

Four score years. It is a long time, and as I sit here in my modern little apartment, memory carries me back through the years to my childhood, and I wonder what would be the thoughts of my parents if they could return to earth and see how we live today.

I am the last surviving member of a family of eleven children--- six boys and five girls. Of the boys my father said: "I will raise them to be teachers, ministers and tillers of the soil" And this he did---each and every one bringing honor to the proud name he bore.

Robert and Rachel (Hall) Gillasp, both residents of Jackson county, Indiana, were married in their teens in the year 1848. One hundred and three years ago. Soon after their marriage they bought a few acres of land 1½ miles East of Crothersville, Indiana, a team of horses and a cow.

Father cleared the land of timber and with some of the logs built a two room house. Also from the logs he fashioned a table, a bed, two stools and a few other pieces of furniture. He split rails for fences and rived (split) clab boards to cover his buildings. A large fireplace took up almost all the space of one wall.

For tilling the soil, he made of wood a plow, a harrow, a sythe, hoe and rake. Of necessity his early farming was on a small scale. He raised a few hogs, cattle and sheep. The crops consisted of corn, wheat, oats, cane and tobacco. The corn was dropped by hand; the small grain was broadcast.

After a time he constructed a cane mill, making sorghum, not only for his own family, but also for his neighbors. In the Fall of the year he butchered 'milk fattened' hogs and a beef or sheep. The hide of the beef was taken to Crothersville and tanned into leather at the Rollings Tannery. From this fine leather father would make shoes for his family. They were good shoes. Heavy shoes made from whole stock leather---and they would last each member an entire year.

Most of the meat was cured by smoking. This smoking was done in a small, tight building so that little smoke would escape. The meat was hung close to the roof, and a kettle was placed beneath it. A smouldering fire of hickory wood and cobs was maintained. This smoking fire required a lot of attention to keep it "just right" Three or four weeks of smoking were needed to produce the right color and flavor of meat. For variety in meat, a part was pickled by placing it in salt brine until eaten. (When an egg would float in the brine, it was strong enough to keep the meat indefinitely)

When it came time to harvest the wheat, father cut it with a cradle, spread it several inches thick on a "cleaned" space of the barn floor, and then drove the horses round and round until the grain was out of the head. It then was fanned and cleaned and put in the granary until used for seed or flour. The straw was kept for bedding purposes both for stock and humans.

Granary did I say? Well, a big hollow sycamore, poplar or gum tree butt was used as a storage bin for grains. Some of these hollow trees, when cut into sections and placed on the barn floor, were large enough to hold a wagon load of grain. Smaller sections were split open, the ends sealed and then used for water troughs, or to hold milk crocks, or for bee colonies. Cut short, the smaller sections were made into hen's nests. The hollow log probably is the forerunner of the modern tile or metal sewer, for it was used under roadways for drainage.

In the Spring the sheep were sheared. Mother and we children then took the wool to the river for washing. After washing, it was taken to Seymour where it was carded into rolls. Mother then would spin these rolls into yarn. It was a trick only she could do. (The yarn always would break when we tried it) From the yarn she wove cloth from which she made father's and the boy's suits. A lighter

cloth was woven for the dresses for herself and daughters. With sumac she dyed some of the yarn red; with indigo some of the yarn was dyed blue.

My parents worked hard, gained slowly. By practising strick economy---a trait which is inbred in all of us Gillaspys---they were able to increase the farm to increase the farm to 160 acres, and to build a 1½ story log house with 3 rooms down and 2 up. This was one of the finer homes of the neighborhood, and it was in this house that we "eleven" were reared. Around this farm father put a rail fence, the rails split by his own hands. This farm still is in the family; being owned now by one of his grandsons, Haskell Gillaspy.

Father loved his horses and when John H. Morgan, the Confederate general, made his marauding expedition into Indiana in the year 1863 and took a favorite filly from his barn, father sent his brother Jimmie after the raiders with a stronger horse to trade for the little mare. Brother Jimmie returned with the mare. Rather than tire his horses needlessly, father would walk to the county seat twice each year to pay his taxes. This was a distance of 17 miles, and meant getting started at sun up; returning home at sun down. He didn't have the hard surfaced roads we now travel in getting to Brownstown.

