

REMINISCENCES  
By Ridley Draper Stone Sr.

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These reminiscences were written by Riley Draper Stone Sr. in about 1950. Although he says a picture evoked these memories, no picture was found with the hand-written account.

He was born in Putnam County (in "Irby," he said in another place) on September 7, 1876, the first son, second child, of Cicero Constantine Stone (son of Enoch Herschell Stone and Eliza Maxwell Stone) and Isabelle Christine Draper Stone (daughter of Ridley Draper and Rebecca Kuykendall Draper) all of Putnam County. He moved to Nashville as a young man and attended Jennings' Business College. His hand-written diploma, signed by R. W. Jennings, dated April 29, 1895, states he had shown himself capable of "acquiring a knowledge of Bookkeeping and Commercial Usage...making him valuable in any office, store or countingroom."

He married Eunice Kathryn Rundle on July 3, 1901. With their two sons, they moved from Nashville to Berkely, California, in 1919.

He died in Oakland, California, on November 3, 1953.

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"This picture reminds me of my life as a little boy living in a little town named Bloomington in Tennessee. About a mile or two (away) was my father's farm on which grew many sugar maples, especially along the creek which was called Martin's Creek. These sugar maple trees were tapped on one side about three feet from the ground by someone. What we mean by tapped is that a notch was cut so as to make a cup or mouth shape with upper lip missing. These cups in the trees would fill with sweet sap oozing out of the tree. A little trough was attached in the tapped part so as to project out far enough so that the juice would trickle into a bucket either hung by a hook or nail or sitting on the ground. We would take the juice and cook into maple syrup or cook it more and make and mould it a cake of maple sugar in the shape of a muffin. I was just a boy, and my father and I would go to the farm, sometime with a horse team and wagon and sometimes with a mule team and wagon and sometimes with an ox team and wagon. It remember that the oxen were named Buck and Ball, and one of the oxen was a muley - that is he never had any horns; and I think that the other one had his horns sawed off.

"One day my father and I were going to the farm with the oxen hitched to the wagon by what we call a yoke; the bows, the part that goes around their necks, was made of hickory wood; and when we had gone to the top of the hill called Stair hill that leaps to the valley,

I was in the wagon and I said “Wa!, Buck and Ball,” and they did not mind me. They started to run down that steep hill. My father also said “Wa! Too, but these oxen were stubborn logging oxen that had been treated badly and had been beaten, so I guess that they were afraid of another beating and they kept running. I crawled to the back of the wagon and fell out on purpose. I was afraid that the wagon would go over a precipice or ravine that was on one side of the Stair Hill. We went running down the hill behind the oxen and wagon and when they got to the bottom of the hill they stopped and we caught up with them and continued to our destination.

“My father had a hillside farm and it was very rich and productive. We raised corn, oats, wheat, hay, pumpkins, sugar cane etc. The pumpkins would grow so large on the hillside that sometimes they would roll down the hill and knock the fence down.

When the sugar cane got ripe we would cut the sugar cane and strip off the blades so as to leave just the stalk and we would feed these stalks through the cane mill (grinder) and squeeze out the juice and cook it in a vat with several compartments, and make some awfully good molasses, and yum yum how good the molasses was with hot biscuits and butter. I do not know which was best, the cane molasses or the maple syrup. Sometimes I would drink some of the maple syrup and sometimes I would chew some of the sugar cane after cutting off the hard stalk. Some of my little boy friends would play and wrestle on the pile of sugar cane pulp after it had gone through the cane mill (grinder).

“One day when father and I were going to the farm with the oxen and wagon, we hitched a large brush (a small tree, or top of a tree) to the back of the wagon and it was dragging on the ground; we were taking it to the farm to brush in some hay seed; and father was walking behind the wagon and he stepped on the end of the tree and it jerked father’s feet from under him and he fell on his back and shoulder.

“One day father and I were cleaning some stumps off of some new ground and there was one stump that had rotten roots; and father got on the hillside above the stump and pushed hard with all his might; the stump gave way and father turned a complete somersault. I laughed and laughed and father got peeved because I laughed. It think on that same day my brother Garnet was with us and he pulled up an Indian turnip, and I told him to taste it. He tasted it and it was so hot naturally that Garnet jumped up and down, almost crying. Garnet was about two years younger than I. Perhaps he was about 10 year sold and I was 12 . I felt mean and ashamed of myself for asking him to taste it.

“A good advice is, never do anything to cause anyone pain or sorrow.”

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The brother Garnet referred to in the narrative was Enoch Garnet Stone, who left Putnam County with his parents and all the children except Ridley Draper for New Mexico in about 1905. Garnet was born March 25, 1880, died November 17, 1967, so he was actually closer to four years younger than Ridley Draper rather than two recalled here.

Assuming Ridley's guess of his own age as 12, the period he was remembering was about 1888.

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