

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA
WESTVIEW



Volume 6
Issue 3 Spring

Article 17

3-15-1987

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Recommended Citation

Dunn, Wenona L. (1987) "From There to Here," *Westview*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 3 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol6/iss3/17>

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From There To Here

By Wenona L. Dunn

Long ago and far away there was born in Manchester, Lancashire, England on November 15, 1847, a little girl whose destiny it was to one day make her home on the Western Oklahoma prairies. This is how it came about.

Anna was the daughter of Robert and Minerva (Gaunt) Bateman. Her parents had grown up in the factory district in Lancashire. By the age of six, Minerva Gaunt was working as a bobbin winder in one of the woolen mills. Her grandfather Gaunt had owned the mill, and probably others, and was quite well-to-do. However, upon his death, his eldest son, as was the English custom at that time, inherited the business; so the youngest children had to fend for themselves when they came of age. Minerva's father was a hat maker who became crippled by arthritis at a fairly young age. He eventually became bedfast, and it was necessary for the children and their mother to go to work in the mills and/or coal mines.

In the same community there lived the William Bateman family--father, mother, at least two sons (Robert and Henry), and one daughter. Robert began at an early age to work in the coal mines. He was a small man who had red hair and a jolly disposition. Robert Bateman and Minerva Gaunt were married in 1844. Times were hard in England, and many people were going to America, so Robert and Minerva began to make plans to go there too. Robert wanted very much to rear his children in the New World. By the time he was able to save up enough money to make the trip, he and Minerva had one daughter, Anna, and another baby on the way. The couple decided that Robert and his brother, Henry, would go on ahead and find a place to live and jobs, then send for Minerva, Anna, and the new baby. So off they went.

By now, Minerva's father had died and her mother had remarried. They, along with five younger children yet at home, also decided to go to America. At first, they thought that they would wait until Minerva's baby was born, but when they received a report from

Robert, they decided to go on. There would be time to make the trip before the baby's birth. A letter from Robert told of his voyage across the stormy Atlantic. He had been shipwrecked off the Bahamas, barely got ashore at Nassau, took another ship, and finally made it to New Orleans. In the shipwreck, he and Henry had lost nearly everything they had, including their shoes. At New Orleans, they took a paddle-wheeler up the Mississippi River to Rock Island, Illinois. They had relatives living near there--among them one of Minerva's sisters and her husband.



It was early in May of 1851 when the rest of the family set sail for America. The passenger quarters of their ship were dark, smelly, and crowded. The weather was terrible, causing the ship to pitch and roll. Many of the passengers became very ill; and sometime during the seven-week trip, Minerva's stepfather died. Of course he was buried at sea, a trauma for the entire family.

They too landed at New Orleans. It was about the end of June, and the time was near for the birth of Minerva's baby; so the family delayed its trip up the Mississippi. Edna Bateman was

born in New Orleans on July 13, 1851; and as soon as Minerva was able to travel, they made the voyage up-river to Rock Island.

Finally, the family was reunited, and homes were established in the New World. Minerva's mother supported herself and the younger children by working as a licensed mid-wife, riding horseback to make her calls. Minerva was busy rearing her two girls while Robert, who really wasn't much of a farmer, was trying to make a living for them.

When the Civil War broke out, Robert was too old to be called up, but he felt it was his patriotic duty to serve his country--the America which he loved so much. Leaving the farm in the hands of his wife, with her two brothers to help, he enlisted in Company B, 126th Illinois Infantry, and served as a hospital orderly for more than three years. The girls, Edna and Anna, were now about fourteen and eleven years old; they helped care for the livestock on their small farm. The main crop was wheat, which during the war years reached the unbelievably high price of about \$2.00 a bushel, about what it brings today! Robert came back from the war suffering from chronic dysentery and never again had good health.

On October 16, 1867, Anna Bateman was married to George C. Fittell, who had served during the war in the same unit with Robert Bateman and with James M. Dunn, father of Abner Dunn. About the year 1875, Robert and Minerva Bateman--along with George and Edna Fittell and their daughter, Mary--moved out to North Central Kansas and settled on a farm near Clifton. About the same time, Abner and Anna Dunn and their two children, William and Elizabeth, moved to a farm in Lucas County, Iowa. While they were living in Iowa, two more sons--Emerson and George--were born. Abner and Anna's next move was to Kansas, where they settled on a farm near Haddam, not far from the home of Anna's parents. There another daughter, Emma, was born. Soon afterwards, they moved to

Clifton where two more children, who died soon after birth, were born. This very tiny English lady had given birth to nine children and had watched four of them die. But their odyssey wasn't over yet!