Does it seem that father did all the work? He didn't. Mother also had her long hours of toil. Besides spinning, weaving and fashioning the wool yard into clothes, blankets, etc., mother raised chickens, ducks, geese and a few turkeys. She milked the cows, strained the milk in gallon crocks and let stand until it clabbered. It then was skimmed and churned in the old dasher churn. The extra butter, eggs and sometimes chickens were sold to a huckster who came each week from Paris Crossing. I remember that the chickens sold by the head and not by weight. The hens brought 25¢ and the roosters 15¢ (There are some who think that same ratio should be carried further in the scale of male and female values.)

The huckster brought groceries and dry goods to our door, thus we scarcely ever went to the village of Crothersville, or to the larger town of Seymour. About the only groceries we had to buy were coffee, rice and salt. In those days the grocery bill was the smallest item in the family budget. (Fair Deal, eh?)

The coffee we bought was green and in the bean. This meant that it had to be roasted and ground before using. To roast, it was placed in a skillet on hot coals. It had to be stirred constantly so that it would roast evenly. I can remember stirring and stirring----a tedious job. Then for each meal the coffee was ground in a small coffee mill.

Our bread was baked in a large iron skillet with an iron lid. Hot coals were put on top the lid as well as under the skillet. The corn pone and biscuits that came from that receptacle were delicious. (As worthy of praise in song as the more modern 'shortnin bread!') How well I remember the hop vine from which yeast was made for our 'staff of life' (Try getting by with a hop vine in your back yard today)

From a crane in the fireplace, iron kettles of various sizes were hung for the boiling of meat and vegetables. One of the smaller kettles, with new legs and a new handle--the old legs burned off and the handle gave way--now is in my possession and is a treasured heirloom.

Big gardens supplied us with fruits and vegetables. But big gardens meant many hours of planting, hoeing, bugging and harvesting. We girls and mother did most of this work.

When the vegetables and fruits were ripe we did not can them as is done today. Canning was unknown. Everything to be preserved either was dried or put in the ground. Apples, peaches, corn, beans, blackberries, pumpkin---all were dried. Many will recall seeing apples cut into small pieces and drying on a paper on a roof top, but how many have seen pumpkin-rings drying? The pumpkin was cut into rings, the rings placed on a long pole, and the pole suspended from the exposed ceiling joists, over our heads, in front of the fireplace. The rings

hanging down looked something like the straps in an old fashioned street car. Kraut we made by the barrel, and lye hominy was made as used.

Those edibles that weren't dried---such as turnips, some of the cabbage, apples and parsnips, were buried in the ground in the late Fall and kept well for winter use. (Parsnips always were left buried where they had grown--"sweeter that way" said mother.)

Having sugar trees on the farm, father would tap the trees in the early Spring and from the sugar water mother would make the sugar needed for the year. Apple butter making was an event we loved. In a large brass kettle over an outdoor fire we would cook, stir, and make into delicious butter the sweet apples of the orchard. Getting splattered with the bubbling hot butter as it neared the finished state was good fun. Exciting. The butter then was spiced and put in stone jars for winter use.

When mother wasn't knitting sox from her 3 ply wool thread---or making stockings for the girls----she was manufacturing candles from the sheep tallow. A wick was fastened in the center of a candle mold, and melted tallow was poured around it. The candles furnished the only light we had until the kerosene lamp came into use. Matches were very scarce, so we twisted paper into tapers for carrying fire from the fireplace to a candle or vice versa. Always on the mantle was a container full of tapers.

With these chores done, there was the picking of ducks and geese. This was not enjoyed by any of us, for the geese sometimes bit a piece from one's arm. But the geese and ducks had to be picked to supply us with feathers for our beds and pillows. Not a bed was complete without a "refined" feather bed resting majestically atop a casing full of straw. (What kept us from smothering as we sank out of sight in the feathers I shall never know)

Mother kept her family and home clean with the soap she made from the lye of wood ashes. Wood ashes were saved and stored until soap making time. Then the ashes were placed in a barrel on a wood frame. A trough was placed under the barrel. Water then was poured on the ashes and this formed a strong lye. All meat scraps and cracklings went into the lye. After long "boiling" the proper consistency was reached and the soap was a finished product. And as a dirt chaser, no modern article ever has surpassed it. Every week the oak floors were scrubbed with a mop made of hickory splints and a generous portion of lye soap and sand. This weekly task required much elbow grease.

