

TWO GRANDFATHERS AND MY FIRST CHRISTMAS

By: Charles Duffy Floyd



Charles Duffy Floyd

Just this minute (4:00 A.M. Christmas, 1964) I am sitting here in my easy chair when the thought came to me that I am grandfather to four lovely children—three boys and one girl and that it would be interesting to open my store house of memory and view some of its most cherished events. Such memories for a man in his twilight of life beginning almost eighty years ago are countless. Some are vivid, others less so, but most of them fairly fresh but none past recall. Accompanying was the desire for security which began that morning at the tender age of two and continued to remain with me to this very day, had a very early birth.

Since it is Christmas I recall my first one, which occurred seventy-seven years ago. (I will say now that I would give everything I possess to be able to record on canvass the scene I beheld on that morning.)

I was awakened that morning by a kiss from a beautiful woman (my mother) with a shaw (sic) draped over her shoulder. My eyes opened in a large room about 16x20 feet. The ceiling was of loose boards laid down on round joists about seven feet apart. The bare rough floor of uneven width. The uneven walls were covered with newspapers pasted on the log wall with flour paste by my mother. On one side of this room was an immense stove chimney about eight feet wide. The only light in the room came from this fireplace in this immense chimney, in six about 5' x 4' x 1 ½'. I remember it was a flickering light, and it came from an immense log fire in the fireplace. But that light was sufficient to show three long hand-knit woolen stockings suspended from a rough board mantel about eighteen inches above the fireplace. These stockings were apparently filled. Around this fireplace were five people, all looking in my direction. There was mother's father and mother, my father and my two older brothers. That was the first time I ever heard the wish "Merry Christmas" expressed.

In that humble three-room log house nestled among the foothills of the Alleghenies, along the Little Kanawha River and four miles from the nearest town. That wish I know was heartfelt and sincere. There were no Christmas carols nor was Tiny Tim mentioned that day. Nor am I sure that there were any Christmas carols composed then to sing.

Mother's kiss awakened me, I could not wait to return the caress but bounded to the cold bare plank floor and in seconds had my stocking emptied on the stone hearth in the firelight. I beheld a wonderful sight, satisfying and delightful. There were two heart shaped molasses cookies, a small Roman Beauty apple and one stick of striped peppermint candy, nothing more. I looked up and saw my Grandfather, his face wearing a broad smile, which later I discovered was a meaning smile; but I was satisfied then.

Later, Grandfather brought out a hobby horse on wheels which horse was mounted a man with a red coat, blue cap, white pants and black boots. The overall height might have been as much as eight inches. When this horse was pulled along the floor in its two wheels, it galloped like a real hunting horse. The toy may have cost as much as \$15.00.

That was the day I commenced to see what a wonderful man my Grandfather Stout really was.

This was the beginning of a wonderful day for me. From then I looked forward to Christmas, but there were no more toys except once when I got a little China dog with a whistle in its tail. There were presents, yes, but only such as were produced on the farm, apples, cookies, socks, mittens, etc.

At this moment I was very much interested in my Grandfather, (Stout) who gave me the tin hose and rides and who was beaming on me with a cunning smile. Presently he left the room and soon returned with a rusty piece of iron about a foot square and had a depression near the center. He brought this to the fireplace and with a shovel he heaped live coals on it. Then he told his three grandsons to follow outside. I recall yet that there was no sun shining. The day, I was told later, was a green Christmas. We followed Grandfather about one hundred yards up through the orchard to an apple tree stump about one foot high where he placed the live coals. He took from his pocket a small package wrapped in red paper. The package was about ½ inch thick by 5 inches long and 5 inches

wide. I beheld my first firecrackers. Soon they were exploded affording us much happiness. Grandfather reached for my hand and led me stumbling in my brass-toed red top boots back over the frozen ground to the house.

We found our way through the warm kitchen to the blazing wood fire to the otherwise dimly lighted family room. All the outside light came in one small window about 3 x 5 feet and contouring eight small windowpanes. Another light came from a kerosene lamp in the center of our immense oblong table. The table contained enough food to feed two dozen men, while there were only four adults and three very small boys who sat down that morning to eat breakfast.

There was a bowl of oats on each plate. The table was so large that it was found convenient to have two of every item on the table. Cream pitchers, sugar bowls, plates of golden brown hot biscuits, ham and eggs, country sausage and country butter, a dozen different kind of spread-jellies, jams and preserves.



