

## Reminiscences of a Wayfarer

Some of the Important Events of the Pioneer Days of Richardson County and Southeast Nebraska, as remembered by the writer, who has spent fifty-one years here.

THE YEAR 1859

With the close of the year 1858, our first battle for the county seat came to an end, that is, so far as the three elections I have heretofore described, were concerned. But we were not entirely through with the struggle.

Our friends at Salem were not satisfied with the result, and proceeded to institute proceedings to contest our right to the majority that the final poll gave Falls City. In a former paper I stated the proceeding was had before the county clerk.

In that I was in error; it was before the probate judge of the county, who resided at Rulo, where he transacted most of his official business, but he sat at Salem, the county seat, to hear the election contest. I have before said that a very bitter political prejudice was entertained against Falls City, by the people of both Rulo and Salem, and it was a fact pretty generally recognized at the time, that the probate judge as an individual, shared in that prejudice to a very great extent. So much indeed as to render him unfit to hear the case, as it was out of the question for him to do so and render an impartial judgment. But we were powerless to help ourselves and the show had to go on.

Dan McGary, the leading lawyer at Brownville, was employed on behalf of Salem, while Falls City was represented by E. S. Dundy, who became a permanent resident of Falls City on his return from the legislature, and myself. The trial lasted the greater part of the month of January, much delay being caused by Dundy having the ague, and an adjournment was necessary about the same time each day to allow him to undergo his usual shake and spell of fever. It was not a comfortable experience but he stood it like a hero, and when not freezing with the malarial chill, or burning up with the resultant fever, he put in his best licks for Falls City, and fought manfully for the rights of his client. But who can successfully fight blind and unreasoning prejudice? Nobody that anybody has ever heard of.

Well, we fought it out as best we could, and lost of course. A considerable number of our people attended the trial from time to time, and as the town was not supplied with a public hotel—and most Nebraska towns at the time were in the same fix—we were very generously and comfortably entertained at the home of Mrs. Oliver, a widow lady, and the mother of Mrs. John W. Holt, presently residing in this city. I remember Mrs. Holt as a sprightly little miss in those days. She had two other sisters and a brother living at home, and a married sister, Mrs. Joseph Hare, sometime a resident of this city. I think most of the family have passed away.

In those times most of our supplies came from Missouri, such as flour and the other necessities of life, though Hare's mill at Salem furnished corn meal to the country which was an excellent substitute for the wheat product when none was to be had.

The winter was a severe one, and what was astonishing and unusual in my experience, there were frequent freshets, and overflows in both the Nemaha and the Muddy, continuing at intervals during the winter and

late into the spring, to such extent that communication with Missouri was made impossible. Jesse Crook had opened his hotel early in the fall before, and had kept open house during the county seat elections later on, to all comers in the interest of our side, and had furnished lodging and subsistence to a colony of young men from Kansas, who had come up to help us, and as no flour could be brought from Missouri, our only source of supply, he was obliged to feed his guests with corn bread only, and that was in the bill of fare every day of that long, cold, dreary winter. Dundy and I, among the rest, boarded with Jesse, but Dundy was half the time freezing and burning with his old time enemy, the ague, and when the election contest at Salem was over, was mostly confined to the house. One day after spring had shown some signs of its coming, Dundy and I were in the dining room of the hotel, he on a lounge where he had just had one of his shakes, and I at the table doing some writing, when he broke the silence with this question:

"Say, Reavis, how much corn bread do you suppose we have eaten this winter?"

"I'm sure I don't know," I answered, "but I think we can find out by asking Mrs. Crook."

"Well, do so, and let us see if we can't figure it out," replied he of ague affliction.

So in the execution of the purpose, I went into the kitchen to interview Mrs. Crook on the subject, and got from that excellent and obliging lady, (who enjoyed the joke about as well as we did), a statement of facts concerning the number of bread pans used in the daily baking, their size and general dimensions, and the number of times the whole force was in use each day, and with the data thus obtained, I returned to Dundy in the dining room, and together we entered upon the task of computing the amount of that farinaceous staff of life, the people in the hotel had consumed since the last installment of flour from over the Missouri had become exhausted early in the winter. Dundy figured for a while but finally gave it up, saying the ague had set his head wool-gathering, and he could do nothing with the problem, and I would have to figure it alone. This I did after a fashion. The time covered was something over three months, the are a—say one inch thick, covered by each day's baking with all the pans doing duty for every meal, would comprehend a certain space. I have not the data at my command now so as to be accurate, but I have a distinct recollection, that the amount was three hundred and twenty acres when multiplied by the number of days the process had been going on. That was superficial measure, but when reduced to solid measure, would make about sixteen and a half cords. When our calculation got about amongst the guests, it created some merriment, as one would accuse another of getting more than his rightful acreage of bread, and would, with much mock gravity, inquire of us whether an action could not be brought to even up things in that particular.

It was a piece of pleasantry, suggested by the surroundings, trifling in its nature, but for the time being helped to break the everlasting monotony of our existence, and in years to come was the subject of many a hearty laugh among all of us.

