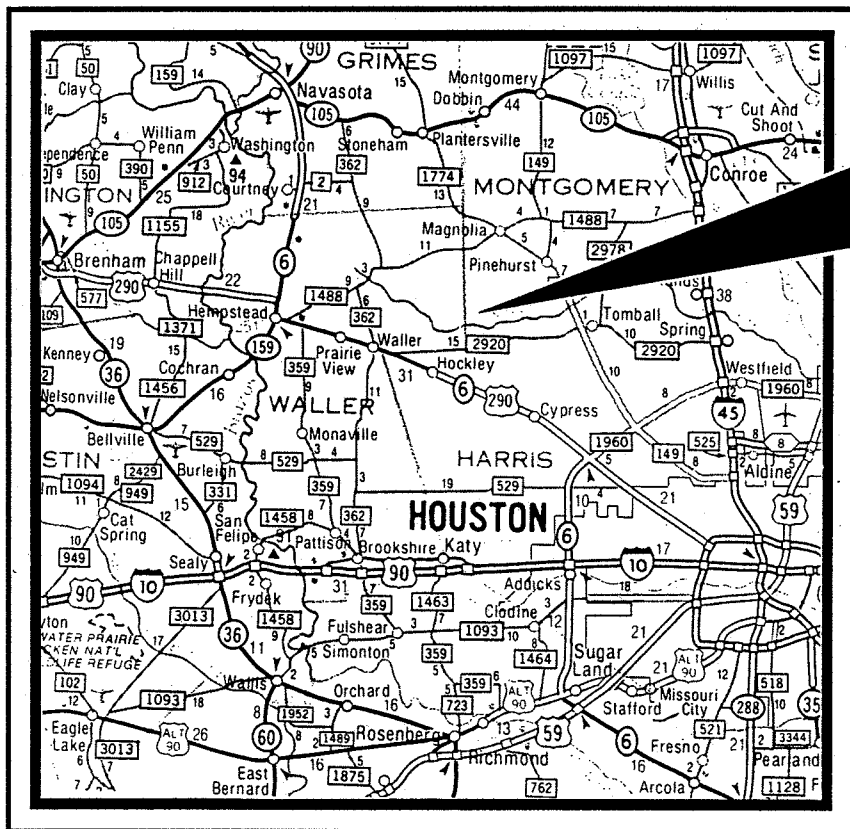


LIVING ON THE COUNTY LINE

The Life and Times of the Alfred Hegar Family



By Frances Williamson Smith

Lakewood, Colorado

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PREFACE

Learning about my family's history has been a consuming interest these past few years. Fortunately one relative, Aunt Maye Hegar, was still living and able to tell me much about the way our family lived. Her memory was still sharp about the happenings of long ago. I feel very fortunate to have this record. How wonderful it would be if we had records of the lives of all our ancestors.

While this is a story about the Hegar family, it cannot help but be a story mainly about Alfred as he was such a dominating force in his family. He had his faults, as we all do, but he was a person with a strong sense of honesty and responsibility who worked exceptionally hard all of his life, never shirking any duty. His colorful language sometimes disarmed people, but his wit charmed them. He could be a severe taskmaster with his family one minute and a gentle, caring person the next minute. He was the epitome of a "character".

Frances

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NOTE: Included in this book are photographs of other family members who played an important part in the lives of Alfred and Helen and their children.

LIVING ON THE COUNTY LINE
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE ALFRED HEGAR FAMILY

To get to the old Alfred Hegar family homestead from Houston go west on the Old Hempstead Highway (US 290) until the small town of Hockley is reached. Even in its hey-day Hockley had a population of only a few hundred people, but today it is only a fraction of that. The depot for the all-important railroad that connected the outlying small communities with Houston, Austin, etc. is no longer there. No one rides this train anymore. The large two-story Becker Hotel is gone. It used to be a favorite meeting place for locals as well as a stop-over for visiting dignitaries and the drummers as they came through the communities peddling their wares. Deserted for many years, the hotel eventually fell into ruin. Also, Dr. Batte's old house used to be nearby where many an anxious person came to get his help in caring for a sick loved one. Barwick's store in Hockley used to satisfy the urgent needs for the farming families nearby. Gone. Gone. Today Hockley is just a sleepy little community with a few assorted businesses and dwellings.

But just west of its remaining buildings is Hegar Road. Turn right here and head north for a few miles, cross Spring Creek, and then turn right again on Macedonia Road. The roads today do not exactly follow the path of the old roads, especially at this point. At the turn of the century there was little fencing and the narrow dirt road took a short-cut across the corner, coming to the old Hegar community General Store and Post Office near the entrance of the present Page Ranch. Continue traveling east past the Springer-Macedonia Church, past Murrell Road on the right to the county line separating Waller and Montgomery Counties. There is a tiny road going left to the

north. This road used to separate the George Lloyd and Alfred Hegar lands. Today there are a number of lovely homes on each side, the property having been divided up into many parcels. Travel north slowly along this narrow road, cross a swampy area and -- there on the right rises a slight hill, now empty except for the tremendous pecan trees which have remained standing there for a century. There -- on the crest of the hill -- that is the place, the place where the old Hegar homestead stood, and where the Alfred Hegar family lived for 45 years.

