

## FOLKLORE

### **As Recalled By Averil Beaver**

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**Folklore is sometimes superstition and sometimes legend, sometimes both. These are stories that have been told by members of local families. These stories were told as true, but few people believed them, yet they continued to be told. The details got changed from time to time as they were passed down generation to generation.**

#### **Reflections from a Dug Well**

**Thomas Andrew Sims was a fine, upright, young man. Yes, he was superstitious, as was his family. Thomas decided to go to Missouri to work for a few days. It was early in the spring of 1896. Of course he was homesick, because just before he had left his home he had met a cute little girl named Amanda Jane Bell. "Tomorrow is May 1st". Louisa Sims, his mother, had told Thomas that if he looked down into a large "dug" well on 'May Day' he would see the girl he would marry. So he just had to get to the "dug" well the next day. Some of the other boys were kidding him, but he didn't care. He went to take a look anyway. He later said it had to have been about 8:00 in the morning. Slowly he gazed over the edge to look into the dark water of the well. He declared that he saw Amanda and she was ironing gloves. After his Missouri trip, he came back home and married her. My mother was their oldest daughter and I heard Grandpa tell his story many times. He was a fine man who truly believed it.**

**Doc. Let's get 'im.**

**Edith Reaper seemed to be born at the right time to become a babysitter. She was somewhere in the middle of a large German immigrant family. I guess that's why she didn't marry until later in life. One day, while she was "sitting" (that's a laugh) with the two youngest Reaper children, two rowdy twins name Willis and Willard (Doc). It was a real rough, windy day on the hill where the Reaper house was located. "Listen, I hear something", Willard said. Edith knew it was the wind that was howling through the latch hole in the door. However, Willis got the broom, drawing it back ready to strike hard, said "Doc, let's get 'im". Edith said "Boys, it just**

**imagination". Willard said, "We'll get him too".**

### **Wind or Rain?**

**Melvin Martin was a timber man and a woodsman. He had never settled anywhere. He just drifted wherever the timber man sent him. They came in the area south of Fairview (now Pleasant Plains). He liked the area and he also liked a young girl he had met - Carlista (Lista) Roberson. They were married, homesteaded some land, and built a cabin. His brother, Isom, moved on to the next job, which was over in the bottomland around Rosie. In the bottoms, the trees grew bigger and taller. Melvin and Lista wanted to go visit him. So they prepared some food and then went to bed to get an early start the next morning. In the early hours of the morning, they awoke to hear a downpour of rain. Oh, it was really coming down on the roof of the cabin. So they decided right then that they couldn't make the trip. But when daylight came it had not rained. Go figure. This is just one of my little stories. I didn't have an explanation. Still don't. Was it wind, or WHAT, that knocked the Martin's out of making their trip?**

### **John Owen and the Owl**

**We had always liked John, even before he married my husband Ernest's sister, Ruby. We always loved to hear him tell his stories. He told us about walking across a meadow with woods all along the edges. He said, "Oh, I was grown, about 18 or 19, not afraid of anything. Suddenly my hat was pushed forward over my eyes. I whirled around and saw nothing." So John said he walked on a little faster, and his hat was tilted forward again. This time he could feel the hair on the back of his neck standing up and he sped up even more. But he still could see nothing. Now this happened a third time. But that time an owl was just visible enough for John to see it, just as it let out a blood curdling screech. Dang that screech owl!!**

### **Children**

**Children are the source of many good stories. I like them because they are not *always* filled with fear. One day Kathleen King Pratt saw kittens**

around the water well. This well had a platform around it built out of lumber. When you “drew” water from the well, you stepped upon this little platform. As Kathleen watched, it appears that the kitten went into the well. So she ran and told her mother, Elva, who then sent Howard out to find the kitten. They looked and looked. No Kitten! So Howard went to find Mr. Hardcastle (Mr. Hardpecker, everyone called him) to come clean the well out. The well digger worked and worked, for two days, eating and enjoying Elva's good cooking. Still no kitten was found. So he began to gather up his tools. And do you know what? That kitten came walking up to them. The kitten had apparently gone down next to the well, but into the platform instead of the well. Still, where had it been for two days? After that, the well continued to be a source of worry for Kathleen. So one day Glenda (her baby sister) ‘disappeared’. So here went Kathleen to look in the well and she ‘sees’ Glenda down in the well. She told Elva and they ran and got Howard, whose plowing stops. (Oh my, everyone is so excited.) Glenda was in the well, Kathleen saw her. About that time, Glenda is seen coming across the pasture. Now Glenda was always a wanderer. She had to be watched all the time. Can't you just imagine the good feeling when she was spotted coming across the pasture? I guess Kathleen had seen her own reflection in the water.

### **Gourd Nest**

In our community, all of the mothers went into fields to work as I was growing up. The children played around the edges of the fields in the shades of the trees. One day my brother Bob (Vondell) came running to Mother. “I found a gourd's nest and one of them is hatching”, he said. We went to see. It was 3 terrapins in a bunch of leaves. One of them had moved, so he thought they were hatching like chickens. One of the little girls told her mother that she had seen a suitcase that was walking. They went to see. It was a terrapin.

### **Night Sounds in Dewey**

Houses are fairly close together in the community of Dewey. Oh, it's actually way out in the country, but everyone lives in each other's yard and

**everyone goes to their farms to work each day. One night a man was sitting on his front porch listening to the katydids when he became aware of the sound of someone, a woman, crying and moaning. He began to spread the word from house to house - people began to gather and listen. It sounded at first like a faraway moan and then it would seem very near. Soon everyone in Dewey was gathered on the hill, listening for the woman to cry. Someone would say they believed it was a baby. "Yeah, that's a baby out there". They began to walk and listen along the way. The moaning seemed nearer and finally it was clear that it was in the trees ahead. As they got closer the woman cried some more. On marched the people. One man yelled, "Over here!" Everyone rushed over. The moaning was loud and clear. "It's up in a tree." Yes, up in a tree is where they shined their lights and there it was. There was a large limb from one tree, rubbing against a limb from another tree. Sometimes it sounded like sobbing. Other times it sounded like a moan. But it was a tree!**