

Memoirs of Andrew Jackson Allensworth

December 23, 1899—May 30, 1997

Typed from handwritten notes by daughter, Margaret Allensworth Franklin, June 2007

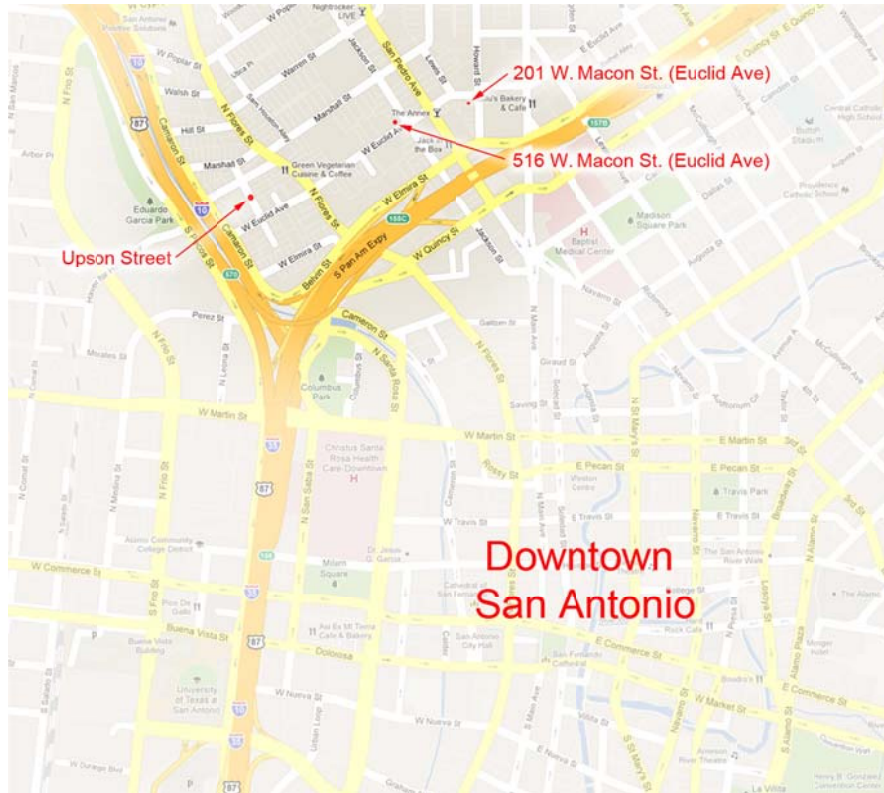
Edited and maps added by Jeremy Franklin, August 2011

Yes, I was born in a northwest upstairs room at 516 West Macon St. (now Euclid Ave.) [San Antonio, Texas] on the night of December 23, 1899. Both of my parents were present. My mother was Ann [Annie] Hortense Hunter and my father was Daniel Carter Allensworth. I had a sister about a year and a half old at the time name Margaret Olive. I remember the house well. It was a long "L" shaped, two-story house, painted yellow. The stair rail was nice and slick and in time I learned to slide down it. There were four bedrooms upstairs and one bath. There was an old two-seater toilet at the end of the grape vine arbor in case of plumbing troubles. There were fig trees in the yard. It was a nice, comfortable place and we enjoyed living there. We lived with Mamy (my grandmother), Aunt Emma [Emma Hughes Allensworth], and Aunt Minnie [Minnie Graves Allensworth].

When I was three, we rented a little house nearby on Upson Street. We were proud of our first home. It was also a very nice place and we were not bothered with electricity nor an inside toilet. There was a beautiful kerosene lamp on the dining room table. The kitchen had running cold water in a sink that drained just outside the house into the yard. That was not bad if we had thrown the dishwater out the window, it would have landed in the same spot. There were no screens. I don't remember what we did about flies. Maybe there were none. The bath room off the back porch was just that. It contained a table and a beautiful, enclosed, white, tin bath tub with a drain plug and a cold water faucet. In the winter when we bathed we poured a couple of tea kettles full of hot water in the tub to take the chill off the cold water. The toilet was a two-seater in the back yard. The cold winter wind used to come up through the unoccupied seat, which was a bit annoying because of the aroma. I never could understand why they were always two-seaters. I suppose they had emergencies in those days too. We were very happy there -- just the four of us: Papa, Mama, Margaret, and me.

