

In those days Christmas was a great event to the country folks, especially us mountaineers who were more or less isolated from the outside world.

There were no elaborate setting or exchanging of gifts, as there is today.

My father would go to the woods and cut down a pine tree, which would be set in the corner of our parlor. The trimmings would consist of strands of popcorn, which we would pop in a pan on top of the kitchen stove and string on a thread, home-made paper ornaments, sticks of candy with a string tied around to fasten to the tree, and small homemade candles.

There were always to be found under the tree homemade dolls for my little sisters, and a pop gun or some similar toy for us boys.

On Christmas eve the young folks of the neighborhood would dress in old clothes, black their faces in various make-ups, (Occasionally a false face would turn up), and go masquerading (Belsnicling as we called it) and with sleigh bells or any kind of a noisemaker they could find, mostly a chatter box, a wooden homemade contraption that was quite a noisemaker, a fiddle or guitar, they would call at the neighboring farm houses where they would get a hearty reception, and be treated to apples, cider and cake which was always plentiful in every home. It was always a gala evening for us little folks.

The village church would have a special Sunday School festival on Christmas night, where all the older folks as well as the children would be made happy.

All the children to the smallest child, would be given a part in the entertainment, singing songs and reciting little Christmas poems, after which a "Santy Clause" would appear and distribute from the huge tree and his pouch, candy in little boxes and other gifts of merit won by some of the children. This was always the happiest occasion of the year for the country folks.

The Winter season was the jolliest time for the youngsters on the farm. There was always plenty of snow, and sleighing and skating parties were the greatest sport. Our greatest Winter sport was coasting on a bundle of rye straw over the frozen snow crust.

Usually after a heavy snowstorm, where the rain had formed a hard crust on top of the snow, we would take a bundle of rye straw, tie it securely to form a sort of sled, mount it, sometimes two or three to a bundle, and coast down a long smooth hill at lightning speed. One who has never experienced this kind of sport has missed a lot of fun.

As soon as there was snow enough for sleighing the young folks of the neighborhood, upon a few hours notice, would get together for a sleighing party, singing songs as we went along, unexpectedly, would make a call on some family in another section of the valley. Old time games, singing and square dancing or taffy pulling was our chief source of entertainment.

At any of the farmhouses there was always plenty in store to eat. Apples, cider, cookies and cakes, therefore, no host or hostess ever felt embarrassed when an unexpected sleighing party arrived.

My father and mother were well mated. Father was a man of small stature, a very unassuming person, pleasant, agreeable, a hard worker whose ambition was to provide a comfortable home for his family. He enjoyed the company of the young folks that frequently gathered around our circle.

Mother was a lady of medium height, good looking, of a happy nature, always trying to make others happy by her witty jokes and good humor.

Although we maintained a fallen top buggy, a dog cart, and a spring wagon for family use, horseback riding was my favorite mode of travel. I had a light roan horse named "Fird" for my riding, and he and I had many a happy time galloping along together.

A neighbor girl (Harbaugh) a good pal of mine, had a bay color riding horse and she and I would ride around the country in good style. She always wore a long black riding skirt which was the style in those days.

We enjoyed many pleasant rides through the valley and over the mountains, and very often rode our steeds to attend parties and social gatherings, especially during the Winter season when the roads were rough and muddy.

Several times when we had planned to attend some evening function, her horse was not available, then she would ride back of me sideways holding on to the back of the saddle, occasionally with her arms around my waist, which naturally made her feel more secure.

On one occasion, as I remember, it being a very dark night, she slid off the horse from back of me. I encountered some difficulty rescuing her from a mud puddle in which she landed, which resulted in our returning to her home for a change of clothing. We were soon on our way again, arriving at our destination a little late, but happy.

CHAPTER VIICHURCHES

There were at my time, six churches in the valley. Two Reformed, three United Brethren, and one Dunkirk. The congregation of the latter church represented a class of plain people who entered the upper end of the valley in later years.

There was only one Catholic family Mr. & Mrs. Groddle, a very fine elderly couple who purchased a small farm along the side of the eastern mountain. They worshiped at Mount Saint Mary's near Emmittsburg, making the journey across the mountain as often as the weather would permit.

