Smuggling Salt in the Sixties.

In a History of Sharp County That He Wrote, the Late Charles W. Shaver of Evening Shade Described a Trip to New Madrid, Mo., By Ox Wagon After Salt.

By CARUTH C. MOORE

Many stories have been told of the difficulties the people of the South had in obtaining salt during the Civil War, but it was in Arkansas that the most hardship and trouble was experienced. Much of the supply that found its way into Arkansas came from points on the Mississippi—Memphis, New Madrid or Cape Girardeau, Mo.

When the able-bodied men went off to fight, there was not one left to work the farms except the old, men, and boys too young to enlist in the army.

One chapter of the history of Sharp county that was written by the late Charles W. Shaver of Evening Shade is devoted to telling how, in 1864, he headed an expedition of ox wagons to New Madrid to buy salt.

Mr. Shaver, then 27, had been an invalid since he was 14, crippled to the degree that he had to get in and out in a wheelchair. But being handicapped meant nothing to him, either on the salt expedition, or in the many other adventures in which he participated during his long lifetime.

He practically educated himself, and later helped to run the business of his father, John Wesley Shaver, a pioneer merchant and factor at Evening Shade. Mr. Shaver established his own business a short time later. He married Miss Bessie Pender, built his own home, and reared a family. For 13 years he was county treasurer, was business manager and treasurer of the Sharp County Telephone Company for a number of years, and was recording steward of the Evening Shade Methodist church for more than 50 years. He served as commissioner of accounts of Sharp county, a position he held continuously, until old age forced him to retire. He died at the age of 94. The brick house he built still stands, just back of the present courthouse, and is occupied by his son, O. C. Shaver, and family.

In his history of the county, Mr. Shaver relates an incident that occurred shortly before he made his salt expedition, which shows just how scarce salt was. This follows, in part:

"In the year 1863, we were without salt. None was to be had in this part of the country for love or money. My father told me to be on the lookout for a long trip had to be made for it. The only place to look was New Madrid. The road to New Madrid was unknown to us, but it was said to be better than the one we were in at Aleppo. We decided to go, but it would not be safe for my father to go, so he might be taken prisoner. My grandmother, Carroll "Neely," was too young to go.

"Accordingly, I made arrangements to go to Batesville, our nearest trading point, to try to find salt. I got a youthful friend of mine, Jesse McCaleb, who was here on a visit with his brother, Col. James H. McCaleb, and family, to go with me.

"We went on horseback to the home of Maj. Smillie, some 18 miles north of Batesville, and stopped there for the night. He was afterwards a member of Congress from Missouri. His descendants live today near Batesville. I know that Maj. Smillie was well acquainted with the country and with every man in Batesville. I asked him as to where to go to have information as to where I might be able to find salt. He replied that he knew none of the men and said he himself tried and failed to find any. He requested me if I found any to let him know.

"We left the major the next morning and went into Batesville. I interviewed every merchant there, but was able to find what we wanted. Finally, on the third day, a friend told me he believed an old man by the name of Robert Smith had some hidden away. I soon found him. He explained that the fact that he had hidden away the salt was due to the fact that he was a slave and feared the Federals. He had no groceries during the war. He had stored away the salt, a bag of salt, under his bed, and had it stored away until after the war. He buried it, and the salt was in a bag at the bottom of the house. He was buried in the salt, and the salt was buried in the house. He buried it in a bag and left it there. We dug up the bag, and found the salt was there. We took the salt and went to New Madrid and sold it."

"The trip to New Madrid, I believe, was told by Mr. Shaver in his history, after inquiry had been made and several persons found who expressed a desire to make the jour- ney. Describing this expedition, Mr. Shaver wrote:

"When the last of October (1863) we determined to quit eating our chicken and fresh meat without salt. It was possible to find any. Warner Motofal and I riggled up one ox wagon for the trip; Jem Adair, John London and Mr. McCaleb furnished a wagon and yoke of oxen; Mrs. Ad Hamilton furnished another ox; and when we came to Smith- ville, Lawrence county, on our way, we fell in with Charles England and two women from Upper Spring river. There we were joined by Col. Bill Adams, whose descendants live today in Independence county; Mrs. Bettie Holt and Miss Franci- ke Holt. Another old couple, man and wife, joined us later. These furnished us up with our oxen on our trip, and with their quilts and subsequent 'making up.'

