

Memoirs of Americus Vespucius Greer

By William N. Greer

Rescued long years ago from a decaying document written by his hand ...

I was born in Chambers Co. Alabama¹ Mar. 4th. 1832, Sunday, in the day time. My twin brother, Christopher Columbus preceded me some fifteen minutes in this event. At birth he weighted [*sic*] 9 ½ pounds and I weighed 9 pounds. We were just alike in our appearance even to our teeth and nails. Our parents could not distinguish us in infancy, they kept a ribbon tied around my brothers arm, he was the Esau and I the Jacob.

We always were the same height and weight, averaging the same at majority. He died Feb. 8, 1854. He had gone with others on a hunting trip in the hills—they found two large deer fastened together by their horns [*center of page missing*]. This was at Port Sullivan , Milam County Texas. His sudden and untimely death was one of the trying ordeals of my life. He was sick about 6 days with pneumonia brought on by the sudden change of weather.

As I am getting ahead of many important events in my life, I shall revert back to earlier infancy, and if my memory will serve me, I shall go back to my earliest recollections.

I was in my 5th. year when father and family left Alabama for Texas. This was in the early part of 1837. We embarked on a steam-boat in Alabama for New Orleans, at which place we stopped for several days.

We sailed on the ship Fannin across the Gulf of Mexico, via Galveston and landed at Velasco, Texas the 4th. of March, my birthday. We settled in Washington County Texas, west of where now is the town of Brenham.

I recollect distinctly many things that happened on the journey. It was a place of embarkation. Our family carriage, turned over—skinned Irvins nose and in the scramble I hurt Mr. Hunt . . . Bill got in a fight with a French boy. I was awful scared and wondered why Pap ever came on the boat. I threw up from worrying. We brought with us two blooded dogs "Pete and Ruler". One night when we were camped on the Brazos River, Mammy called Tom Irvin and requested him to get his gun, as she thought a bear was trying to get into the tent. Tom came over and snapped at the intruder and then called "come out of there Pete". He came, it was Pete trying to get into the tent. It was raining, the gun was a flint lock and damp from the rain, which probably saved Petes life, which would have been a great loss to the company as well as the family.

We killed 25 or 30 bears the following winter, which were very valuable not only for the meat, which is the best I ever ate when fattened on oak and pecan nuts for which Texas is noted, but the oil is valuable too.

Another incident I remember very well; my twin and I had set out some fishing hooks on Buffalo Bayou near Houston. Tom Irvin and my brother Gilbert put a large catfish on our hook. I remember also my brother Gilbert selling a large catfish to a Hotel man for \$5.00. I also remember a stranger giving my twin brother and myself a fancy cap and some money. He took a liking to us because we were twins and so alike it was difficult to tell us apart.

We had hard times in Texas for clothing and many of the luxuries. Even corn bread was scarce. We gave \$5.00 a bushel for corn, then hauled it 50 or 60 miles to Old Caney, then ground it on a steel mill turned by hand. Hard, work, especially for a large family. Our family consisted besides father and mother and eight children, William Hunt, Mr. Loveless, LeRoy Greer and Tom Irvin (the last two were cousins, being father's nephews). Also five colored viz; Ned, Jim, Judah, Lucy and Louisa—20 in all.

Father was away most of the time. He was a Senator² under General Sam Houston who was the first President of the Republic of Texas.

We improved three places while in Washington County. The second was on the Yegar River³ probably thirty miles N. W. of Brenham in the 40th. section [*now in Lee County*], called the Dodd Settlement; the third was on Mill Creek seven miles N. W. of Brenham.

I worked at the first store in Belton—I also kept store at Spice Woods Springs before Belton was located. I worked there for three or four years. I was clerking for T. A. Supple; my favorite school teacher.

I was an Indian scout with John Payne, William Smith, Josh Blair and others. We routed Indians in connection with Capt. James Cross and 8 others. We charged the Indian camps, they ran fast, just what we wanted as we did not want to kill. I recollect eleven buffaloes ran across Nolen Creek, one Sunday—Father Bowls was after them, this was about the beginning of the 50's.

We spent most of one year in Dewitt Co. with parents, also S. M. Johnson and wife and three brothers. We bargained for a place from Jonathan York. We put up some log cabins three miles from Yorktown on the Corpus Christe [*sic*] and San Antonio road. Think this was in 51. Our brother next older than Matthew Siemeon [*sic*], Parley died in this place the 14th of Oct. 1851, he was a sprightly and bright boy.

About the year 1852 father and family settled in Milam County Texas near Port Sullivan, also son's-in-law E. W. East and S. M. Johnson and Aunt Nancy Johnson and family, where my brother Gilbert Dunlap Greer resided. About this time he married his second wife, Marion B. Lane.⁴

My father put up a good house and a sawmill. My brother Gilbert and E. W. East took up land, one and one quarter each. The Company did considerable business here. It was here in the summer of 1852 that we first heard Mormonism preached by Elders John Ostler and Washington L. Jolly.

It was in this place that my brother Christopher Columbus died, Feb. 8. 1854. We buried him above the sawmill near the edge of the river bottom, but on a high place.

My parents began to make preparations to go to Salt Lake City. Father and S. M. Blair were in partnership. Early in 1855 they sold land and other belongings and bought oxen, wagons and supplies for the trip across the plains. Father was born in Jasper County Georgia, and died in 1855 while going to Utah on the Old Mormon Trail, at Little Nemehaw Nebraska Territory. My little brother Ira Abney fainted and died in the wagon. Father died in the night. Asiatic Cholera was the cause of their death. Nearly one third of the company died, in fact 51 including a lovely devoted cousin (T. D.)⁵ known since earliest recollections, about two years my junior [*part of page missing*]. Sad for the two nephews with this plague we had had we put four away.

Carpenter and I worked hard, afterwards he pronounced a blessing upon my head. Many things I recollect distinctly.

That I would reach the valley... the destroyer shall not hinder you . . . you shall be the means of bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, [*top of page missing*] .. The next day continued the search. We got 35 men to help us, they were from another Company.⁶ Elder S. M. Blair President of our Company sent back to Garden Grove to the authorities for help. Elder Edward Stephenson and several other Elders came to our assistance. This was in the month of June 1855. As soon or before we had recovered from the cholera, measles attacked us in a malignant form.

... Here the large majority of AVG's memoirs are lost. Some 150 pages — covering a period of 40 years — are missing.

¹ *At the time, the birth site was in Creek territory. Chambers County was not formed until December, 1833.*

² *Actually, Nathaniel Hunt Greer was a Representative from Washington County — never a Senator.*

³ *Yegua Creek forms the northern border of present Washington Co.*

⁴ *Gilbert wed Marion in Austin Co. on October 13, 1853.*

⁵ *This cousin — whose initials were "T. D." — has not been identified.*

⁶ *This is an apparent reference to George Woods who strayed from the train on June 30 while sick with cholera. He was never found.*