

Cast Iron Kettle & Sourdough
Life of Elizabeth D. McCaskill Capps

By her granddaughter
Mae Leggitt Finney
With her friend
Clarence

2005

..TIME LINE..

- 1824 February 11, William E. Capps born in Edgefield, South Carolina..
- 1836 February, William E. Capps at the Alamo..
- 1836 July 25, Elizabeth D. McCaskill born in Simpson, Mississippi..
- 1846 May 1, William Capps enlist to serve 6 months in the Mexican War..
- 1846 July 4, Marched from Brozos to Buneta, Mexico..
- 1846 August 10, Discharged at Mobile, Alabama..
- 1850 Zachary Taylor died July 9..
- 1852 September 15, William E. Capps married Elizabeth McCaslill at Bradley, Arkansas ..
- 1854 Daughter, Margaret, born February 6, died, Feb. 6,1924..
- 1858 Son, William D.born, died after 1911..
- 1860 Arkansas land record, William E. Capps..
- 1860 Civil War..
- 1861 William goes to Fort Leavenworth as harness maker..
- 1862 Daughter, Lucy Graham, born, (Mae Finney's grandmother) February.6.Died, April, 1947 ..
- 1968 November 27, Massacre on Washita River in Oklahoma called The Battle of Washita ..
- 1869 January 8, Fort Sill established..
- 1869 Elizabeth and family join William at Caldwell, Kansas..
- 1870 Daughter, Dora, born, Died after 1911..
- 1871 City of Caldwell, Kansas, founded..
- 1872 Daughter, Jenny, born, Died after 1911..
- 1873 Daughter, Estelle, born. Died after 1911..
- 1875 Son, Andrew Garland, born..
- 1875 Fort Elliot established near Adobe Walls, (Sweetwater Creek) Texas..
- 1875 Family moved to Adobe Walls, Elizabeth cooked for soldiers at Fort Elliot..
- 1876 Son, Russell, Born..
- 1878 Son, Ollie A., Born..
- 1880 Family again in Bradley, Arkansas, according to census. Seven children at home..
- 1885 Lucy Graham Capps married Jediah Clark Hussey July 30, in Harold, Wilbarger, Texas ..
- 1886 Geronimo captured..
- 1887 William applied for Mexican War pension. Lived in Vernon, Wilbarger County, Texas ..
- 1889 Elizabeth and William lived separately about Nov. 4..
- 1894 Geronimo brought to Fort Sill, Andrew in trouble at Fort Sill, Elizabeth cooks at Fort Sill ..
- 1898 William died, November, 21..
- 1899 Elizabeth granted \$8 Mexican War pension..
- 1903 Andrew in the Boxer Rebellion in China..
- 1906 Elizabeth lived in Fort Worth..
- 1908 Elizabeth's pension increased to \$12.00 month..
- 1911 Elizabeth died May 15, Fort Worth, Texas. Said she reared her family in Vernon, Texas ..
- 1911 Andrew in the Philippines when his mother died..

INTRODUCING WILLIAM E. CAPPS

Elizabeth D. McCaskill, was born July 25, 1836, the eldest of fourteen children and was bound out to a man and wife in Simpson, Mississippi. She was to work for them until she was eighteen or married. How she came to know William E. Capps is not known, but when she was sixteen, she married him in Bradley, Arkansas.

William E. Capps, born in Edgefield, South Carolina, February 11, 1824. February of 1836 found William Capps, twelve years old, at the Alamo. The Alamo was the site of a famous battle in the fight of Texans in their war of independence from Mexico. The Alamo was a mission built in 1744 by Spanish missionaries along the banks of the San Antonio River. In the spring of 1836, 182 Texan soldiers were besieged there by a Mexican army of some 2,000 men. Notable among the defenders of the Alamo were Davy Crockett, William B. Travis, Jim Bowie (of the famed "Bowie Knife.") The small garrison needed reinforcements and so the youngsters, were sent out at night to seek such help. One of these boys was William Capps. It was believed that he was the orderly for one of the men from South Carolina who were at the Alamo. Orderlies cared for the officers' equipment and personal effects. Help was not forthcoming and although the outnumbered defenders fought gallantly, the Alamo fell in 13 days. "Remember the Alamo" became the rallying cry for the Texans through out their War for Independence and the Alamo became known as the "Cradle of Democracy."