My parents were members of the Otterbein Chappel United Brethren Church, a little log chapel built by Solomon Harbaugh on his farm, on an acre of ground which he donated to the congregation. This chapel was a half mile from our farm.

In my time, mother was the main stanby of this little congregation. I am told, but do not remember much about it, that every Sunday morning she would have her brood of children in the Sunday School.

As the preachers were circuit riders, each serving four or more churches, they usually resided in Mechanics-town (now Thurmont) about seven miles from our part of the valley. Services were held in each church every two or more weeks, alternating the various churches so as not to conflict with one another.

As my brothers and sisters grew older, they transferred from Oterbein Chapel to the United Brethren Church of Sabillasville, a newly built chapel, after which we attended both the United Brethren and Reformed Church, as the two congregations never held services at the same hour.

By this time, being a musician and a fairly good singer, I was instrumental in getting a reed organ in each of the village churches.

It being my duty to regularly play the organ and conduct the choir in the United Brethren Church, and occasionally play the organ in the Reformed Church, of whose choir I was a regular singer.

In 1889, the Hawley Memorial Chapel was built at Monterey, Pa., by a wealthy Baltimorian on a plot of ground along side of his Summer residence, and donated to the Mountain people, under the care of the Congregational Church of America.

The church having been completed in 1889, the congregation was not organized until 1892.

During the Summer season the organ of the church was played by city residents of the mountain resort.

In the Fall of 1892, after the city folks had returned to their homes, the congregation elected me as their organist and choir director.

Living three miles from the church, it was necessary for me to travel by horse and buggy, or on horseback over the mountain roads to reach the church. However, I agree to give my services to the church, for which I received no compensation.

By this time, I was teaching music to a number of young folks and children in the valley and mountain district as organ salesmen had been doing a good business in the vicinity, and many of the farm houses had an organ. Thus I inherited the title of "A Country Music Teacher".

Among my pupils was a young lady whose home was near Hawley Memorial Chapel. She was a conscientious pupil, and in due time was playing well enough to help out with the church organ when I was unable to attend.

When I left home in June 1895 to take a position in an office in Hagerstown, Maryland, my music pupil took over the church organ, and did, I was told, a very satisfactory job.

Recently, while visiting members of my family in Waynesboro, Pa., some friends took me to Hawley Memorial Chapel for a Sunday morning service. The church is in a prosperous condition, and contains a single manual pipe organ, partly donated several years ago, by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation Fund. There is also a very good choir. As this was my first visit to the church in 54 years, I regret to say there were only three of the original members left, and two of them were present to greet me. It was a rare treat for me, and a happy memory of the past years.

CHAPTER VIII

FARMLIFE

I remained on the home farm with my parents until I was twenty-four years of age. By then, all my older brothers had left home to seek their living in other parts of the country, six of them residing in Kansas City, Missouri.

When I left home in 1895, there still remained a younger brother and two sisters. The younger brother remained at home for a couple of years until he married, after which he set up housekeeping in the village and continued to work for father and mother until they retired from the farm in 1907.

We farmer boys were compelled to work hard at a very early age, and each one of us according to our age had special jobs to do.

One of my special jobs was "Soap Making." As a boy of 12 I spent some time in the spring house boiling soap. The soap was made from fats and bacon rinds. In fact, from all the off-falls from the butchering of hogs, and excess fats not used for food.

The process of making soap was, as follows:

A large ash hopper made of wood was constructed in a triangular shape, wide at the top and graduated to a point at the bottom with a draining rough. On the inside of this hopper was placed long rye straw to carry the fluid to the bottom. On the straw, wood ashes would be added until the hopper was completely filled, then each day a certain amount of water would be poured on the top of the ashes. The liquid passing through the ashes would produce a very strong lye.

In the fireplace in the spring house, two large cast iron kettles were hung on a bar specially built into the chimney. These kettles would be partly filled with the lye in which would be added the fats. The rinds in one kettle to produce soft soap, the other fats in the other kettle. A wood fire was placed under each kettle. The liquid was then brought to a boil, and kept boiling, being carefully watched for fear of boiling over.