One day there was a guard in front of the house across the street. We learned the house was quarantined because of small pox. I used to watch some of the family climb over the back fence each day to go to work. The Johns family a block away had a girl for us to play with and the Muehlendorffs had eight children [Julius, Adolph, Louis, William, Emile, Pauline, Frederick, and ?], so we always had someone to play with us in the creek behind our house or in the various yards. Sometimes I would have 5¢ to spend. Then I would walk a few blocks to Bailey's Bakery and buy a nickel pie. They were very good!

When I was almost 5 years old, the family bought a lot at 201 W. Macon Street and built a two bedroom house. There was an inside toilet but we had a two-seater out by the wood shed just in case we needed it. It was several years before the street was graded and graveled. We were proud of this, our own home. Mama lived there for about 50 years until she came to live with us after I was married. Every 2 or 3 years we would have a vacation at the Gulf or at Grandma's in Palestine [Texas]. We got railroad passes on the J & G N Railroad because Grandpa worked there for so long.



At the end of the summer in 1914, as I entered high school, Papa became ill with leakage of a heart valve, we were told. He could work no longer and was on the bed or in a wheelchair most of the time. We had a nurse to help Mama. In two or three months he passed away. We did not have very much money, so we rented our home and [brother] Dan, Mama, and I moved to Palestine to live with Grandma [Jane A. Beeson Hunter], Aunt Kate, and Aunt Polly. Margaret moved out to Uncle George's so that she could graduate from high school with her class in the spring. Those were pretty dark days.

Mama was wonderful to us children. The family in Palestine was good to us also, and I have never forgotten it. Auntie Maude [Maude L. Hunter Carson] tried to find a job for me to work after school at the hardware store in Palestine, but they did not need a boy. She finally landed a job for me at the newspaper. I would ride her horse in the afternoon to deliver the newspapers. The first afternoon I did not finish my route until way after dark. She canceled the job the next day as she was afraid it was too hard on her horse.

The year went by and we returned to San Antonio in the summer of 1915. I was put back in school in Palestine because they did not have a February class, and then put back in San Antonio because of the Palestine school quality. I went to summer school on returning to San Antonio to make up some courses. I graduated in 1917 after 3 ½ years in high school but it was more like 2 ½ years with 2 put backs.

After summer school was over, I worked for Uncle George's [George Taylor Allensworth] wholesale hardware store until I graduated from high school. I continued to work most afternoons and on Saturdays. I was glad to have a job so that I did not have to have any money from the family.