Under cover of night, the young men rode near the brush along creeks so the Mexicans might not see them. As indicated before, they were not able to recruit reinforcements. Bill Capps kept riding to the northeast, traveling at night and staying hidden during the day. He hobbled his horse so it could graze. When he came across a ranch house, he found he would be fed and no questions asked. He followed tree lines, knowing there would be grass for grazing and water. As an orderly, he had learned how to care for his horse and so saw that it had enough to eat and drink, but to be sure it didn't overheat, overeat or drink. He chopped wood and did odd jobs for meals and money. Bill played the fiddle, (violin country style) and at some communities he played for dances, earning a dollar per night. He eventually made his way to the Southeast. It is not know whether he came to Bradley at that time or not.

In May of 1846, Bill enlisted at Montgomery, Alabama to serve six months in the Mexican War. He was sent to Brazos Island. He served as a private in the company commanded by Captain James M. Curtis of the first regiment of the Alabama Volunteers, Colonel P. H. Raiford commanding. On July 4, 1846, he marched from Brazos Island to Buneta, Mexico. He was discharged on August 10, at Mobile Alabama. For his service, he received land warrants and it was noted he filed a deed on property at Bradley, Arkansas in 1860.

EARLY YEARS IN ARKANSAS

The marriage of Bill and Elizabeth seemed to be quite solid. They settled in Bradley and it is presumed, on a farm. That was usually the case in those days. Farms were self sustaining. There are indications that there were relatives of Bill in the area. In the next few years they had three children; Margaret, February 6, 1854, William D., in 1858, and Lucy Graham, my grandmother, February 6, 1862. Land records indicate that Bill filed on a piece of land at Bradley.

The 1860s were turbulent in the U. S. The issue of slavery was dividing the country. The people of Arkansas were divided on the issue and although Arkansas was one of the states seceding, the State had two legislatures. There was no fighting around Bradley, but there was a major battle on March 7 and 8, 1862, in northern Arkansas at Pea Ridge which the North won. In April 1862, the Confederacy passed the first draft act. There were some exemptions such as, "If a man owned twenty slaves, his boys were exempt." Bill Capps owned no slaves and he wasn't going to be conscripted. According to Elizabeth, his motto was, "Being a live deserter is better than being a dead hero." In the event of having to evade the draft, Bill and Elizabeth decided on a third person through which they could communicate. The person named in family lore was Zachary Taylor. Zachary Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready", was a general and the hero of the Mexican War and obviously Bill's hero. Zachary was elected the 12th president in 1849 and died in office in 1850. Finding that he died before the Civil War, has left a mystery of who the third person. However, they did stay in touch.

Under cover of night, Bill left Bradley and headed for Indian Territory. Indian Territory was primarily that area which became Oklahoma, but included part of other states. Bill never gave details of his trek through Indian Territory, but he did evade the Southern authorities. He ended up at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and served as a harness maker for the Union Army.

THE WAR YEARS

When Bill left the family, Elizabeth was 26, Margaret 8, William 4, and Lucy Graham, a baby. It would be around seven years before the family would be together again. Margaret would be about 15, William 11, and Lucy Graham, 7. No one kept a diary of the life Bill and Elizabeth had during the War. Bill obviously was kept busy at Fort Leavenworth. Elizabeth, at home in Bradley, struggled with the task of making ends meet while raising three children.

There were the usual child diseases to contend with, food and clothing to be provided. Families lived off of what the land provided and with sale of some crops, hiring out and trading labor for provisions, made a go of it. It was noted, there were Capps family in the area and no doubt they helped Elizabeth.

