

THE DAYS OF THE OLD SORGHUM MILL

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My Granddad Haney made sorghum molasses on the banks of Rock Creek for around thirty years. After Granddad passed away, there wasn't anyone to make sorghum molasses. My uncle, Earl Firey, said he would give it a try. Uncle Earl read everything he could find about making sorghum molasses for table use. He found that the type of soil had much to do with make good sorghum. The cane that is grown in light sandy soil makes the best sorghum molasses. It is light in color and doesn't have that strong smell or taste about it. The cane that is grown in black soil makes molasses that is much darker in color and much stronger in taste. Uncle and I talked about it some, then we decided to plant us a field of cane. There was about three acres of upland with light sandy soil. I plowed the field and got it ready for planting. We picked out some cane seed that we thought would make good sorghum. When it came time to plant, I planted the little three acres in cane. It turned out to be a good season that year. We had a fine crop of sorghum cane, with stalks that were small around but very tall. In late summer, Uncle Earl fired up the old sorghum mill and started making sorghum molasses. There was lots of cane coming in from all over the country side. Uncle Earl would make sorghum using different neighbors' cane for a share of it, just as Granddad had done. Uncle Earl started right off making very good sorghum. After Uncle got caught up with all of the

neighbors' cane, I cut down our crop and brought it to the mill. Our little crop of cane filled well over three hundred and fifty gallons of the best sorghum that you could ever hope to find anywhere. It didn't have that strong taste to it, was light in color and looked like honey. Uncle really did a great job making very good sorghum. Seems all of the things Uncle read about making good sorghum paid off. We bought three hundred and fifty one gallon pails and Uncle had some labels made that read "*Rock Creek Valley Sorghum*". We were both proud of that label because we knew that it represented the best sorghum found anywhere. After the sorghum season was over, we started taking our sorghum to market. We would load Uncle Earl's Model A Ford pickup down with those gallon pails of sorghum and head to town. We went around to different grocery stores selling our sorghum. We had samples of sorghum with us and that is what made each sale. Within two weeks time, we had sold all of our sorghum, selling it for one dollar per gallon. Back then in those days, that wasn't too bad. We were both well pleased with our little venture. I was around sixteen years old at the time. We divided the money 50/50. Now this is just one of the many things that Uncle Earl and I did in our years of life together.

I now own the land where the Old Sorghum Mill once stood. I have owned

it for forty-six years. My Granddad Haney started making sorghum on the banks of old Rock Creek a long time ago, somewhere in the twenties. This is the same piece of ground where we now have our Evans-Haney-Firey family reunions. We have had thirty-eight of them. This is how it happened in this hill country where I grew up a long time ago.

A Note from Travis Firey, J. W. "Bill"'s Son

I have read many of the stories that my Dad has written about the life and times of himself as well as many friends and relatives of long ago. I feel as though I know many of these people, what they might say or do in a certain situation. I feel as though there is common ground between us. I can see the resemblance and feel a strong sense of kindred spirit with these relatives of mine who were a very real part of my Dad's past. The feelings and perceptions that I have of these individuals exist only because of my imagination for I have never had the pleasure to meet them. I feel as though my Dad is very fortunate to have been able to live among this caliber of people. I realize how busy and complex the world is today and how it must have been back then. How I would like to spend my days on the banks of old Rock Creek, growing cane and making sorghum.