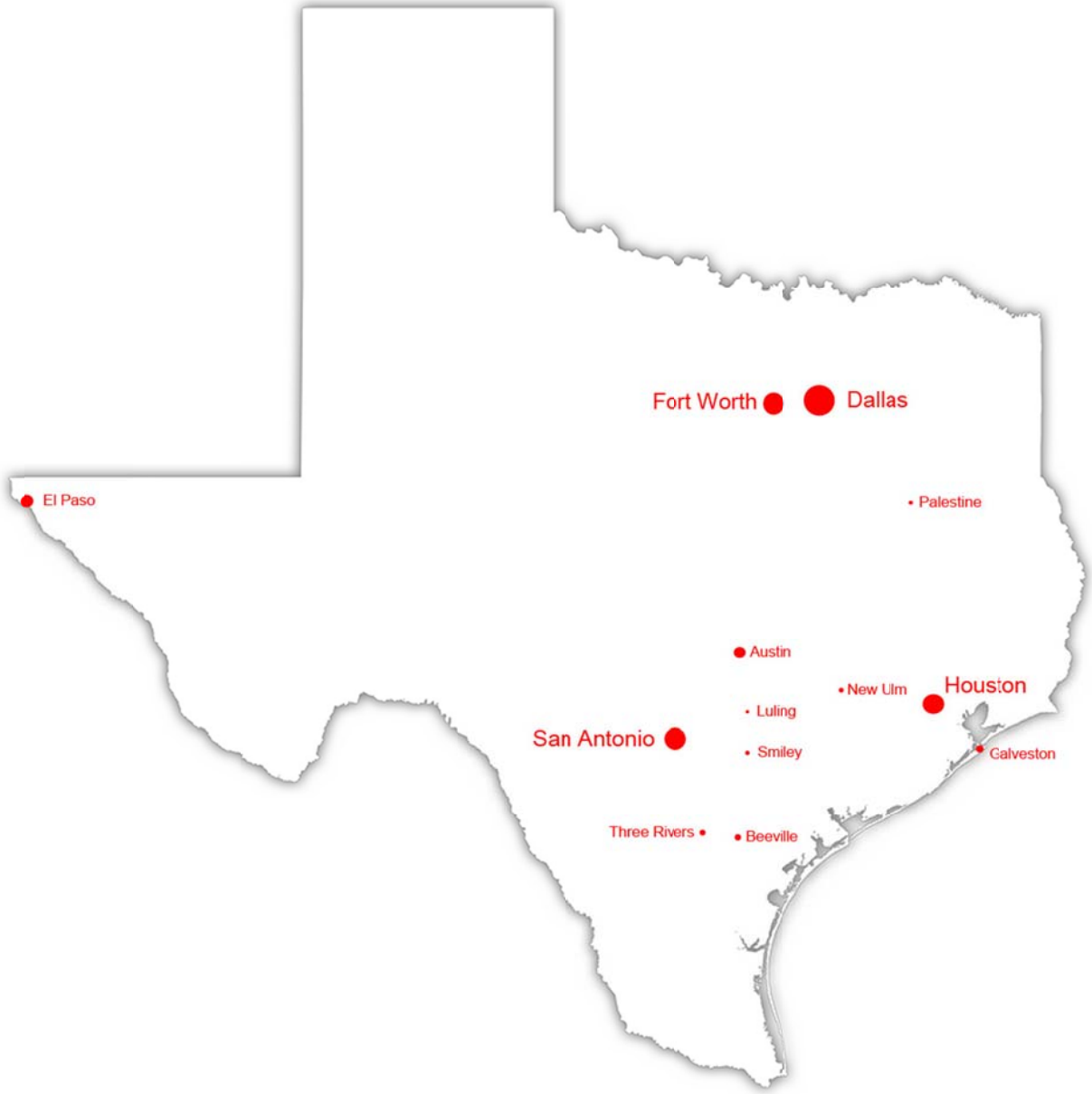
The two years in Main Avenue High School were a wonderful experience for me. I was treasurer of the school paper and the class annual and business management class. These were very busy, happy times. I made friends with a lot of boys and girls—some of the friendships continue to the present time.

After graduating from high school, I went to work full time from 7am until 6pm six day a week for \$30 a month. I rode my bicycle to work to save car fare. Those were long hours and I did hard work in the shipping department. It made me strong and healthy.

After working three years and with Margaret graduated from Texas University [University of Texas or Texas State University?] and home teaching, Mama gave me some money to combine with some I had saved in order to attend one year at the University [of Texas] at Austin. How thrilled I was, and what a wonderful opportunity. I applied for a job in the business department on the school's daily paper. There were no business positions, but they gave me a job as reporter. I did not know anything about that type of work, but Shelby McNeel was living in the same boarding house, and he coached me for a few weeks. It was not long before I was getting "by lines" for my work, and before the year was over I was assistant issue editor. The paper and the church were my only social contacts as I was living on a tight budget. The year was great fun and I really appreciated it. During this year I returned home only at Christmas. I was afraid I would miss something if I left school and it was expensive to travel. After the year I returned to San Antonio and to work. Then I studied at night and finally received a BBA degree by correspondence—which did not amount but I really acquired a vast amount of knowledge! There were, in those day, a considerable number of short night courses offered in San Antonio and I attended a number of them.

