

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 20 – No. 7

sandman43@att.net

July, 2020

A TROUBLESOME STRETCH OF ROAD



About five miles south of Prescott toward Laneburg, the highway crosses the Terre Rouge creek bottom. The name Terre Rouge is a French name meaning “red land” (terre = land; rouge = red).

Very few of the local residents today pronounce the creek name properly. They call it Carouse (pronounced “ka-roos” or “cruise”).

That’s nothing new. Early residents of the county pronounced it that way and I guess it just got passed down from one generation to the next. There was even an early post office called Carouse located near the creek.

This picture was taken in September, 1974 following a big flood. The highway had just undergone some construction work and had not yet been stabilized. This was the result.

This levee across Terre Rouge creek bottom was a serious problem for the early residents of Nevada County, especially for those living south of the creek who had to go to Prescott for supplies or attend to business at the court house since Prescott was the county seat.

The problems with this road were frequently mentioned by the local news reporters from Laneburg and Rosston. Here are some comments from those news columns:

12-15-1886

The roads! The roads! The bad roads!!

11-13-1889

Some of us are anxious to see the iron bridge put up over Carouse creek. The road around through the bottom is getting fearful bad and is likely to get worse, if not impassable, before long.

12-3-1891

The levee across Carouse creek bottom is in bad condition from wagon ruts almost hub deep.

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1-7-1892

To say the Carouse levee is bad is putting it too light; The English language, as far as I know, fails to furnish a word to suit the occasion.

1-28-1892

“Bad roads” is the general cry. The levee is very near impassable. Very few try to go to Prescott from here in a wagon. Mr. Andy Weaver bogged his wagon down last week, threw off his cotton, and returned home.

5-5-1892

An effort was made to repair the Carouse levee by filling in the holes with sawdust, but after three or four loads were hauled, it was given up due to the bad condition of the road.

You can imagine how difficult it was in 1890 to repair a road across a creek bottom. They had no equipment to dig up gravel and nothing but wagons for hauling material to repair a road. The narrow wheels on wagons easily made deep ruts making it difficult for the horses to pull the load.

Nevada County residents living south of this creek began a petition drive to move the county seat from Prescott back to some place near the center of the county, but they failed in this effort. The railroad has been constructed through Prescott causing that town to grow rapidly in population. The Rosston news reporter has this to say in 1891:

2-12-1891

The bridge on Carouse creek is still out of repair. This levee costs the people of this county an immense amount of money every year, and even then, it is impassable a great deal of the time. Let us move the county seat south of this abominable stream. As it is, it takes two days to go to and from our homes in the southern part of the county to Prescott, and in the fall, winter, and spring, it is almost impossible to get there at all.

Farming was the main occupation in those days and farmers did not like to waste time by having to go to Prescott to assess or pay their taxes. To help the farmers, the tax assessor and tax collector traveled over the county to the various communities to meet with the residents so they could assess or pay their taxes. This was very helpful to people living in the rural areas a long way from Prescott.

We have no newspapers available for the period 1892 to 1906, but in 1906, an iron bridge over Terre Rouge creek was mentioned.

Today, the highway across Terre Rouge creek bottom is in good shape. An occasional flood might do some damage, but 99% of the time, traffic moves along at 55 miles per hour (or faster). We forget that it was not always so. Early residents of Nevada County had to contend with what the Rosston reporter called “this abominable stream”. This is another example of “the good old days” not being so good.

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LOG ROLLING

An activity common in the late 1800s in Nevada County was log rolling. It involved cutting trees and removing them in order to put land into cultivation. It was done in the spring, usually in March. It was similar to the barn raisings done by the Amish. When a farmer announced he was having a log rolling, his neighbors gathered to help get the job done and when it was finished, they were treated to a good meal prepared by the women. The neighbors were not paid for their work—it was neighbor helping neighbor. It was a way to get a tough job accomplished followed by a social gathering with plenty of good food.