I saw all this when I looked across the table and saw my Grandmother, small in size as compared to my Grandfather. The two sat tighter with eyes closed and slightly bowed heads. Grandfather began in his usual slow, distinct, resonant voice to ask a blessing. My tender age prevented me from realizing the solemnity of this moment on this holy day. Grandfather's face was covered by a full beard, auburn in color. I recall that it resembled in shape that of General U. S. Grant. He had perfect control of that beard as he made it shake and wiggle as he spoke; I recall now there was nothing beyond the heavy beard and the high-topped handmade leather boots Grandfather wore to remind one of General Grant. When he stood up in his high-heeled boots, the top of his head covered by a heavy suit of auburn hair was almost 6 ½ feet from the floor. He had a cow lick in front which he was never able to control. The part of his face exposed to view was of a pinkish color and his eyes a deep blue. His teeth glistened in the sunlight when he smiled (that was often). He always wore a full suit of clothes. The material taken by my Grandmother's hand from sheep after the wool was cut from the sheep and spun into yarn. It was dyed a nut brown with walnut hulls. Then it was woven by Grandmother on a homemade loom into a cow's cloth, who tailored the cloth by hand into a full suit of clothes.

My life continued uneventful for three years. Sad news came when a man on horseback rode up to say that Grandmother Stout was dead. Six years later my mother died; and two years after that I was headed for the big adventure of my life, which shall recur when I speak more fully of Grandfather Floyd.

I visited my Grandfather's home, known as the (*unreadable*) and the immense kitchen where all of the inside form of work was performed was a joy to recall forever. I can see it yet in my mind that wonderful old Southern home standing on a knoll in the center of a large green lawn surrounded by stately birch trees. Among the trees were the farm buildings – barn, tool sheds, corncribs, granaries, in which a handmade cider mill was kept.

We had three methods of transportation from my home to Grandfather's (Stout), which was 13 miles away. The kind of transportation depended upon the weather. We either rode old Bill and Morgan, two immense old farm horses or they pulled us in a farm wagon or on a sled. The last way was the most fascinating as the sled was filled with straw and we were kept warm by a number of red woolen blankets. The horses wore sheep bells and announced our arrival in advance of the end of the journey, where all the relatives stood on the front porch to receive us.

We were glad to get to go to Grandfather Stout's home anytime we could. I must have developed a romantic vein early in life. I remember my first visit to Grandfather Stout was made on horseback. Mother rode old Morgan, a dun horse. She was seated on a sidesaddle. She held me on her lap she wore a long black cotton skirt which almost reached the ground. This skirt was known as a riding skirt and protected her clothes from the mud. My second oldest brother rode behind her on a blanket holding onto mother's waist. My oldest brother rode behind father on a blanket on old Bill. We could not make a round trip in one day so it was at least an overnight visit. Father always carried a white meal sack on the saddle in front of him filled to capacity with our clothing and possibly presents for Grandfather's family. We did not have the usual leather of saddle pockets.

The visit to Grandfather Stout was an event never to be forgotten. It was a regular family reunion when we arrived and assembled in his wonderful kitchen. There were 11 of us all together which at the time of our first visit included two unmarried aunts. We three boys were the only children. Therefore, it was easy to see how three eager boys could not absorb all the love and affection, which was available from their elders.

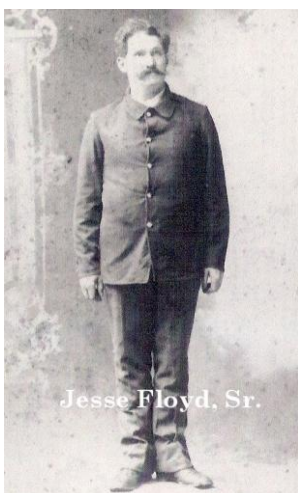
It has been so many years since I saw Grandmother's wonderfully large kitchen. It seems to me now that the floor covered as much space as the average country church, and there were literally dozens of interesting pieces of furniture. I can see now in my mind to the left of the immense fireplace sat a spindle with a large homemade loom on which blankets, linens, and woolen cloth were woven. In the immense fireplace, which might have been 6 feet wide by 4 feet high, where all the cooking and baking was done for the family and guests, was a host of metal utensils unrecognized then but later became well known. There was dutch oven, a skillet, both with iron lids, a cast-iron tea kettle, a coffee pot, two covered pots with handles in which to boil meat and vegetables, a swinging

