

CREEK FISHING AND A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

The Journey
By Jack Leftwich

My brother and I have been fishing creeks for over 50 years. While catching fish is enjoyable, the real purpose of these trips is to renew childhood memories.

Our most frequent destination has been Spring Creek in Wilson County, but last week there was not enough water in the creek. We decided to go to Lancaster and fish a creek that borders our great-grandfather's farm.

As I rushed to finish some last piece of work, my thoughts turned to the Lebanon of my childhood. In the 1950s, Lebanon's character was more rural and agricultural. The courthouse was on the square. In front of the courthouse, men in overalls used their pocket knives to whittle piles of aromatic cedar shavings. It was a rite of passage when a boy was old enough to own a pocket knife and attempt the art of proper cedar whittling.

On Saturday, farmers brought produce to the square and sold it from the beds of their pickup trucks. The square was vibrant shopping area with hardware stores, Five and Dime stores, taverns and movie theaters. It was center of many Wilson County activities.

Both of my parents grew up on farms. When I was a child, it was an exciting event to visit the farms where my grandparents still lived. The drive to the creek through Cherry Valley on the way to Watertown reminded me of these trips to the family farms. I think that this valley is one of the most scenic drives in Wilson County. It is a wide valley with picturesque farmland bordered by distant hills.

As we drove east and approached Lancaster, the hills got progressively steeper and taller, and the valley were narrower. One road we passed, Devil's Garden Lane, brought back memories of the stories I had heard regarding the area in pre-Civil War times.

According to the stories, the Lancaster Hill Church had invited slaves in the area to attend church services. The slaves replied that they could not attend church because they had to work in the devil's garden. The area retained "The Devil's Garden" name until it was renamed Sebowisha.

Sebowisha was once a train watering station. Steam locomotives would stop to replenish their water tanks. My mother remembers traveling on the train to Lancaster, and the conductor bellowing out "SEEEEBOO WISH EEE" to announce the upcoming train stop. Sebowisha had its own post office early in the 20th Century.

We went by James C. Prichard's home, which is still standing. He was my great-grandfather whose Civil War diary was the subject of a earlier column. Across the road, his grave is in Prichard Cemetery, which is about an acre in size and is totally overgrown. I wondered how much longer his weathered, gabled farmhouse would survive.

We turned off of the state highway onto a tar and gravel, one-lane road. There were steep drop offs with no guardrails. If two cars met, one would have to back up to a wide spot. In wider spots, there were houses that were built too close to the road where bored dogs lazily chased my truck.

I observed utility poles with small capacity electrical wires serving the sparsely populated area. Another set of poles had a phone cables that appeared identical to those I had seen 50 years earlier at my grandfather's farm. Cell phone service is spotty at best, and I doubt anyone in the area has high speed internet.

When we got to our fishing location, I took a rope out of my truck to help us get down the steep bank to the creek. The water was perfect for fishing. It was clear, but not too clear. My brother managed to catch a few smallmouth bass, while I specialized in catching sun perch that managed to hook themselves on my lure that was too large for them to bite. Sun perch are beautiful fish with bright orange and blue colors.

As we fished, a hawk flew overhead with either a rodent or a fish in his talons. Wood ducks occasionally shared the creek with us. Kingfishers and blue herons fished near us. We spooked occasional frogs as we waded upstream in the middle of the creek.

Creek fishing is only partially about catching fish. It is really about brothers being boys in a creek again. I have passed this tradition to my son. I hope to pass it to grandsons.

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Note: Jack Leftwich is the son of J. B. Leftwich and Jo Doris Prichard. Read stories by J. B. Leftwich at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

James Carroll Prichard(1840-1936) md Melissa Lancaster (1848-1921)=
James Fenn Prichard (1884-1969) md Alta Mason Wright (1889-1974)=
Jo Doris Prichard md J. B. Leftwich (1919-2011)=
Jack Howard Leftwich md Lisa Mae Williams

Lewis Temple Leftwich (1823-1898) md Mary Elizabeth Cross (1829-1892)=
George Madison Leftwich (1861-1906) md Anna Frances Haggard (1870-1933)=
Lewis Cass Leftwich (1892-1961) md Lela Belle Bates (1899-1970)=
J. B. Leftwich (191-2011) md Jo Doris Prichard=
Jack Howard Leftwich md Lisa Mae Williams