I learned early in life that the family did not owe me anything, but that I owed the family everything. I would never understand why some people would not eat things because they did not like them, or why they would quit a job because they did not like it. It always seemed to me that everyone should eat everything that is served to them and be thankful that they have food, because there are many families that don't have enough food. The important thing it seems to me, is that you have food and a job.

After graduating from high school, it seemed every friend I had went to college. But I knew I could not afford it and the family needed my help. I studied almost every night for 2 or 3 years in my correspondence course. It was not bad as I was young and strong. Grandma once told me that it was too bad that I was born into a shirt sleeve generation. But I was happy and tried to make Mama happy. She was so good to me.



• El Paso

Fort Worth • Dallas

• Palestine

• Austin

• New Ulm

Houston

• Luling

• Smiley

Galveston

San Antonio •

Three Rivers •

• Beeville

My Work

As a young boy of about ten years of age I delivered bottles of milk on my bicycle for special orders. Whenever someone wanted some special milk, the dairy would phone me and I would take it to them. Then at 14 years of age, Papa died and we moved to Palestine, Texas to live with Grandma for one year. Upon returning I went to work after school and in the summer at Uncle George's wholesale hardware company. And at 17 when I finished high school, I went to work full time there from 7 AM to 6 PM six days a week. I received \$30 month. I gave Mama half and I kept half. At this company I worked as collector, maintaining the sample room, packing shipments, shipping clerk, city salesman and some country routes as a salesman. In 1940, the company opened a hotel department. I was transferred to outside salesman in that department. Then I was hotel department Sales Manager. Then when Uncle George died, I was made Vice-president and Sales Manager of the company. In 1950 the company broke up, and the building and certain monies went to Uncle George's wife, and the business went to the Carnahans. I resigned and took a job as City Salesman in San Antonio for the Walter Tips Co. of Austin, representing them in San Antonio. In 1961, I resigned from the Walter Tips Co. to take care of 13 apartments that we had accumulated. I took care of these apartments until in the seventies we sold them all and I really retired.

Working outside most of my life, I have had many experiences that an inside job did not offer. I have eaten all kinds of food in all kinds of places under all kinds of conditions. And that wasn't bad. I never quite enjoyed the two or three-seaters out in back of the small bowl & pitcher hotels, and the Sears Roebuck catalogue nailed to the wall for toilet paper was not too inviting either. There was usually a cabinet with a slop jar in the bedroom, but that cost a dollar extra if you used it. I remember being in an upstairs room in a hotel in Hixon [near New Ulm, Austin Co., Texas] one night when a storm blew the roof off over my room. After a little while, the papering on the ceiling burst with a load of water over the bed. Some of the small town hotels had no heat in the bedrooms and on cold mornings I would have to tilt the ice in the pitcher to get water to shave and wash with.

Cuero had an annual celebration that they called the "Turkey Trot." I did not know before seeing it that thousands of turkeys could be driven down a street and never lose a turkey. This town had a very active Klu Klux Klan. One night when I was there, the hotel owner suggested that for safety, I had better leave town. It seems that someone had spilled a keg of roofing nails on the only road from the meeting place back to town. A rain shower broke up the meeting and most cars had flat tires on the way back to town. I was one of the few strangers in town and they were looking for me.

