

Memories of
Whitestown

Life of Yesteryear Recalled

Written by Omer and Myrtle Darling Sloan

This story is being reprinted from our Bicentennial
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Contributed by Ruth DeWitt

William E. Darling was born in Greene County, Tennessee, September 4, 1850. Mother, Amanda Delilia Ronk was born in Old Town, now Winston-Salem, North Carolina, July 16, 1858. Both migrated to the Whitestown area a few years after the Civil War, in which our mother lost two of her brothers in the Battle of Gettysburg, early in the war.

They were married in Lebanon, Indiana, on September 14, 1878, and their first home was in a log cabin built by Uncle Bill Miller on his land. He was married to our mother's oldest sister, Laura Augusta Ronk, on November 30, 1871.

A few years later they purchased an 80-acre farm, adjacent to the Miller farm on the West and on the Whitestown Road. Father was appointed road supervisor and he with our cousin and neighbor, Henry Hine, pioneered the re-building of the road from a wagon track, dirt road into a modern gravel road, serviceable throughout the year without being stuck in the mud or flood waters. A considerable amount of gravel was furnished from a pit dug on our farm.

This part of the country was undeveloped and covered with an undergrowth of shrubs, small saplings, brush, and weeds, in the midst of a forest of beautiful trees, consisting of oak, maple, ash, elm, walnut, hickory, poplar and sycamore.

In clearing the land, most of these beautiful trees were cut down and the logs hauled into the mill at Whitestown and sawed into lumber, hoops and staves. Numerous tomahawks and other Indian relics were found scattered around on the farm. The wooded area also contained wild raspberries, blackberries and gooseberries which were picked by the buckets-full and made into pies, jelly and jam. The maple trees would be tapped each spring and the sap cooked down into syrup.

After the land was cleared and drainage ditches dug, bountiful crops of wheat, oats and sugar cane would be

grown in the virgin, rich soil. The sugar cane would be cut in the fall and hauled into the Miller sorghum mill, near by, and made into sorghum molasses.

Sylvester Cunningham, a farmer, owned and operated a thrashing machine and would thrash the wheat of farmers, living in the neighborhood. The neighbors would help each other with their harvesting by furnishing their teams and wagons, while their wives would get together and cook up a big noon day meal for those hot, hardworking farm hands. It was quite an event for them to come in, sit down, cool off and eat their big, hearty dinner and spin off some of their favorite stories.

During winter months, our father would cut down young hickory trees and make axe handles to take into town and trade for groceries and other things needed to sustain life on the farm.

Our first school days were spent at the little red schoolhouse, known as the Miller schoolhouse. It was built on his land on the Whitestown road. Among its first teachers were Billy Miller, Jr., and his wife, Alice Miller; Charlie McCarthy, who spared not the rod; and Oliver Markland, a substitute. Sunday School was also held there on Sunday afternoons and my sister, Myrtle, was the organist.

We shall always treasure the memories of the old huckster wagon, traveling through the countryside, loaded down with household articles: the favorite coffee being Lion Head, Arbuckle and XXXX coffee for which we would trade our butter, eggs, chickens and turkeys.

The saw mill in town where we hauled our logs; the blacksmith shop with its forge and the ring of the anvil as the smithy struck his blow; horses standing by, switching their tails, waiting their turn to be shod.

The Jerry Neidlinger dry goods store; the hardware store across the street where farmers would meet when coming to town during inclement weather to talk over

their farm problems and discuss current events.

Our Uncle Henry Null's home and harness shop on the East side of the street and our favorite store, Aunt Nancy Montforth's candy shop, across the street where we bought peppermint stick candy and those large chewing gum hearts at a penny each!

The grain elevator and flour mill where we hauled our grain and traded for flour.

Doctor Hardy and the many years of faithful service to our family.

Gossett's chapel where our family was active and the children went to Sunday School. . . a small frame building with large yard and hitching posts for horses and rigs to tie up during services.

Our cousins Estella and Pearl Hine, coming by our home for Myrtle to join them on way to church by taking a short cut, climbing over rail fences in their pretty white dresses with their penny offerings tied up in the corner of their hanky and walking through the Slagle woods to the church in time for Sunday School. Myrtle, 13, was secretary of her class and played the carpeted

pedal organ for Sunday School.

The ministers were on a circuit and would preach at a different church each Sunday. Some of the ministers were the Rev. Wilson, the Rev. Hutchings, the Rev. Cannon, the Rev. Bush, the Rev. Tippy, and, of course, the Rev. Gossett, founder of the church. Our father would often drive up to Lebanon in his buggy and bring back the Rev. Wilson and others to preach the Sunday sermon and before returning home he would have Sunday dinner with us.

Members attending church were the Witts, the Millers, the Hines, the Darlings, the Lutz, the Lanes, the Slagles, the Glendennings, the Hanks, the Gochenours, the Harlos, the Isenhours, the Harrisons, and the Groovers, coming to church in their surrey with the fringe on top.

We are grateful for those precious years spent at this hallowed place. Neither time nor space have dimmed the memory of the sound of voices, filling the air with inspirational hymns, closing with the eternal, "God be with you till we meet again." ★



Photo contributed by John Huffman

One Horse Sleigh

Traveling in the early days of Boone County was no simple matter. This photograph was taken about 1916 in the yards of the Milledgeville Church. The horse, covered with blanket, and the sleigh await the journey home from Sunday worship services.

