

MAURINE ENSOR PATTON

'HAVE YOU EVER'

(Abstractions from her book compiled by Audrey J. Lambert)

Putnam County Tennessee's Historian Maurine Ensor Patton (1917-2009) wrote '*Have you ever*' filled with recollections of a country girl, growing up during the great depression in the small community of Gentry, among the hills and hollers, in the lower end of Putnam County, in the heart of the Upper Cumberland of Middle Tennessee. The concept then was to: Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or do without. Its purpose was to bring back memories of those fortunate enough to have lived in that era.

RECOLLECTIONS:

Worn clothes made from flour sacks and feed sacks or shined your patent leather shoes with half a cold biscuit? Bought cloth for 10 cents per yard? Worn black sateen bloomers to school, crammed your dress in your bloomers to be in uniform for the basketball game?

Played jacks with the cork ends cut from horse shoes? Blown up a hog bladder, tied it with a string and played ball? Made a pop gun from a cane section – using dogwood berries for ammunition?

Put out the ice card with the number of pounds of ice you wanted and watched the iceman split off your 25 pounds of ice and carry it to your ice box with his tongs all along picking up the loose chips of ice to eat?

Written a note on a penny postal card in code to keep the mailman from reading it? Put your letter in the mailbox with 2 pennies for the mailman to attach a stamp?

Pieced a star string quilt top on paper patterns cut from a Sears Roebuck catalog? Ridden a spinning jenny? Read the outdated Sears Roebuck wish book at the outhouse and noticed the colored pages lasted longer. Used a slop jar or had to empty one?

Heard the county agent say that the only way to tell which hen laid the undersized egg was to catch her in the act? Known that 15 eggs is an average setting for the hen and known that eggs hatch in 21 days? Sold an egg to buy a penny pencil for school?

Had a pair of Buster Brown shoes that were bought with your chicken money and enjoyed seeing the picture of Buster and Tige inside the shoes or wore your old shoes to the highway (nearly a mile away) changed to your good ones – hiding the old ones under the store porch? Had your father fix the tack in your shoe that was hurting your foot and watch him half sole your shoes and helped by handing him the springs?

Carried a cool drink of water in a fruit jar to your daddy ploughing the field with a bull tongue or double shovel plow? Ridden the mules to the barn stopping at the spring to

water them? Heard if it thunders in February it will frost on that day in May? Heard that a ring around the moon means rain is due?

Stripped tobacco and graded it – from tips to lugs? Picked up the fallen lower leaves of tobacco (called lugs) after the tobacco was cut, having enough money for a new dress after the lugs were sold? Watched the workers bulk the tobacco down into huge drums for each tobacco company and then gone to the tobacco sale barn and listened to the chants of the auctioneer?

Filled the black kettle with water, drawn the day before wash day, and saved the rinse water for scrubbing the floors? Built a fire under the kettle to boil the clothes and cut up lye soap? Scrubbed a rusty wash kettle with a brick and sand?

Watched your parents bottom a straight chair with hickory bark they had stripped from a sapling? Gone to the thresher to get new straw to put in the bed ticks?

Attended a pounding for the preacher (where each person bought a pound of something, beans, butter, canned goods, etc)?

Gone to the neighbors on Saturday night to hear their brand new battery operated radio and then listened to the Fruit Jar Drinkers and Amos and Andy?

Rubbed a baby's feet with tallow to cure colic or made a sugar tit by placing a bit of sugar in a piece of cheese cloth and then tying it into a lump for the child to suck on?

Soaked a red corn cob in a quart of water overnight to cure a sore throat (a cup of the water every few hours). Applied a mixture of soot and lard to a wound or placed a handful of spider web to stop bleeding?

Removed a wart by rubbing it with a dishrag? (bury the rag in the woods, and when the rag rotted the warts would go away) or removed a wart by making it bleed-then put a drop of blood on a grain of corn – feed the corn to a black hen?

Given anyone with measles hot tea made from sheep droppings? Had a dose of 1 tsp. sugar with 4 or 5 drops turpentine taken each morning for a week to cure worms or a dose of vermifuge? How about some Cardui 38-proof patent medicine to get through some difficult days? Had smoke blown in your ear to cure ear ache? Had the "big eye" and couldn't go to sleep? Carried a buckeye in your picket to cure rheumatism or arthritis?

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