I liked the hotel in Smiley [Gonzales Co., Texas]. They always served fried turkey for breakfast. I have never eaten fried turkey anywhere else! Sometimes I would drive a car and sometimes I would travel by train. I have sat in a railroad station on a hot day beside a stack of milk cans containing sour cream on its way to a creamery in San Antonio. I didn't like cream for a long time! Few of the roads were all-weather roads in those days. When it rained I used to stop on a wooden bridge to put chains on the car tires and stop on another bridge to take them off. I could not put on chains in the mud. I did not want to drive on a hard surfaced road with tire chains on as they would ruin the tires. One time a man came in a store and said he had caught a big catfish and had it in the river on a chain which was tied to a tree. I went down to see it. It was about the size of a piano. I could hardly believe it. This was in the Nueces River near Three Rivers City [Live Oak Co., Texas].

After Papa died I was 14 years old. I made all of my spending, clothing, etc. money and at 17 when I graduated from high school I became a regular contributing member of the family.

Stories

“Papa in R.R. Camp”

Before Papa married Mama, he worked for his father who was a limit engineer. Grandpa Allensworth [Andrew Jackson Allensworth 1833-1891] built many segments of the grade on the Southern Pacific Railroad from Luling to El Paso. His work was to prepare everything up to laying of the rails. Papa was a good shot. He used to tell me about supplying the camp with buffalo meat. He traded an old rifle for an Indian blanket, which we used for a long time. They always camped close to a creek or river so there would be water for the horses, who were never allowed to roam, as Indians would steal them. It seems the Indians were always stealing something. Texas rivers rise quickly after a heavy rain. Papa said he was awakened one night by water splashing in the tent on his cot and as soon as he could get on a horse, the animal was swimming. These streams were full of fish. He did not have time to fish with a hook and line so he dynamited the water so the dead fish would rise to the surface and be gathered.

“Trains”

Grandpa Hunter [Nathaniel Wyche Hunter 1839-1905] worked for International and Great Northern (I & GN) railroad and was assigned to buying the right-of-way through Texas. He named a little town “Hunter” and another one “Goodwin” after another railroad man. These towns were between Austin and San Antonio. When I was a young boy, we were still receiving passes to travel back and forth to Palestine from San Antonio. In the early days the engine burned wood which was stored along the track at certain intervals, and the engine would stop on a bridge to get water for the boiler. A little later, the engines were converted to coal. This made traveling a dirty and slow trip as cinders and dust would come in the train windows. Each passenger car had a pot bellied stove at one end with some skuttles of coal nearby. The porter would keep the fire going, but sometimes the passengers had to add coal to keep warm. Just before dark, the porter would light the hanging oil lamps (later these were gas). Only RR men went from one car to another, as it was dangerous to walk through the open areas where the steps were located.

“Stories”

When we moved into our new home on 201 West Macon and Howard Street [San Antonio], there were no graded streets. The lots had fences and all between was the street. After a few years, the streets were graded and graveled and later paved. Sideways across Howard Street was the Beckman family—2 sisters and a blind brother. They had a sturdy, small, rock house which was very old. Mama used to buy herbs from them to make tea, and we bought eggs from them too and sometimes a chicken. A block east, facing Main Avenue was a big rock house where the Kearny's lived. Old Mrs. Kearny used to tell me about shooting at Indian who was stealing things from their barn, which was where our house was built. In those days we knew everyone in the neighborhood. Dan [brother] was born here. All three of us walked to Marshall Street elementary school, and later to old Main Avenue High School where we all graduated. The Mathews (Papa's sister) lived in San Antonio. They had a car -- the first we knew about. They took us riding sometimes, but Mama did not like it because the car frightened all the horses and went around corners on two outside wheels.