To produce the soft soap, it would take about six hours' boiling, the hard soap around eight hours' to boil it down to the required thickness.

The soap was left in the kettles to cool, after which the soft soap was transferred to an open top barrel, and was used for scrubbing floors or for laundering heavy farm clothes etc.

The kettle containing the hard soap would be about half full when cold. It would then be cut into four inch squares to the depth of eight to ten inches. It was a great pleasure to turn out this beautiful white soap.

My first job, as I remember, was to feed the chickens and gather the eggs, work in the garden, milk the cows, and drop the corn, three grains to each hill in corn planting time. Pumpkin seeds were mixed with the corn and I was told to occasionally drop one seed with the corn. These seeds were good eating, so that many of them never reached the soil.

The corn was planted in hills, as it was called. After the ground had been plowed and harrowed, the field was laid out for planting by a shovel plow in a criss-cross manner. At the intersection of the cross the corn was dropped, after which it was either covered by a man with a hoe, or by a corn cover plow which was introduced to the farmer around that time.

To score a field for planting corn so that in cultivation it could be plowed in either direction, it was necessary to have, as nearly as possible, a perfect square. This was made by drawing a furrow 3 feet in width across the field both ways. To do this, a pole was stuck into the ground at each end of the field. The operator of the plow would start at one end of the field, and by keeping his eyes constantly focused on the pole at the opposite end of the field, he was able to plow a straight furrow.

The horse was trained to follow such commands as "Gee" for right turn and "Haw" for left turn.

Plowing a field with a two horse plow, especially along the hills, was no easy job. My father was very strict about the tillage of his soil, therefore, I was instructed that there was an art in good plowing, which I very soon learned was true.

After a field was plowed and harrowed, there would appear on the surface many loose stones which would have to be picked up and carted away before any planting was done. This usually took several days' time in the Spring and Fall, which was a back-breaking job.

Each boy, in turn, was given the team to manage and drive, which was taken over with much pride and the feeling that he was then a man.

It was a pleasure to drive a four-horse team around the farm, and over the mountains when hauling the farm products to market, which was usually a five to ten miles drive.

Breaking into service a young colt was quite an interesting job. We usually began training when the animal was about two and a half years of age, by first riding him, bareback, around the farm until he became accustomed to the bridle bit in his mouth, after which we would put on the saddle and try him out on the highway.

Occasionally we would find an untractable colt that would give us a lot of trouble and cause us to be extra cautious in handling. Then again, very often, when we attempted to harness a young critter and hitch him to the wagon, he would prance and try to kick himself loose. After he was accustomed to the wagon, we would try him out hitched to an old buggy which we kept for this purpose.

On several occasions I have been thrown from the back of a horse and slightly bruised, but the climax came while driving a spirited young horse in a fallon top buggy. I was coming down a steep hill in sight of my home when the horse became frightened and got beyond my control. Shying to the side of the road, the buggy struck a stone pile and was upset. The front axle having broken in the center, together with the shafts, was separated from the other part of the vehicle.

Having a firm hold on the lines by virtue of their being wrapped around my hands, I was pulled from the buggy. The excited horse at high speed, dragged me together with the shafts and broken axle about an eighth of a mile, or until he reached the barn.

My parents, seeing the race, were surprised to find me alive with nothing more than a bruised body, which laid me up for a few weeks repairs.

Though I had had several accidents while working around the farm, this was quite the worst one I ever experienced.

The meadows of the farm, along the lowlands, needed draining in order to produce good crops. This was done by digging ditches through the section two feet

wide by three feet deep, in which we would form a drain by laying upright, stones on each side of the ditch, then flat stones across, which would make a substantial drain and carry the water off to whatever point along the brook we would designate. The excavation would then be filled in with about a foot of fine stones and the job completed by filling with earth. We usually did this work in the late Fall of the year. For weeks at a stretch, I have helped in the excavation of these ditches, which was always a muddy job.

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Our farm of 90 acres was laid out in nine 10 acre fields, enclosed by post and stake and rider fences. All the material for these fences had to be cut from mountain timber, split, then hauled three miles across the mountain to the farm where the post and rails were prepared for use.

