

Excerpts from my upcoming book, *Davenports and Upchurches: The Roads Converge*

## Living in the 1910s

By Mae D. Cox

It was now the mid-1910s and from farm to farm Arthur and May Davenport moved. First to Wanette, then Macomb, over to Trousdale, down around Noble, and then back to Buckhead—all in the first few years of marriage. Farming just wasn't a get-rich occupation back then and instead was full of hard work and many woes. Arthur, like many others, toiled to make the land produce, yet his back-breaking efforts never brought the success he so desired.

From sunup to sundown he struggled with plowing and planting; with hoeing and weeding. But Oklahoma is well known for droughts and other perils. The life of a farmer is a treacherous one for sure. What crops Arthur brought in barely fed the family and seldom provided enough to pay the landowner his share. It's my guess the family's many moves were for that very reason! The crops didn't make, so they moved to another place, and tried again.

### Houses, Shacks, and Shanties

Most of their domiciles were meager and sparse, one- or two-room shacks or shanties on sharecropper land. Though some places were decent, many were not. Walls of these structures were frequently just boards nailed to a frame and offered little resistance to the cold north winds and the dry dusty heat. Roofs leaked, sometimes the windows had

no glass, and the rooms were small and cramped.

There was no electricity to such places, they used kerosene lanterns. Nor was there running water or bathrooms. Outhouses served that purpose for all families. If they were lucky they had a well, otherwise water had to be carried from a nearby creek. Cooking was done on a woodburning kitchen stove. Heat for the house came from a fireplace. Cutting wood was another chore that had to be done often to supply little logs for the stove and keep the fireplace blazing in the winter.

They had little furniture. Early on the kids slept on the floor, or on tick mattresses stuffed with hay. Kitchen utensils were few and consisted of a couple large pots and an old iron skillet. Their few dishes and flatware were kept in the safe, a cabinet-like piece of furniture.

May had an old trunk that held their prized possessions such as pictures and embroidered linens for special occasions. I'm guessing what clothing they owned was kept in boxes as I've not heard mention of a dresser or chest-of-drawers. That kind of tells us they didn't own just a whole lot of stuff. They did however, have a rocking chair, plus a table and chairs. When it came time to move, they used a wagon drawn by a team of mules to carry their few possessions. It took only one or two trips to move everything. Live-stock was driven by horse-back.

### Meager Family Meals

Providing food for their growing family was extremely difficult. They felt fortunate when they had meals of fried potatoes and mustard greens, one aunt told me "Sometimes breakfast was just watered-cornbread." School lunches were often a cold biscuit with sorghum or cold gravy on it ... if they had anything at all.

This was an era long before welfare or government subsidies to help families. They were on their own and had to fend for themselves. There never seemed to be enough food to go around ... just too many mouths to feed.

May was an excellent cook and made what little there was to fix taste quite yummy. It was from her talent in the kitchen that all the Davenport daughters in turn became excellent cooks.

Generally, when the family gathered for meals, there was no talking at the table. The children sat on benches on each side of the table and ate quietly. "We ate. Then talked," commiserated another aunt.

She thought perhaps that was because they were all so hungry and starved that they gobbled down their food instead of yakking with one another.

### The Upchurches Deaths

It was during this time that May's parents, Charles and Julina Upchurch, passed away. Julina died in 1912, and then Charley in 1915. They were laid to rest at Mount Zion Cemetery. Sadly, their deaths were hardly noted in the nearby newspapers as these clippings show.

From what I've gathered in talking to the old-timers, when someone died, the burial usually took place the next day. There were few funeral parlors then, so the family took care of the arrangements and burial.

### The Mid-1910s

Let's go back to Arthur and May. They had now made several moves. Their first two sons, Charlie and Carl, were born in the Tribbey area then a couple years later, a third son, Roy, was born in early 1915. They now had three boys ranging from four to infant. Their lives now evolved around farming and their three sons. Moves were still quite frequent. In 1917, they were in the Trousdale area when another child came along. This one, the first girl, they named Ethel.

Before long, they moved over to the Buckhead area, and it is here that another of the early stories took place.

## Buckhead

Mrs. C. W. Upchurch died Sunday at the home of her son, W. A. Upchurch, after an illness of several days.

Eugene Mallow made a business trip to Wanette Saturday.

C. M. Mantooth made a trip to Byars Saturday.

Box Lodge No. 201 I. O. O. F. will hold memorial services at their lodge hall at Box on Tuesday night June 11. Everybody is invited.

Dan C. Crider, the socialist lecturer from Texas, will speak at Red Springs school house on Thursday night, June 13. He also gives a free musical entertainment in connection with his lecture. Everybody is invited to come.

Don't U C.

Julina obit From the Lexington Leader, Friday, June 7, 1912

## Mt. Zion Items

Rev. Moorhead of Mangum, Oklahoma, will preach here Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night, May 8 and 9.

Miss Vesta Upchurch took dinner with Miss Niece Menasco Sunday.

Rev. Myers and family were dinner guests of Luther Hopper and family Sunday.

Will Hill and wife were Wanette visitors Tuesday.

Mrs. Maggie Mallow visited Mrs. Curry Thursday evening.

Sunday school attendance Sunday was 84, with good preaching services afterward by Rev. Myers.

Florence Bowlen was the guest of Vergie Barber Sunday.

Mr. Harris transacted business in Lexington Wednesday.

Mr. Upchurch died Thursday April 29 and was laid to rest in the Mount Zion cemetery Friday. He leaves eight children and three step children a sister and brothers to mourn his loss. The warmest sympathies of all go out to the relatives.

Mr. Stone and wife of Corbett visited her daughter Mrs. Macknut Saturday night.

Clay Bowlen and family visited his father W. S. Bowlen Sunday.

Quite a number of our young people attended the Hay Seeder's Union at Box Saturday night. They say they had a jolly time.

obit From the Lexington Leader, Friday, July 7, 1915



The Davenport Family in early-1918. Though difficult to make out the folks in this photo, it's one of the earliest ones we have in our family. Arthur and May Davenport pose with their four children: on left is Carl, 5; Charlie, 7, on the right, and in front is Roy, 3. May is holding infant, Ethel.

### First Ice Cream Cone

While living in the Buckhead area, May and Arthur hitched up the wagon one day for a trip into Purcell. When their errands were completed, they decided to treat small sons, Charlie and Carl, to their very first ice cream at the local ice cream parlor.

The boys were all eyes as they were handed the first ice cream cone they had ever seen. They had been told how wonderfully delicious it would be and could hardly wait to taste the frosty treat.

Tentatively they stuck out their tongue to the cold

creamy mound then commenced to lick happily away. Carl glanced over at his big brother and realized Charlie (Buddy) had started eating the cone—one of those tapering sugar-cone types.

Now young four-year-old Carl thought that cone was just the holder for the wonderful ice cream and was aghast that Charlie was eating it. That cone looked like an upside-down horn and most surely belonged to the man serving the ice cream.

Alarmed, Carl ran to his momma, crying, "Momma, momma, Buddy's eating that man's horn!"

She quashed his anxiety and assured him the cone was his to eat. He was thrilled to discover the 'horn' was his, and after gobbling down the cold vanilla delicacy, delightedly polished off his 'horn' too!

Author Note: Family legends and stories passed down through the years are of great interest to me. They are the meat from which my stories are written. If you know of one, or have any relevant photos to share, please write or call me (405-321-1617 or upchurch@coxok.com).