

CROSSING OF MO. RIVER 59 YEARS AGO

Mrs. T. A. Nelson, Sr., Bunceton, Tells of a Girlhood Experience at Boonville in 1864.

(By Mrs. T. A. Nelson, Sr.)

I do not think I was ever more forcibly reminded of the changes in our modes of traveling in the last fifty years than when I rode across the Missouri River at Boonville on the fine new bridge a few weeks ago in an automobile. Memory brought to mind a trip made across the same river sixty years ago.

It was in the winter of 1864, during the Civil War. I was attending school in Boonville, at what was then known as Cooper Institute. The building was on Sixth Street at the intersection of Vine Street. Rev. X. X. Buckner, a noted Baptist minister, was principal. Associated with him was Mr. J. M. Byler, Professor of Mathematics, a most excellent instructor. Professor D. R. Cully was principal of the Presbyterian school where Megquier Seminary was afterwards located. Professor Cully had been married only a short time, his wife having been Miss Sue Chilton, an intimate friend of mine. There were in Cooper Institute a number of girls from Howard County, among them being Jennie Turner and Pensa Robinson. Miss Turner is now a widow, Mrs. Ed Ford, and lives in Bunceton. I have lost all trace of Miss Robinson and do not even know if she is living.

Professor Cully and his wife are, and have been for many years, beloved neighbors of mine. He is 86 years old, but still drives his buggy and goes alone to Bunceton, a distance of four miles. His wife has been an invalid for two years, unable to walk a step, the result of a fall.

Now for my story. One Friday in December, 1864, Mrs. Cully, Miss Turner, Miss Robinson and I crossed the river under very different circumstances from what I did recently. Mrs. Cully was going to New Franklin to visit her uncle, Mr. Warren Chilton, and his family. The young ladies were going for a visit to their homes and had invited me to go with them, and, of course, I accepted the

invitation. The ferry boat had been burned, but I do not recall whether by accident or by soldiers or bushwhackers, who were constantly committing depredations. There was only one way for us to get across the river and that was to go in a skiff.

It was a pleasant winter day and we enjoyed our ride, the novelty of it adding to our pleasure. The short December afternoon was almost gone when we landed on the Howard county side. Imagine, if you can, our disappointment when the conveyance which we expected to meet us failed to appear and there was nothing to do but walk the intervening three miles to New Franklin. Now if our sweethearts had been along and we had called it a hike, we would have enjoyed it more. But the circumstances right then were not very conducive to happiness. The road was very muddy and we were in constant dread of meeting a squad of soldiers, either "Feds," Rebels or some of Todd's bushwhackers. Lamps and candles were burning in the farm homes long before we reached our journey's end. I do not know that I ever traveled such a long three miles. We all went directly to Mr. Warren Chilton's, where they gave us a hearty welcome and a good supper, and we were tired and hungry enough to appreciate it. Mr. and Mrs. Warren Chilton were the parents of Boonville's fine citizens, the Chilton Brothers.

Before Monday morning came, the weather had turned bitter cold, and when we got to the river, we found great cakes of ice floating in it, which made it very dangerous to cross in a skiff. But as our school was on the other side, there was nothing to do but brave the danger.

I shall never forget that trip. So frightened were we and so glad to get on solid ground that we forgot to pay the boatman and were up in town before we thought of it and had to send the money to him.