

Mississippi as far as St. Louis, Mo.

Before the Presbyterian church was built at Gleason, services were occasionally conducted in the schoolhouse by a minister making the circuit. Our Sunday School was taught by Peter Smith, who at that time had a farm and sawmill one mile east on Haymeadow.

The country progressed. The post-office had been moved to Blanchard's Store. A few years later it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. John Hayman of Parrish and Mrs. Hayman became the postmistress. Father had started a stage line, carrying the mail three times a week, leaving at 1 p.m. and returning the next day at noon.

At present, we are enjoying rural delivery daily from the Gleason post-office.

A large L-shaped frame addition had been added to the log house and it acquired the dignity of the name Dudley Hotel. During these years Hart and Harris were born.

When Brooks and Rose started lumbering and the towns of Jetties, Harrison and Parrish grew up like mushrooms, father extended his stage line to Parrish. The minister of those towns, Rev. Rube ———, added our community to the circuit, and thereby changed the title of the Prairie river trout stream.

One day he said: "Dudley, I believe there are brook trout in this stream and the next time I come, I am bringing my rod and flies to find out." This he did, and the first trout in the Prairie that I remember being caught were taken in front of our house below the bridge.

That started it, and the word soon spread. In a few short years this was known far and wide as the best brook trout stream in the United States.

All through father's active years, he made the applications and attended to the replanting of the trout. "Merrill" and Wauase residents usually came in parties, dividing the livery expenses and staying a day or two. There were no automobiles to step into and drive anywhere you wanted to go to fish.

Whenever we saw a cloud of dust down the road we were always certain that it meant fishermen and a hurry-up meal, which mother always seemed to be able to provide without notice.

How that ordinary sized cook stove could cook meat, vegetables, fish, cookies, pies and biscuits in a couple of hours has always been a question, but how she could prepare it was a greater one.

Dr. D. B. Reinhart was the first to drive here with an automobile, the first such vehicle in the city of Merrill.

Major Daniels from Denver, Colo., had fished in many countries but claimed this to be the best trout stream he had ever seen. He was the first man to introduce the art of studying the habits on the water and making his own flies.

Many other men of note came, including Messrs. Pitkin and Brooks, Hubbard Spencer, Bartlett Van Lou Gerke, Antoine, Dr. Gentles — who still comes to Mrs. Gross' home for the opening season — and many others too numerous to mention. But in my estimation, the greatest of all these men was Major E. E. Critchfield, of Critchfield Company Advertising Agency, whom I married in 1903.

Farmers were beginning to take interest in stock raising and a Mr. Young from the creamery section down state, drove about the country getting subscribers and as a result the first creamery was built near School Marm's Rock on the highway.

An time went on, the resort business was getting too much for mother. The boys bought the farm and built the present house for the folks, thinking that would be the end of the tourists. But Sam MacFarland of Hart, Schaffner & Marx refused to take no for an answer and continued to come here with his wife for several years.

Richard, or Dick as he was more familiarly known, and his family occupied the old house until it burned. On that occasion the Merrill fire department made the longest trip away from the city that they had made up to that time.

Dick built the house that still stands, living there with his family until his death in October, 1939, which is the beginning of the end of my story.

His daughters, Edith and Lorraine, began teaching and Delmar, after attending one year at Madison, at the State University, joined the Army. Nellie, his wife, closed the house and went with her daughters at that time.

Father died June 30, 1940 when he was nearing the age of ninety-two. Olive, Mrs. Ed. Hall, lives in Carter, South Dakota; Walter lives in St. Johns, Quebec, Canada.

Pearl married Judge Max Van Hecke, Merrill.

Harris lives in Decatur, Ill., and I, since my father's death, have lived with my mother who is now past ninety-three and the first and last of the remaining pioneers.

Merrill boasted two pianos in 1875.



Slab burners were a picturesque part of the sawmill scene of earlier days. Sheet metal affairs with screen tops, they were used to burn the sawdust, edgings, etc. They glowed at night, and day and at night smoke and sparks issued from them as they consumed what were then considered waste products of the mill.

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