Alfred Carl Hegar was the second son born to Otto and Sophia Hessig Hegar on August 6, 1859. Otto and Sophia had arrived in Texas from Germany in October 1846 and soon thereafter settled in what was then Harris, later Grimes, and finally Waller County. As he was growing up, Alfred helped on the farm as most boys did in those days. He went to Enoch McPherson's School when he could be spared from the farm chores, and on September 9, 1882 he married Hellen Florence Loyd, daughter of John Isaac and Tabbitha Martin Loyd, whose family had moved to Montgomery County from Dale County, Alabama in 1872. Probably Alfred and Helen met at school or church gatherings. Nothing is known of their courtship except that it must have been rather lengthy as a faded hand-written poem remains, dated February 14, 1880, which reads:

Miss Hellen Loyd

No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart,
No love but thine can make me blest
And satisfy my heart.
If you believe this,
Seal my love with a kiss.

It was enclosed in an ornate folder with an 1880 calendar on the back advertising John R. Young, Druggist and Apothecary, Hempstead, Texas. Marriage records in Waller County Court

House state that they were married September 9, 1882 by G.W. Harvey, Minister of Church of Christ, probably at the home of her parents where her twin sisters had married in 1880. Most weddings were held at home in those days.

Soon after their marriage, in 1884, Alfred purchased 164 acres of land from William Randall for \$500. This property was on the Montgomery side of the county line and consisted of some cleared fields and wooded land. A sturdy house and out-buildings put up around the Civil War period stood on the low hill.

In those early days the community was sparsely settled. Roads were just narrow paths because transportation was mainly by horseback and foot. A person going far distances would take a wagon or perhaps a buggy. Few houses were in sight of each other. They were surrounded by trees and some open fields.

There are stories that Indians had passed through the area in earlier times to get from their homes along the Sabine and Trinity Rivers to hunting grounds west of the Brazos River, but no known Indian villages had existed there. Certain trees in Three Mile Creek Bottom have markings that were definitely not made by white men. Perhaps the Indians had stopped to catch their meal in the creeks where fish were plentiful. Old-timers remember that arrowheads were frequently found around houses after a rain had washed them out of the sandy soil, or in the fields after plowing.

Helen recalled that soon after her family had moved from Alabama to property in the Lacy Pearsall Survey near the county line, Indians came to their house begging for food and frightened the women and children. But they were peaceful and did no harm. Frequently they simply helped themselves to whatever they wanted around the property and they especially liked red hot peppers! Ate them like candy!

Alfred and Helen started their family in this community near the Harris-Waller-Montgomery County lines. Their first child, August Monroe, was born the next year on March 28, 1883. One of Helen's twin sister's, Mary Elizabeth Smith, died following the birth of a son named John Henry Smith on June 30, 1885, so the Hegars took in the boy to raise. Helen Florence was born October 22, 1887, Mina Edna on March 9, 1890, and Sallie Neva on January 26, 1892. Sadly, after a short illness, August died on October 22, 1895. A little over a month later on December 12, 1895, Sophia Anna was born. A bright, spirited baby, she also unfortunately died suddenly of the croup or diphtheria on January 15, 1898. This was a common ailment among babies at that time. And, lastly, Mary Magdalene, later called Maye and Madalyn, was born on February 10, 1901.

The Hegars were an average Texas farm family in the late 1800's and early 1900's. By today's standards they might have been considered poor, but they didn't know it! Almost everybody nearby lived as they did. All family members worked hard to provide the necessities for a large family. They endured many hardships but accepted life as it was without self-pity or rebellion. They always shared whatever they had with other family members and friends. No one ever came to the house without carrying away something to eat. Eating well was very important to Alfred Hegar.

Although Alfred did not go to school beyond the fourth grade, he was a man with a fine mind and improved what education he had by wide reading. In addition to being a farmer, he also acted as a Notary Public in the community and his advice was frequently sought and trusted by his neighbors.

He was an exacting husband and father devoted to his family but uncompromising in his demands for obedience. He kept his family close to home as he himself was not an especially social person.

Helen was a capable homemaker and devoted to her family also, but she was a yielding wife who gave in to her husband's every demand. These personal characteristics were not uncommon during those times.

Thus the family set upon its course in life.

The old house was constructed of unpainted lumber running vertically. It faced south and was mainly one room deep so that prevailing south winds in the summer could circulate freely through the house. It may be considered small by today's standards but in the late 1800's and early 1900's it seemed quite adequate for a rural family. The house consisted of a parlor, one large bedroom which was also used as the actual "living" room, a smaller bedroom for the children, a kitchen, and a separate dining room which was unusual in rural areas in those days. On the back of the house was a rough shed for "the help" to sleep in or for storage. Across the entire south side of the house was a "gallery" or covered porch. It was very sturdily built as evidenced by its long life. It was dismantled in the late 1920's with great difficulty as the old square nails and pegs which held the house together were meant to stay!

There were two barns west of the house next to the road. One held corn and hay. The other was long and contained a trough for feeding livestock, stalls, and a place for supplies. A shed was located somewhat south of the gate to the house yard. Here Alfred kept the buggy which his mother probably gave him after the death of her husband Otto in 1885. There was a smokehouse out back as well as the "necessary house".

Inside the gate into the house yard and to the south were a large black walnut tree and two sycamores that were so huge that an adult could not reach around them. Four-o'clocks were always growing at the back kitchen door, and Alfred had a special garden west of the house. It was enclosed with still another fence and in it he planted the special flower seeds

with which he liked to experiment. He would order seeds and liked to be the first person in the area to have a new kind of flower or vegetable, such as watermelon with yellow meat. You might say that he was one of the first experimental agriculturists in the area!

To the east of the house were fruit orchards, mainly pear but also peach and fig which Alfred had ordered from "Old Man Bouden" who came by in his one-horse buggy taking orders for nursery items.

The house yard was always free of grass as was customary in those times for protection against fire and snakes. It was the children's job to keep it swept clean with small bunches of cut limbs tied together.

