

Pioneering In Northwest Arkansas

1869-1953
Memoirs of the late Miss Margaret Woods of Bentonville.
Daughter of James D Woods 1831-1907 & Cecelia Pace
Buried Cemetery

Woods/Pace

The pioneers of this section came on foot, on horse-back, by ox-cart, or four-horse wagon, as my forebears came to this section. The following facts and stories I have gathered by word of mouth from some of these pioneer women whom it has been my good fortune to know.

My mother (Saline Pace) came here in 1835, with her parents, the Henning Pace family, when a babe of one year. They first settled on Pea Ridge (called Pea Vine Ridge then because of the covering of the buffalo peas on the Ridge.) but soon afterwards my Grandfather purchased what in later years became known as the Kindley farm on Sugar Creek, northeast of Bentonville, later remembered as the Erickson farm. It was here they were living when the "Big Road" or as we would now say the highway connecting Neosho, Keetsville, Mo., in ^{Elm Springs} Arkansas to Fort Smith, was opened and the bi-weekly stage line established. Grandfather Pace was given the contract to keep the "Stage Stand." That was where the teams are changed, fresh horses put to the stage and the driver and passengers rest and are served their meals. I can close my eyes and envision the 50-foot long front porch in front of the big double log house. I see a child standing there listening and watching for the first sound or sight of the clattering hoofs and rattling wheels of the old stage coach as it came racing down that long hill from the south, or hurrying up the valley from the north and I hear the cry, "The Stage Coach" is coming. and Instantly all is commotion. in that big old kitchen as grandmother and the girls hasten to get the hot food dished up and on the table by the time the driver, with a flourish of his long whip swings his team around and halts in front of the house. He tosses the line to ^{who} ~~whichever~~ of the seven sons of the house happens to be on duty that day. I see him as he dismounts and courteously assists his lady passengers to alight or to call to the men, "come on, this is where we eat!" While they are eating, the fresh horses already fed, watered and harnessed, are hurried up from the barn and hitched and rearing to go, when the driver comes stomping across the

MEMOIRS OF MISS
PIONEERING IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

James' Woods, son of Samuel Woods
 My father's family came here in 1838 when he was eight years of age, both families came from Tennessee ~~as did most of the early settlers in this county.~~ as did many of the early settlers in this county. There were some from Virginia, Kentucky, the Carolinas and Georgia, Texas and later from other states, but the Tennesseans were rather inclined to look askance at anyone who did not come from Tennessee. Grandmother Woods died of pneumonia on the way out here. Grandfather and the children, some of whom were grown, reached here in the early spring, they were fortunate in securing a three-room house in which to live while grandfather and the boys cleared, fenced the land and planted their first crop. Then in the latter part of the summer, they started the erection of their first home, located in Sugar Creek Valley. Some of you remember where Uncle Allen Woods spent his life. This house was built on the exact site where the present house stood. It consisted of two 20-foot square hewed log rooms, two stories high with a 10 or 12-foot hallway between. At first they had only puncheon floors but soon grandfather sent his wagons and teams away to the pineries where mills had been established and got dressed lumber for floors and ceiling for all those six big rooms and the 10x50 foot porch. There was a large dressed stone fireplace at each end of the building, and the next year, another 18-foot room with fireplace was erected for a kitchen. In most of these big old houses there was one bed in the living room and two or three beds in each of the other rooms in the house, so that a house of this size would have at least ten or 12 beds with 40-pound feather beds on each.

When I remember the stories told by my mother, my grandmother and other of the pioneer women, we marvel at the work they accomplished. Think of carrying all the water for all the household purposes from a spring 50 to 100 or even 300 yards away and probably up a steep hill at that, of hand-picking, hand-carding, spinning and weaving of all the cotton and wool for all the clothing for all the family, the cutting and hand sewing of this same cloth as it was fashioned into garments. The knitting of all socks, stockings, gloves, and even men's suspenders. The hackling of flax for all the household linens, the tanning of hides from which the men made shoes for all the family, and this

in addition to the regular tasks of cooking on an open fireplace, washing without washboard, sweeping with a brush broom, making soap, caring for a family of 12 or 15. My Mother was one of 11 children and Dad, one of nine and neither was considered an overly large family in those days. As I think of these noble women, their most noteworthy characteristics were their deep piety, ~~their~~ untiring energy, their loyalty to their family and friends, and their never failing courtesy to the guest that came within their door and their never failing sympathy for the neighbor in illness or distress. The night was never too dark and stormy nor the day too bleak and cold for grandmother to even hesitate if a call came that some child in the neighborhood was choking with the croup, or some expectant mother needing care and comfort while awaiting the arrival of the doctor.

