

Laura Lenora Woods by Lenora Woods. Mommas Story(Lucile Reese nee Montgomery contributed this autobiography)

Laura Lenora Woods, daughter of Harris and Arrena Woods was born March 11, 1860. The Civil War between the states began in April of '61, therefore my first recollections are of Civil War days and the very hard years which followed. My father enlisted for the Southern army in July of 1862. I do not remember his leaving, but remember well when he returned home in July of '65. I had four sisters and three brothers older than I, and seven brothers and one sister younger, so you see I was the middle of 16, had twin brothers next younger, therefore no one ever had time or inclination either so far as I know to give me any extra petting. I was a very healthy child, never was sick to amount to anything, and a doctor had never felt my pulse when I was married at 22 years old, and my father had never bought any medicine for me nor paid a doctor's bill. Times were hard in those days and all the grown ups were busy trying to get a start again after 4 years of devastation and privations caused by the war, and there were grown ups that really had to have Sunday fixens, and the little babes to be looked after, therefore the middler neither large nor small was supposed to get along with plain home made clothes, eat at the second table, and take care of herself, for the most part at least. I never had a toy of any kind, not even a rag doll given me. We had no Christmas gifts except a little handful of candy apiece on Christmas morning and no more again until the next Christmas. Ice cream was talked about as a 4th of July luxury by older ones, but really I never tasted and of it until I was grown up! But all was not gloomy in my childhood. I had a dear little brother, John Emmet, 3 years younger than I that I played with and we loved each other very dearly. We were both unusually fond of flowers, and from the first warm days in March till Nov, we roamed the hills and hollows hunting wild flowers, which at that time were plentiful.

We had no toys but did have a great love for flowers which God had no graciously provided for us. We knew the places where the different kinds grew, some along the clear sparkling streams, some on the hillside, some other on the ridges. We would sometimes go a mile from home, but never took those trips without mother's consent. We always wanted to know the names of the flowers and if no one could give us their name, we proceeded to name them ourselves. We loved to get hands full to take home, but were always careful to leave some of "next year." I never see a yellow buttercup or wind flower but what it reminds me of these happy childhood days and of my dear little brother

that died when he was 9 and I was 12, which is now 71 years ago. After his death I played more with my twin brothers Landen and Loren which were only 16 months younger than I. Fact is, I grew up with boys--2 brothers next older, Wilson and Oliver, and 7 just younger.

For the first few years after the war, terms of school at the old Dry Valley School house were short, at first any 3 months, later on 4, and by the time I was in the teenage, six months. I attended all of these schools. When 14 years old never missing a day of the six-month term and never was tardy and was never assisted in anyway in getting there and back home. We wore heavy shoes and stockings and no snowstorm or rain was supposed to hinder us, and it didn't. The schoolhouse was about one mile away if we went through the field, farther if we went around the road. We had good teachers and good schools. In 1876 the old Dry Valley district, one of the oldest in the county and probably the state also, was divided and two new schoolhouses built, one in each half and we again had short terms of school (4 months) until district got out of debt, but my father's family and others in the district managed to attend every day of term and didn't fall far behind. As I now recall eight country schoolteachers went out from the Dry Valley part of this district, the first few years of the division.

My first calico dress. I do not know the exact date but think I was about 8 years old when my mother made my first dress that wasn't of home made cloth. It was dark calico I remember the exact figure and color and can never forget how proud I was and how I felt when my mother called me in from play to try it on. I could hardly keep from weeping for joy and I prized it so highly it seemed almost sacred to me.

The first time I wore it was when my mother took the three boys, Landon, Loren and Emmet and me to Saturday meeting at the Dry Valley schoolhouse and I imagined everybody there was noticing my pretty dress Ha! Ha! Should this dress be compared to the dresses of my own girls at 8 or, or my granddaughters it would not be considered pretty by any means. I also remember the first pair of store shoes that came my way. My mother said in time of the war that she would get a side of leather and hire an old Negro that lived a few miles away to make shoes for the family.

After my father's return from the army he made our shoes for winter wear and we went barefoot in the summer. I have often thought about the danger of

snakes as we ran over the ridges and down into hollows and along the streams barefooted to hunt flowers, but remember my mother would say as we started, “ Look out for snakes!” and I just have faith enough in God to think he protected us.

(Continuation of Momma’ s story from another paper. Might be repetition.)

In the first few years after the war, my clothes like my food was homemade and very plain. Linsey dresses for winter and homemade cotton dresses for summer. The linsey was a heavy cloth, cotton warp and wool filling. My mother and older sisters would make two pieces of cotton cloth every spring. One piece was colored with indigo, a chick would consist of deep blue, pale blue, a little bit of copperas, (dull yellow) and a few threads of white as indigo was expensive and the process of coloring slow and tedious they would make another piece for hard every day wear, and color it with buds and barks and some copperas and could in one day color enough for one piece of cloth. I remember going over in the burnt wood with my mother while she would fill a basket with black jack sprouts to color thread to make cloth. I would find many beautiful flowers and always greatly enjoyed the trip.