

This information comes from an old website no longer valid. It is a story written by Evelyn Goforth about a cousin of Caswell Reece's named Curnel Reece. Many of those on our branch of the family tree are mentioned in the following tale. I have used parts of this story in other places but here it is in its entirety.

The Curn Reece Story

Anthony Reece (Caswell Reece's great-grandfather) came to Haywood County in the early 1800's. His wife's name was Sarah Chambers and they are the ones that lived in the hollow tree. The story is that they lived in a hollow tree until they got their house built. Another story says that one day an eagle swooped down and picked up their baby. Sarah beat it with a scrag (straw) broom until it dropped the baby.

There was a falling out within the family. There were some Reeses who lived between Cruso and Bethel who used the "s" instead of the "c" in their name. Bonnie Reece Sharp was asked if they were related. She said they had changed the spelling because they didn't want to be associated with the rest of the family.

John Valentine (J.V.) Reece (Caswell's father) was a preacher and apparently a carpenter. He could have been called a circuit rider or not, but his grandson, Mont Reece (Caswell's son) told me he rode a horse to different churches to preach. Possibly that is the reason he traveled as much as he did.

When J.V. first came to this part of the country, according to his grandson Mont, he lived over in Georgia between Ebenzer and Blairsville. He built and operated a grist mill while he lived there and possibly that is when he became acquainted with Clay County. Somewhere along the line he also spent some time in the Watauga Settlements in what is now Tennessee.

When J.V. settled in Clay County, all of his children except one son and one daughter also moved to Clay County. His son, Charlie, operated a blacksmith shop. His sons Joe, Theodore and son-in-law, Curn (*Susan Ellen's husband*), operated a saw mill and his daughter, Ann, and her husband George Sharp, operated a country store. His son, Caswell, also operated a country store and farmed on the other end of Pine Log. His daughter, Lillie, operated a grist mill he had built for her. She was a widow with five children to raise. (*Jefferson Waldroup died in 1914*) So J.V. bought an old mill from Peter Miller that didn't even have cogs to operate it. He and his son, Charlie, made cogs and other workings for it in Charlie's blacksmith shop. Ann, George and Joe eventually returned to Haywood County. Aunt Bonnie was already married and had two children when Curn and the other family members moved to Clay County, so she stayed in Haywood County.

According to Mont, his father (J.V.), Caswell, Uncle Theodore and Cousin Arthur bought a horse drawn combine in the mid-twenties. When the depression hit that part of the country, the conveyor belt on it was worn out. The cost of a new one was \$6.50. Between the three of them they didn't have the money to buy one, so they had to cut the wheat and rye they had contracted to cut with a cradle. Cas said he had no idea how many acres of wheat he cut.

Mont loaned my Uncle Cas ledgers from 1928-1929 and according to them sugar was 3 cents a pound, salt 2 cents, coffee 15 cents, and a pair of overalls or work shirt \$1.25. People worked for him for a dollar a day. Eula Reece Miller had a notebook she kept in 1939 and the prices were the same. They had not gone up at all in ten years.

People didn't buy things, they traded eggs, chickens or whatever they had for what they needed. Uncle Cas paid 8 cents for a dozen eggs, 2 cents a pound for dried apples and a hen brought about a quarter. Mont said they took any kind of staples to Murphy and traded them to wholesale houses for the things they needed. He would load up the wagon at night and leave out before daylight and after he had done his trading, it would be dark before he got back home.

Lillie, Annie, Roy, and J.T. (Theodore) left for factory jobs. They would all come home for Christmas. Sometimes Bonnie and Dave Sharp came. They always brought a barrel of sheep nose apples and we could eat all we wanted. I thought they were the best apples I ever tasted. They must have come home earlier one year because there were still chestnuts. Blight had hit the chestnut trees. There was one in Curn's pasture. Uncle Roy and Uncle J.T. cut it down, brought the chestnuts to the house and roasted them in the fireplace. The only problem was, they forgot to punch a hole in them. When they got hot, they exploded shooting chestnuts and fire coals all over the room.

Curn Reece, was, I guess, almost what you would call dour. I don't remember ever hearing him really laugh. He was slow moving and didn't seem to ever get in a hurry and was rather quiet. He attended church but never took an active part in the worship service. His pastime was fox hunting. He always had a bunch of fox hounds. One he had was an egg sucker. Grandma Ellen kept telling him if he didn't break it from sucking eggs or put it up, she'd get rid of it. One morning, grandpa went to feed the dogs and this one was sitting on the side of the hill above the house and didn't move when he called it. He went to investigate, when he touched the dog it fell over. Grandma had kept her promise and poisoned the dog. He kept his dogs out of the hen house after that.

When the menfolk went fox hunting, if the dogs were running good, they'd spend the night. Grandpa taught me (*Evelyn*) how to blow his fox horn. I'd go out on the porch and blow the proscribed number of times and before long here would come everyone who wanted to go fox hunting. He also used the horn to call in the dogs when the hunt was over.

Grandma Ellen Reece was a fun loving person. She loved to play tricks on people. They were always funny but sometimes verged on being mean. She taught me to milk and would let me help run the separator. I never could understand how you could pour milk in a hopper and cream would come out one spout and milk the other. She would take me fishing sometimes when I was over there on Saturday. I was only 4 or 5 years old and only caught molly crawly bottoms but to me that was a big adventure. She was very active in church.

Grandpa Curn Reece had a home-made cider press. It set under a white sweet apple tree between the house and the barn. The apples were delicious baked but wouldn't keep. What couldn't be used was fed to the stock. They always made several gallons of cider and it would keep for a good while in the spring house in stone jugs. If it got hard before it was drunk up and you drank too much of it, it would make you high. Grandma also used it to make vinegar. I always had fun when I visited Grandpa and Grandma Reece.