It was the rule almost without exception in those pioneer homes that all the family get up at 4 o'clock every morning, summer and winter and breakfast was served at 5 o'clock at the latest, and every member of the family was at the table before Grace was said. In front of the master of the house was always a large platter of fried meat, perchance it was slices of the breast of wild turkey, or venison, or prairie chicken and always it was flanked by a large bowl of cream gravy and farther down the table would be one or more dishes of sausage or fried pork and in the summer and fall, it likely would be chicken or ham and brown gravy; a dish of wild honey, always a dish of golden butter, and plates of hot biscuit coming fresh from that old dutch oven every few minutes. With wild fruits in season and dried fruits in the winter, at our house, there was always a pitcher of sorghum. At the other end of the table was a huge coffee pot and large pitcher of milk which was usually replenished several times. This sounds like a hearty breakfast but the long mornings of splitting rails, plowing, clearing land or some other heavy work from dawn to noon, was needed to maintain their strength. In the house, the beds were made, floors swept, dishes washed and as Aunt Rena would say, "The house rid up," so that when daylight came the women were ready to begin their stint at the wheel and loom. Dinners were very similar to the breakfasts with

4. the addition of some kind of boiled meats, several kinds of vegetables and pie, but supper was very apt to be mush and milk with the left overs from dinner unless there were guests, then the dinner menu was repeated. If the guest came unexpected they were made welcome and another plate or two was added to the table and some of the younger members of the family would wait for the second table.

Mother's people were still living on the Sugar Creek place at the time of the Pea Ridge battle and as grandmother went to the spring one morning for a bucket of water, on crossing the foot-log she noticed the water flowing beneath the bridge was red. She learned the next day that a skirmish of the battle had been fought several miles above there and men who had been shot from their horses had fallen in the creek. Soon after this the family, mother and her husband ^{and} Thos. Black were up there visiting. He started back to his father's leaving mother for a few days' visit and as he rode across the prairie the bushwackers shot him off his horse. The next year the family moved again this time to a farm near Maysville and mother went with them. The next summer when threshing time came her brothers, who were all in the Southern army, got leave of absence and came home to help harvest the grain. About 10 o'clock when everybody was working busily, they heard a horseman coming from the west, riding at all the speed the horse could make. He did not halt as he sped by but called, "Hide, the Pin Indians are coming." Of course, work stopped instantly, the teams were loosed from the machine and men and horses rushed into a field of tall standing corn which grew hard by. They had just gotten out of sight when a band of Indians came ^h ~~dashing~~ ^{dashing} into the yard, dismounted, dropped their reins and crowded into the house and began rummaging. One young buck found a coat that had belonged to Uncle Newton Woods who had died of typhoid fever the year before. Mother always had the feeling that the clothing that had been worn by those who had died was somehow sacred, so she rushed over and tried to take the coat from the Indian, he turned, the coat loose, caught up his gun and just as he would have shot her an older Indian knocked the gun so that it fired over her head. Then he reproved the younger one by saying: "you kill white man's woman, and white man come an kill your woman."

Another ~~Indian~~ story was that of Bob Walker. His wife had gone to a neighbor's to spend the night, and after completing his chores, he had gone into the house when three men rode up in front of his house. Two of them dismounted and came into the house and demanded his money. They were armed and he knew there was no use to resist, so he gave them his roll. They evidently knew how much he had and to make sure that he was not holding out on them, they got down on their knees in front of the fire to count it. Walker was young, strong, active and alert. He remembered his newly ground axe just inside the back door. By taking two steps backward with his hands behind him, he was able to grasp the ax handle and with one powerful stroke he ~~finished-the-work~~ entirely beheaded one man and cut the other's arm off a second swift stroke finished the work. He snatched his money and only taking time to get his own gun from the rack above the door he ran out the back door and was away in the dark before the third man holding the horses was aware that their plans had been delayed. The next day as he was riding thru the woods, he saw a horseman coming to meet him and instantly shot the robber thru the heart.