

EXCERPTS FROM

THE CHAMBERS FAMILY HISTORY

(as told by Mary Chambers DeLong)

From: The Chambers Family History  
as told by Mary Chambers DeLong

My mother (Elsie Woolsey Chambers) was from a T.B. family - - - and about to break down. So Father (Robert Chambers) felt, as everyone else did in those days, (1874), that "to go West" was the last chance.

Father and Mother decided on Colorado since that was the place for T.B.ers, and friends who had gone to Denver were always urging them to come.

Father started out with his sister Nettie, two children and his wife, who was expecting another baby. They all left, on the train this time, from Pennsylvania in 1874 with Father's \$10,000 from his wheat crop and Aunt Nettie's farm sale money, all in cash, with just a tiny pistol not more than eight inches long including the handle "to protect them all." However, after leaving Aunt Nettie in Wisconsin, they arrived safely in Denver without having had to "draw the pistol." On the train he would pull out a roll of money "big enough to choke a horse" and make Mother so mad. But it was common practice in those days.

They really intended to settle at Denver near Mother's school chum, Sara Wolfe, but Father was persuaded to run down to Colorado Springs. He was looking for a good place for a fruit ranch with ample water. He fell in love with Colorado Springs and bought a house in town to get his family into. Shortly, he bought the ranch, a 160 acre homestead for \$1,700, with water rights, which pleased him very much. Mother named it "Rock Ledge Ranch".

The little baby Bessie was born soon after and died at four months.

Father built the long, wooden part of the old home and they moved into it. They started work on the stone house, getting the stone from the quarry on the land.

Mother kept urging them to hurry as she wanted me to be born in the new house. The house was finished enough for me to be born in Mother's bedroom (1875). No more babies after that.

There was also much tough going for Father. First, the terrible scourge of grasshoppers which lasted for three years all over the Middlewest. On account of this, he bought milk cows and ran a dairy. The grasshoppers devoured every spear of green and he had to buy feed for the cows.

The water didn't seem to be sufficient, so Father built the reservoir for flood water. He and two other men (Hardwick and Neff) had first rights to the water of Camp Creek which ran through the ranch and down the valley, but he had to bring it into the higher reservoir by way of a surveyed ditch from 'way up in Glen Aerie.

When I was twenty-four, and Father was ready to quit farming, General Palmer bought the three farms in order to get the water for his Glen Aerie (1900).

Father and Ben (his son by a first marriage) also tried a big, expensive windmill, north of the reservoir, but this was ruined by the first strong wind.

This ranch just south of the east gate to the Garden of the Gods, prospered because of good Chambers work and enterprise. Ben invented and devised many helpful things such as a sauerkraut mill. Father, besides his fruit orchard, asparagus, etc., had two very fine heated green houses (just behind the house). He sold out-of-season produce and Mother's jams and jellies to the Antler's Hotel. They also took in summer boarders, often T.B.ers from the East.

Ben married Madge Kinney and another Robert Chambers was born there on Rock Ledge Ranch.

When Mother and Father wanted to **retire** from Colorado farming they sold the ranch, did some traveling and then settled in Pasadena, California, about 1903, after observing that raising oranges in California was more than "just lying under a tree and picking the fruit."

#### THE FIRST SCHOOL

This account of the beginnings of the ranch is really not complete without a note that the first school was started upstairs in the Chambers home.

Mrs. Elsie Chambers had taught in Pennsylvania before her marriage and so it was natural when her little ones were ready for school that she would gather the children from the surrounding farms and teach them in a classroom upstairs.

Soon however, the county built a little school house across the fields from the Chambers home. This is probably the beautiful little building that was moved to the Glen Aerie grounds and stands there so beautifully preserved today.

Later, each of the Chambers daughters, Eleanor and then Mary, took a turn at teaching in the little school, but only a year or two each.