

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 2-No. 3

March, 2002

CAMPING AT DR. ROOK'S PLANTATION

Sit back, kick your shoes off, and let your mind wander back some 138 years to April 13, 1864. Imagine you are living a few miles southwest of Bluff City on the main road that runs from Lone Grove by Ebenezer and eastward toward Camden. The Civil War has been going on since 1861, fought mainly in other states, but now troop movements are a common sight on the road by your place. Imagine you are living about where the Arkansas Forestry Commission tree farm is located today on Hwy. 299.

This is the area in which Dr. William R. Rook owned a plantation in those days. Dr. Rook owned just about all the land from where Doris Barlow and James Nelson live today all the way to Ebenezer Cemetery. This area was well suited for a large farm with level fields and well-drained soil. Other large plantations were nearby, including the huge Gulley plantation just down the road. From census records, we learn that Dr. Rook was born in Tennessee and was age 36 in 1864. His wife's name was Mary Jane and they had two children. Dr. Rook's plantation is shown on an 1865 map (see next page). I don't usually associate a doctor as being a plantation owner, but evidently this one was. Deed records show he sold his farm in 1876 to Harriett J. Blake.

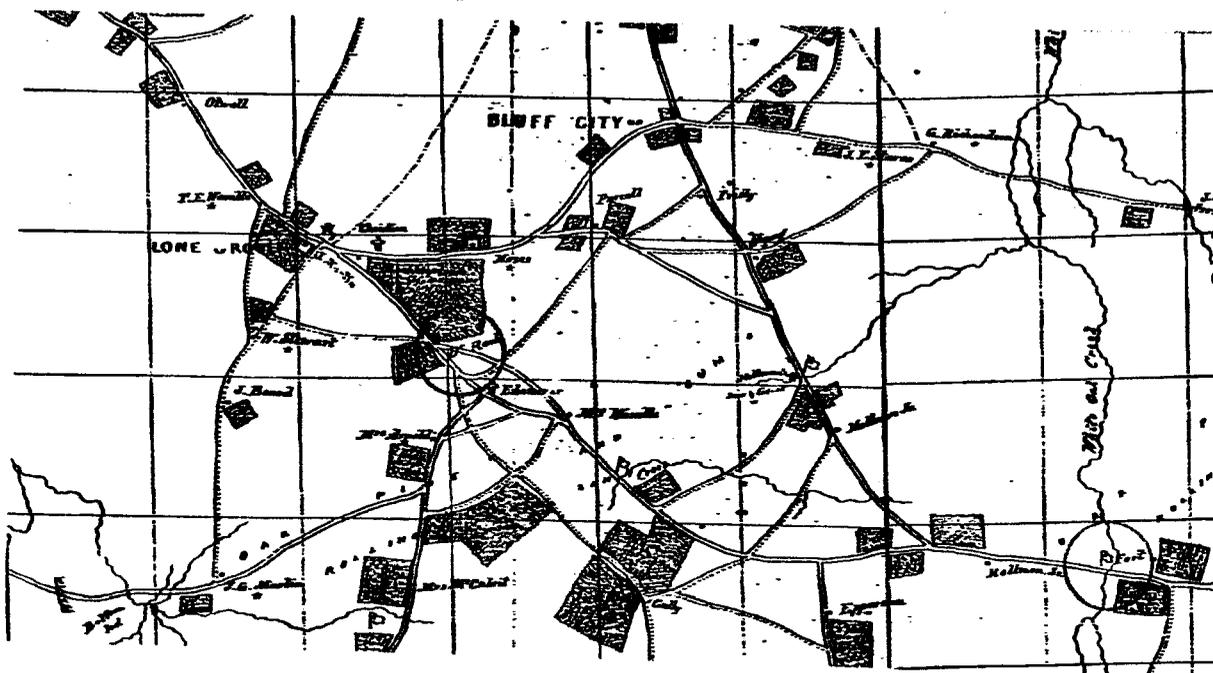
Since Dr. Rook was a physician and was only in his 30's, it is possible that he was away from home in 1864 serving in the army or he may have been allowed to stay at home because he was a doctor. Other than the census record and the deed record, very little is known about this man.

I would imagine the war somewhat disrupted normal farm life as soldiers could be seen moving through the countryside, raiding nearby farms for whatever supplies they might need. I would expect that many of the plantations were operated by women and slaves as most of the menfolk had enlisted to fight and were gone from home. In April, 1864 a small bit of history was recorded that should be of interest to those of us who grew up in this area.

