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To Each His Own. . . .

Memories

by Irene Easley

My childhood was spent in a wagon yard! Not the most glamorous place, but interesting. I have many happy memories of those years. My friends tell me I should write about them while I can still remember them.

When we left Illinois in 1907, and came to western Oklahoma, we weren't just poor, we were REAL poor. Papa thought he could make a fortune, since Oklahoma was a new state. It should have lots of opportunities just waiting for us. With five children, three old enough to work, he decided to try farming. He rented a farm in the Cedar community. After a few years, my two sisters married local farm boys and started farming on their own. That is when life began in the wagon yard in Hydro, Oklahoma.

In those days, people took great pride in their horses and buggies. Some of the buggies were as shiny as the new cars today, and with

the tasseled buggy whips and all of the decorations on the harness, the young men made quite an impression on the girls.

The yard covered half a block. It had stalls with mangers for feed and hay. For the high strung animals, there were box stalls. The water had to be pumped by hand, so my brothers and I had to pump a tank of water before going to school each morning. There were very few automobiles around, which made business very good for a while. The horses could be fed and watered for twenty-five cents.

Papa also met the trains twice a day, driving an old stage coach and taking the passengers to the hotel (we had two hotels in). Everyone traveled by train, if the trip was over twenty-five miles.

I don't recall that life was ever dull. The kids in our neighborhood would gather after school and play until dark. Some of our

favorite games were "Hide and Seek" and "Follow the Leader". Mama spent a lot of time doctoring our injuries, as someone was always falling out of the hay loft. We played "Shinny" with tin cans, a game that had a slight resemblance to hockey.

After a hard rain, we would all go down to Deer Creek Bridge to see how high the creek was. The farmers would stand around and speculate whether the bridge would hold. Then we would wade home in the ditch that ran along the road.

On Saturday afternoon the picture show was a must. We saved our pennies all week for that. The picture was sure to be a thriller. It was always continued right at the moment when the train was about to run over the girl, who was tied to the track by the villain. Clara Willis, whom I admired a lot, played suitable music for the



Left to right (John McFarlin, Mearl McFarlin, Mrs. J.D. McFarlin, Charles Mc Farlin, Jess Spain, Minnie Spain, and Irene Easley) photo provided by author

film. I planned to someday learn to play the piano and take her place playing for the theater. However, all I learned to play was "Beulah Land" with one hand on an old second hand organ.

On Sunday morning, Mama didn't send us to Sunday School and Church, she went with us. In her Sunday waist and skirt, me in my pink china silk dress and the boys in their knee pants and starched shirts, we could have posed for Norman Rockwell. Mama always prepared dinner before leaving for church, then she would invite

friends for Sunday dinner. The memory of her fried chicken and butterscotch pie still flashes through my mind, especially when I am served the "brought on" kind in some fancy restaurant.

The Hydro Fair was a highlight in our lives. The wagon yard would be full, and most of the families brought baskets of food and ate their meal right there before going to the fair. Sometimes they would invite us children to eat with them.

At least once a month a family would come in a

covered wagon, and stay a few days. They usually had children our ages, so many friendships were formed that lasted for years. Papa had a camphouse fixed up with a stove and table, and if they were tired of cooking and eating in the wagon, they could use it.

Once in a while we had the excitement of coming home from school to find an encampment of Indians in the vacant lot across the road from us. They would pitch their tents and stay for days. They had such beautiful spotted horses, and bright colored

blankets and shawls. We spent hours watching their activities. They cooked over a campfire. Late in the evening they would dance around the fire and have some kind of ceremonies.

When I think of horses, I remember an experience I had with a pony. My brothers each had a pony, "Skip" and "Buck". Skip was rather skittish and Buck was real gentle. Someone left Buck tied in our yard. I thought it would be fun to ride around the block. After all, he was gentle and I was nine years old. I knew I could ride as well as the boys. When I

climbed on, I missed the stirrup with one foot and sort of put my foot in his flank. That was a no-no! Off we went. I stayed on for two jumps, and fell off. My foot catching in the reins and my head bumping the ground with every jump. I heard Mama scream as we went by. After a few more jumps, Old Buck, gentle soul, stopped and I was rescued. Mama didn't have to tell me not to do that again.

When automobiles became plentiful, the wagon yard died. Not a trace of it is left, except the old iron pump, which stands in my

yard, a memento of the days that used to be (more than eighty years ago).

Papa found a job in a creamery, picking up cream and eggs from the farmers. Mama cleaned house and did the washing for the more affluent families in town. My girlfriend and I made a play house of the old stage coach and life went on.

Papa didn't make his fortune, but we children managed to get an average education. We had a happy childhood, and made many good memories. I am the last of the McFarlin clan, and I often think life in that old wagon yard:

Sometimes in the evening
when cool breezes blow
I find myself dreaming
as I rock to and fro.

And old friends seem to beckon
from memory lane
to join them once more
but it would not be the same.

Old father time seems to have
the right knack
of pushing us forward,
we can never go back.

So Benji, our pet,
his master and I
will look to the future
and to the old says....good bye.... ■

(Irene Easley came to Oklahoma with her parents, J. D. and Minnie McFarlin, when she was two years old. She has spent the greater part of her life in western Oklahoma. Out of a family of two boys and three girls, she is the only member left. She and her husband, Arthur, are members of the First Baptist Church. She is a member of the Hydro Garden Club. Irene enjoys painting, ceramics, and other crafts.)