"We went to Potosi, where we were ex- pected to cross Black river. But the ferry boat had been destroyed, and we had to turn back and go to Potosi, and there we decided to go to New Madrid, although some of the party wished to go to Memphis. We traveled slowly and carefully until we got to the St. Francis river valley, east of Crowley's Ridge.

"Here some 'Jayhawkers' camped upon us, and took from me a 400-pound bag of cotton, which I could have sold for 180 pounds in New Madrid. Two of their men got into our wagon, and threw the bag to the ground, bidding us go on our way. This we were glad to do, before they molested us farther.

"Coming to the river just at night, we camped in a farmer's pumpkin house. There was no ferry here, so we secured a 20-foot canoe, or 'pugwari.' We fished all night and caught enough for our trip. We crossed Black river, and traveled on to New Madrid. We were formerly in the army, and had seen a lot of fighting. We saw a lot of fighting. We had a lot of fighting. We had a lot of fighting.

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"When one of the 'Jayhawkers' planted a gun against Andy Metcalfe's head, he turned his pockets wrong side out to convince him that he was too young. War-ner Motofal had hidden his money that afternoon in the fold of his trousers at the last, so he handed it over, and then turned out his pockets with very little money in it. The man accordingly struck him on the cheek with his pistol, fracturing the bone. Warner at once snatched his money from his hiding place and handed it to the 'Jayhawkers.'

"When the man went to New Madrid, the man cracked the black man was not allowed to be there."

"This is my story, and how I saved the money. I was hustling and had a little bill in my pocket. The man snatched it and I did not think he would. But I was just as hot as I could get. He gave it up as a bad job, and left me sitting by the campfire.

"The robber continued to curse and de- mand my money. I was really mad now, and told him that I was an industrious young man, and I did not think he would. But I was just as hot as I could get. He gave it up as a bad job, and left me sitting by the campfire.

"I was left to find how I was to get back to New Madrid, and I was feeling it when I saw a man and a woman who were taking my belongings. Next morning we found some of the men where they had been dropped.

"We were told that those robbers were after bank men, and had had some money."

"We were now on our way home. We (Continued on Page 11)"
travelled slowly, but little incident. We camped that night on the bank of the river. It had fallen, and the river was fast rising. The next morning as we were getting around a short bend in the road, being still on the bank of the river, we heard a fearful crash. Looking back, we saw that 75 yards behind us some 50 feet of the road over which we had just passed, had caved into the river. If this had happened only a few, short moments before, it would have been the last of us and our precious salt.

"Traveling on, we came to within a mile of Cayson, where we stopped to buy corn. After the corn had been sacked, and Warner Metcalfe was putting it into our wagon, the farmer came to me and said, 'I don't know who you folks are, nor where you are going. But here is a Federal gunboat anchored in the river just below the mouth of the slough at Cayson. There are 150 soldiers on it. You and your wagon are likely to be searched. If any contrabands are found, they will confiscate your goods, and maybe hold your prisoners indefinitely. We wanted him for his warning, and drove on.

"We did not feel the best in the world. All of us had more or less contraband goods, which we did not have permission to bring through the lines. We had the gunpowder hidden inside the feathered which my mother had thought necessary for me to bring with me. There was no road around the place. We had to go forward to reach home. But we were to be delivered from the dilemma in a way unforeseen.

"There was a very deep slough at the north edge of town, bridged by a self-supporting wooden bridge. The bridge was in the shape of the roof of a house, floored with logs split in two pieces, with the split side turned down. This made a very rough floor for the bridge, something like a corduroy road.

