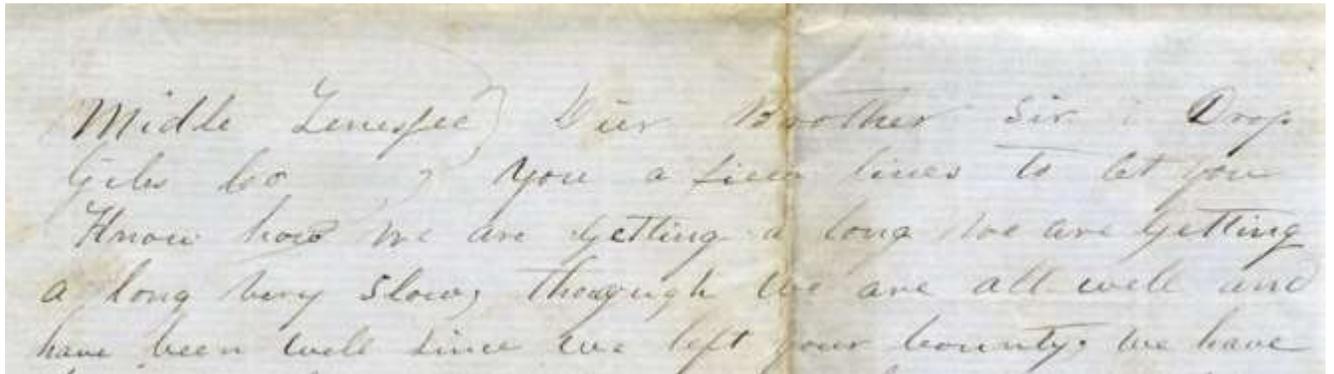


BENJAMIN BOWMAN AND THE WESTWARD MIGRATION

Ever wonder what it was like to travel on a wagon train into the American West a hundred and fifty years ago? A letter found in the archives tells you. In 1859, Benjamin Bowman left his home in Washington County and took his family along with another party and journeyed to Texas. In the following letter written to his brother back home when Benjamin's party had reached Giles County, Tennessee, you feel the excitement and the fear that went into the westward migration.



BENJAMIN BOWMAN AND THE WESTWARD MIGRATION

Middle Tennessee - Giles Co.

Dear Brother Sir, I drop you a few lines to let you know how we are getting a long. We are getting a long very slow, though we are all well and have been well since we left your county. We have lost some four Days all ready on the account of Sickness in Mr. Blackmores family - loose to Day on the account of a Sick Child. It is very Bad, he don't want me to leave him and I don't want to leave him for one weake, yiet if he cant travel in that time I will go on. We have had good luck - not one thing wrong with any of my stock, But scalded Sholders a little. Our youngest Child was very porley when we left But has improved all the time is getting fat. Our folks injois the trip so fare very well. Roads is good not much Rain since we started. Expenses is very high, the Cheapist corne we got was 50 cts, the Dearist \$1:00, average about 75 ctds, avreg pr Day is about \$3:00, it takes money very fast to fead Sic head of horses and twelve in family, we have Been on pike Roads pikege is very expensive. it will Cost me Som \$300.00 dollars if grain and provision is as dear from here on as from here Back. On the Cummberland Mountain, the thieves tried to Steel our horses, But our vigilance kept them from getting any. One of the thieves got his hand on one horse But was Seen Before Could Cut the halter, But Could not Shoot at him for fear of Killing a horse. we cept Sentinell every night for five nights. David Northington Burstid cap at one of them, Said if

the gun had fired he would have killed him Dead, i took too fires with a Shot gun; Dont know whether i hit him or not, was Determined to Kill if i could, we have heard Since we got off the mountain, there was horses Stolen from movers, allso heard that Some mover had Shot a man on the mountain. god send the movers would Kill half the mountain men for they are nothing But thieves and Robers...

i write on my Knee, the children a Squaling Round, the Boys a Shooting all is life in our Camp tell Richard Northington David is well seems to enjoy the trip well I am well pleased with his company, this the 10 of Oct 1859

*Ps i will wright to you often when I get to my Journeys end Yours truly
Benj Bowman*



Reading this simple letter, we share for a moment in the westward migration that made America a great nation. A Washington County family was part of it. So the next time you head west to Nashville on I-40, think about the Bowman family that passed this way before you. That the letter and its hidden voice survived at all is rather miraculous. Had Bowman on the back of the letter not asked his brother to go to the clerk at the courthouse and pay a \$10 debt and then had the clerk not filed the letter rather than tossing it when read, this piece of history would be lost to us.

Benjamin Bowman and his family did reach Texas. He acquired a ranch in Collin County (now part of suburban Dallas), where he raised a family and prospered until his death in 1884. And that, as Paul Harvey used to say, is the rest of the story.

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