crane with hooks on which to suspend any or all of their utensils at one time and turn them into the fireplace, two hand irons, several iron pokers, a long-handled-hand wrought fire shovel, a pair of tongs to lift any article too hot for bare hands. These cooking utensils were always cleaned after each meal and returned to their respective places. There were no articles, which were not cleaned three times a day except two stove jars, one was a four gallon and the other half gallon jar received the daily production of cream to sour by the fireside. When the cream was soured in about three days, the side of the jar nearest the fire was turned back from the heat ten or fifteen times during the day. When the jar was filled, the sour cream was emptied into a tall barrel-shaped wooden churn, from which, if the cream was of proper temperature and sourness, would emerge four or five pounds of the sweetest, yellowish butter imaginable. It took only 20 or 30 minutes to make it by vigorously working the wooden dasher up and down through the ¼ inch hole in the wooden lid. That which was left in the churn – “Ye gods,” I can taste it now about 2 gallons of buttermilk fit for a king to drink. There being no king on churning days, the family and friends descended upon the churn and drank their fill of the fragrant beverage. Some of the buttermilk went to the cellar to save for biscuits, some was kept there to put in the two-gallon jar each day with the ‘starter’, therein for wonderful buckwheat cakes. The cream jar and churn were washed and scalded immediately after they were emptied. But the two gallon starter got its bath regularly once every two weeks, though it was said that a longer interval between cleaning made the cakes that much better. I neglected to state that the kitchen as was the custom, was a one-story structure of hewn logs, with a shed roofed porch on either side and a door from each porch entering the kitchen. There was a small window near each door. There was one door in the end leading into the two-story main house. The large chimney was in the opposite end of the kitchen from the main house door. On the stove mantel rack was the rudely carved word OTHERS. Above each porch door was nailed two sets of small deer antlers. Each pair of antlers supported a beautiful silver decorated long deer rifle and from one prong of each of the two pair of antlers a convenient shot pouch.

Grandfather said, that my mother (Angeletta Stout Floyd) that warm February day when she was 12 years old at home alone was too excited to arm herself with either of these rifles, which were always kept loaded. But she grabbed the first lethal weapon she saw and followed a pack of hounds chasing a large buck deer toward the river. The deer was driven over the riverbank, and it landed on and broke through the soft melting ice. The deer was held at bay for a minute or two until mother arrived with the axe and killed it. Then she fought off the hounds for over 2 hours until Grandfather arrived and helped her to haul the deer up over the riverbank home. The antlers from that buck deer were mounted about 50 years later on a doe’s head and remains in the family in good condition to this day, more than 100 years later.

Back in that big kitchen again there was a long square dining table in front of the West window. This table was so large that 20 adults could dine around it at one time. Grandfather (Stout) sat along the back of this table and in front of the window for over a quarter of a century. During those years, he was a county squire, better known as a Justice of the Peace. People came for miles around to have their differences adjusted. While Court was in session a large leather-bound family Bible was placed on the table to Grandfather’s right. The front cover was always turned up. There was one spot on the cover, which was worn, discolored and faded by the sweaty hands of witnesses during the years gone by. Near the South end of this table was a deep corner cupboard, which reached the ceiling. In this corner cupboard was concealed all the evidence of refinement. The shelves were loaded with the finest china and silverware from several European countries. Between the corner cupboard and the fireplace were four wide boards tacked against the wall and used for every day dishes. There was a linen curtain on these shelves to keep out the dust.

Some years ago, I was asked to join the Sons of the American Revolution and was told to do this I must furnish an authentic and complete family tree. So accordingly, as soon as possible, I left my home in Clarksburg, West Virginia, for a hunting trip to my boyhood home in the same state in Gilmer County. I was resolved, before I returned, to bag my daily limit of squirrels and to learn all I could and why about myself. It was 6:00 o’clock, P.M., on the day before squirrel season opened that my only child, Billy, a boy of 8 years and I arrived at my sister’s home. (This would be Aunt Lucille Floyd Self, daughter of Jesse L. Floyd, Sr., and Eva Elizabeth Reed Floyd.) The equipment we carried in my car was a 12gauge pump gun for myself, and a 410gauge for my son.



The story goes this way. The Jesse Floyd, Sr., and Eva Elizabeth Reed Floyd’s (My grandmother. My grandfather Floyd’s second wife.) house at Trubada, Gilmer County; a large house comprising 5 large bedrooms requiring 5 “thunder mugs”, pots at night. These pots were emptied each day into the outdoor “privy” or toilet, washed out and turned upside down to dry against the wall of the outdoor toilet. Billy, not realizing what these nice white objects were, used them for target practice with his 410 gauge gun Uncle Duffy had provided him with on their expedition to Gilmer County and his boyhood home to hunt for squirrels and family information. Aunt Lucille, Uncle Matt, Dad and Mom seemed to delight in telling this story with good-natured amusement, at what Billy had done. This was these people’s wont. They, more often than not, found the delight in human foibles, errors in judgment, failings in actions and deed, as well as their quirky ways. Besides the fact I’m sure, in their eyes Billy or Uncle Duffy, for that matter, could do no wrong.)