Farther south of the house on the other side of the fence rose the large pecan trees. Alfred probably planted them soon after he bought the place. And on beyond that lay the grape arbor and some of the cultivated fields. There were patches of fields here and there used for the family's food supply as well as the monetary crops of cotton, potatoes, and corn.

The house itself was plainly furnished. The fanciest piece of furniture was the organ in the parlor. No one seemed to know how to actually play it but Maye liked to "play-like" she was playing. Alfred had bought a Seth Thomas steeple clock for the mantle soon after he and Helen married. It came from Waddell's Furniture Store in Houston. The fireplace itself, built of wood and clay, was boarded up and never used. Instead, a wood stove was installed in the living-bedroom. In this room were also two beds, a Victorian-style marble-topped walnut dresser, some chairs, and a pine table on which Alfred kept his precious books and papers. The parlor had more formal furniture: a couch, chairs, library table, and the organ, but was rarely used.

In the dining room there was a long table with chairs and benches and a cupboard with glass doors which held dishes.

A sturdy Bucks wood range stood in the kitchen. It had four lids on top and a large oven. There were also two tables here, one on which dishes and utensils were kept, and the other on which most of the food preparation took place. On the wall behind the cook-table was a coffee-grinder, a very important gadget in those days.

On the gallery outside the kitchen was a safe and a milk cupboard. There was also a shelf on which the essential white enameled water bucket stood with a dipper hanging from a hook beside it. Zinc buckets and a wash pan were here also for washing up. A small black table held an extra bucket of water. The children and Helen had to be mighty sure there was plenty of water for Alfred to wash up when he came in from the fields.

Nearly all of the beds had feather mattresses and were covered with hand-made quilts, mostly made by Helen and Aunt Sallie Lloyd. The heaviest feather bed was given to the family by Alfred's mother. A good feather bed was considered a prized possession and was frequently mentioned in old wills. A hand woven coverlet of black and off-white yarn was made by either Helen's mother Tabitha or grandmother Elizabeth Martin and was also a prized item. Helen's brother Nelson and sister Emily Attaway also had coverlets similar to this. Emily's descendants recall that she said that as a young child she had helped her mother make it.

An average day in the Hegar household began early. After Alfred had started the fire around 3 AM, he would make the coffee. The green coffee beans had been previously roasted very carefully in the oven. A child was usually posted at the oven door to keep watch to see that they did not scorch. Alfred would grind some beans every morning for that day's brew. The remainder would be kept in a can. This coffee must always be piping hot but was then "sauced and blown".

Although their daily fare throughout the week was plain

and sometimes lacked variety, it was substantial, nourishing food which would "stick to the ribs" for several hours of hard work. Biscuits were always on the morning menu along with some kind of meat, usually bacon or sausage, eggs, and syrup.

Alfred then headed for the fields. That land which was light-colored and sandy was productive if there was adequate rain. August and John Henry went along to help even when very young, and the girls were later expected to join in, especially during busy times. Sometimes neighbors or nearby blacks helped.

Helen would occasionally do light work in the garden but her main responsibilities were milking the cows, taking care of the chickens, cleaning the house, washing and ironing the clothes, sewing, taking care of the younger children, and especially keeping plenty of food on the table. There wasn't time left for much else!

Alfred had plain farm equipment as did most farmers in those days. The horses, Old Beck and Old Dan, faithfully led the plow up and down the rows for years, to the yells of "Whoa!" and "Gee!"

Alfred was a believer in the Farmer's Almanac and was careful to plant by the moon, and he never, never started anything different on a Friday! He worked very hard and demanded that his children do likewise. The problem was that after August's death in 1895 and John Henry's in 1902 there were only girls in the family. But help they did although it was not done enthusiastically! From 1900 young Helen was away at school at Chappell Hill so that left an even greater burden on Edna and Sallie, but they did their share of planting and working in the fields. After they grew up and left home, Maye who was nine years younger than Sallie, was left to help with the chores. She didn't help much with housework-- she was needed in the fields. She followed her father around for years, running errands, doing any chore he needed done. When he called, she had better run fast! It was her job to open gates, also, when father was

bringing in the cows. She can still hear the bells on the cows and father yelling, "Baby, open the gates!" and she was terrified that the old cows were going to come after her! Though she thought her father a hard task-master, she did not shirk from the never ending early morning chores nor the necessary work in fields until almost dark.

The main crops were Irish potatoes, sometimes called German potatoes, and cotton. The potato rows were long. When the crop was dug and sorted to size, it was hauled to Hockley where it was sold and sent to Houston.

Cotton was also a big crop for many years until the boll weevil took its toll. Sometimes good adult pickers were hired and would pick 250-300 pounds a day each. The girls could hardly pick 50-100 pounds. It was hard work picking and dragging the bag behind. At the end of the long rows there would be a wagon for the pickers to weigh and dump their cotton. Alfred was very particular about his pickers keeping their cotton clean. Bits and pieces of leaves, stems, etc. would lower the price. When the crop had been picked, the wagons would haul it to Leverkusn's Cotton Gin. No girls were allowed to make this trip. It was a dangerous job, just for men. Alfred usually had 4-5 bales a season. He wasn't a very large producer.

He grew sugar cane, sweet potatoes, peanuts, corn for animal feed, and, of course, other vegetables to eat. Almost all of the family's food was raised on the farm. Very little was purchased-- only such things as flour, sugar, coffee, soda, salt and pepper, and occasional delicacies such as pickled herring, canned oysters, and rock candy.