Although the War didn't reach Bradley and no crops were confiscated or destroyed, no battles fought, and no livestock confiscated, life was uneasy and a struggle. Even when the War ended, the country was in flux. The military was gearing up for a campaign against the Indians and lawlessness in the West. Although there were perils in Oklahoma and Kansas after the War, Bill sent word that it was probably safe for Elizabeth to come and join him. She was to proceed to Fort Sill and then to Caldwell, Kansas. Caldwell was a new community on the Chisholm Trail and a new rail head at the end of some of the great cattle drives in the years following the Civil War. Bill was going ahead to Caldwell and would build a dwelling for the family. There are few trees in Kansas. However, Bill found that he could obtain enough crossties to build what he called a hut. It was much like a log cabin and was chinked with mud to make it water tight.

The trip would take Elizabeth through Indian Territory. It had many possible perils. There could be encounters with outlaws, rustlers, unfriendly Indians, storms, shortage of water, fording rivers, and accidents. It would take a woman of great courage, resourcefulness, endurance and determination. There were also the three children to be considered. Margaret, the oldest was fifteen and an attractive teenager. William was eleven and would be of help in gathering wood and other tasks. Lucy Graham was just seven and would tire easily. The trip would be some five hundred miles and take from four to five months.

INDIAN TERRITORY

In 1834, the federal government set aside a region west of the Mississippi called the Indian Territory. It included part of Nebraska, Kansas and all of what became known as the Oklahoma Territory. In 1838, the Five Civilized Tribes, the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole were removed from their homelands in the southeast and forcibly driven to the Indian Territory by the army. The march was about 800 miles from Georgia to the "Territory." Thousands died on the march, later known as the "Trail of Tears", which began in the midst of a drought and continued into a fierce winter. The Five Civilized Tribes were so called because their system of government was similar to the U.S. in the Indian Territory, most of them were peaceable and engaged in farming. Some of them even had slaves. During the Civil War, they aligned with the South. Following the Civil War, in October 1867 at Medicine Lodge Creek in southwestern Kansas, federal negotiators met with 7,000 Native Americans to negotiate treaties that would reduce Indian Territory to about the area of present-day Oklahoma by removing Native Americans from Kansas and other Western states. Treaties negotiated there assigned native peoples like the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche new reservations in western Oklahoma on lands ceded by the native peoples following the Civil War. The treaties were much easier to negotiate than to enforce, however, and Plains tribes continued to follow the bison and attack isolated white settlements in Texas and Kansas. To discourage these attacks, Major General Philip Sheridan ordered an unexpected military campaign against the Native Americans during the winter of 1868, when Native Americans would be low on food and supplies. During this campaign the Seventh Cavalry under Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer attacked an unsuspecting Cheyenne village under Chief Black Kettle, who had earlier tried to ally himself with the United States. On the banks of the Washita River, in November, 1868, Custer's troops killed Black Kettle and more than 100 Cheyenne men, women, and children, as well as hundreds of Cheyenne ponies.

Following the "Battle of Washita," the army established a fort in southwestern Oklahoma at the edge of the Wichita Mountains. The site was selected by Major General Philip H. Sheridan on January 8, 1869. At first the garrison was called "Camp Wichita" and referred to by the Indians as "Soldier House at Medicine Bluffs." Sheridan later named it in honor of his West Point classmate and friend, Brigadier General Joshua W. Sill, who was killed during the Civil War.

The Fort was the headquarters for Sheridan's campaign against the Indians. Six cavalry regiments were garrisoned there. The 7th Cavalry, the 19th Kansas Volunteers and the 10th Cavalry, a distinguished group of black "buffalo soldiers" who constructed many of the stone buildings still surrounding the post quadrangle.