I recently found a record in a book called *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies-Series I-Volume 34* in which Brigadier General Eugene Asa Carr, a Union general, made a report on the activities of his army as they moved through this area. He mentions that he camped at Dr. Rook's plantation near Lone Grove. From previous reports, we learn that his army consisted of at least 600 mounted men plus a forage train (wagons). He had been near Murfreesboro on April 10th, at a place called Folk's Old Field on April 12th, at Dr. Rook's plantation on April 13th, at White Oak Creek on April 14th, and his next report was from Camden on April 21st.

The Battle of Poison Springs happened on April 18, 1864. I have all the reports from the armies in that battle and it appears that General Carr's army was already in Camden and did not participate in that battle. That means that another large army probably traveled the same route a few days later. A good water supply at a campsite would have been needed to supply water for 600 horses. My theory is they may have used the spring that furnishes water to the
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HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY DIVISION,

Dr. Rook's Plantation, near Lone Grove, Ark., April 13, 1864.

SIR: I am encamped along the road from Lone Grove toward Camden. Colonel Ritter has orders to move with his mounted force to Camden early to-morrow. In the absence of other orders I propose to march at 7 o'clock to-morrow, keeping scouts well out on either flank. The Caneby makes a sweep to the southwest from the crossing, and is said to be impassable, so as to protect us on the south till we get several miles further east. Some of my foragers saw 12 rebels about a mile north of here to-day. I propose to take out the family of a soldier of the Tenth Illinois, which is at a cross-roads called Bluff City, 3 miles east by northeast of Lone Grove; also those of two Union men living near here north of the road. The soldier says there is forage in his neighborhood, and that he can take a train of twenty wagons off the road at Lone Grove and come in again at a point several miles in advance, loaded. The man has gone to-night after his family. If he returns in time in the morning he will report to Captain Henry, but I think it would be well to send the wagons any way, as any intelligent man ought to be able to make the circuit, and guides may be pressed. The road, so far, from Caneby is sandy, and rain cannot hurt it.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. A. CARR,

Brigadier-General, Commanding.

Lieut. G. O. SOKALSKI,

Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

CAMP ON WHITE OAK CREEK.

April 14, 1864—9 p. m.

SIR: Upon arriving here a short time before sunset I sent out 500 men to reconnoiter the Washington road, 350 to go to the junction with this road, and 250 to take a cross-road which leaves this 1½ miles in advance. The reconnaissance on the direct road drove a scouting party of about 60 (which had been annoying my advance for several miles) to within half a mile of the junction, where it met a column of the enemy and engaged it. At last reports they were still engaged, and had not yet arrived at the junction. The party on the cross-road went on to the Washington road and formed line across it. A few moments after there came a party of about 300 from the west. My men challenged: "Whocomesthere?" Answer, "Friends." "Friends of whom?" "Friends of Jeff. Davis." Whereupon my men fired on them, killed 1, wounded and captured another, and captured 1 unwounded. The unwounded prisoner says he belongs to Kitchen's regiment, of Greene's brigade, and that Greene's and Shelby's brigades have passed on to Camden; that his party was the rear guard; does not know whether Price's whole force is moving or not. The wounded prisoner has not yet come in. A citizen, captured about 1½ miles in advance, says he saw one of Marmaduke's flankers near the Washington road this p. m. I have had 3 men wounded, 1 through the chest.

General Rice came to this creek just after I had received the above report, 7.30 o'clock. We agree that we are between 5 and 6 miles from your headquarters; the junction is 4 miles still farther. We

propose to move at daylight. I send with this orders to Colonel Ritter to move at daylight. The road is good; there are two small creeks to cross; bottoms narrow (a few yards wide), but may (probably will) require some work. The crossing here is covered with water, and promises to last well. Lieutenant Porter places but little confidence in the prisoner's statement, but I feel satisfied that a considerable part of the enemy's force has got between us and Camden. The remainder may be camped to-night on the upper crossing of the White Oak, in which case we will be before them at the junction in the morning.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. A. CARR,

Brigadier-General, Commanding.

Lieut. G. O. SOKALSKI,

Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

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Brigadier General Eugene Asa Carr

Born March 20, 1830 in Concord, NY

Died Dec. 2, 1910 in Washington, DC

Graduate of West Point--

Commanded Union forces at Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge;
Received Medal of Honor for heroism in battle; in Arkansas in
1864; after the Civil War was Indian fighter

nursery pond on Hwy. 299, since it was along the main road. The exact location of Dr. Rook's home is not known.

See page 2 for copies of General Carr's reports and the map to help you locate his route.

A note to members of the Nelson family: If you had been living where you now live back in 1864, you would probably have had some visitors as these soldiers camped near your place. I'm sure Mrs. Oleta Nelson's cooking would have been better than what these Yankee soldiers could have come up with. They might have "borrowed" some of your animal feed or other supplies. You would probably have given it to them, hoping they wouldn't harm you or burn your home. You probably wouldn't have gotten much sleep that night knowing that over 600 Yankee soldiers were camped nearby.