Weather played a very important part in a farmer's life. It was his first consideration in the morning and the last at night. The crops depended on the all-important rain, yet too much could be a disaster, too. A severe hurricane hit the area in 1915, causing much damage. Trees were blown down in the yard and so many branches were blown off trees that the

11

women couldn't even get out in the yard until Alfred cleared it out. Summers were extremely hot, winters very cold, seemingly much more extreme than today. Maye remembers it being so cold once that the combs on the chickens froze! The pond near the house froze so solid that a horse and buggy going over it did not break the ice. And summers were sometimes miserable too. The children would put a pallet out on the gallery in order to catch a bit of breeze so they could sleep.

Alfred would come in from the fields at noon to take a little rest and to have the main meal for the day. He would wash up and read in his old oak rocking chair until Helen put the meal on the table. Reading was always a favorite pastime with him when he had a few minutes to spare, which wasn't often. He had a number of books which he read and reread, sometimes until they literally fell apart. He especially enjoyed reading about major catastrophes such as the 1900 Galveston hurricane and the San Francisco earthquake, etc. Western stories about Buffalo Bill and others were favorites. And, of course, Doctor Chance's Book of Medicine and Recipes was always handy for consultation for the ever-present problems which turned up in those days.

Alfred had a friend in Hockley, Mr. Reeves, who always saved the newspapers which he got off the passing trains.

These were from the larger cities, some even New York. He gave them to Alfred who read every word voraciously.

There were always plenty of vegetables to eat in season, delicious peas or beans, potatoes, corn, okra, cabbage, and sometimes meat, although not always because of the difficulty of storage without refrigeration. Fried chicken, roast chicken with dressing, and stewed chicken with dumplings were some of Helen's specialties, although these were not for every day. Occasionally Alfred would go fishing at Three Mile Creek and bring home enough for a meal, or shoot a squirrel or rabbit

which would add variety to their meals.

In the winter Alfred would kill hogs, smoke or salt them, and the family would have pork while the supply lasted. He also belonged to a Farmers Beef Club in the community. It consisted of a group of about a dozen nearby farmers who would butcher a calf every so often and all would share in it. Their share would vary-- sometimes roast, sometimes soup meat, sometimes steak. Also, Uncle George shared goats which he raised, as well as the wild turkeys and deer which he and his boys hunted.

Corn bread was an absolute necessity every noon. If there were fresh berries, grapes, or other fruit available, a cobbler or pie would be made for dessert, but otherwise there would be canned fruit or the ever present syrup. Fancy desserts were usually only for company.

Chicken in some form or other was usually a Sunday or company meal. As the adults usually ate first, the children last, Maye recalls that that was when she acquired the taste for wings and backs-- that was all that was left when she got to the table!

As the girls grew older, they helped in the preparation of the meals and especially in the cleanup afterwards. Many an old white ironstone dish was washed.

During the intense heat of the summer, the family took a longer rest at noon, but about 3 o'clock they went back to the fields and worked until five or six. Then back to the house for clean-up and the evening meal which usually consisted of left-overs and perhaps a fresh pan of corn bread or biscuits. A bowl of crumbled corn bread with sweetmilk poured over it was one of Maye's favorites as was left-over potatoes fried in bacon grease with onions, and left-over corn cut from the cob and cooked with butter and cream. No one ever went hungry. That was one thing Alfred made sure of.

After the final clean-up everyone was pretty tired and usually went to bed "with the chickens". Having only a kerosene

lamp for light after dark made reading or sewing difficult, so the daylight hours had to be used efficiently. But as Helen did most of the sewing for the family, even making Alfred's pants, shirts, and "drawers", she probably had to burn the oil to finish her projects, especially if there was a baby in the household.

Each summer pigs would be brought in from the woods where they had been running wild. They were penned and fattened up for butchering when the first good freeze arrived. They would be fed scraps from the kitchen as well as corn and any surplus from the farm. All hogs would be good and fat when they were ready to kill. Usually three or four would be killed at the same time and prepared for smoking, salting or cooking. Several neighbors would come to help and the meat was shared with them and others who in turn would share theirs later when Alfred helped them. These were helpful sharing people who lived in those times.

The hogs were shot with buckshot, then put in a large kettle of boiling water. They were then put up on a rigging where they were scraped clean, gutted, and cut up. Some of the meat that wasn't to be eaten fresh was salted down in layers in a barrel or large wooden box. After a period of time the pork was washed off with scalding water and then hung up in the smoke house. This was usually done with the "side meat" or bacon and hams. A "souse" or hogshead cheese was made with the boiled heart, liver, and other parts. It was seasoned, corn meal added, and placed in a crock. It would then be sliced later and eaten. For some days after the hog killing, the family lived "high on the hog" with fried liver, baked spare-ribs, boiled backbone, fresh sausage, etc.

It was the children's job to keep the smoke going in the smoke house during the daytime. This meat lasted for months. It could be left in the smoke house or stored in a safe during

the cooler weather, but once it became warmer the only ways to keep things cool were to put them in a bucket and lower it in the well, or get ice from Hockley which Alfred occasionally did. He would bring home in the wagon 100 pounds of ice wrapped in cotton seed hulls and a toe sack or old quilt. It might last as long as two weeks. The family especially liked it to cool drinking water on the very hot days and to use it to make ice cream, a real treat in that country community.

In addition to raising hogs for family use, Alfred ordered some thoroughbred pigs. He raised and sold the piglets. Poland China was a black and white pig. Tamworth was reddish. They were mainly show hogs. He also raised a few cattle for selling. His brand was **TG**.

