

# History of Reed Henderson's Wagon

Reed and Elsie (Ramsey) Henderson lived above Parthenon, Arkansas on what they called "the bench" from approximately 1931 until 1965. They had eight children: Hugh, Ray (who died as an infant), Russell, Obie, Geraldine, Herman, V.J., and Betty. Most of their children eventually moved away from the Parthenon area. Several moved to the Harrison area, while others settled in Wichita, Kansas. V.J. was the only one who stayed near his parents. Today his sons Ricky and Michael, are the only descendents of Reed and Elsie that live near Parthenon.

Reed hauled freight on his wagon too and from Parthenon, Jasper, Mill Creek, and Harrison. He often told the story that it would take two days to go from Parthenon to Harrison. The leg from the Pruitt bridge to the top of the mountain often took a full day. Reed and a fellow freighter would hook both teams of their horses up to one wagon at a time just to get their wagons to the top of the mountain. He also hauled grain to Marble Falls to be ground, and he then returned home with his share. During the winter time, Reed had a dog who would lay on his feet to keep them warm when he made these long trips. At other times of the year, Reed would remove the bed from the wagon and haul stave bolts from the woods in and around Parthenon for income to support his family.

It is believed that this wagon was one of the last wagons sold by a company in Harrison and purchased by Reed around 1930,

shortly before Herman was born in 1932. Not many of the original parts still remain on the wagon, as the heavy use by Reed damaged the original wooden bolsters. When something broke, he would cut what was needed from the woods and make a replacement part. At some point, he replaced the bolsters with metal bolsters.

One story told by Reed involved his younger brother, Sylvan, who borrowed the wagon to court a girl that lived a ways from Parthenon. After taking her home, the horses spooked and the front axle was damaged. Reed's brother-in-law, Virgil Willis, had another axle, which Sylvan used to replace the damaged one before he returned the wagon. A lot of felloes and spokes have been replaced over the years. During the time that the wagon was actively being used, it was best to finish repairs with the parts available because there was no time or money to wait on expensive parts.

Herman told a story about his Dad's fondness for visiting with friends at the Parthenon store. Reed would often send the team of horses up the mountain towards home by themselves pulling the wagon. Herman and Russell would normally be near the barn and would straighten the wagon at the lot gate so they could pull it into the barn for storage. One day Herman and Russell were messing with the horses as they were pulling the wagon. The horses got spooked and ran through the gate. Fortunately, there was no damage to the wagon, but it did make the boys think about the folly of messing with the horses as they

were pulling the wagon in the barn. While growing up, Herman loved to carve his initials in anything wood. You can see his initials (HDH) carved on the underside of the wagon seat.

Reed and Elsie moved off the “bench” around 1965 to their new home in Parthenon, near the general store owned by William Riley Shelton. Their new house had actually been a general store before they moved into it. When they moved, they left the wagon near the barn where later it was pushed into the woods, probably by some kids playing with it. Thankfully, Herman had the foresight to recover the wagon. He and his sons, Steven and Nelson, brought this wagon to their farm near Bellefonte, just outside of Harrison. It was stored in their barn for several years. On a few occasions when Herman’s boys were growing up, they would hook the wagon to a couple of donkeys they owned and take it on short rides.

In 1982, Reed’s grandson, Donnie Daniels (Obie’s son), asked Herman and his boys if he could restore the wagon. They agreed, and Donnie took the wagon and restored it to a useable condition in 2001. Donnie and his wife, Joe Daniels, began competing in dutch oven events shortly thereafter using Reed’s restored wagon. In 2002, they became members of the American Chuckwagon Association and competed in Ft Worth, Texas at the Red Steagell Cowboy Gathering. Part of this competition included driving the wagon in downtown Ft. Worth into the famous stockyards located there. After competing for many years in chuck wagon events all across the country, the wagon

was once again retired to a barn at Donnie's farm just outside of Harrison.

For a short period of time, Herman's son, Nelson, safely stored it in a shed on his place near Pocahontas, Arkansas. When the opportunity came to display the wagon in the Bradley House Museum at Jasper, Nelson, Steven, and Donnie all agreed that this would be a great place to tell the history of their grandfather's wagon and also to preserve this almost 100 year old story for future generations of those interested in Newton County history.

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