

DR. SAM DENTON TELLS ABOUT BUFFALO VALLEY
FORTY-TWO YEARS BACK

Has Been Practicing Medicine There Since 1880
Was Born At Cave in White County.

Forty-two years is a long time for a physician to practice medicine and necessary emergency surgery in a country village, especially when there wasn't much of a village to begin with. However, the condition can be made tolerable, even pleasant and profitable, when one believes that this particular village is the best on earth and when most every one else who has chanced to come into contact with the people who comprise its citizenship agree that they are the highest type to be found in the state – intelligent, wide-awake progressive, kind-hearted, generous to a fault, interested in other people because they found the lands fertile and productive and because with many of them their fathers were pioneers, and, having inherited a liking for primitive things, they were unable to understand why it was that strangers from the more populous centers would comment on the solemn quietude of the hills and the segregated condition of those who had cast their lot in Buffalo Valley.

TIME WORKS ITS CHANGES:

But forty-two years witness many changes. The hand of destiny weaves with never-ending strands. That which was rural only yesterday will tomorrow be rolled up in the onward march of civilization. The land marks of our boyhood days give way to the telegraph and the telephone pole and the old beech tree upon whose smooth bark our fathers carved initials when life was in its springtime have fallen before the tempest's blast or their stately trunks have been floated down the Cumberland and reduced to flooring in the capital city where dainty feet trip the light fantastic to the rhythm of orchestra in the dance-hall and ball-room far removed from the solitude of original habitation.

Forty-two years ago Dr. Sam Denton went to Buffalo Valley to live with the citizens of Indian Creek. And like Dr. Kennicott of Gopher Prairie, made famous by the author of Main Street, he has ministered to the ills of those who were in Buffalo Valley when there was little to suggest its future development, and he has done his duty since that time as conscientiously as though charged by the invisible Hand with a great mission and a sacred duty.

WAS BORN IN WHITE COUNTY:

Dr. Denton was born in White county at a cross-road community known as Cave, six miles south of Sparta. He was in Cookeville Tuesday morning, with Mrs. Denton, enroute home after a visit in the old settlement where he had been since Sunday. As a young man he studied medicine in the office of Dr. H. P. Smith, of Doyle, father of Dr. Lee Smith who is now a prominent physician of Knoxville. Sparta in 1880 was without railway facilities, and so was Cookeville and most of the Upper Cumberland country.

After remaining in Dr. Smith's office for two or three years, Dr. Denton determined to go to Buffalo Valley and establish himself in the practice of medicine, but it was a number of years before he completed his professional course. Buffalo Valley, Silver Point, Laurel Hill, Rock Springs Valley and contiguous environs have for the past fifty years been looked upon as common ground for the physicians practicing in that territory. They have as a rule labored together without any feeling of professional jealousy and have taken counsel each of the other.

FEWER DOCTORS NOW THAN THEN:

In 1880 there were eight doctors in this territory, while today there are but three – Dr. Denton of Buffalo Valley, Dr. T. J. Smith of Laurel Hill and Dr. Love who only recently located in Silver Point. Until the arrival of Dr. Love, Drs. Smith and Denton were called upon to cover the same territory formerly looked after by the eight. In referring to the old-time physicians Tuesday, Dr. Denton recalled that at the time he went to Buffalo Valley in 1880 he soon met Dr. Tom Denton, who at that time boarded with "Uncle" John Farmer, the latter being a brother of Dr. W. M. Farmer. Dr. Farmer was then in prime vigor and had an extensive practice. Dr. T. J. Fisher was then practicing at Laurel Hill, on Wolf Creek, but is now established in Lancaster. Dr. Lycurgus Hardcastle was practicing on Bowling's Branch, in Smith county, but later moved to Laurel Hill. Dr. W. E. Supert was at Laurel Hill, but is now in Lancaster, Dr. Syper's father was at Silver Point, Dr. Amonett was at Rock Springs and Dr. Ned Burton was established on the old Walton Road not far from Rock Springs Valley.

MANY OLD CITIZENS DEAD:

Dr. Denton recalls but three citizens of Laurel Hill now living who were married at the time he moved to the Valley. They were Fate Vaughn, W. A. Moss and Bill Burton. At Buffalo Valley there were also three John Tucker, Jno. T. Askew, and F. P. McGinnis. Mr. McGinnis has since moved to Carthage, leaving but two of the originals still at Buffalo Valley. In Rock Springs Valley there were also three – H. M. Maddux, Lewis Fletcher, and Alex Huddleston. Perhaps, said Dr. Denton there are one or two others still living who were married in 1880, but he could not recall them without more time for deliberation.

BUFFALO VALLEY IN 1880:

Buffalo Valley proper was made up of a blacksmith's shop, four stores, a grist mill and a tobacco press. One store was owned by Mit and Joe Bartlett, another by Wade Jones and Capt. P. Jones, another by Jno. T. Askew and another by R. S. Alcorn, J. N. Maddux, F. P. McGinnis and Joe Jones. This firm was known as "Alcorn, Maddux, Jones & Co." The tobacco press was operated by Capt. Bill Carlen, father of J. A. Carlen of Cookeville, and Rube Plunkett. Dr. Denton did not remember who were the owners of the tobacco press, but did remember that Rube Plunkett was one of the largest men in that part of the country and on one occasion in the early eighties tipped the scales at 287 pounds with no more clothes on than the law allowed him. Most of this weight, Dr. Denton said, was

made up of strength-producing matter, with only a small allowance of surplus fat. Wade Jones owned and operated the grist mill and the blacksmith shop was owned by some of the merchants as a community necessity, the work being done by trans clients who were generally on the move.

There were no churches at Buffalo Valley then but one at Moccasin Bluff was attended by Buffalo Valley people. There was also a church at Pleasant Grove, not far from Gentry, and a school house on Joshua Bartlett's farm was occasionally used as a place of worship. Mail was brought in twice a week coming to Lebanon by rail then to Doweltown by horse to Laurel Hill then to Buffalo Valley, the route ending at Pekin. Only an occasional newspaper was subscribed for, but the population being mostly republican, weekly issues of the St. Louis Glob-Democrat the Toledo Blade were favorites with those who were able to show a tendency toward literary extravagance. There were three buggies in the community, owned by Esq. R. S. Alcorn, Sam Young and David Nichols. Mr. Young also owned a piano the only one in the territory.

DOES NOT LIKE PUBLICITY:

When Dr. Denton discovered that the Herald editor was asking questions for the purpose of writing a brief story on Buffalo Valley as it was forty-two years ago, he asked that his own name be not mentioned. He is a type that does not crave publicity – but this little recital would be without form if Dr. Denton's request had been complied with. He has played a prominent part in most of the affairs of his community that have been for the common good, and twenty-five years hence when his work has been finished and he is ready to turn over his territory to another. It will be found then, as it is known today, that he has left his foot prints on the sands of time. Rigidly honest, a conscientious and strict flower of his Maker. Interested in the affairs of humanity and the onward march of civilization, he is one whose work ahs been worth while, one whose place his friends hope it will not be necessary to fill for many years to come – one who has recognized a serious duty, and having recognized it had the courage always to strive fully to measure up to the full requirements.

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