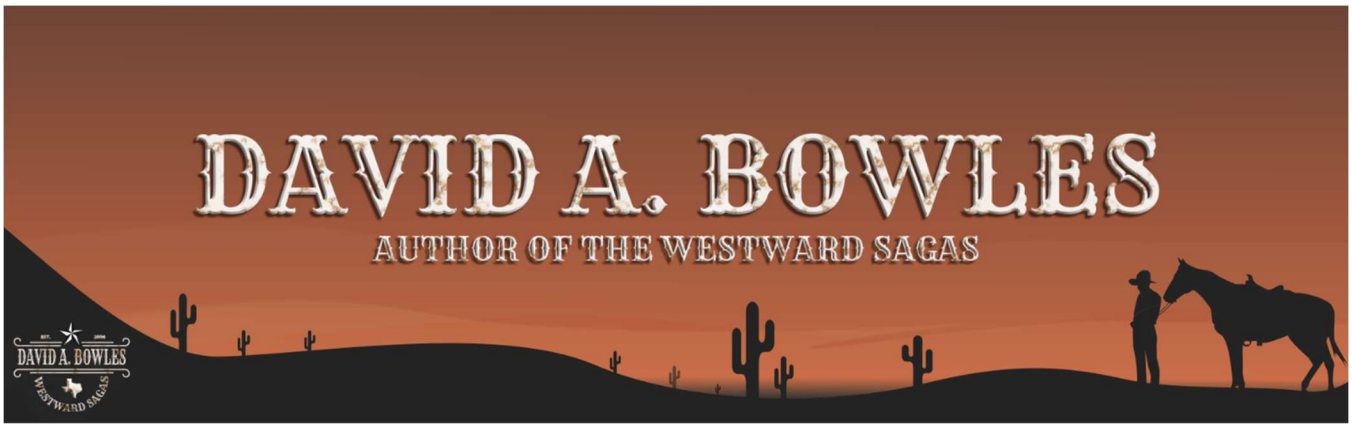

How the Westward Sagas Began

As a young boy, I loved to hear about my grandparents and great grandparents. My parents, aunts, and uncles told wonderful stories and painted vivid pictures of every event. I spent my childhood summers at the ranch belonging to my Uncle Lester and Aunt Izola Bowles near Marble Falls, Texas. Aunt Izola was a great cook, and I always gained a few pounds during my summer visits. She and Uncle Lester tended to my elderly grandfather John W. Bowles until his death.

Aunt Izola spent the days with Granddad while Uncle Lester worked cattle or tended to the many details of running a ranch. She spent hours listening to her father-in-law's family stories and could recite them better than her husband or any of his siblings. In the evenings, we sat on the front porch. Sometimes, my cousins and I took turns cranking the handle of the old-fashioned ice cream maker. Even if we had homemade peach ice cream, we ate the peaches picked fresh from her orchard as Uncle Lester or Aunt Izola told tales of long ago.

Those stories intrigued me because they really happened—and they happened to people that were connected to me. I wanted to know more about my ancestors and developed an early interest in history, the only subject I ever excelled in.

In the late 1970's, I started my research by interviewing my father and his oldest brother, my Uncle Elmer. Their collection of old family pictures and original family documents included a family Bible that had belonged to his Grandmother Elnora Van Cleve, in which she had recorded births, marriages, and deaths beginning as early as 1845.

Uncle Elmer gave me the Bible and family documents, which have been used to trace our earliest Mitchell ancestors back to Ireland in 1637.

The Westward Sagas are based on the history of the Mitchell family as well as the history of life in America from the Revolutionary War through the settling of the West. I have done extensive historical and genealogical research and will never write anything that contradicts known historical facts, characters, or events. The books are presented as historical fiction rather than as nonfiction to allow me to imagine and create details of how events might have occurred when those details are not actually known.

All historical data – names, dates, locations, historical events – are as accurate as I could make them with comprehensive research and fact-checking. When information in various documents conflicted, I used the sources that were best-documented and/or the information that was most supported by evidence.

I hope you enjoy reading the Westward Sagas.

David A. Bowles, Author

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