JOURNEY PREPARATIONS

With the establishment of the Fort and the presence of the troops probably led Bill Capps to believe it would be safe for Elizabeth to come to Caldwell by way of Fort Sill. It was probably in the spring of 1869 when Elizabeth started on her journey into the unknown. With little money, she had to make preparations for a long journey with three children. The family's farm wagon was converted to a "Prairie Schooner." Prairie Schooners were given that name because of their white canvas tops making them look like sailing ships going across the barren landscapes. They were just farm wagons, usually about ten feet by four feet, fitted with hickory bows which were attached to the sides of the wagon and covered with canvas. At the front and back were oval shaped openings with draw strings which could be closed to protect the contents from the elements. In addition, there would be a tool box in front, a feed trough at the back, a water bucket and a tar pot containing tar and tallow for greasing the axles. These were farm wagons of a size that could be drawn by horses, mules, or a yoke of oxen. In this case, the wagon was to be drawn by four Arkansas mules, Polly, Molly, Jake and Buck. Mules or oxen were more dependable than horses for pulling the wagons across the plains. For protection she took along Fred, a good sized brown dog of unknown pedigree.

The family called Elizabeth, "Aunt Lizzie," and I'll refer to her as such for the rest of her travels and travails. Aunt Lizzie covered the floor of her covered wagon with a straw tick and she made two like size feather beds for some comfort on the trail. She prepared as best she could with she might need such as an axe, a shovel, a shotgun, shells, hobbles for the mules, lengths of rope, axle grease, water bags, candles, kerosene lanterns, and no doubt a curry comb and brush. Her larder consisted of some corn meal, a cask of flour, a side of salt pork, coffee, sorghum, beans and a jar of sourdough starter. At the time, there were some canned vegetables such as tomatoes and dried fruit available. Whether she had any of these is not known. In addition, she had a large cast iron kettle which not only was good for stews, but with a lid, would serve as an oven for sourdough biscuits. She also took two large chests with personal effects.

JOURNEY BEGINS

Aunt Lizzie often mentioned that there were no roads and this gave her some concern. One of William Capps' relatives had returned from a trail drive from Abilene to Dodge City and had come back to Bradley. He told Aunt Lizzie to just follow the Indian trails leading west after she reached Indian Territory. He warned her not take any trail that led southwest because there were Indian trails going to the Red River. She should just follow trails heading west and to follow the sun.

Bradley is in southwest Arkansas, several miles east of the Red River as it turns south and about thirty miles south of the point where the River turns south from its easterly course Aunt Lizzie will spend several days reaching the north bank of the Red River where it turns south. This area had some settlers, but was not completely settled. Texarkana, which is on the Red River, near where it turns south was not yet a town, although the area was somewhat settled. This leg of her trip was relatively safe and gave her a chance to get into the routine of collecting wood, preparing meals on the trail, hobbling the mules at night and when camping during the day. Which tasks were assumed by Margaret and William isn't known. Children on the frontier were quite capable in doing chores.

Reaching the north bank of the Red river where it turns south, the trail leads along the Red River for some eighty miles to the west northwest. At that point the Red River meanders to the southwest and she would have to continue northwest. Just before dusk one day, the mules were getting jittery and Fred, the dog seemed nervous. There were dark clouds in the sky and she thought there might be a rainstorm. She pulled off into a stand of timber and hobbled the mules. It was just in time because one of those downpours with thunder and lightning came on quickly as they do. With the lightning and thunder, Fred covered under the wagon. Aunt Lizzie and the kids took refuge in the wagon. Rain pelted the wagon and continued for several hours. There was no fire or hot meal that night.

The next morning, she started a fire and cooked a hot breakfast. That day she came on to an Indian settlement near a small lake. It may be that the lake she mentions is Lake Hugo, which is located just beyond where the Red turns southwest. The river was high from the "gulley washer" from the night before and she couldn't cross it, so she camped out. The delay was probably welcomed. By this time she had traveled some one hundred forty-eight miles. There is still another two hundred twenty miles to go.

