ferry boat and went down stream five miles, then landed. As the ferry boat could only carry one boat load at a time, and as it took a day for each trip, we were there for several days. The horses had to be ferried over, too. It all took time. After we got over we were in a wilderness. A man came to our tent and said he could save us forty miles of travel. He had a private way which he sold to Father and which we afterwards found was the worst way. It was a foolish bargain. We were well fixed for travel and the forty miles around were good roads, the one we took was too low and poor.

The first town we saw in Texas was Greenville. There we met a family from Evansville, Indiana. The man was a dentist and we stayed there to let him fix some of our teeth. We crossed the Brazos River at Huntsville. After we got out of the Pine Woods we had a pleasant drive. We often spoke of our friends that started before we did and wondered how many we would see when we got to Seguin where we were to meet agreeable to promise. We had never heard from them or they from us, and on the fourth day of March 1850 we drove into Seguin and to our sorrow found but few of the crowd to welcome us. They were so happy to see us. They were afraid we had been lost. So many of their party had dropped out on the way, some at one place and some at another. The families we met there were J.J.Thornton, George Day, Horace Neely, a Mr. Houchens, and two Nortons, and there might have been others but these are all I remember. They told us about a pleasant trip they had. They came through Indian Territory and were delighted here.

We moved to a small colony on the Cibolo River for the summer. We found nice people there. It was about eighteen miles from San Antonio where we had left word for our mail to be sent. So the next thing was to hear from the folks at home. No one could go alone on account of the Indians, but a company was soon made up and went and brought back so much mail. The Postman had been told to keep our mail till we called for it.

I am writing this for my grand children, and if I were a good writer I would like to write them a book on the same subject but as this is the best I can do, will stop. I forgot to tell that when we were at Gainslanding, Father took our furniture and household things to New Orleans and shipped them across the Gulf to Indianola. It was late in summer when we got them, some were lost that we never got. It was foolish for us to have shipped so much. I had a hundred

dollar parlor stove that was ruined before we got a cabin to put it in, but our carpets and such things were useful. My nicest carpet I used for a partition in the first house I lived in. Father Luce knew we were bringing too much but he was afraid to tell us for fear we all would not come. He would say: "Bring all you want, and I will pay the freight."

Well, in the fall of 1850 we moved to Lockhart, Texas, and I have lived here continuously ever since. Some of the colony moved here too and were our dear neighbors. Of course all the old ones have passed away, but some of their grand children live here yet and feel near to me. I forgot to mention that Father Luce had a sister who came to Gainsland with us. She said she could not bear to see us leave so she took her son, Thomas, who was quite a handsome young man and gay. Aunt Hettie Everton was very pious. She made them tie up the boats on Sundays, and she would call all into the boats and have prayers, much to the annoyance of the three Captains. She wanted singing, but as there were no singers in the crowd but the Captains and myself, and as the Captains were mad to have to stop on Sunday, we did not have music. This Thomas Everton in after years moved to Texas, and died a few years ago in Luling, Texas, this County. His daughter, Mrs. Jennie Clark, runs an Orphans Home at that place now, which is a credit to herself and County. The name of her Orphans Home is "Bell Haven".

I was ninety years old the fifteenth of last March [1919].

Rachel Harness Whitman,
Wife of Matthew Rogers Luce.

Hill Men of Indiana

Conrad Hill from Germany 1811, married Barbara, lived Allen Co. 1850.

Conrad C. Hill born 1835, married Dorthea, died 1905 Indianapolis.

Cornelius Hill of Mooresville in Co. D. 70th Regt. Ind. Inf. 1862.

Cornelius A. Hill born 1856, died Franklin 1943.

Cornelius A. Hill born 1867, died Indianapolis 1940.

Daniel Hill married Sarah Bush 1858 Allen Co. Ind.

Daniel Hill married Mary Kamter 1860 Allen Co. Ind.

Daniel Hill married Catherine Brossert 1863 Allen Co. Ind.

Daniel B. Hill born 1889 Ill; married Ethel; died 1949 Indianapolis.

Daniel F. Hill of Montgomery Co. Sgt. 11th Regt. Ind. Inf. 1861.

Daniel F. Hill of Indianapolis; Adj. 132nd Ind. Regt. 1864.