The logs removed were either burned or just moved to the edge of the field and allowed to rot. Some of the better logs were probably set aside to make lumber. Heavy work was involved even when using horses or mules to skid the logs. It seems that this activity was more common in the southern part of the county. Here are some comments about log rolling found in the local news columns from some of the farming communities in Nevada County:

Falcon (1886)—Log rolling and oat sowing seems to be the order of the day.

Clayton (1886)—Log rolling is about over and oat sowing is done.

Laneburg (1886)—Elijah Matthews had the boss log rolling of the county. He had 40 to 50 hands working and it took two days to pile all his logs.

???? (1888)—B. T. Loe had a big log rolling with 40 hands at work. In a little over one-half day, they rolled logs off 30 acres of new ground and 13 acres of fresh land.

Laneburg (1890)—It's time for log rolling which means lots of heavy work and many good things to eat.

Laneburg (1891)—Log rolling, more properly called log lifting, is the chief attraction at present.

Rosston (1887)—Log rolling is the order of the day.

Register (1891)—Log rollings are all the go now.

Farmers knew that “new ground” produced better crops than worn-out land. This was a way to open up more fertile land for growing cotton, corn, and other crops.

HOG AND HOMINY

Another common phrase found in old newspapers in the late 1800s and early 1900s was “hog and hominy”. Here are some examples:

Bodcaw (Nov., 1886)—Plenty of hogs for next year. Take care of your pigs so you can have hog and hominy.

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Laneburg (Nov., 1886)—Plenty of mast to fatten our hogs which are healthier than ever before. Our prospects for hog and hominy is good.

Willisville (Dec., 1886)—Plenty of acorns to fatten the hogs. We are sure of hog and hominy now.

Willisville (July, 1887)—If no disaster befalls the hogs, we will have plenty of hog and hominy.

Mt. Moriah (1913)—We have plenty of hog and hominy with peas as a side dish.

Honeaville (1889) – We are sure to have plenty of hog and hominy next year.

I think the phrase “hog and hominy” was used back then to mean they had plenty of basic foods to sustain them. Practically everyone in those days in the rural areas raised and killed their own hogs for food and grew their own corn for making hominy. More than likely, the hogs ran loose in the woods eating acorns because stock laws had not yet been passed. Usually, in the summertime, some of the hogs were penned up near the house and fed corn, table scraps, etc. to fatten them up for butchering. Hogs will eat just about anything and they grow fast. When the acorn crop was good, the hogs were fatter. Fatter hogs produced more lard which was a valuable commodity in those days to be used in seasoning vegetables. Just about every part of a hog could be used in some way. Someone once said everything was used but the squeal.

Hog killing had to be done when the temperature was cool enough so the meat wouldn't spoil and it was usually an all-day family affair. Sometimes neighbors helped in return for part of the meat. I got in on hog butchering when I was about ten years old and it was one of the most unpleasant things I ever did on the farm. Of course, after everything was ready, the hog had to be killed. We used a .22 rifle to kill the hog and then its throat was cut so it could bleed. A barrel had been placed in the ground at an angle and filled with hot water. The hog was dipped in the barrel of hot water and then the course hair had to be scraped off with knives (a very smelly and nasty job). After this was done, the hog was hung up and gutted (another unpleasant task). Some people even saved the liver, the head to make souse, the feet, the tail, and the small intestines to make chitterlings (or chitlins) as most people called them.

After the butchering was done, came the job of grinding up the meat for sausage. This was done with a hand-operated sausage mill fastened to the edge of a table. Dishpans full of sausage meat were brought into the kitchen or wherever the sausage mill was set up. Someone turned the handle (usually one of the kids) while the meat was being fed into the grinder.

Most farms had a smoke house where meat was cured in the days before electricity. The hams, shoulder meat, and side meat were covered with salt to preserve it and later rubbed with seasonings and hung in the smoke house to cure over a slow-burning fire usually made with hickory or other suitable wood. The ground-up sausage meat was put into

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long narrow bags (or casings) and hung in the smokehouse to cure. The fatty portions of the hog were rendered into lard to be used in baking and cooking. Crisco and other vegetable shortenings had not yet been invented. Almost every part of the hog was used in some way, but any scraps left over were given to the dogs.