With all the above things to be done, mother yet found time to piece quilts, weave rag carpets and rugs, and make the most difficult of all home made articles---heavy bed spreads called coverlets. Some of her quilts were bright in color and done in applique. Yes, in addition to the basic subjects of raising foods, cooking, preserving, making clothing, washing, scrubbing and other subjects like dyeing, spinning, weaving---she found time to raise a family of eleven children. (Of course she didn't get in much Canasta, and the television never was on.)

Hardships? I don't believe my parents thought they were having hardships--(Didn't all the neighbors have to do the same things under the same conditions?) But it wasn't all work and no play. Not at all. Although all of us were versed in work, and none grew up in ignorance of what work meant, we still had our fun.

There were apple peelings, bean hullings, corn huskings, square dances. After a large quantity of apples were peeled by the young men and cored by the young ladies---or after several bushels of beans had been hulled---all were ready for the games of "Weavely <sup>W</sup>sheat" "Long kiss in the corner" "Hiss cat" and many others. Refreshments of pie and cake were served. (No Cokes, you ask) I wonder if we, after all,

aren't as happy as the young folks of today.

<sup>Word</sup> Some of these parties were arranged in advance, but many times they just 'grew'. Without invitation we would have friends or relatives visit us. Or maybe father would hitch the team to the wagon, place two chairs in the front for mother and himself, then put hay in the rear for us children. We would go calling. A lot of this was done. Maybe someone would bring turnips, and between eating raw turnips-- or apples--we'd talk and laugh and play games.

In winter we had the spelling bee. These events were attended by all and much interest was taken in orthography. The spellers would be divided into two sides and spelled down until a winning side remained. Sometimes we would spell by the last letter---interesting but catchy.

On Sunday afternoon we would go to Sunday School. Father and mother's first church membership was at the Grassy Creek Baptist Church, then was moved to Uniontown when Grassy Creek and New Hope (near the Albert Spall farm) united to form one church. Since these two churches formed a 'union' the new place was called Uniontown. And that is how Uniontown got it's name.

Inasmuch as the young men of those days had few buggies, they either walked or traveled to their girl friend's home on horse back. If they were to attend a church meeting or party, the girls either walked with the men or rode behind them.

Four of my brothers and two cousins had a sheep-skin band and practised each week at one of the homes. This was real entertainment for us younger people.

Perfumes, rouge, and toe nail polish were unheard of in my early days. But in spite of a lack of such fragrances as <sup>'To your Harman'</sup> 'Too jour la moor' <sup>L</sup>'Dangerous' and 'Tail Spin' we got along alright. Our folks believed that the best way to have rosy cheeks was to spend a few hours each day over the wash tub or with a broom or hoe. I can tell you also that <sup>L</sup>'hip slimming exercises were unheard of.

Readin, writin and rithmetic---book larnin---was limited. Usually the girls went only to the fourth grade. McGuffeys reader was one of the few books studied. The girls often excelled the boys in spelling and reading.

Breakfast cereals were not on the market yet, and our morning meal---early it was too, since we got up at 4 o'clock---quite often was bacon, eggs and hot biscuits. We were deprived of the pleasure of sending off box tops for finger rings with flash lights, compasses and long range telescopes incorporated in them. But we had a good breakfast.

Before bringing this to a close I must mention the old trundle bed. We had one in our home, and well I remember sleeping in it. I always felt a sense of security and love when at night my trundle bed was pulled from beneath mother's and father's big bed and I went to sleep along side of them.

They were strict with us children, and always there was work to be done, with not too much entertainment, but I am thankful to them for the industry, respect of others and honor of right which they taught us.

Truly my parents were of the sturdy, honest, pioneer stock from which America grew to greatness.

Allie Gillaspie Bedell