Remember the newspaper article I put in my *Diggin' Deeper* book about the buried treasure believed to be buried on the Hildre Griffith place. That article stated that a Confederate soldier buried the treasure at the site of a Civil War campground shortly before the battle of Poison Springs. That article says the Confederates camped there and we have record of Gen. Carr's Union army camping there, so it is possible that armies from both sides camped at the same places as different times. Since Mr. Griffith plowed up Civil War artifacts on his farm, the actual campsite may have been near his old home place, but remember this army had at least 600 men and horses plus wagons, so the camp could have covered a large area.

The newspaper article stated that Mr. Giffith purchased his farm from Dr. Rook in 1926. The deed record I found shows Mr. Griffith bought his farm from A. C. and Fannie Moody in 1925, so maybe more research is needed to sort all this out. Dr. Rook would have been 98 years old had he been living in 1926, so I have my doubts about that part of the article. The last deed records I found involving Dr. Rook was in 1878 when he sold the place to Harriett Blake. What happened to him after 1878 is unknown.

YOU

By Edgar A. Guest
(from the Camden Evening News-1925)

You are the fellow that has to decide
Whether you'll do it or toss it aside.
You are the fellow who makes up your mind,
Whether you'll lead or will linger behind-
Whether you'll try for the goal that's afar
Or be contented to stay where you are.
Take it or leave it. Here's something to do!
Just think it over. It's all up to you.

What do you wish? To be known as a shirk,
Known as a good man who's willing to work,
Scorned for a loafer or praised by your chief,
Rich man or poor man or beggar or thief?
Eager or earnest or dull through the day,
Honest or crooked? It's you who must say!
You must decide in the face of the test,
Whether you'll shirk it or give it your best.

Nobody here will compel you to rise;
No one will force you to open your eyes;
No one will answer for you yes or no,
Whether to stay there or whether to go.
Life is a game, but it's you who must say
Whether as cheat or sportsman you'll play.
Fate may betray you, but you settle first
Whether to live to your best or to your worst.

So whatever it is you are wanting to be,
Remember, to fashion the choice you are free.
Kindly or selfish, or gentle or strong,
Keeping the right way or taking the wrong.
Careless of honor or guarding your pride,
All these are questions which you must decide.
Yours the selection, whichever you do;
The thing men call character's all up to you.

PUZZLE: How much is 1 times 2 times 3 times 4 times 5 times 6 times 7 times 8 times 9 times 0?

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WHAT ANATOMY IS (found in the Camden Evening News-March 14, 1923)

A little Negro school girl down in Florida in answer to this question, wrote the following:

Anatomy is a human body. It is divided into three parts--the head, the chest, and the stummick. The head holds the skull and the brains if they is any, the chest holds the liver and the lites, and the stummick holds the entrails and the vowels, which are a, e, i, o, and u and sometimes w and y.

RATES OF BOARD AMERICAN HOTEL--CAMDEN, AR., DEC. 27, 1847

Board and Lodging per month	\$15.00	Breakfast	\$.35
Board without Lodging per month	12.00	Supper	.35
Dinner boarders per month	8.00	Lodging	.25
Board per week with Lodging	5.00	Horse, per month	10.00
Board per day with Lodging	1.00	Horse, per day	.75
Board per day for Man and Horse	1.75	Horse, single feed	.35
Dinner	.50	Children and servants half price-	
		Lights extra	

EXCERPT FROM THE BLUFF CITY HIGH SCHOOL HANDBOOK (1913-14)

Literary Societies, Reading Circles, Debating Clubs, and Conventions will be organized. Much pains will be taken to train pupils in the use of Parliamentary Laws. They will be stimulated to post themselves and to contend for every privilege the law allows them. But all this work will be done upon a high moral and intellectual basis. All low vulgar slang and dialect will be discouraged. Our every aim will be to elevate their morals, develop their intellect, and to prepare them for the actual duties and responsibilities of life.

Pupils will be given much practice in essay writing and in writing, memorizing, and delivering speeches of their own composition.

Location: Bluff City is situated in the eastern part of Nevada County, in one of the best agricultural sections within the famous "Pine Belt Region". Its people are cultured and hospitable, and thoroughly interested in the cause of education.

The town and surrounding country are elevated and well drained, thus being free from malaria. The moral and religious influences are good. There are three churches in the town, and our pupils are encouraged to attend religious services every Sunday. We have no saloons or other immoral places. (*more from this handbook in next issue*)

