

of this territory. They often visited their cousin, the wife of Black Jem Wall, who owned and operated a trading post, mill and post office called Faith. He owned farm land; bought and sold and fed livestock. At a long dining table in his home were fed not only 7 sons ("Frank", Peach, Cat, Floyd, Will, Chester and "Jesse") and five daughters (Betty, Ida, Ollie, Cora and Stella) but anyone present at meal time was expected to eat.

Faith was 9 miles from the Madden Church, 6 miles northwest of Crocker. Mr. and Mrs. Wall brought their 12 children seated in the bed of a wagon to attend services in this church. Mrs. Wall advised her boys not to allign with any fraternal organization-membership in Christ's organization was sufficient she insisted.

An individual, who had a moonlight ride with one of the James boys was Jim McMillian (the same Jim who during the Civil War cut the noose from his fathers neck). He was returning home on horseback from a courting date with Ollie Porter (Mitchell) when he heard hoof sounds approaching from behind. A man riding a horse of recognizable worth came up quickly by his side and for a while talked small talk in a very friendly manner. Then, quite abruptly, he asked, "Are the James boys anywhere around?" Young Jim's reply was "If I thought so, I'd be home." Then, the horseman said, "You are riding with one right now." With that introduction over, it was as before until the crossroads separated them and the dark woods covered the two. Through the mind of one of them keeping time with his horse foot beats, two after thoughts were cutting deep - What a horse! What a man!

Mable (James) Elliott, wife of James W. Elliott and mother of Dr. John Elliott of Crocker was a second cousin of the James boys. She had other children who were raised in Crocker.

The following Associated Press news release was clipped from Friday's

WALTER JOHNSON'S MOTHER DIES AT 100

Oiney, MD. - The mother of the late Walter (Big Train) Johnson, famed pitcher for the Washington Senators, is dead, Minnie O. Johnson died Sunday in a nursing home. She was 100.

Born in Wayne County, Ind., Mrs. Johnson lived on farms in the midwest and the family was operating one in Kansas when Walter went to Washington.

One of her favorite stories was how as a child she had taken care of the guns of Jesse and Frank James when the notorious robbers were lodged overnight at her farm home at Dixon, MO.



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THE DAY THE LIGHTS CAME ON

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In a book titled *The Day the Lights Came On* published by the Missouri Rural Electric Women's Association in 2000, Newburg resident Mary Agnes Hudson described the arduous task of washing and ironing clothes during the days before electricity: "There was no push button washing machine. You were the washing machine. A rub board, bar of lye soap and strong hands and back were the only requirements to hook up to that energy source. The dryer was a line in the yard you pinned clothes to. The sun and air took care of the rest. Then you built a fire in the kitchen (wood burning) stove. You set flat irons on the stove to heat. Then you touched the bottom of the iron with a moistened finger. If it sizzled it was ready for the heavy garments."

When asked if she'd like to go back to the "good old days," she replied, "Not without being forced to. Any good memory makes good old days."

When Dixon was first founded, most settlers used homemade tallow candles for lighting. One lady known as "Aunt Polly" Miller often told the story of how she and her husband lighted their first kerosene lamp standing far away from it using a homemade broom.

The first electric light plant in Dixon dated to about 1909. Its location by the "old Dixon Pond" made it a convenient place for the wintertime skaters to go in to warm up. Mr. Grempczynski remembered Dixon's first electric lights were only turned on for a few hours and went off at 11 o'clock every night. "they blinked them three times at a quarter 'till," he said, "so you'd be prepared for them to go off. If you were at a party, you knew exactly when to start putting your coat on."

Retired right-of-way foreman Bill Thompson recalled growing up in Alder Springs near Iberia. "We'd get up and carry an old lantern out to milk the cows and by the time mom would have breakfast done. She'd have a lamp setting in the middle of the table. I guess we ate good food -- we couldn't see it. By daylight, we were ready to go."

During the Great Depression, people had little money to buy the produce and meat the farmers produced and one of the worst droughts in the country's history just added to their troubles. Though just a young child, current board member Bill Davis recalls his own grandfather working for the Works Progress Administration making eighteen cents an hour. "During the Depression, people couldn't have afforded to have a house wired," he said. His Sunday job was to prepare for washday on Monday so he'd "draw water from the well, fill the wash kettle with water and bust up some firewood." The next morning before leaving for school, he'd start the fire to heat the water.

The editorial in the December 21, 1935, edition of the St. Louis Star Times read, "It is a staggering commentary on the backwardness of rural life in the State that there were still 238,047 farms in Missouri at the beginning of 1935 not supplied with electric current. More than a quarter of a million Missouri farms where light is unknown; where churning butter is household drudgery and milking cows by hand a chore; where hair curlers must be heated over a smoky kerosene lamp chimney when ma and the girls go to town." The president of the Consumers' Cooperative Association of North Kansas City proclaimed in January of 1936; "A higher proportion of pigpens in Sweden are lighted by electricity than the ratio of farm homes with electricity in the United States."