I have already mentioned the fact that Falls City had no physician. It is proper to say in this connection, that while we had none made in the usual way, we did have one who now and then gave sick people homoeopathic pellets—those sugar creations—which, if they do no good, are not likely to do any harm. Ned Burbank, who was about as smooth a proposition in most of his relations with the people, and especially the female portion of them, (to whom he never told the truth in his life), as could be found anywhere and in any society, had, or pretended to have, great faith in the curative proprieties of those little medicaments and usually kept a quantity on hand, which he gave for any complaint, to anyone, at any time. As the imagination has a good deal to do with taking medicine, a dose of almost any kind, if the taker has confidence in it, is likely to do him good, or make him think so, which is the same thing; and it came about that Ned's pills, as they were called, were in great requisition especially among the women in town, and he was frequently called to their houses as though he was a regularly graduated physician. I don't know that he ever made a charge for his services, I hardly think he did, but all the same he was rapidly gaining a local reputation as a successful doctor, for the regular practice of which profession he was no more fitted than he was to be a preacher. Nevertheless the practice went on and the reputation grew, until one day he was sent for to see a sick woman on the west side of town, down about where Mrs. John King now lives. I do not remember the name of the woman, nor is it important, but Ned was ready to respond, and did. He put on his coat, his hat, and his best smile, (he always had one about him), and taking his pill bags in hand, started for the house of suffering with as much gravity and professional circumspection as old Esculapius himself. Arriving at the house he found several neighbor women in attendance, which circumstance suggested the fact that the case was a serious one, but it would never do to let it be known that he didn't know all about any human disease. So he laid aside his pill bags, his hat and coat, but not his smile, and inquired very gently how the sick lady felt, at the same time feeling her pulse and making close observation of her tongue. Physicians always do this, first because it is professional, and besides it gives them time to take observation of things in the surroundings, which is frequently of the highest importance.

Having thus paid his respects to the professional proprieties, satisfied himself of the situation of affairs, he remarked with great assurance that there was nothing in the condition to be alarmed at, that he had been afflicted in the same way only the past week, and a timely dose of the pellets he would presently give the patient, had straightened him out in twenty-four hours; and going over to the table where his pill bags had been left, he proceeded to extract a half-dozen of the sugar globules and to saturate them with some liquid decoction preparatory to administration.

In the meantime the women withdrew in a group on the other side of the room where they held a whispered consultation for a few minutes, when one of them, and the oldest of bunch, crossed the room to where Doctor Ned was preparing his lotion, and thus addressed him:

"See here, Mr. Burbank, I don't think you know what's the matter with Mrs. ——. She ain't got no ague nor fever, and she don't need any of them

## Well—Here we are again!

An old acquaintance back.  
Just as happy, just as snappy,  
just as gingery, just as enticing—

# Zu Zu

GINGER SNAPS

5¢ A Package

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY



pills. She is about to be confined in childberth."

"What," says Burbank, as he jumped about two feet straight up from his chair, with never the ghost of a smile on his face. Gathering up his pill bags, his coat and hat, he shot out the door as though impelled by some tremendous force, and going up town at a double quick pace, rushed into the Broad Axe office and was no more seen on the street that day.

A young doctor named McLaughlin was at the Crook hotel, looking about for a location, was called and attended the sick lady in true professional style.

That was Doctor Ned's first and last case of obstetrics, in fact, it was the end of his professional career, but it was not the end of the story. I might not have recited this circumstance in these reminiscences had it not been that Mr. Burbank is still in life and will enjoy it quite as much as I do the task of its reproduction. The shadows of fifty years have obscured many things and events of a later date, but this stands as undimmed in my remembrance as the business letter I received from him only the other day.

Sometime in the month of

April of that year, I think about the 13th, an event happened that was not, at that time, regarded as of particular consequence, but which, by a concatenation of subsequent events and circumstances, became a part of the most curious history that was ever made on the American continent.

A man thought to be a monomaniac, and by many a down right lunatic, came to our town that morning in the prosecution of a felonious enterprise and which he boldly published to all who cared to know, and did it in such a fool hardy way as to impress people with the idea that he was either the worst sort of criminal, or a monumental incompetent in need of a

guardian. It was John Brown and his band of outlaws, armed to the teeth, and it is said, had in a wagon a lot of stolen negroes, whom they were engaged in conducting to the Canadian frontier, out of the reach of their owners. It was the same band of outlaws, that later in the same year committed another crime of a still darker hue, but which by some means not explainable by any process of ordinary ratiocination, has become wedged into world history, to there remain as imperishable as that of Thermopyle

To suffer a felons death for treason, murder, robbery and arson, was only to furnish the material for a lot of doggerel, without rhyme, reason or sense, which set to an inspiring tune in a great national crisis, became the battle song of the republic, and the very synonym of victory. I was not in town that day and so lost the only chance I ever had to see that strangely predestined character, who, to use the language of another, "was the disgrace and the glory of his age."

There are but two people remaining in the city, who saw that cortage of criminals pass through, and they are William E. Dorrington and John R. Dowty. If there are any others the fact is not known to me at this moment.

Close beside the line of the Pennsylvania railroad on the right bank of the Potomac river, and on the very spot where his last crime was committed, and where he was hung in expiation for it, stands a granite monument in commemoration of the now world historical event. It seems that some grim sarcasm is hidden in it somewhere, that the powers that hung the crazy brained fanatic were just as unconscious of, as was the Jewish rabble who enacted the tragedy of calvary, that the instrument of their feindish torture that day, would in time, become the ground plan of every christian church all over the world.

## You Are Invited

to attend the demonstration at our store on

### Wed., June 9th

and see the exhibition and demonstration of the

## PERFECTION BLUE FLAME OIL STOVE

It has no equal—there's nothing like it!

## Don't Forget Date

We will have with us on that day an expert who can thoroughly explain and demonstrate these stoves.

# J. C. Tanner Falls City Nebraska

