

Amonett Family Newsletter
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By Glen Amonett

"A Rustling of Leaves" is the title for these recollections from the sandy land farm where we used to work and play. Memories are a lot like leaves; when the top leaves are stirred the movement stirs up more leaves that have lain undisturbed for about 70 years.

Many recollections are wrapped up in the activities at the school of White Star, a little rural school in Motley County where a dozen family members attended at one time or another. Extra curricular activities rated high. There was an Easter egg hunt in the spring and school turned out early that day. In the fall a couple of plays were put on by the school kids at night by lamplight. When the "outsiders" put on a play it was longer and their play and the refreshments - sometimes refreshments -took up the whole evening. We often went in the wagon. We had a good Model A Ford, but we didn't use it much in the early thirties. The way home was pitch dark after those plays but Dad didn't worry about it. The mules knew the way. Apparently they could see well enough. I wondered about him unharnessing them in the dark, but probably he had done that job so often it was no problem.

Other activities included an annual picnic near the end of school for students, parents and teachers. Four of the picnics come to mind. One was to the Pease River East of Turkey. Another was a trip to Roaring Springs. Our longest trip was to Linguish Falls near Silverton. Twice we went to the Pease River East of Turkey. Picnics included dinner on the ground. The dishes were served on bed sheets.

The road to school was 4.5 miles. Dad saddled our pony before breakfast and tied her to a mesquite tree west of the house. Neighbor kids that joined us along the road were the Fishers and Bartons. Closer to school were the Pritchetts and Merritts, some of them walking. For a while Shorty was in the group, riding his pony named Penny, and we rode a black mare named Trixie. I wanted a horse of my own, but Derwood and I both rode Trixie. Before I got a horse of my own, school bus service started. In 1935 Clyde drove a car that served as a school bus. He picked up the kids for White Star then carried the High School kids on to Matador. About that time Shorty started going to school at Flomot because they had a football team. It was a very successful team. His football skills are well known in High School and College.

Dad was an early riser, even in a time when everybody was an early riser. He did outside chores while Mother was cooking breakfast. Right after breakfast he harnessed the Mules and went to the field. By the time breakfast was over the

water was hot and Mother would carry a load of clothes to the wash pot and stir them in, along with a bar of home made laundry soap that she chipped up.

She would go back to the house and do the breakfast dishes and sweep the floor while the washing simmered in the pot. The laundry required stirring and frequent trips to the windmill where the wash pot was located, about 50 yards from the house. The washing was done at the windmill because that's where the water was. There was a pipeline to the stock tanks because cattle drink lots of water. People don't use much water so it was hand carried, mostly by the kids. We kept our drinking water in a wooden bucket because it stayed cooler. A long handled dipper was kept in the bucket. One winter morning I tried to use the dipper in a frozen water bucket, and the handle broke off.

Houses weren't warm in the wintertime. The heating stove was just a warm place in a cold house. On a cold day the family spent a lot of time around the stove, or stopped by the stove to warm up between chores. Night temperatures cooled the house quickly after bedtime, because we didn't keep a fire going during the night. One morning when Dad struck a match to light the lamp he read the thermometer near the window. It was four degrees in the house.

Feather mattresses were popular because they were warmer. We had two mattresses on our bed. In the summer the cotton mattress was on top. In the winter the feather mattress was on top.

Do you remember those woodpiles near the farmhouses? There was firewood in the pasture in Motley County. When we moved to the plains in 1940 we burned coal, and later switched to a kerosene stove. During the forties a new fuel (butane) came on the market and replaced other fuels.

Firewood around a wash pot wasn't chopped short like the wood for a house stove, when the limbs burned low near the pot, the remaining part was scooted against the pot to keep the fire going. Hot clothes were removed from the wash pot with an old hoe handle, and dropped into a tub of soapy water. A rub board was used on difficult spots. The second pot of clothes was the work clothes. They were boiled longer, and the rub board was used more. There was a tub of cool water for rinsing. Bluing was added to make white things whiter. When the washing was done the water from the wash pot was used to put out the fire and the wood would be dry and ready to use the next washday.

The clothesline was about 30 yards long beside the path to the windmill. The clothes would dry fast but if the weather was good, mother let them hang a while. She loved the smell of fresh sun dried clothes.

After supper the clothing was sprinkled and rolled into a ball for ironing the next day. The irons were heated on the cook stove. Most homes had several of the

steel irons so that some would be heating while one was in use. Washday and ironing day were both busy.

In 1937 we bought a brand new green Ford pickup for \$637.00. A big washing could be done in town with washing machines and plenty of hot water for only a few coins. We stated doing the laundry in town. Gasoline was 10 cents a gallon at that time, or 12 cents a gallon for ethyl.

We visited a restored mountain cabin in the Great Smoky Mountains in 1989 on a bus tour. In the back yard was a cast iron wash pot like ours used to be. They had benches and equipment similar to ours. Instead of a windmill to supply their water there was a path down to a rippling mountain stream. Their washday in the old days must have been much like ours. Perhaps that shouldn't be surprising, because our ancestor's came from just across the mountains.

The second Sunday in June (June 11th) is a good time to come to Lubbock and join your kin around the dinner table at the 50th St. Clubhouse. 5012 - 50th St. We'll be looking for you.

Cousin Ladelle and Milbert Opitz have just completed their first 50 years together. We salute you. We are proud of you and look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely Yours,

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