Aunt Lizzie evidently had learned some of the Indian language during her years in Arkansas where there were still some Indians who were not resettled. Anyway, she was good at communicating with the Indians. She traded one feather bed for some Indian blankets. She took advantage of her delay to wash clothing and the blankets in the lake. For soap she boiled roots of yucca grass, also called bear grass. Clothes were spread out over the bushes for drying. The Indians gave her a pot of corn, boiled and allowed to ferment so it would taste better. I imagine there was another reason to allow it to ferment. In exchange, Aunt Lizzie probably made some sourdough biscuits in her cast iron kettle for the Indians.

Sourdough biscuits were a staple for most meals on the trail. Bread soon dried out and it was not practical to bake on the trail. As I understand it, sourdough was made by placing some batter in a

jar and each day some soda and lard were added and mixed in the dough. As dough was taken out, more flour, salt and water was added. The mixture fermented continually. In reading about cattle drives a cook's ability to make light fluffy biscuit made his reputation. In lieu of a Dutch oven, Aunt Lizzie used a cast iron kettle with a lid. Evidently her technique produced light fluffy biscuits for she became known for her sourdough biscuits where ever she went.

After a rest and visit with the Indians, Aunt Lizzie, refreshed, was ready to continue her journey. Lake Hugo was at the base of the Ouachita Mountains and fed by Bushy Creek. This was the stream which was high, probably from the down pour the day before. In a few days, it was lower and easy to ford. The Indians told her that there was another stream about a day's distant. This was probably Muddy Boggy, which was about 15 miles ahead. Whether she reached it in a day or whether it took two, is not known. Generally she just followed the sun which took her west.

Aunt Lizzie often mentioned that there were no roads across Indian Territory. However, there were probably some trails between streams. Eastern Territory had numerous Indian settlements and the Indians hunted throughout the plains and gave her some directions as to water and grass conditions. The plains were rolling and grassy. Wildlife was plentiful, especially near the streams. When camping, she could kill a cotton tail rabbit, grouse, sage hen or pheasant to vary the menu. There were larger game such as deer, prong horns, (antelope) and buffalo (bison.) But Aunt Lizzie limited her hunting to the small game. She was aware of edible plants such dandelion greens and others. Of greater concern to her, was water and wood. The Indians told her wood would be scarce and to collect wood when ever she could. Of course, she was also aware of dried buffalo and cow chips. .

The stories about Aunt Lizzie didn't mention the children except that three accompanied her. The children could be both a comfort and a concern on a trip such as this. They were probably more of a comfort and help. The concern would be for their safety. She was lucky in that no horse thieves or desperados were encountered and the Indians were friendly.

The speed at which Aunt Lizzie traveled is not known. She said it took her about two moons (two months) from Lake Hugo to Fort Sill. Given the distance of 220 miles, that would seem a little slow. It is assumed that she made a least six miles per day and laying over at each stream, it was probably less than two months. However, she had to be concerned about the condition of the mules and giving them adequate time to graze, combined with fatigue from handling a team of four mules, she might stay several days at one camp site.

Beyond Clear Boggy are Blue Creek, Washita River, and Caddo Creek. Caddo Creek runs right on course some sixty miles toward Fort Sill. The plains of Indian Territory are rolling hills covered with buffalo grass. The grass in the southern part of the Territory is short and when the winds sweep across the plains it causes dust storms. Some of the hills are steep enough to make the mules labor. Aunt Lizzie said that the weather grew hotter and the water scarcer the farther west she went. Leaving Caddo Creek, in a day or two comes Wild Horse Creek, just before crossing the Chisholm Trail. Fort Sill would be at the southern end of The Wichita Mountains which should be visible from the Chisholm Trail. The Chisholm Trail would be obvious because the numerous trail herds coming up from Abilene, Texas, leaving the ground pitted with their hoof marks. Crossing the

Chisholm Trail, heading straight west for two days, would bring Aunt Lizzie to Beaver Creek and probably the next day to the fort.