My sister, then the guardian of my boyhood home, (This is not the domicile that Uncle Duffy describes waking up in on the Christmas morning of this story.) assured me that the latchstring was always out to me. Nevertheless, I always notified her in advance of the exact moment of my arrival. She often said that she was so sure that I would keep my promise that she could set her clock by the time of my arrival. At the last bend in the road when I could first see my home, I commenced to blow my horn to announce my coming, (My siblings always did this when they came here to my home.) and I continued the noise until I stopped at the door and she was safely in my arms. Then I was immediately pulled and urged into the house (My family of Floyd's always did this.) where a steaming feast awaited me on the large family dining room table. I wish I had words adequate to describe her breakfasts and dinner, but I shall have to be content to say that she was a wonderful cook and the best sister any man ever had. (Amen!)

Squirrel hunting was chronic with me. I was used to it, but hunting ancestors was new so I started out alone early the next morning before daylight on my first hunt for ancestors. It had been more than 20 years since I passed the site of Grandfather Stout's home. In the meantime, a new road had been graded. In the dawn morning light I recognized no familiar objects. It should have taken me no more than 15 minutes to reach the once familiar beech tree studded knoll atop which was Grandfather Stout's old home. I drove for nearly half an hour before I became convinced that I was lost. So I turned around and started to return slowly by the same newly graded road. By this time, it was broad daylight. The first familiar thing I recognized was a small ravine which passed under the road and 100 yards further on the road should have commenced to ascend the once familiar knoll; but it was gone now and nothing but a deep cut remained. No beech trees, but on the South side near the edge of the road was a pile of stone. I stopped the car and scrambled up the bank fighting my way through woods and blackberry vines. I saw the stone shambles of a chimney across which was the mantel rack, and on this rack was clearly carved the word "OTHERS". Many years after my first remembered visit to Grandfather's home, I learned the origin of the carving of the word "OTHERS" on the stone mantel and the imported china and silverware.

Grandfather's family came from England four generations before. It was the custom for them to carve two words – "FOR OTHERS" on the mantel to announce to all friends that they were welcome. The china and silverware were heirlooms brought in by the immigrants from England (my ancestors (and yours)) on a boat later known as the Mayflower. But the dear old home had given way to progress.

As I stood there, alone in the early morning light, the lines of a famous poem came to my mind:

"I've wandered to the village. I've sat beneath the tree
Upon the schoolhouse playing ground that shelters you and me,
But none were left to greet me and few were left to know
Who played with me upon the green just forty years ago."

I knew then that I had returned, but I felt very much alone.

It seems fitting that these apparently rambling and disconnected accounts would occupy the first position in this so-called book. Though many pages were written months ago, my first recollection commenced on Christmas day 1887, and recorded at the hour, and on the day first above written.

There are scattered through these many tributes to Grandfather Floyd. He was a busy and important man in his community, while Grandfather Stout was meeting out justice and advice to all who came (Braxton), Grandfather Floyd was performing the same function 13 miles away in another county. (Gilmer)

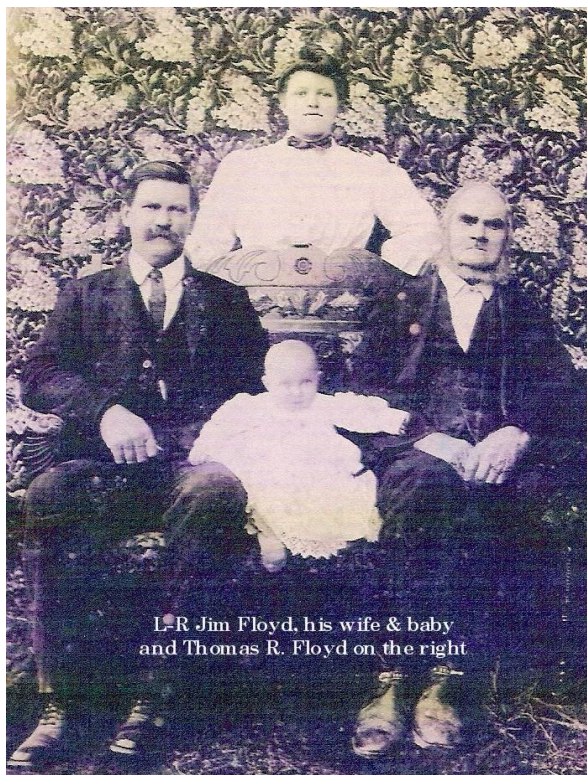
In recent years, I have been reminded by the actions of many of my so-called friends and relations that my stories are becoming corny. When they suddenly take the notion to depart to places unknown and rudely state in no uncertain terms that they had "heard all that before", this is to remind them "that a word to the wise is sufficient". They are free to make their own decisions as to whether they stop reading right here or proceed at their own risk, if these notes ever come to print.