One day Papa rented a horse and buggy. We packed our lunch and drove out to Berg's Mill. Out and back was an all-day trip. It must have been about five miles from home. One summer we visited Aunt Minnie [Emelyn L. Carnahan Allensworth] in Beeville. Her husband, Uncle George, had only one arm. The other was shot off during the Civil War. I used to watch him eat. He had a curved knife with some prongs on the end which served as a fork. He did pretty well with this. They had a big underground brick cistern for drinking water. After a good rain cleaned the roof, they would run the clean water into the cistern. The water was always nice and cool. Beeville had just a few people so it was like living out in the country. Aunt Minnie left me her footed glass covered candy dish which she had owned before the Civil War. She used to tell me about the war but Uncle George never would talk about it. Papa's family in San Antonio would meet on Sunday afternoons and would fight the war all over again. I learned a lot about the war.

Christmas time was a big time for us children. Papa and Mama would hide the Christmas tree with neighbors and dress it after we went to bed Christmas Eve. Christmas morning, they would light some candles on the tree. Decorations were a chain of cranberries strung on a thread and chains of popcorn on a thread. We also made some paper chains out of colored paper. We left our stockings in the living room Christmas Eve and found them Christmas morning filled with an orange and an apple and some nuts. We received one nice gift and another smaller one. Mama would give us 25¢ to 50¢ before Christmas and would take us to the variety store so we could buy gifts for the other members of the family. It was many years before I could spend more than that on a gift. Papa would make homemade eggnog in a punch bowl on the dining room table for people when they came to visit. It was a wonderful life. We were so happy! Papa and Mama were so good to us. If children only realized what their family does for them. They would be forever grateful. Mama was so good to us after Papa died. I could never thank her enough. No money could buy the love and care she gave us.

[Great] Aunt Minnie Fizer [Amelia A. Hughes Fizer] was a young girl during the Civil War and lived on a plantation in Tennessee. There were just women and children at home, as all the men were away in the war. The military lines changed from day to day so they never knew which side was in control of the plantation. The women planted some crops but discontinued when the soldiers always came through and took all the harvested crop. She told me the story of how the family had secretly raised a turkey for Thanksgiving. On that day the table was set and the turkey cooked when some Union soldiers came in and took all the dinner, including the turkey. She ran upstairs and opened a window over the front door. As the soldiers came out she spit all over the food. The soldiers raised their guns but when they saw the young girl, they just continued on their way.

"More Stories"

A few weeks after Papa died, Mama, Dan, and I went to Palestine to live with Grandma, Aunt Polly, and Aunt Kate. This gave Mama a little time to get her thoughts together and it was less expensive for us to live that way. The rent from our home brought in some money. Grandma [Jane A. Beeson Hunter]

was good to me. She used to say that it was good to have me sleep downstairs so that she would not be alone, that it was too bad I was born into a shirt-sleeve generation, and that I could get used to anything but hanging. I used to light the fire in the morning so she could get up in a warm room. I would also build a fire in Aunt Kate's [Mary Kate Hunter] music room so it would be warm for her to teach before school opened. Sometimes Grandma would go into the backyard and catch a couple of chickens, wring their necks, and in a few minutes they would be on the dining room table. Grandma was a good cook and I was always hungry and would eat anything. Aunt Polly was principal of a public school. Everyone loved Aunt Polly [Pauline Hunter]. Aunt Kate was different. Everyone did not love her, but I got along fine with her. I would carry the soap box around town and she would get up on it and tell the passers-by that politics would be cleaned up if women got the vote, while I passed out literature. I used to mail her poems to the publishers and when they were returned, I would send them to someone else. Aunt Kate had an unusual ability to tell about things that she could not see. Aunt Polly came to be with us in San Antonio on summer so she could go to a normal school so she could teach in the public schools. After taking her examinations, she returned to Palestine. A few days later, the school sent her a letter saying she had failed the tests. Aunt Kate had her write for a second look at her examination papers. Aunt Kate said that she had not failed. In a few days another letter arrived with her certificate to teach. They had found her exams were correct. Aunt Kate was constantly using this power. I remember at the beginning of World War II, Aunt Kate was living in a rooming house in Boston while she studied music. The landlady was sad one day and she told Aunt Kate that her son had left and she did not know where he was. Aunt Kate told her to write to a certain address in London and they would give the details. This office happened to be the office of soldiers missing in action. The landlady received a reply saying that her son had gone to Canada to enlist in the army and was killed in action in Europe. I could go on for pages with incidents I know that Aunt Kate foretold.