FORT SILL

Fort Sill, as was stated earlier, was staked out on January 8, 1869 by Major General Philip H. Sheridan. It was laid out around a quadrangle which was normal military layout. Fort Sill had no stockade or lookouts as some forts along the Oregon Trail. The troops stationed there were the 7th Cavalry, the 19th Kansas Volunteers, and the 10th Cavalry, a distinguished group of black "buffalo soldiers" who as stated before were constructing permanent buildings at the Fort. There were stones available in the Wichita Mountains which were quarried and became the principle material in the buildings.

The Fort was on the Comanche, Kiowa and Southern Cheyenne reservation. Some of these Indians pitched their tepees at the edges of the Fort. The Fort was established not only to protect whites, but also Indians, from horse thieves, outlaws, and cattle rustlers who were active in the territory at the time. Others at the Fort were cowboys returning south after a cattle drive and buffalo hunters.

Aunt Lizzie and family were welcomed, as were all travelers in those days. After a rest, she told the officers of her need for some supplies and her financial need. She prepared a meal for some of the officers and after tasting her sourdough biscuits, they employed her for a period of time to cook for them. The mules would be turned in with the troop's horses. What the children did isn't known. It is imagined that Margaret, the teenager, attracted a lot of polite attention and was given the job of taking care of her little sister, seven year old Lucy Graham. William, an eleven year old boy, was wide eyed as he took in the formations and parades of the troops. Watching them leave on patrol and returning. Of course, there was no end to the stories related to him by the troops and the cowboys. At night, he would go to sleep to the sound of taps and after the hot day, there might be a cooling breeze coming off the Wichita Mountains.

How long Aunt Lizzie stayed at the Fort and cooked for the officers. Her comments about it becoming hotter and dryer the farther west she had come, would lead one to think it might have been late June or early July when she had reached the Fort. It is not known how long she stayed at the Fort, but given the need to earn money for supplies and the heat of an Oklahoma summer, probably she stayed there a month or so. One would delay taking off on another two hundred mile journey in the heat of an Oklahoma July sun. How much she was earning and how much was needed for supplies is not known.

While at the Fort, her wagon wheels were greased and her harness repaired. An Indian woman sewed up the collar of one of the mules. Aunt Lizzie enjoyed square dance music and there is no doubt that there was a dance or two while she was at the Fort. There were few women at the Fort and each one added to the festivities. Of course, the children would be invited and no doubt, Margaret participated.

A cowboy who had been on cattle drives, carved a map with his pocket knife on her wagon, showing grass, water, and wood, she would find along the way. She was given supplies and probably, some beef, which might last for a day or two on the trail. One family member writing of Aunt Lizzie's experience indicated she expected to be in Kansas in a month. That might have been a little optimistic, it was possible and so given a few days grace for possible problems, the trip took a

month or a little more.

CHISHOLM TRAIL

Aunt Lizzie would follow much of the Chisholm Trail on her trip. The trail was named after a Scot-Cherokee trader, Jesse Chisholm, who first marked the trail in 1864 for his wagon. Jesse Chisholm used the trail to trade with the US Army and Native Indian tribes from his trading post at the present site of the Twin Lakes Shopping Center in Wichita to his southern trading post in Indian Territory. In Indian Territory, it runs almost true north and south through the central plains.

THE TRIP TO CALDWELL

Given the heat, Aunt Lizzie started early in the cool of the morning and if she reached water or a suitable camping place, made early camp. This would be her plan all the way. The mules would be refreshed and there was enough light and sometimes an early morning breeze. After leaving Fort Sill, she had to reach a point to the northwest on Rush Creek, a distance of some fifty miles on the Chisholm Trail. From there on, she would go north, staying on the Chisholm Trail. The Trail in order would cross Little Washita, Washita, Walnut Creek, South Canadian, North Canadian, Cimarron, and Turkey Creek. At each of these creeks or rivers, there was water, wood and grass. At some of the water holes, she found cattle herds stopped to water the cattle and horses and the cowboys butchering a beef, which they shared with her. She shared her sourdough biscuits with the drovers. Sourdough biscuits were standard fare for the cowboys on the trail, but no doubt her biscuits were lighter and when dipped in sorghum made a tasty dessert. In addition, according to one account, she shot rabbits, deer and antelope to supplement their meals. Remember, she had a shot gun and probably killed some wild life even on the trip to Fort Sill. Aunt Lizzie started early in the cool of the morning and if she reached water or a suitable camping place, made early camp. This would be her plan all the way. The mules would be refreshed and there was enough light and sometimes an early morning breeze.

