HISTORICAL
and
NATURE STUDIES
of
MUTLAX COUNTY.
Collected
by
MFA PACK HORSE LIBRARIANS.
Compiled
by
Joshua P. Sharp
Librarian.
INTEGRATION

Nowhere do we find more quaint and peculiar folk lore and human interest stories than has been handed down by the old settlers of Whitley County.

In our work with the Pack Horse Library we have learned, from the aged fathers and mothers who yet live, many interesting and unique stories about the development of this county.

All the quaint names of creeks, ridges, and districts have a story behind them. Names like Dogslaughter, Wolf-pit, or Idiot branch were not imagined. They were established and hung on to these places from something that happened there.

Peculiar trees, caves, and springs have a history-story connected with them.

Hanging oak, Blowing cave, and Alum spring all have a tale which gave them their name.

This booklet contains a few of the stories we have collected.
Just below and to the right of Cumberland Falls is one of the wildest, roughest spots in Whitley County. A small creek heads up in a deep, rocky hollow and runs between two rows of cliffs for about five miles to Cumberland river. From the banks of the creek on either side to the cliffs has always been a dense thicket of laurel, ivy, underbrush, and vines. Only in a few places does there even a path penetrate these thickets.

Here has always been a paradise for wild animals they denned and raised their young in the cliffs and hid in the thickets by day.

Years ago this spot was the home of a pack of wolves. At night they would steal out of these thickets and make life miserable for calves, goats, sheep, and pigs which they would find within a range of five or six miles. The men who owned this stock would send their dogs on the chase of those wolves.

Straight for those thickets and cliffs the marauders would head. The dogs followed them into that wilderness spot but seldom did one return. Lost in such a dense thicket a dog had no chance against a mob of hungry wolves, so they made a meal of him.
Hunters came to this section with trained hounds but these hounds usually met the same fate. Thus so many dogs were killed at this place that the region became known at Dog Slaughter and the creek as Dog Slaughter Creek.

Later these wolves were all caught outside the thicket while on their raids or frightened out of the country; but the thickets and cliffs are yet there in all their natural wildness and beauty. They yet abound in wild game of less ferocity, but until today a dog is not able to do anything with a fox, a coon, or a wildcat, once it gets into this natural refuge.

An old timer who used to live near this haven of wolves and wild animals gives us the following tale of dogs massacred in this section.

An old bear had taken up his haunts in this isolated home of the wolves. Every few nights he would scurry forth to kill a calf or sheep, then he would slip back to the safety of the cliffs before daylight to sleep off the effects of his feast.

A group of hundres decided to stop the old fellow's depredations and probably have a bear steak in return for some of the beef and mutton he had stolen.

With sixteen of the best hounds they could find in the whole country, they lay in wait one night for the old rogue to leave the cliffs.

When he came out the hunters felt sure that the hounds would soon bring him to bay and that each of them would in a short while be b roiling a bear steak and bragging that his dog did the best work at the kill.

The old bear could not see things this way. He knew a few things about dogs. He managed to stand the whole pack off until he reached the thicket. Then he ran a little ways through the laurel and ivy, and backed himself up against a rock, ready to take on any dog that might come.

The hounds followed through the brush and the hunters pushed after them as fast as they could get through. When the men caught up with the dogs and bear they saw a sight that made them sick.

The bear had killed fourteen of their dogs, crippled another, that lay in the brush howling, and had old Buck, the wisest of the pack, stood off.

They shot the bear and carried out the hind-quarters but they did not enjoy their steaks so well as they had anticipated, for they were thinking about the fate of their best dogs.
No wonder this place is called Dog-slaughter.
There is a large bend that reaches for fifteen or more miles up the river from Cumberland Falls.

Years ago before anyone lived in this region or before any of the land was cleared this large bend afforded the best of range for cattle. The people living at Williamsburg and nearby communities took advantage of this opportunity. In the spring they would send all their cattle, except a milk cow at the home to this range to grow and fatten.

They hired someone to go along to keep a watch on the cattle and to especially care for those with young calves.

A large creek ran through the middle of this range land. Near the head of this creek the watchman built his cabin and a pole pen in which he kept the young calves. The mother cows would come up night and morning to their calves.

Then the watchman would milk a few gourds of milk for himself, let the calves have what remained, and start the cows off to graze again.

For years the signs of this calf pen remained, so when settlers moved into the section on the creek was given the name of Calf-pen Creek.
Three or four miles North-east of Cumberland Falls and near the section known as Dog-slaughter is a district called Wolf Pit.

About seventy five years ago only three old settlers lived in this part of the county. They raised cattle, sheep, and hogs, and made the remainder of their living by hunting.

A pack of wolves that stayed in the Dogs-slaughter cliffs was playing havoc with their stock. These settlers soon realized that they must catch these wolves or quit raising calves and pigs.

Since dogs could not catch these wolves the men decided to dig a pit and lure them into it at night.