"Mama"

Mama was left a widow with 3 school-age children and a home paid for, but not much money. But we always had a happy home life. Mama never complained of her lot in life. Some of my happiest memories are my home life with Mama. I remember how happy I was when I could give her five dollars extra each month for her to spend as she pleased, other than for household expenses. We called this Mama's "fun money." She liked to go to the movies and would frequently go to the early afternoon shows as the tickets were least expensive then.

Auntie Maude, Mama's youngest sister, would exchange old dresses so each would have a change of costume. Sometimes I am sure Auntie Maude sent Mama new dresses in exchange for Mama's old ones. Aunt Lil [Lillie H. Hunter Noble], another sister, who had the most money in the family, would sell Mama her old dresses. It's interesting how different sisters are. One time Aunt Lil invited me to visit them in Houston for a vacation after I had finished high school and was working. Aunt Lil met me at the train herself. Hal [William H Noble], my cousin, was out with friends. Hal showed up later in the day. The next morning, Aunt Lil said I could ride downtown in the car with Uncle Hal as he went to work and could see the sights and return home on the street car. He saw a friend waiting for the street car and asked me to get out and take a street car so his friend could ride down with him. I felt I was not very welcome so I returned and packed my bags and told him I wanted to see Galveston. I took an interesting trip to Galveston and then returned home to San Antonio.

“Grandpa Allensworth”

My grandfather, A.J. Allensworth, lived in Tennessee, not too far from President Andrew Jackson's home. When my grandfather was born, he was named after President Andrew Jackson, who was a family friend. My grandfather was born and grew up on the Allensworth Plantation [Christian Co., KY and Montgomery Co., TN]. This must have been a sizeable place, as his father, John Catlett Allensworth [1805-1879], had some 90 or more slaves. Grandpa married Ellen Hughes [in 1857] and after the Civil War, brought his wife to live there also. When Papa was born, he was a very sickly baby, and once there was some doubt to whether he would live. An old ex-slave who still lived on the plantation took Papa to live with her in her cabin. After a while he was a well and healthy baby. The white folk got the food and the Negroes got the pot liquor, which had the vitamins and minerals that were cooked out of the food [when it was cooked] as the way we [whites] liked it.

Grandpa had a friend who killed a man and was in jail because he could not raise the money for bond. Grandpa wanted his father to sign a bond on so the man could get out of jail, but Great-Grandpa [John Catlett Allensworth] would not do it. After much insistence, Great-Grandpa finally said he would sign but that if he had to pay, it would be Grandpa's inheritance. Grandpa accepted, as it was for his best friend. The man caught a river boat as soon as he was out of jail and fled to New Orleans, where he took a boat for Mexico. Grandpa never heard from him again. It was a bitter lesson! Grandpa moved to Texas and settled in San Antonio. There was no railroad to San Antonio. The Southern Pacific ended at Luling [Caldwell Co., TX]. Grandpa was a civil engineer and worked at building segments of the grade for the railroad tracks. He worked until he died in the construction of right-of-way for the Southern Pacific and the International and Great Northern railroads.

Papa had dropped out of high school to be with Grandpa in railroad camp as Grandpa was getting deaf. Grandpa wouldn't pay Papa a salary but would give him some money whenever they would come to town. Thus Papa could never save any money and when Grandpa died, Papa came back to San Antonio to live and get a job as a shipping clerk in a wholesale china company. When Papa and Mama got married, they had to start from scratch. Grandma used to tell me that it was too bad that I had to be born to a shirt-sleeve generation! The family would gather at Grandma Allensworth's on Sunday afternoons to visit. I remember them fighting the Civil War over and over again. Grandpa Allensworth was a major in the Confederate Army.