

REMINISCES (2001)

As the last survivor of the original Swope family, I thought some of you might be interested if I reminisce about living in the old homestead. As you know, there were originally seven of us. By the time I was knee high to a duck, Sister Mayme had married Bob Henry & moved to a farm 10 or 12 miles away. Being alone one day, I saddled a mule & rode to see my big sister. I didn't think I'd ever make it!

Brother Ralph worked at the Swope Jewelry Store in Terre Haute. He owned a motorcycle with a sidecar & would take us younger kids riding when he came home. Once when Dad was driving an old mule out of the barn lot, Ralph blew his horn –OOGA! It scared the poor mule so bad he lit out, dragging poor Dad behind him, yelling “Whoa, you fool mule, whoa”! Mom was watching, laughing so hard tears ran down her face!

Sister Laura was secretary to the head of the Y.M.C.A in Evansville & often stayed in town. Later she married her fiancé, Jason McCutchan, when he returned from service in W. War I.

That left Elnora, Kathryn, Alice & me. Elnora taught 2nd & 3rd grades at McCutchanville School. She was my teacher for those grades. At home she helped Mom with the cleaning, canning, laundry, churning & just about anything that had to be done. Later she too married a returning soldier, Ivan France, who had done time in France. “France in France” the papers had printed at the time.

Kathryn liked to help Dad. She drove a team of horses for all kinds of jobs. Once cutting hay, she ran over a bumblebees nest. She was stung pretty badly. Her face was so swollen Dad didn't recognize her when he came in & said politely “How do you do?”

That left Alice & me. Oh, we had tasks too, carrying wood & coal for the stoves, washing & drying dishes, knocking potato bugs into kerosene cans, chopping thistles from crops – little stuff! When we got older, we got to herd

cows from the road while riding horses & carry water to the men in the fields. That was fun!

We still had plenty of time to “play house” under our apple trees. Rooms were divided with sticks & furniture was made with bricks & boards. We cut out paper dolls from the Sears catalog & dressed them with clothes from the same source.

We never had indoor plumbing or electricity. When nature called, we ran down the path to the two-holer—ran because we had to pass under an old catalpa tree that harbored big, ugly green worms (fishermen's delight) that we were afraid would fall on us.

Mom washed clothes by hand, using a scrubbing board (I forget what you called them), then put them in the boiler on the stove, then through two tubs of rinse with a hand turned wringer between the two. All the water we hauled from the well on the porch. We kids hung the clean clothes outside on the lines. Mother insisted they look nice, matching lengths & colors. They smelled so good when we took them down.

That was on Monday. Tuesdays were ironing days. Irons with removable handles were heated on the kitchen stove. There were times of cleaning house, canning, gardening, picking fruits & vegetables. I remember especially climbing the several cherry trees in our orchard & competing with each other as to who could fill her bucket first.

We used coal oil lamps (kerosene) at night. When we got Aladdin lamps when I was in high school I thought they were wonderful as they gave a soft white light instead of the glaring yellow!

We walked to school (no buses), sometimes with the Hornby girls who lived down the road. In the winter, if there was enough snow, Dad or Mr. Hornby would take us in a sleigh. To get to High School in Evansville, we had to catch the “traction” that ran from Princeton. That too a long walk!

We carried our lunches to school, sometimes the boys thought it was fun to put

something extra in our lunch boxes—a frog, a grasshopper, or even a small snake! We didn't think it was so funny! We had out-door-toilets & drinking water from an outdoor pump. We probably all used the same tin cup!

There's so much more I could tell, but I can hear you say "Enough already!" Though we didn't have modern conveniences, we had family, we had love, & we were happy!

Anna Isabel Swope August 2001