In 1892, the Cheyenne-Arapaho lands in Western Oklahoma were opened for homesteading. The land could be secured by making the "run," selecting a homestead, and then filing a claim to the land. Abner Dunn wanted some of that new, rich, free land! By this time, his and Anna's eldest son, William Robert, was married to Ethel Perkins and settled on a farm near Clifton, Kansas. Their eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was married to Hugh Carmichael; they also lived in the Clifton area. The younger children were yet unmarried and living at home.

Ethel McInturf of Clinton, Oklahoma, and daughter of William and Ethel Dunn, tells of how several families came down together from Kansas by wagon--Abner and Anna Dunn and their three children, Hugh and Lizzie Carmichael and their son, Artie, as well as other relatives and friends, made the trip together.

They gathered at Guthrie to await the signal to start the "run." Abner had brought along a race horse, with which he hoped to be able to run ahead and find a really good place to homestead. However, the night before the run, someone stole his horse.

After traveling several days, Abner found a farm he liked near what is now Stafford in Custer County. His son Emerson filed on a farm in the same section, Hugh Carmichael filed on one northwest of Abner's claim, and other relatives filed on farms nearby. At first, Abner and Anna lived in their wagon while preparing a dug-out home. In later years, a small house (two rooms with a shed kitchen) was built; even later, they added two more rooms--together with a big porch on which the grandchildren loved to play.

In 1900, Emerson Dunn was married to Miss Nellie Chapman, daughter of James and Clara Chapman; and Emma Dunn was married to Avery Chapman, Nellie's brother. The double-wedding ceremony was held in the dug-out home of Abner and Anna with James and Clara as witnesses. Among the family members in attendance was Nellie and Avery's brother, R. R. (Dick) Chapman, who was later to be known

in WESTVIEW circles as "the Poet Laureate of Arapaho." In 1906, George Dunn was married to Miss Lena Alexander. All three of these young couples made their homes in the Stafford community.

And soon the Dunns' grandchildren began to arrive! Bill and Ethel had seven children, Hugh and Lizzie had five, Emerson and Nellie had seven, Avery and Emma had eight, and George and Lena had two--plus a nephew whom they reared. But there was sadness mixed with the joy. Bill's wife, Ethel, died shortly after the birth of their seventh child, also named Ethel, in 1901. Bill remained a widower for two years and then married Elizabeth Perkins, sister to his first wife, in 1903. In January, 1907, Bill and Elizabeth moved their family from Kansas and bought out a homestead just to the northeast of Abner's place. So now the family was together again. In addition to being a farmer, Bill Dunn served several terms as State Representative from Custer County.

As Abner and Anna grew older, they decided to leave the farm and move into Arapaho, where they lived the remainder of their lives. Abner served for a while as Court Bailiff for Custer County. Anna's health began to decline, but she continued to enjoy visiting and playing with her grandchildren. A granddaughter, Gladys Dunn Snider, of Butler, Oklahoma, remembers her as a tiny woman, a fun-loving person who loved to jump the rope along with her granddaughters. She taught Gladys how to make bread and dress chickens. Grandma Dunn also loved to make jelly from the fruit Abner grew in his orchard.

One day in May, 1919, Abner decided that he needed to wean the young colt of one of his mares; so, after hitching up to the buggy, he and Anna headed out to Emerson's farm west of Arapaho, where he intended to leave the colt. It was a lovely day, and Anna was feeling better than she had for a long time. She asked Abner to let her drive the horses, and he agreed. She snapped the reins and put them to a trot, having the time of her life. Just as they made the turn into the yard at Emerson's place, Anna gave a sigh and leaned over against Abner. He looked at her and saw at once that she had died. He called for help; Gladys and her sister, Mable, helped him carry Anna into the house. Just that easily she had left this life--an

English girl who had become a Western Oklahoma pioneer. She was laid to rest in the Arapaho Cemetery; in 1933, Abner was buried beside his devoted companion of fifty-two years. Lying with them is Abner's second wife, Sarah Lemons Dunn, whom he married in 1920.

The descendants of Anna Bateman Dunn number in the hundreds, and they are engaged in many walks of life in various parts of the United States. English blood flows in their veins, but they are Americans every one! ●

CREDITS: Myda Stough (formerly of Geary, daughter of Edna Bateman Fittel); Ethel Dunn Barrick McInturf of Clinton; Gladys Dunn Snider of Butler; and other children of Emerson and Nellie Dunn.