

The Wagon Load of Cotton That Disappeared

*J. W. Firey, Jr.
Written in 1991*

Many years ago in the fall of the year, Granddad Haney was gathering in his cotton crop. The wagon was completely loaded at quitting time, so he put a big tarpaulin over the load of cotton (to keep it dry just in case it should rain) and just left it out in the field. There was well over 2000 lbs of cotton on the wagon. Early the next morning, Granddad and his son, Matt, harnessed up a team of mules to take the cotton into town to the cotton gin about 12 miles away. But when they got to the cotton field, the wagon was gone. It seemed Granddad was fit to be tied. Granddad Haney was an honest man and did not take lightly to thieving. They went back to the house and Granddad got his gun while Matt saddled up two horses. They got on the horses and set about tracking down that wagon load of cotton. The wagon tracks came out of the field just south of Granddad's house and onto the main road. The main road was hard and packed. It was difficult to follow the tracks any more, so they looked very closely to find any tracks that had pulled off the main road. After about a mile and a half, they found a set of wagon tracks that had left the main road and went out into the brush. They followed the tracks about 1/4 of a mile off the main road. The tracks led into an old shed of a barn that was about to fall down. Granddad looked inside and there was his wagon load of cotton. Nearby was a little two room shack of a house. Granddad knocked on the door but it was some time until someone came. It was a woman. Granddad said, "Mrs. Berryhill, I am not going to harm you in any way, but I have come to get that no-good thieving Frank!". She said, "But he is not here!". Granddad said, "But he *is* here, and I intend to get him!". He pushed her to one side and went inside. Granddad and Matt looked the two rooms over and did not see Frank anywhere. Granddad said to Matt, "Pull that mattress off of that bed!", and when he did, there was Frank. Granddad stuck the barrel of his gun through the springs of the bed to the side of Frank's head. Granddad said to Frank, "Get out from under that

bed, you coward, before I blow your no-good head off!". Mrs. Berryhill began to cry and begged Granddad not to kill him. She said, "I know he is not much of a man, but he is all I got! Please, Mr. Haney, don't kill him!". Granddad said to Frank, "Get out from under that bed and hitch up your team of horses! Then take that wagon load of cotton right back to where you got it!". Granddad told Frank not to give him one bit of trouble for he had every reason to kill him. Frank was very lucky to be alive.

No one in their right mind would ever cross Granddad Haney for that would be the wrong thing to do. Granddad was a good man and helped his neighbors and friends in many ways through the years.

The Missing Billfold

*J. W. Firey, Jr.
Written in 1990*

One day I was plowing in the field with my tractor when sometime that evening or earlier that day, I lost my billfold. I looked everywhere for it but never did find it. In my mind I ruled out any possibility of maybe plowing it under, because the tractor seat was so tall and the seat wrapped all around me. There was just no way it could have fallen to the ground. Even if it had worked it's way out of my pocket, it would still be in that big tractor seat. After some time, I forgot all about it. But it sure was a mystery to me as to where it was.

Then two years later, I was plowing in that same field. I plowed up something that looked like maybe a old piece of leather. Stopping the tractor, I got down and picked it up. There was my billfold I had plowed under two years before. The eight dollars it contained were in pretty good shape. That was the end of the two year old mystery.

But I did learn one thing that day...that money does not grow, for my billfold had been in the ground for two years and there was still just eight dollars in it!

Roping the Rabbit

*J. W. Firey, Jr.
Written in 1990*

I was probably eleven years old when I took a great interest in learning how to rope. I would rope old tree stumps, fence posts, and just about anything I could. My rope was small, maybe 1/2 an inch in diameter and about 20' long. I had a little saddle pony and I practiced all the time I could.

One day I told Uncle Earl and my brother, Kenneth, that I was getting pretty good at roping. They just laughed and said, "Yes, we know you are. You are probably the best roper around." Well, I knew they were just making fun of me. That evening or so, I went out to bring in the milk cows. This was in the summer time. I was riding my saddle pony driving in the cows when a wild rabbit ran in front of me and stopped. I got down off my horse and picked up a rock and threw it at the rabbit. The rock hit him and knocked him down. I picked him up and he soon began to kick, trying to get away. I realized that rock had only stunned him a little. Then I thought, "I will just show Kenneth and Uncle Earl what a good roper I am." I put my rope around the rabbit's neck so it would not slip off. I kept the rabbit up in the saddle with me until I got close to the milk lot. I could see Kenneth and Uncle Earl at the milk lot waiting for me to bring the cows. I put the rabbit down on the ground and came in a little closer. That wild rabbit was lunging at the rope trying his best to get away. I said, "Hey, you guys, look what I roped up there in the hills!" They both had a surprised look on their faces and couldn't believe what they were seeing. One of them asked, "How in the world did you rope that wild rabbit?" I said, "I've been trying to tell you guys that I was getting real good at roping!" I never did tell them how I really did it. I just let them go on thinking that I had roped that rabbit on the run.