Preparing the posts and rails for the fencing meant a lot of hard work, as after they were split to size and shaved to shape, it was necessary to bore five or six double holes in each post, chisel out to correct size, then point and prepare the rails for use.

Digging holes for erecting a post fence was another job for us boys, as half of our farm was fenced in this manner. The other half was enclosed by a stake and rider fence, which very often necessitated a lot of resetting after a heavy storm.

Every season in the rider fence corners there would shoot up all kinds of bushes and weeds quite a job to mow and keep clean, but very essential to a well appointed farm. One can readily see there were never ending chores and essential duties, but they all improved the appearance of my father's farm, which was considered the best-looking place in Harbaugh's Valley, Maryland.

My father owned a wood lot of seven acres across the mountain in Eyer's Valley, and up the second mountain. In the Winter season, after all the farm products had been harvested and stored away, we would go to this lot and cut down large trees suitable for lumber for repairs to the farm buildings and fences.

We would leave home early in the morning around daylight, take our lunch, drive three miles completely across the mountain, and spend the day at hard labor, cutting down trees, trimming and sawing the wood with a cross-cut two hand saw into required lengths for whatever purpose needed.

The limbs of the trees were cut into firewood lengths to be burned in the bake ovens, fireplaces and stoves.

As stated before, there were four fireplaces in the main house. By the time I came along, their use was discontinued and ten-plate stoves were in evidence. These stoves required a certain length of wood. They were a nuisance to fire and care for. In time, a coal stove was installed in the sitting room, and the others remained in use until the house was vacated in 1907.

In those days, the wheat was cut by a hand cradle, consisting of a curved handle, a long scythe and six fingers the length of the scythe.

To handle a cradle correctly, so that a perfectly straight, even swath of wheat, rye or oats was left for the hand raker and binder who followed the cradler, was also an art which required special training.

Later reapers were introduced, and still later, before I left the farm, a binder came into evidence, which cut and bound the grain into bundles.

Also, in my early days, the grass for hay was cut by a scythe. Many a day I cut grain or grass with these crude tools, working from five or six o'clock in the morning until dark, stopping only long enough for short breathers and my meals.

Many a time, when the day's work was ended, I was too tired to go to bed, and would lie for hours on the hay and sometimes sleep until the middle of the night before I finally got to bed.

Rye grain grows to the height of five feet. My father usually planted about five acres, the straw being used for making bands to tie fodder.

To keep the straw straight and firm for this purpose, it was necessary to thrash the grain out by the flail method.

A flail was an implement consisting of a wooden bar (or swingle) about two inches in diameter, specially planed to an octagon shape, and tied to a long, smoothly-planed handle of sufficient thickness by heavy leather laces, about four inches between handle and flail.

To operate a flail was considered an art which required much practice, skill and patience. The long straight stalks of rye were evenly spread along the center of the barn floor in two lines with the heads facing

each other. Two men, each operating a flail, would work simultaneously together, beating out the grain from the heads of the stalks.

This work was usually done on a rainy day after the harvest when the farmer was unable to work in the fields.

It was not an easy job, and my father and myself spent many a day at this work.

It was a pleasure to see the large bundles of long straight straw we would turn out, after which we would spend our spare time making straw bands, forming sufficient lengths of straw together at the head ends in a firm loop knot, which would make a tight unbreakable band.

In corn cutting and husking time, these bands were very necessary for tying the tops of the shocks, and the bundles of fodder.

Corn husking was not a comfortable job, as in the month of October when this work was done, the days, especially the early mornings, were very cold, as we were usually in the field around daylight, hunkering on our knees until sun down.

Many times on a clear moonlight night, after supper, we would return to the field and work until nine or ten P. M.

Around 1884 peach orchards began to thrive around the valley and tree salesmen, with flowing talks, were busy trying to induce the farmers to go into the peach raising industry.

My father fell for the salesman talks of big profits etc., and decided to invest in peach trees, choosing one of the best hill fields on the farm to try out this venture.

My brother and myself fought desperately against it, arguing that we had work enough to farm the crops etc., as it was, but to no avail. Father purchased 1400 trees. In the middle of March I had to quit school to begin preparation to plant the trees.