He belonged to the Farmers Union, made up of a group of farmers in the community who met every Saturday evening about 6 o'clock to discuss matters pertaining to agriculture. They were also able to borrow money from the bank to tide them over until crops were harvested. The Union would have picnics for the community every year on the grounds of the Macedonia Schoolhouse. Some of the men would barbeque. Alfred's job was to make stew. He would take the vegetables and the large black wash pot in the wagon to cook it on the site. Everyone thought his stew was great. These affairs were eagerly anticipated.

Soap making was a necessary chore most women dreaded. Helen, like all farm women of these times, saved all the left-over grease. She rendered it in the old black washpot over a fire in the yard back of the house, strained it, then carefully added the lye solution which she had made by draining water through ashes from the stove. All the children were warned to keep away so as not to get burned. It would then be poured into a wooden frame to cool and harden and be cut up into useable pieces for washing. It was strong and used only for

washing clothes. Hand and body soap was bought at the store.

Most wells in the area were dug by hand and were faced with boards from bottom to top. The Hegar's first well had such hard water that it could hardly be used. Water had to be carried from Spring Creek or from the Lloyd's for drinking and washing, which was quite a task. Later on under the supervision of Helen's cousin Jode Hughes another well was dug by the Imhoffs. This furnished plenty of good water.

And there was the time when the pet cat got into the well while the family was away visiting. It didn't fall all the way into the water but was stranded on a ledge and couldn't get out. Alfred, Uncle George, and some of his boys rigged up a small platform using a board, put some food on it to tempt the cat, and lowered it in the well by a rope. Fortunately the cat was smart enough to get on the board and stay there until it was raised to safety!

Sunday was a day of rest from the field work. It was a day to dress up and go to church-- that is, if a minister was there. The small church at Macedonia did not have services every Sunday. There was only a visiting circuit rider minister who came about every four or six weeks. But when there was a service people came for miles around because it was not only a day to rejuvenate the soul but a time to get together to visit friends and relatives, an opportunity to catch up on all the news, and a chance for the young folks to "court" under the watchful eyes of their parents! Services were sometimes long and the young girls made sure they sat close to a window so they could have whispered conversations with their "fellas" outside. Sometimes after the service the congregation would hold a covered dish "dinner on the grounds". Everyone would bring a special tasty treat. It was an enjoyable get-together for all and a much needed respite from the long days of labor.

The first services for this Macedonia Methodist Church

were held during the years 1892-94 in the McPherson School, which was a small community-built structure that stood near the present church site. The first actual church building was erected about 1894 on land belonging to William Page.

Summer revivals or camp meetings were held occasionally in the evenings. Brush arbors were built outside for these meetings. Many people would come to hear the preaching and to join in the singing. Uncle George was an especially good and enthusiastic singer. The revivals would last from one to two weeks.

One time remembered by Maye was after her oldest sister Helen had married John Page. The small boys were left to sleep on pallets in their wagon while the service was going on. Later Helen and John got in the wagon to go home. On arriving home and taking the children in to bed they discovered they were missing one child, so they had to go back to retrieve the lost one!

Grandma Sophia Hegar was descended from generations of clergymen in Germany and had helped to organize the Macedonia church. She was an active member until her death in 1904. On one occasion she helped to decorate the church grounds for a special May program for the children in which they gave recitations.

In the afternoons when there was no church, families and friends visited and the children had a chance to play together. Swinging on a grape vine, playing ball, and chase were favorites. Most games were played without benefit of toys as most of the children had few.

Ice cream socials in the summertime were very popular and were usually held on a Sunday afternoon. They were a real treat for these country folk. Alfred would go to Hockley for the ice and Helen and the girls would make the ice cream, usually vanilla or lemon, and perhaps bake a cake. Many times they got

together with their Lloyd relatives and had a real party. It was after one of these happy affairs that Grandpa John Isaac Loyd died of a heart attack in 1909 at Aunt Sallie and Uncle George's house.

A number of years later large family reunions were held each year to honor George Lloyd's birthday in June. Relatives from miles around would come bearing their tastiest dishes to go with the pit-barbequed goat which George and Sallie furnished. Outside under the trees tables were set up. There were tubs of iced tea and the most inticing, delicious food anyone would ever hope to eat! All this in addition to visiting with relatives not often seen made it a very special occasion and a memory family members still cherish.

Alfred's older brother August and his wife Kate and their family lived out on the Hockley prairie which was only a mile or so away but far enough so the families didn't see each other very often. Occasionally Helen and the girls would ride over in the buggy for an afternoon visit. Aunt Kate's table was always set for company. She was a good cook and her German cookies were a special treat.

Young people tried to get together as often as they could, usually on Saturday nights. Parties were held at different houses. They loved "surprise" parties, taffy pullings, "candy breakings", and "play" parties where dancing was forbidden but singing, marching, and folk-dancing were permitted. At a "candy breaking" there would be a box full of different colored stick candy. The girls and boys paired up. The boy had to pay a dime. Each of them reached into a hole in the box for a piece of candy. If their candy matched they kept the candy and got to walk around the house together! If they did not match, the boy put his back, the girl kept hers, but no walk! After being isolated on their farms all week, the young people really enjoyed

getting together. They would walk, ride horses, or go in buggies or wagons for miles to such an occasion. But the Hegar girls were permitted to go only to nearby parties and then only when accompanied by their mother, aunt, or other older person. Alfred was very strict in such matters.