Somewhere after Turkey Creek, the trail splits, with one going on to Dodge City, Kansas, and the other toward Caldwell. The Caldwell branch probably was a little to the northeast toward the Great Salt Plains Lake where Salt Creek runs into Sandy Creek. From Turkey Creek to Caldwell is an arid area where water and wood was scarce, and grass for the mules was sparse. It was too bad that the last miles to Caldwell were difficult, but Aunt Lizzie soon would be there at last. One account said that Aunt Lizzie's trip from Arkansas to Caldwell, Kansas, took five months.

Five months, with all of it on the trail, except for the stay at Fort Sill, managing four mules, worrying about the safety of the children, dealing with the elements, probably took its toll on Aunt Lizzie. Although she never mentioned any hostile Indians, rustlers, or outlaws, they were active in 1869. Yes, this trek of over five hundred miles took courage, resourcefulness, and stamina which would try the most hardy of men, not to mention women. Aunt Lizzie exemplified the best in pioneer women in keeping families together.

CALDWELL, KANSAS

Caldwell, Kansas is on the southern border of the State. In 1869, it was one terminal for the shipment of cattle brought up the Chisholm Trail across Indian Territory from Texas. A railhead at Caldwell was the shortest shipping point in 1869 and no doubt, William Capps thought, like many in that day, that it had potential. Settling there, on the edge of settlement offered opportunity. The town, itself was founded in 1871.

With the construction of the railroad, there were ties available. There was little lumber in the area and Capps thought that a dwelling built out of ties was preferable to the grass soddies and dugouts many of the first settlers had to resort to. Although he referred to it as a hut, it was probably about 24 feet by 24 feet, outside dimensions. The ties were probably six feet long and nine inch square. These could be interlocked much as logs. It was also easy to leave openings for doors, windows and a fireplace. Probably it had one door, two windows, a dirt floor and a stone fireplace for cooking. There was stone available and many of the buildings in Caldwell were stone. Remember, the hut was to house five people. Whether there were latter additions, giving a growing family, isn't known.

What Capps did for a living, isn't known. There is a sign in Caldwell proclaiming it as "The Border Queen." It was one of the original cow towns in Kansas. Caldwell was the home to gunslingers, cowboys, prostitutes, Indians, saloon keepers and criminals, but it did become a respectful, staid farming community after the heyday of the cattle drives. It was not where one would want to raise a family in those early days. But there were many respectful ways of making a living and there is no indication that Bill was anything but respectful, at least as respectful as most frontier men.

Aunt Lizzie and Bill Capps did start a second family. In 1870, Dora a daughter was born. In 1872, Jenny, another daughter was born and again in 1873, Estelle was born.

At this point, the record is a little dim. In 1875, Andrew Garland was born. There is some indication that about this time, the family moved to Adobe Wells, Texas. Whether he was born before the move or after. In any case, this move would have been hard on Aunt Lizzie.

ADOBE WALLS & FORT ELLIOT

In 1874 the army undertook a major offensive against the Indians in the Panhandle. It seems that Adobe Walls was the site of a buffalo hunters' camp which was attacked by a party of Cheyenne's. Four were killed. Thereafter, Fort Elliot was founded. It was situated on Sweet Water Creek, twenty-seven miles west of the 100th meridian. The 100th meridian is the east border of the Texas Panhandle. Adobe Walls is some 50 miles from the Fort .on the Canadian River. It is said that the area around Adobe Wall is as fine an agricultural country as one wishes to see. The Wheeler County Heritage Day program of June 28, 1997 entitled "Wagon Trails" dedicated the day to the Men, women and children who courageously came to the Texas Panhandle in 1875 to tame the wildness of both men and beast then living on the plains, clearing the way for those of us who now make our homes, raise our families and enjoy the same abundance of water, clear air, verdant vegetation, and wild life.

