

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

Life in the 1910s

Fire Destroys Their Home

By Mae D. Cox

Sometime in 1916 or so, the Davenport family was living southeast of Noble in a little frame house when, one night, it caught fire. No one seemed to know just what caused the fire, but it quickly spread throughout the house.

May and Arthur now had three young boys and they scurried frantically to get them out of the blazing structure. But either the youngest or middle boy—no one seems to remember exactly which one of the two it was—panicked and crawled under the bed scared half to death. When they realized one son was missing they began hollering and trying to find him. May knew the children frequently hid under the beds from storms and while playing, and sure enough when she looked, there he was.

She pleaded with him to come out but he wouldn't budge. By now the smoke was really thick and she was desperate. It's not clear just what they said or did, but they finally coaxed the toddler to them and fled the house.

Other than shaking from their close call, they managed to escape unscathed. However, the house was completely destroyed along with all their belongings. Losing everything they had was a hardship even though they'd only had a few things to begin with.

They moved into a place in the Trousdale area and began putting their house and lives back in order. Family and friends donated some of their extra kitchen utensils and other household items. Once again their lives settled down and Arthur went back to farming, while May took care of the kids and household chores. The following year, their fourth child, a daughter, was born. They named her Ethel Loretta.

1918-1919

North of Buckhead Corner

By early 1918, the Davenports had four little ones and were living in a little shanty northeast of Buckhead. This is the earliest known place where May and Arthur lived in southeast Cleveland County, Oklahoma. Other places earlier mentioned were general localities. This house though was on the east side of the road about a quarter mile north of what is now Dobbs Road and Flat Armadillo Road (I just love that name and wonder what person with a great sense of humor named it that.)

A creek ran along the south edge of the property and there was a pond down a ways from the back. May's brother, Bowman Upchurch, and his family lived nearby just to the south and back east. Their house was about a quarter-



Bowman Upchurch and wife, Leola, with their two girls, Bessie on the left, Annie at right. Bessie Upchurch was about three years old when this photo of her family was taken, most likely in early 1916.

mile east of Dobbs Road, on Flat Armadillo Road. Bowman's daughter, Bessie, loved to visit and play with her Davenport cousins and still remembers many events of this time and era. Bessie Upchurch Starbuck, a nonagenarian at 92, is the oldest-known Upchurch, and has graciously shared her delightful childhood memories with me. Many of them are in my book.

While in this area, Arthur and May's oldest two children would attend Rose Hill School. Records found indicate that Charley Davenport attended in 1918, and Charley and Carl in 1919. They

are listed as sons of A.M. Davenport.

It was also in this area that Bessie joined her cousins in an escapade that ended in their being cold, wet, and punished.

Fall in Icy Pond Merits Whipping

In winter of 1919 when the pond down from their house iced over, the three Davenport boys were entranced. Charlie was 8, Carl 6, and Roy just 4 when they, along with cousin Bessie Upchurch decided to check it out. They scouted around the edges, quite excited to have such a

neat thing right in their back yard. Charlie and Carl broke off pieces of ice around the edges and began sucking on them. They urged Roy and Bessie to venture further out on the ice and fetch them some cleaner and bigger chunks.

It didn't take much prompting and the two little ones ventured out on the ice. They were barely away from the bank (thank goodness), when the ice broke and dumped them into the icy water. Charlie and Carl pulled them out, getting their

pants wet. They decided they best build a fire and dry out their clothes so their dad wouldn't know what had happened. Roy hid behind a bush and stripped off to the buck, however, they thought it best if Bessie didn't do that.

Needless to say, they were a mess in their still-wet, smoky-smelling clothes when they trudged back to the house. And also needless to say, Charlie and Carl got a big-time whipping when Arthur found out what had happened.



92-Year-Old Bessie Upchurch Starbuck. Born and raised in southeast Cleveland County, this delightful nonagenarian has provided many of the stories chronicled in my book, *Davenport and Upchurches: The Roads Converge*. Her humorous accounts of being a child in the 1915-20 era are interesting and entertaining, and will be featured in this and other-to-come articles.

I Smell a Polecat!

Another time, when Charlie and Carl were between six and eight, they were playing with cousins Bessie and Annie Upchurch when they came up with what they thought was a brilliant plan. They lived right next to a creek and that gave them this money-making idea. They would set out traps along the river and capture critters whose pelts would fetch a few cents in town.

Sure enough when they checked the traps the next day, they'd caught something. A skunk! They attempted to set the varmint free and as they opened the cage, the frightened trapped critter let loose his spray. It didn't hit them directly but just the odor was overwhelming.

It was so strong and pungent that folks for miles around could smell it. Cousin Bessie says, "Oh, that was just such an awful smell!"

Needless to say, they gave up their trapping endeavors.

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 405-321-1617 or upchurch@coxok.com.