Butchering hogs was a long tiresome day but was necessary to provide food for large families for the coming months. In my case, it was a few days after the hog-butchering before I wanted to eat any of the meat. I don't think I would like working in a slaughterhouse or being a butcher. It was a messy job, but had to be done to have meat for the family. Later on, the good country cured ham, homemade biscuits, and red-eye gravy for breakfast made it seem all worthwhile.

I never associated hominy with hogs, but most farm families also made their own hominy. Usually this was done in a large cast iron wash-pot out in the yard. Evidently, hominy was considered to be a basic necessity back in the late 1800s since they often used the phrase "hog and hominy". Today, we can just buy a can of hominy from the grocery store and not have to do all the work involved in making it. We even have a choice of white or yellow hominy. For those who don't know, hominy is made from kernels of dried corn.

Cracklings were another by-product of butchering hogs. These were left over from rendering the lard. They could be fried and eaten (pork rinds) or used to make crackling cornbread. They were also used in making lye soap. I have a recipe for soap that my grandmother wrote on the back of an envelope that lists cracklings as an ingredient. Soap making was another chore most farm women did in the old days. The cast iron washpot was also used for soap making. Here is my grandmother's recipe: (some of the words were hard to make out).

10 quarts of water. Let come to a boil. Add three cans of lye. Add 12 pounds of cracklings. Add 18 quarts of water and boil one hour. I always let my cracklings boil a little longer in the lye water. It will eat them up better. You can take them out but be careful not to let them burn (?) to the pot. I put my ?? in a sack so it will not have drugs in it.

So, if you were growing up in the rural areas of Nevada County in the late 1800s, you would have probably been involved in the butchering of hogs, making hominy, and making soap because that was something almost every family did. Families were large in those days and some type of meat was usually served at every meal. Farm work in the days before tractors and other labor-saving inventions was very physical-type work and the protein from the meat helped make strong bodies. People living on farms in those days (both adults and children) got plenty of exercise from all the work that had to be done.

When I did a search on the Internet for "hog and hominy" several pages came up about a restaurant in Memphis called Hog and Hominy. The restaurant was destroyed by an electrical fire in January, 2020, but they planned to rebuild. It is classified as a southern restaurant with Italian roots and serves everything from collard greens to pizza. The restaurant has won many awards and evidently is a very popular place to eat.

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RAINFALL RECORD

Here are the monthly totals for the first five months at my house---January (7.5 inches); February (7.7 inches); March (7.8 inches); April (10.4 inches); May (5.3 inches). That's 38.7 inches. Normal annual rainfall for our area is 52 inches.

MEMORIES

Here are a few things I remember from my childhood. If you remember most of these, you are probably a senior citizen. No. 7 and 14 were more common in the Bluff City area.

1. Drawing water to drink from a well
 2. Watching Winky Dink on TV
 3. Boys buying blue jeans too long so they could roll up the legs and make a cuff
 4. Boys with flat-top hair cuts
 5. The dimmer switch located in the floor of vehicles
 6. Drinking unpasteurized milk from the farm
 7. Picking pine cones to sell by the bushel to the nursery
 8. Sleeping on a feather mattress
 9. A quilting frame hanging from the ceiling
 10. Eating a green persimmon
 11. Playing with a cap pistol
 12. Playing with Tinker Toys
 13. Bell bottom pants
 14. Eating seeds from a bull nettle plant
 15. Watching a TV with only 13 channels and no remote control
 17. Having a transistor radio
 18. Kids having candy cigarettes
 19. Putting peanuts in a bottle of Coke
 20. Playing with a yo-yo
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Only two readers (Bill Sellers and Brenda Barham) knew that this was a Doyle log scale stick used to determine the board feet in logs of 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16 feet lengths. The measurement is taken at the small end of the log. A log scaler at the saw mill measures each log brought into the mill and writes down the scale for each log. The numbers are added up to determine how many board feet are in each load of logs. The timber owner is paid a certain amount per thousand board feet. Today, most logs are cut in longer lengths, weighed, and owners are paid by the ton. The truck loaded with logs is weighed and then the empty truck is weighed to determine how much the logs weighed.