They dug a large, deep hole in the ground and covered it over lightly with brush. They hung a bait cut over these brush so that when a wolf went for the bait he fell through the brush into the pit. Thus many wolves were caught. In fact, this is the way they rid the country of them.

One morning the settlers found a panther and a wolf in the pit together -- each too frightened to harm the other. Because of this trap the district came to be called Wolf - pit. The school district there today is known by that name.

*******************************************************************************
Several years ago while the territory through which Bacon Creek now runs was yet a partial wilderness. A great number of wild hogs and a few deer roamed through the woods. The scattered settlers killed these deer and hogs for their winter's supply of meat.

They built a cabin near the creek where the meat was stored to be used during the winter. The meat house was a community proposition. All the settlers helped kill and store the meat and all came to the house and got meat when it was needed.

From the meathouse that stood on the creek bank the creek came to be known as Bacon Creek or as called by some Meat-house Branch.

************************************************************************************************************
On top of a high ridge that forms a divide between two mountain creeks there is a row of overhanging cliffs that for ages have furnished shelter to man and animals who decided to camp under them.

The last group of Indians to remain in this part of the State made their home in this line of cliffs. Some of these Indians died while living there and their graves mark the spot. Many people visit this place and some yet search for the gold.

The place is known as Indian Gap.
During the civil war a soldier got lost from his company and was riding through the mountains of Whitley County trying to find his comrades.

Two thieves decided to rob the unfortunate soldier and take his horse and whatever he might have. They lured him up a deep hollow pretending to show him his way. Here they killed him and covered him with brush and leaves.

A week or two later some hunters found a bunch of wild hogs eating the dead soldier. They buried him and piled a bunch of stone on his grave. The pile of stones yet mark the place and the hollow has since been called Dead Man Hollow.
More than fifty years ago Buzzard Creek got its name. Near a spring at which the creek heads up is a large, high rock standing out alone from the cliffs. Near the top of this rock is a cavity in which buzzards raise their young.

Here no animal can reach them to hard their eggs or young ones. No human would want to go near, for of all scents, the worst one is here.

In the summer when the rotten food is being carried to the nest, one can tell when he is near the place long before he can see the rock. From this Buzzard's nest the creek got its name; and until today as a reminder that they named the creek, the old buzzards yet raise a family of stinking baby buzzards there every summer.
A few miles south of Corbin, Kentucky near US Highway #25, at a place called Faber, stands a three-pronged, second-growth, black oak tree that could tell a gruesome tale if it could recall and describe a scene that occurred under it a few years ago.

Early on a Saturday morning a bus driver coming along the highway saw a man hanging from one of the limbs by a rope that was around his neck.

Upon investigation it was found that the man had been hanged some time the night before. The man was identified, and robbery established as the cause of his murder, but the crime has not yet been solved.

The tree has since gone by the name of the Hanging Oak.
On Limestone Branch near the Big Oak is Blowing Cave.

It is a hole about two feet in diameter in the face of a cliff. Air roars and rushes out of this hole at all times with enough force to blow one's hat off. The air is cool in summer and warm in winter, and water runs out of the hole at all times.

This mystery is not understood by the mountain people who live in this vicinity.
The largest tree found in or near the Cumberland National Forest is standing in Whitley County, near the head of Limestone Branch on Popular Creek.

It is a giant white-oak, thirty-three feet and eleven inches in circumference.

It is called the Big Oak.
Hurricanes or even severe wind storms are rare in the mountains of Kentucky; but about sixty years ago a terrific wind swept across Jellico Mountain and tore its way down a narrow valley that lay between two long, high mountain ridges.

It blew saw-logs and tree tops for a mile and lodged them against buildings and in peoples fields.

It is told that an old man sitting on his porch in a rocking chair was blown from the porch with the chair and killed as he was hurled down the valley.

Since this storm the place has been called Hurricane Hollow.

Today one gets no impression of a hurricane as he walks through this secluded valley. It is a most perfect haven of wild flowers, birds, trees, and small animals that play in the leaves and weeds; yet the old name hangs on.
In the roughest part of the cliff country in Whitley County, near the Do'-slaughter and Wolf-pit regions, there are dozens of crystal-clear streams of water bursting forth from the face of the huge rock cliffs found here.

Most of this water has a mineral tang which is different from that of any other stream. Thus the spring which is formed where one of these streams gushes out is usually named from the taste of the water.

So it was with Alum Springs. The water has a strong taste of Alum. In the winter when the water freezes a piece of ice from this water will "pucker" your lips as will a cake of commercial alum. For years the people living near this spring carried water or ice from it to use in their homes as medicine.
Buggor Hole is a yawning crater in the ground by the side of a lonely country road. Many people of the community have reported seeing things come out of this hole to frighten them as they passed at night; thus giving the place the name of Buggor-hole.

Some say that a woman without a head has leaped from the hole onto their horse behind them and rode away regardless of their efforts to get rid of her.

Others say they have seen animals without heads come out of the hole. No wonder the superstitious mountaineers call such a place Buggor-hole.