Christmas was a special time but not the big commercial holiday it is today. Alfred would go out in the woods to chop down a big pine tree that would almost touch the ceiling in the house. It was set up in the parlor and decorated by Helen with small candles attached to the tree with tiny tin clamps and a few ornaments, perhaps a string of holly berries. The children were not permitted to see it until Christmas morning when the few gifts were exchanged. Stockings were also hung on the fireplace mantle. The children usually got only one or two small toys, but there were treats of apples, oranges, and hard candy, which were also shared with neighbors and relatives. And surprisingly enough, there were a few fireworks, such as sparklers, fire crackers, and roman candles. The children were allowed to shoot the fire crackers and carry the sparklers around, but Alfred insisted on shooting the roman candles himself because of the fire hazard. These went tremendously high and were most impressive to those youngsters.

The day was spent with relatives sharing a feast of fowl and dressing and all the trimmings.

As Maye grew older she went with her father to Magnolia to help shop for the presents for the little ones in the Page and Wallingford families. Alfred did all of the shopping. Maye does not remember her mother ever going into town to shop. He would go to Magnolia, Hockley, Waller, Hempstead, or occasionally Houston in the wagon and bring back what was needed. He even brought Helen and the girls some clothes, including underwear, shoes, and hats!

The trip to Houston was quite an ordeal. Going in the wagon, it involved stopping overnight at Brick House Gully and then heading for the big city the next morning to handle his business. He didn't care for this trip at all but it had to be done once in awhile. Depending on when he finished up, he would try to make the journey back home that day, arriving late at night. But sometimes another night at Brick House Gully would be necessary.

During these absences he always made arrangements for someone to stay with the family. Sometimes it was Grandma Sophia, Sophia Swank, or some relative or nearby neighbor. They lived fairly isolated. The dangers were few but Alfred was an overly cautious person.

No gala affairs were attended by the Hegars so there was no need for fancy clothes. Most were made at home and were quite plain, but as the girls grew older they convinced their parents to let them have fancier things. Aunt Alice, Aunt Sallie, and Helen were all good seamstresses and did their best with the help of Delineator Magazine and patterns from Uncle Otto's store to dress the girls in style. Fancy white "waists" and skirts were especially popular in the early 1900's.

In 1899 Otto George Hegar, Alfred's younger brother, established a general store and post office near his residence which was just south of the present Macedonia Church. It lay on the north side of the Waller-Magnolia Road. Part of the old Otto Hegar house in the woods, home of his parents, was dismantled and moved to this site. It was expanded into a larger house and became the residence of young Otto and Alice's family and his mother Sophia. It was a nice big white house. It had posts in front and faced south. Descendants say it resembled the present house of Frank Hegar on Hegar road. There were three bedrooms with a wide hall down

the middle, an L-shaped gallery, a large kitchen and dining room, and a yard with a picket fence around it. There was a playhouse on the side of the house for the children. The store was separate from the house. It was a fairly large one room building. Groceries and household necessities were on one side, merchandise on the other-- mainly for ladies-- shoes, fabric for clothes, needles, thread, stockings, hats, very basic things. The front corner held the post office. There was a fence with a gate around it and the children knew they had better keep out!

The store and post office soon became the center for the community of Hegar, Texas. It served a real need for the people of that rather isolated area and it was a gathering place to keep in touch with the news of the day.

Alfred made a trip down there at least twice a week on "mail days" and more often if supplies were needed. Helen frequently went down to sew with Alice, and the girls of both families loved to play together. Maye remembers Aunt Alice giving her and her cousin Bertha a piece of bacon on a line so they could catch crawfish, and then she cooked them for the girls. Alice was good with the children. Everytime a new shipment of hats came in she would invite Maye to come to see them and often gave her one. Hats were important in those days.

After repeated crop failures by both Otto and his customers he decided to move to Tomball in 1908 where he built the Hegar Hotel and ran it for a number of years.

Occasionally when Alfred and the others could be spared from their chores, he would take the girls to Three Mile Creek to fish. It was just a short walk through the woods from the house. Fishing tackle was simple and most of the fish were small, but sometimes as many as 53 were caught! Helen would

roll them in corn meal and fry them. They were delicious.

Fishing and hunting were not done just for the sport of it or just for fun(although it was considered fun) but for the food it would provide the family. After the older girls left home, Maye went with her father to hunt squirrels. It was her job to get around on the other side of the tree in which a squirrel was hiding and scare him around to the other side so Alfred would be able to shoot it. Squirrel fried or boiled with dumplings were both treats.

The girls didn't have any special pets but of course there were always animals around. Old Red the dog was remembered as a good snake-hunter. He would grab a snake and shake it until it was dead. A great deal of attention was always paid to baby chicks.

Edna once built a trap in which she baited and caught birds, especially quail which she roasted. They were delicious and the whole family liked them.

Uncle George had a sugar cane mill. He, Alfred, and other neighbors raised cane and each fall they would bring their cane to be mashed into syrup. The children all loved to watch the process and of course, the syrup was a treat. In almost every rural home syrup was a staple on the dining table at every meal. It served as their sweet when nothing else was available.

It was a serious problem when someone became ill in those days. Not only was this area of the country remote, the roads bad, and the doctor's help too far away, but medical science was in its infancy. Very little was known about treating illnesses. People usually had to make do with what they had on hand. Some of the remedies did a good job, others were

harmless, but some were downright dangerous.

Alfred read as many medical books as he could and kept a number of medical supplies on hand. Neighbors frequently called on him for help. Patent medicines such as calomel and Epsom salts were thought to be good for any and all ailments. So many doses would clear the disease away. Mustard plaster was applied to chests for coughs and colds. A few drops of Japanese oil on a strip of flannel tied around the neck helped a cough, or a few drops of the oil and some sugar in a cup of hot water settled an upset stomach. Japanese oil was powerful stuff!

