



Frontier Folklore & Pioneer Prose from Harvey County

by Darren McMannis

The Lassell Diphtheria Cure: A Sad Testimony from Ike & Lucy Elder

Everything was going wonderfully for Ike S. & Lucy Elder early in 1884. Since January 17, 1872, they owned 320 acres of good land on section 20 of Lake Township, south of Burrton. Ike had 110 acres in cultivation, 160 acres fenced, five acres of timber, and a good orchard. Their home was small, just 16x28, about the same size as their barn (16x24). They had the necessary wind mill and sheds to support 125 head of cattle.

Ike was born June 12, 1836 in Pennsylvania. As a 20-year old man in 1856 he came to Kansas to organize a Pony Express from Westport, MO to Santa Fe, NM. He was forced to give up the project due to the hostility of the Indians at the time, through whose territory the Express would travel. He would fight the Indians on many occasions for several years following.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Mr. Elder in 1861 enlisted in Company G, 19th Illinois Infantry, and served in various capacities until he rose to the rank of Second Lieutenant of Company H, 52nd Wisconsin Volunteers and mustered out in 1865. In the fall of 1868 he raised a company of volunteers and went with Governor Crawford after the Indians, and was with General Custer when the white women, Mrs. Morgan and Miss White, were captured from the Indians.

In the fall of 1869 he came to Wichita, Kansas, and served on the first jury that was convened in Sedgwick County, became the first Constable elected in the County, and was appointed the first Deputy Sheriff in Sedgwick County. He was a brave man and enjoyed the danger and the excitement of life on the frontier.

Then came Lucy. Lucy Dunlap won his heart and they were married on August 21, 1870. Ike soon settled down to life as a farmer, pioneering land near Burrton

in 1872. Soon the family grew, with Bessie, William H, Minnie R, and James O living in 1884, their son Eddie Elder having already died at age 5.

The fall of 1884 brought further tragedy to the home, when young James came down with diphtheria. Jimmie died October 16, 1884. The newspaper said simply, "A young son of I.S. Elder's died of diphtheria, Thursday afternoon. Mr. Elder and family have the sympathy of many friends in their bereavement."¹

Just 2 weeks later, Ike & Lucy's little daughter Minnie died, on November 2, 1884. She was 6 years, 3 months, 0 days old. No newspaper notice was found.

The Elder's wrote a letter of appreciation to a Mr. Lassell concerning his diphtheria cure. It was published in the Burrton Monitor throughout April and May of 1885:

Burrton, Kas., March 27, 1885

Mr. Lassell. - In answer to the results of that one-half dozen bottles of your sure cure for diphtheria that I sent for to Wichita last fall. We can not find words to express ourselves. In the first place we had just lost a little boy and girl in two weeks of each other of diphtheria. We got the best doctors we could find, but it seemed they could not control the disease. Then our baby was taken with the same disease very bad, we think worse than the others, when we got two doctors. We lost faith in doctors, and as we had part of a bottle of your medicine in the house, we tried it, and in a few hours we could see a change for the better. We then sent for the one-half dozen, which we gave for five days. We now sum it up this way: In the first place, two doctors, \$50.00, and buried two children; in the second, three bottles of your medicine, \$1.50. Anybody can see the difference in dollars and cents, but it will take those that have lost some of their children to appreciate the other side. Ike S. Elder & Lucy Elder.

This is to certify that I was painting Mr. Elder's house and was there all the time their last child was sick, and know the above to be the exact facts. Frank E. Brown.

I also helped to nurse all of the above children and can also corroborate the above statements. S. E. Brown.

¹ The Burrton Monitor, Burrton, Kansas. October 17, 1884. Page 3 Column 2.

Sadly, very soon after the Elder's wrote this testimonial, their little son, Charles E. Elder, died on April 20, 1885. He was 1 year, 8 months, and 4 days old. No newspaper notice was printed in the Monitor.

All of the Elder children are buried together in Star Cemetery near their former home. Their parents are not buried with them, and nothing is known of the Elder family after little Charlie's death in 1885.²



Minnie Elder



Jimmie Elder



Charlie Elder

² Additional details of Ike Elder's Military service is found in Cutler's History of Kansas, Harvey County, published in 1883 and is summarized on the Harvey County GenWeb site.