"Making a turn in the road we saw the gunboat. She lay anchored just below the bridge. To make it worse for us, some 50 or 60 soldiers lay running themselves on the sage grass. We expected nothing else but that they would rush out and capture us.

"Now Colonel Adams had a very bad boil on his knee. In fact, he was unable to walk. He had two yoke of oxen to his wagon, fat and spirited animals. The woman who was driving them could not make them go on the bridge. Some of the men went to her assistance. Now an ox is a slow-moving beast, but when it runs away, it really runs away. The four oxen took a mutual notion to run, and run they did.

"The wagon bumped across the rough flooring of the bridge. Colonel Adams' knee was knocked and bumped against the hold. He opened his mouth and began to swear as loud as he could yell. He was an accomplished 'swearer,' and this time he used his ability to the fullest. He cursed the oxen, he cursed the wagon, he cursed the bridge, he gave all 'Yankees' their full share, referring to all Yankees in picked terms, as if the soldiers who ran to a sitting posture below us and raised their necks to hear, were in some way responsible for his hurts. He cursed until we were half a mile from the town. It did not take us long to traverse the distance, for the other crew, excited by the tumult, ran pell mell after the column of wagon. Never Roman character took so wild a ride. It was, in a measure, a triumph, also! To be on the safe side, however, we traveled until after dark that night.

"The next day we were obliged to travel through swamps. Shirt was falling so hard that we could hardly see our way. We traveled in every direction of the compass, going around holes and logs. By dark we had come to a little hard ground, where we could camp. We drank water out of the wagon wheels, rolled up in our blankets, and were soon asleep. During the night I was awakened by snow falling in my face. The next morning we were covered up in snow.

"Arriving at Little River, we were obliged to pay a man who knew the stream $3 to pilot us across. Much rain had put the river out of its banks, and strangers could not tell where the ford was safe. To get to the river, we had first to cross a slough 50 yards wide. The men had to wade through this and break the ice for the oxen. The beasts were not anxious to go, but with much coaxing and whipping on the part of their drivers, were finally prevailed upon to do so.

"Our man had us halt at the bank of the river, while he went ahead on a horse to see if the crossing was safe. He said he would come back and pilot us. We stood and anxiously watched him ride into the water. He went forward for a time, then became more distant and disappeared from our sight beneath the surface of the water. He rose at one to the top of the water, and called to us that he would swim to the other side. Then, he said, he would send a man with a boat for us.

"As the fellow disappeared from sight on the opposite side of the river, Andy Motcalfe, evidently feeling helpless to cross, and disgusted with the whole trip, slipped his thigh with his hands, and said, 'O, I'll never see Bethy again! I'll never see Bethy again!' Bethy was his wife at home, and two very good old people they were.

"Just as sundown a man came in us in a 12-foot canoe, but we told him to return the next morning to row us across. We were forced to camp that night on the icy island between the river and the slough.

"In the morning, in preparing to cross the river, we took everything from the wagon that we wanted to keep dry, tied the wagon bed to the axetree, hooked three yokes of oxen to the wagon, placed one man in the wagon, and two in the boat to guide the oxen and keep the wagon from hanging up on cypress knees, as well as to run the boat. After they had got our wagon and camping outfits over, they took the woman and me across. It took all day, but we camped that night on the other bank of the river.

"We crossed the Grand Prairie the next day, and found the roads good until we came to the St. Francis river bottoms. The bolder river was swollen from rain, but we were fortunate in finding two 20-foot pirogues to cross in. The men tied the boats together, but far enough apart to put the two wagon wheels on the right side in one boat, and the opposite ones in the other boat. Thus the wagons were carried across, without the necessity of unloading them. As usual, we had to swim our oxen across.

"We were now back in Arkansas. That day we traveled 10 miles through water from three to 18 inches deep, with no visible road except the open way through the timber. We stayed over night on Crowley's Ridge in the home of our mutual friend, Mr. Johnson. He was a black peddler who has since sold clocks all over Sharp county. The women in our party had access to Mrs. Johnson's cabin.