Every year in the summer almost everyone got the chills and fever for a few days each week. This was probably due to malaria but that was unknown at the time. Adults took quinine, children were given Feberline. Sick ones in the family were given corn meal soup which was supposed to heal many ailments. Helen would cook one cup of cornmeal, sometimes slightly browned, with one tablespoon butter and two and one-half cups water or milk. She would stir it until smooth and administer to the patient.

Babies and young children were especially susceptible to the croup and diphtheria. They would develop this and die within a few days. The symptoms were greatly feared by parents. The Hegar's little daughter Sophia Anna died of this in 1898.

It was a fact of life that many children would be lost before adulthood. Sometimes the father had to dig the grave, build the coffin, and do the burying himself. The Alfred Hegar family had lost its share. First son August died at the age of twelve in 1895, Sophia Anna died at age two in 1898, and nephew John Henry Smith died at age seventeen of black jaundice in 1902.

All were buried in the Hegar Family Cemetery near the

old home place of Alfred's parents. Henry Turpin probably built the coffins. Burial usually took place the day after the death if at all possible. This family and the surrounding community were very caring and sympathetic. Many friends and relatives came to help day and night during the illnesses and subsequent deaths as Alfred and Helen had helped others in their time of need.

One of the most tragic happenings in the community was the death of Sophie Swank who lived nearby. She had been burning brush outside when her clothes caught on fire and she was severely burned. Neighbors tried to treat her by applying linseed oil and wrapping her in a sheet. Dr. Batte was also called from Hockley, but she died during the night. This event further convinced Alfred of the dangers of fire, a fear he held all of his life.

One summer when Helen's cousin Viddie Martin Black and her children were visiting from Houston, the youngsters were walking bare-footed back to the house from the Lloyds one night when daughter Viola was bitten by a snake. Alfred immediately soaked her foot in coal-oil or kerosene, which was his special remedy and it evidently worked. Some folks treated snake-bite with chewed-up tobacco placed on the wound, other adults felt a few drinks of whiskey was the best treatment, but Alfred stuck to his coal-oil.

Besides the Blacks coming to visit each summer, Helen's brother Henry Loyd's daughter Sally Pendergrass and children came. "Cousin Ann" Hughs, youngest sister of Grandpa John Isaac came frequently. Why she was referred to as cousin instead of aunt is not known. And of course, Helen's bachelor cousin from Willis, Jode Hughes, was a regular visitor in his later years. Jode traveled from one household to another and stayed for long periods of time. He was a big help around

the place and was always welcome. He was a gentle man, easy-going, who loved all the children. He was always full of news, stories, and fun. Jode brought them gifts, took them fishing and hunting, and they all hated to see him leave. In the early 1900's Jode and Alfred would sack ripe pears from the orchard. Jode would load them on a wagon and take them to Prairie View College near Hempstead. After he sold them he would go by the bakery in Hempstead and get seven loaves of bread for one dollar!

There were a number of blacks who helped the family. "Aunt" Liza Stewart and "Aunt" Hannah Barnes helped with the cooking, washing, and cleaning. "Old Turk" helped with the outside chores and fence building. They lived in shacks in the nearby woods. Maye remembers one time when "Aunt" Liza, who made delicious bread and cinnamon rolls, got the chile powder mixed up with the cinnamon and ended up with hot rolls! Alfred always had interesting and unusual spices on hand-- he was a great one for trying new things.

The children in the tri-county area did not have many educational opportunities in the early days. There were not nine months of school every year. Instead, a teacher would come to the crude isolated one-room schoolhouse perhaps for a few months out of the year. Most of the children, especially the boys, could not be spared from their farm chores during the growing season. Because of this, young people were very eager to attend school when possible. The Hegar children went to school as often as it was available as Alfred wanted them to receive a better education than he had. And when there was no school, he saw that Edna and Sallie kept in practice by writing letters to their older sister Helen. She had been sent to the Methodist Chappell Hill Female College in Chappell Hill,

Texas, near Brenham, from 1900-1903.

This letter-writing was good practice in language skills as well as spelling and handwriting. It was interesting to see that they were always formal in their writing: "Miss Helen Hegar, Dear Sister, I will take the pleasure of writing you a few lines" And Edna and Sallie delighted in writing a letter for Baby Mae, then just one or two years old, to her big sister. An especially amusing letter was written by Baby Mae but addressed by Alfred with the following: "If undelivered return to Miss Mae Hegar, Wall St., New York City."

The nearby schoolhouse, a small crude one-room building was east of the Lloyd house. Alfred, Uncle George, and other neighbors helped to build it and make the necessary simple furniture for it. It held a long sloping table with hard splintery benches, a table for the teacher, and a pot-belly stove used for heat in the cold weather. About six scholars at one time went to school here. Their teachers were Fannie McPherson and a one-armed girl who came from the orphanage, Birdie Taylor. The latter stayed with the Lloyds and became very close to all the family. In those days, qualifications for teachers were low, indeed. They needed no advanced education but were required only to pass a test. But most were fine, dedicated people.

Later Maye and Helen Lloyd would ride a horse to Springer School, near the church. There would be one-half term there and one-half term across the creek at the Ogg School. Maye remembers one night in particular when the creek rose after a hard rain and she was unable to get home. She had to stay overnight with the Leverkusns.

The scholars usually carried their lunch in a tin syrup bucket. The lunch consisted of a buttered biscuit or two with some syrup in an old chili powder bottle to moisten it a bit. If there was sausage available, there would be a

piece. If sweet potatoes were in season, there would be a baked one. Children especially liked them.