It is thought that Bill and Aunt Lizzie Capps were some of these settlers. About that time it was said the family moved to Adobe Walls. Also in 1876, a son, Russell was born and in 1878, Ollie, another son was born. Little else is known about the stay at Adobe Walls. It was said that Aunt Lizzie cooked for the soldiers at Fort Elliot. For how long she cooked and when given the birth of three sons born from 1875 to 1878.

In some of the bits of information about William E. and Elizabeth Capps it was noted that they were listed in the 1880 census as back in Bradley, Arkansas with seven children. This would mean that the two older children, Margaret and William D. were no longer at home. Records show that Lucy Graham, the third child was married in Harold, Wilbarger, Texas in 1885.

From the dates of the birth of the children and the number of seven at home in 1880, it is assumed that the family returned to Bradley, Arkansas in about 1879.

VERNON, WILBARGER COUNTY, TEXAS

Wilbarger County was first settled in 1878. The settled on the Red River north of Vernon near a spot where the Western Trail of the famous Chisholm Trail crossed the river going north to cattle markets to Kansas. Millions of cattle were driven out of Texas to the northern market. In 1879, a mail line was established from Wichita Falls to points north though Doan and also south to Seymour in 1880. The original town of Vernon was laid out in 1880 and the city was incorporated in 1889.

It is believed that the Capps came to Vernon in about 1884. The only evidence we have for this is that Lucy Graham married Jediah Clark Hussey on July 30, 1885 in Harold, Wilbarger, Texas. In 1887, Bill Capps applied for a Mexican War pension. In 1889, Bill Capps and Elizabeth were living separately. The date was about November 4. Why the specific date is not known. However, Aunt Lizzie said she raised her family in Vernon, Texas. Since Lucy Graham was married shortly after the Capps moved there, she was referring to her second group of six children. William Capps died in 1898. However, his pension of \$8.00 a month was granted after his death. It was increased to \$12.00 a month on 19 April 1908.

HER FINAL DAYS

Her granddaughter, Inez, was a well-known writer of the popular column "Cheyenne News" in the Sayre Headlight. In an article entitled Tales from Grandma Capps, she recalled that her Grandma was a fine looking old lady and after Grandpa died, she got a soldiers pension of \$6 a month. She used that to pay her train fare from one member of the family to the next and stayed three months. She would have \$18 to buy her ticket.

Her death certificate indicated she died of uremia at 9 PM on 15 May 1911 at 1700 May Street in Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. She was buried 16 May in Oakwood Cemetery, Fort Worth.

The Fort Worth Record, Tuesday Morning, May 16, 1911, page 5, column 1.

MRS. ELIZABETH CAPPS

Mrs. Elizabeth D. Capps, 78 years old, and a widow of a veteran of the Mexican War, died at 9 o'clock Monday night at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. J. P. Casey, 1700 May Street. She reared her family in Vernon, Texas and had been a resident of Fort Worth for the past five years.

Surviving are nine children, Mrs. J. H. Hollis, Warren, Ark.; W. D. Capps, Los Angeles; Mrs. J. C. Hussey, Oklahoma City; Mrs. L. Moss, Kingfisher, Okla.; Mrs. T. W. Wellington; Andrew G. Capps, Philippine Islands; Russell D. Capps, Lamar, Col.; and Mrs. Joseph Baer, Columbus, Ohio.

The funeral will be conducted from the Residence of Mrs. Casey at 10 o'clock Wednesday morning. Rev. J. M. P. Morrow of the Baptist Seminary officiating. Interment will be made in East Oakwood.

Here is her information about the Oakwood Cemetery plot: Block 103, Lot 12, Space 7: Elizabeth D. CAPPS, b. 1836, d. 5-17-1911



Elizabeth D. McCaskill

Capps ca. 1911