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- *July is National Culinary Arts Month; a time to recognize the cooks and chefs who bring innovative cuisine from their kitchens to our tables. To celebrate, Don Mathis brings these tiny short stories, each one an entire tale in six words.*

Feast and Famine in Six Words - By Don Mathis

I've got champagne appetite, beer budget.
Haven't had caviar for so long.
Don't eat sushi at bait stand.
All you can eat. He pays.
Ten cent beer, can't afford foam.
Holiday hamburger, eat like a king!
Homemade ice cream, poor man's riches.
Back yard bar-b-que, food stamp feast!
California produce truck, dollar a bag.
Stole a tip, bought a pie.
So hungry I ate dried peppers.
Expelled from the Garden of Eatin'.
Ate five pounds of Louisiana crawfish.
Squeeze the tail, suck the head.
What is "Doggie Bag" in Italian?
Hondo Game Dinner, five-dollar feast.
Simple meal, loving hands, I'm rich.
So hungry, could eat a horse.
Everything tastes better when you're camping.
Spent all I had, still hungry.
Pockets are empty, belly is too.
Meat and potatoes guy; cracker income.
Have my cake, eat it too.
A dessert, heading for a waistland.
Famished, until I finished second helping.
Don't criticize service until food arrives.
Meal was lousy, and not enough.
Bum eats well, then he runs.
Eat to live, love to eat.
Once was starving, now I feast.

O 0 4 I 8 0 (Owe zero, for I ate nothing).
Wanted a steak, got a burger.
Chicken fried steak, dollar sixty-eight.
One taco, but looks like two.
Big plate of food just evaporated.
Beggars' Banquet causes a Salvation Army.
Read the menu and I drooled.
So sad, Happy Meal is fattening.
Hungry eyes big as the plate.
Couldn't even afford a small appetizer.
So malnourished, couldn't eat at all.
Hungry for everything, I've got indigestion.
Not in a hurry to fast.
Fishes and loaves won't be enough.
Pay you tomorrow for hamburger today.
Ate it all, pass the Tums.

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CONFEDERATES VETERANS HONOR UNION SOLDIER

We have heard much in the news lately about statues of Confederate generals and others being removed all across the country. Here is a story you probably haven't heard involving a memorial located in the Indiana state capital honoring Col. Richard Owens.

Col. Owens was the commander of Camp Morton in Indiana in 1862. About 4000 Confederate soldiers were imprisoned there after the fall of Ft. Donelson in Tennessee. One of these prisoners later became the editor of a magazine for former Confederate soldiers and he began a project to honor the commander of Camp Morton for the kind treatment the prisoners received while they were imprisoned there. Col. Owens allowed the prisoners to have books to read and allowed them to form glee clubs, theatrical groups, and sports teams. He started a prison bakery operated by the prisoners and proceeds from the bakery were used to buy more books and sports equipment for the prisoners.

Former prisoners donated enough money to pay for a bronze bust of Col. Richard Owens and the Indiana legislature voted unanimously to accept the memorial. The bust cost about \$3000 and was unveiled in June, 1913 with both former Union and Confederate veterans attending. The sculpture was called "a bond between North and South".

On the day of the unveiling, the Confederate Stars and Bars flew over the Indiana capital. The band alternately played "Dixie" and "The Star-Spangled Banner". Members of the Owens family were present for the occasion.

This inscription is on the memorial:

Colonel Richard Owens
Commandant
Camp Morton Prison – 1862
Tribute by Confederate Prisoners of
War and their friends for his
Courtesy and Kindness

Col. Owens was transferred from Camp Morton to the front lines of battle and was captured himself by the Confederates in Kentucky. When the commander of the Confederate prison camp learned that Col. Owens was among the prisoners, he released him because of the humane treatment he had given Confederate prisoners.

Col. Owens worked as a geologist prior to his military service and in later years became a professor at Indiana University and president of Perdue University.

Col. Owens died in 1890 from accidental poisoning by drinking some embalming fluid which he had been told was mineral water.