We had to lay out the field in squares of sufficient size by drawing furrows with a shovel plow, then dig the holes which were ready for planting when the trees arrived.

The trees thrived and grew rapidly, but they had to be cultivated each year as a special crop, in order to keep the fungus growth of every kind that quickly sprung up in an uncultivated field.

The fifth year we had a fair crop of fruit which was easily disposed of. The sixth years crop was quite large and also readily disposed of at a fair price.

The seventh year, there was a tremendous yield. The crates were purchased in a knock down state. Every spare moment we had during the early part of the Summer, had to be devoted to constructing the crates, many times working late into the night after a hard days work, in order to be ready for the fruit when ripening season came along.

There was no fooling around when the fruit began to ripen. Every other kind of farm work had to be neglected. Every day we would pick and get ready for shipment from fifty to a hundred crates of fruit. The fruit was shipped to commission merchants in Baltimore. Each day the Western Maryland Railroad ran a special fruit train to accomodate the farmers, which came along around 9 P. M. so as to have the fruit on hand for market the following morning.

Every fruit grower had an abundant crop. The market was glutted, and prices were very low.

On one shipment of 124 crates we made, after the freight and commission charges were deducted, we had to send a check for \$2.54 to defray expenses, which was very discouraging.

The following year, the disease known as the yellows, struck our orchard. As facilities for spraying trees at that time to fight the disease were not available, in two years time every tree had to be removed.

Removing 1400 trees was another hard job, as we first had to cut them down, then with a log chain and two or three horses attached, the stumps were removed.

Coroson had almost ruined the field, which took several years careful cultivation to restore the land to production of farm crops again. Therefore, the peach venture was a complete failure, and the hard labor attached left a very sore spot on our memory.

In those days, farm products were plentiful and market prices were very low, therefore, a mountain farmer with a large family had very little chance of saving any, or very little money.

Clothing was cheap as I recall, although I never had a suit of clothes that cost over \$7.50 until I was past 21 years of age.

My father had a tailored suit made for each, my brother and myself, for which cost \$25.00.

These suits were with cutaway coats, the style at that time. Later on, father had made for us an extra pair light trousers, purchased derby hats, the little low type, and very pointed patent leather shoes, which completed our wardrobe and made us appear and feel like dudes.

CHAPTER IXTHE MOUNTAINS

Along the summit of the western mountain about two miles in length and a mile wide, there is a flat plateau of beautiful country extending from Monterey to Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania, then along the Western Maryland Railroad through Highfield and Pen Mar, Maryland.

After the Western Maryland Railroad was built (Sometime around the civil war days) the Summit became quite a Summer Resort section. Hotels were constructed. The Clairmont, Monterey and Mountain House, were the leading hotels, where many guests were entertained during the Summer season.

Further along on the opposite side of the mountain there was built in my time, The Blue Mountain House, and Buena Vista Hotel. From these splendid hotels, there was a magnificent view of the Cumberland Valley.

These hotels provided a good market for the farm products of Harbaugh's Valley.

Pen Mar Park was a beautiful picnic resort, located about two miles up the mountain side along the Western Maryland Railroad, to which daily excursions were run from Baltimore, and frequently excursions from Washington and many parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The park contained a fine large dining room, a splendid dancing pavilion, and various other amusements of the time, and was visited by large crowds of people during the Summer season.

Further up this great mountain there was a very high rock several hundred feet, protruding out from the mountain side like a sentinal.

On top of this rock there was built an observation pavilion from which the view across the great Cumberland Valley was unsurpassable.

On top of the mountain, there was built an observation tower from which a general view of the whole country, north, east, south and west, could be seen. The view from this point was visible for a hundred miles or more.

Looking due north and south was all mountain scenery, while east was open country to the sea, and the west open country as far as the Alleghany mountains.

Most all the old mountain roads are now modern highways, with the exception of the road through the mountain leading from near Emmittsburgh through Hampton and Eyler's Valley, Marland. These valleys are isolated sections and very little traveled. All the farms through this mountain country are rough and hilly.