

July of 1903 brought about many opportunities for the May family. Banking on a promise of cheap land and wonderful farming conditions, the Mays set out on a journey from Newburg, Comanche County, Texas, to LaPlatta, New Mexico, which took 80 days to complete. Samuel Richey May, his wife Francis, five sons, and other neighbors undertook the arduous trip that year in five covered wagons.

My great-grandfather, Earl Wayne May, and his brothers were greatly impressed with the endless prairie near Lubbock, Texas, and never forgot one specific incident along the trail. Two men approached the wagons and asked to see the women. When asked by my great-grandfather about this strange request, the men replied that they had not seen a female in over two years.

The quest for land and happiness ended with disappointment. The land was unsuitable for farming and not at all what had been promised. After spending a miserable winter in New Mexico, the family returned to Newburg, Texas, in June 1904, broke and disheartened. The Mays began to rebuild their lives in Newburg through farming and are buried in the Newburg cemetery. Our family history and other mementos are stored in a dome-top trunk in our home. This trunk was taken on their historic journey.

Newburg is at the intersection of Farm Roads 2561 and 1476, off State Highway 16, 10 miles south of Comanche in southern Comanche County. The site was settled in December 1854, when it was known as South Leon for the nearby South Leon River. The first school in the community was taught in 1896 in a log house. In July 1872 the South Leon Baptist Church was organized and met in the log schoolhouse. The church membership reached 48 in 1875; the earliest grave in the community cemetery dates from that year. The Lee post office, most likely named for Add Lee, a prominent early settler, was opened in the community in 1883. The name of the post office was changed to Newburg in 1884 at the suggestion of Lee. In 1890 Newburg had a population of 18 and a general store, and by 1896 it also had a cotton gin, a gristmill, and a blacksmith shop. In 1906 a new Baptist church was built, and this third church was still standing in the 1990's. The post office closed in 1908. In 1940 the community consisted of the school, the church, the cemetery, one business, and scattered dwellings. The school was consolidated with Comanche during the 1950's. The population of Newburg was estimated at 74 until 1968 and at 35 from 1968 through 1990.

*(Patchwork of Memories: Historical Sketches of Comanche County, Texas, 1976.)*

I remember the day some men carried an old trunk into our house and carefully set it down in our foyer. My brothers and I surveyed the alien piece of furniture and dismissed it as just another thing to clutter our house. Our father was beaming with pride as he carefully scrutinized every inch of the trunk. We later discovered that this was not just any piece of furniture. This dome-top trunk represented the determination that our ancestors had when they set out on a journey for land and happiness. This quality, as we later saw, should be incorporated into today's world. The trunk is a constant reminder of this idea.