Maye was eventually sent to stay with sister Edna after her marriage to John Wallingford. They lived in the community of Joseph where she went to a larger four-room school at Field's Store. Alfred took her over in the wagon or buggy on Sunday evening and she stayed until Friday afternoon when he picked her up again. She remembers liking the sports activities particularly.

In 1900 oldest daughter Helen went to Chappell Hill to school with Emma Lee (Effie), eldest daughter of Otto Hegar, and Mary Emma, eldest daughter of George Lloyd. Mary Emma soon became too homesick to stay, but the other two girls stayed and eventually graduated, with much encouragement from their families. Alfred and Helen, Sallie, and Edna all wrote letters to young Helen at least twice a week. Sometimes there wasn't much to write about but they would make a gallant effort to ease her homesickness. These letters have remained intact over the years and are a priceless chronicle of that period of time.

Alfred was proud of his daughter and eager for her to do well in school. And it wasn't beneath him to do a little bribing, either! If she studied hard he would see that she had a party when she came home! He sent her boxes of cape jasmines, peanuts, sugar cane, rosam, and even sweet potatoes which she craved! He wanted her to dress and do the things that the other girls did, within reason. And he was always concerned about her health. One thing he was adamant about, however, was her not using "that toilet cream" on her face. It was "ruinous to the complexion", he said. But he was a loving, caring father.

And while he was no doubt disappointed when she wanted

to marry upon graduation, he acquiesced. Helen married John William Page on December 24, 1903. They lived in a small house near the Hegar General Store and Post Office for several years until Uncle Otto moved his family to Tomball in 1908. Then they moved into this larger house and continued operation of the store and post office. Four boys, a girl (who died young), and eventually twin girls were born to John and Helen before a fire destroyed their home in 1913. They built another house nearby and the family increased to ten children. John farmed and operated the post-office until the mid-twenties when he moved his family to Houston.

In the meantime, in 1909, as previously stated, after an ice cream social was held at Uncle George's house, Grandpa John Isaac died suddenly of a heart attack. He had lost his right arm during the Civil War and had been living with the family for fifteen years since the death of his wife Tabbitha. He was buried beside his wife at the Field's Store Cemetery (between Hempstead and Magnolia on FM 1488). Plans went on for Mary Emma to marry George Stephenson a month later. The wedding was an all-day affair and afterwards at home when Alfred went out to the barn to feed the livestock, John Pinckney Wallingford followed him to ask for daughter Edna's hand in marriage. They were married two weeks later on June 27, 1909. The wedding took place on the gallery outside the parlor as was customary for summer weddings. Aunt Alice made the cake and decorated it with white icing which was her specialty. It was shiny and hard on the outside and soft on the inside. This time she had to cook it twice to get it just right. Edna went to live with John's mother near Joseph. They had two boys and a girl before he died suddenly of pneumonia in 1921. After living with her parents for almost a year, Edna and the children moved to Houston.

Sallie went to Chappell Hill to school, also. After graduation she went on to Sam Houston Normal Institute in Huntsville to earn a teacher's certificate and taught for nine years in Macedonia, Pasadena, and Houston. It was in Houston while staying with the Black family (cousins) that she met Charles Frankford Williamson and married him on December 27, 1919. He was a brother to Robert who had married Viola Black. Sallie and Charlie had a daughter and a son, and lived in Houston.

Maye, being considerably younger than the other girls, was the only child at home for many years. Most of the nearby children were gone and it was a lonely time for her, which probably explains why she disliked the "country" and the woods. She passed the teachers test at age sixteen and started teaching although she had no special schooling or training. She taught at Byspot, Magnolia, Decker's Prairie, and Cedar Bayou before moving to Houston. There she was a book-keeper for Bering-Cortes Hardware Company for sixteen years and then a cost accountant for Shell Oil Company for twenty-six years. She did not marry.

Alfred and Helen continued to live on the old homestead, but they were getting older, no children were around to help, and Helen's health was declining. In 1927 they sold the property on the county line to Archie Lloyd, son of George, who in turn tore down the old house and used the lumber to help build his new one located on the Magnolia Road near his parents' place.

The Hegars bought a house with ten acres on the old Post Oak Road outside of Houston. It was close enough for Maye to commute to town to work. It was here that she cared for her parents until Helen's death in 1933 after a severe stroke

disabled her. Later Sallie moved in with her and helped with the care of Alfred until his death in 1946 at age eighty-six. Until almost the very end, Alfred farmed a few acres and managed to grow enough vegetables and chickens to supply most of the family's needs. He remained a dominant, demanding, hard-working "character"-- but with a touch of wit.

Both Alfred and Helen are buried in the old family cemetery in Waller County.

EPILOGUE

Aunt Maye and I made a sentimental journey back to the old home place on the county line.

We paused near the crest of the small hill where the house stood and took in the sights and sounds-- a pear tree was blooming, the pecan trees were beginning to leaf, cows were munching in the fields, a hawk was soaring in the sky searching for a quick meal, birds were singing, guineas were cackling. But mainly there was quiet, just like long ago.

We stopped by to talk to the present owners, the Halls. They shared with us some of their "treasures" found thereabouts: a rusted door hinge, a piece of a plow, an old square nail, bits and pieces of bottles and dishes. That was all that remained at the site of the Alfred and Helen Hegar homestead at which the family started their journey through life over a hundred years ago.

Yet it was a beautiful peaceful spot now, more open, less enclosed by the woods, nice homes within sight. Life goes on here, but it is comforting to see that it has retained its basic rural nature and is not covered with a highway or shopping mall. That makes it much easier to visualize that life long ago.....