It was the year before the presidential election; fifty years ago plus five years, the day was a sunshiny one early in September. It had rained early the night before. The dirt roads had almost completely dried, but there was still a slight trickle of water in the little gullies coming down from the hills. Over these same hills there were a few white fleecy clouds chasing each other from the West, indicating there might be more rain again soon.

To me it was a memorable day. It was the last day of my vacation preceding my graduation the following June at the University. My boyhood home was located in the rough foothills of the Allegheny Mountains in the heart of the wonderful Pittsburgh coal region just four miles from the county seat. (Gilmer County)

It was in this town where the Glenville Normal School was located from which I was graduated three years before capturing such honors as was available at that time.

It was probably these captured honors, which caused a number of my kinfolk to sheepishly admit that they were “sort of proud” of the first descendant in recent years who had come to grips with the arduous task of acquiring higher education. Therefore, I could not be blamed when I decided to spend an hour at my Grandfather Floyd's home that was located one mile West of mine on the main road into town, if I had a selfish desire to sort of make myself available for any farewell admiration.



L-R Jim Floyd, his wife & baby
and Thomas R. Floyd on the right

I guess I did walk a little more lightly than common that day, but I remained conscious of my surroundings. The first thing I noticed that day was the aroma of wood smoke in the air. This, as I knew, came from a fire under an evaporator where they were bottling sorghum molasses. I knew that I would soon review this scene in person so, I became determined not to be deprived of a farewell lick of “stimulus”. Before I came to this scene, I tore a splinter from a locust post at the road side and fashioned a beautiful mouth sized paddle, which I could dip in the creamy, amber colored froth, which collected in the ends of the last two sections of the evaporator.

The operators of such evaporators were always kept very busy keeping the greenish scum from collecting on the other 8 or 10 sections of that manufacturing plant. This was done by placing a board about 1 foot long horizontally over the greenish foam, there lifting the frame and scraping it off with a wooden knife into a convenient hole dug in the ground about 18 inches deep. (I have always heard this called the “skimming hole”.) This was a common procedure where it was not possible to slice the froth from the board (called a skimmy). (I have never heard the board that did the skimming called a “skimmy” until Uncle Duffy called it that in this story. I’m certain he is correct.)

This day as I approached this primitive manufacturing plant of sweets, I noticed Old Doll was being led around by a strap tied to a pole which prevented her from going any other direction than ‘round and around. I was personally acquainted with that old gray mare because on numerous occasions during the twelve years I knew her I had been permitted to feed the

Kane Mill. I knew the dangers connected with this grudging operation. I was told never to push too hard on the cane stalks as they might break and Old Doll might lose her balance and before recovering it, he could lose a hand or perhaps an arm before Old Doll could be stopped. Old Doll was a splendid performer, but she presented some difficulties. She had to be watched constantly. She would either go to sleep or get drunk from constantly circling that grudging machine. One must be ready at all times to give her a prod with the sharp end of the longest cane stalk to prevent her from falling down and due to her hook up, upsetting the Kane Mill.

There was another danger, not to the operator of that homemade plant, but to the young folk who assembled night after night to lick the amber skins as I did. Many of them approached the operation in a more refined way. They brought spoons and saucers to enable them to partake of the luscious sweets. But the danger to them was none-the-less, as all were equally exposed to the same danger played by pranksters who sought to entice everyone, both young and old into the green skimming hole.

My desire for sweets was soon satisfied, so I stuck my paddle in the top of a post for use by some other person, less fastidious than I, and trudged on. I first saw a flock of crows, flying from one hillside cornfield to another where I knew they had been engaged in eating the scattered ears of corn left by a man with a red bandanna handkerchief wound around his neck to prevent the keenly sharpened edges on the blades of corn from cutting his skin.

I saw one redheaded woodpecker chasing another up a telephone pole and when they both reached the top of the pole, they went up in a power dive one after the other fashion to another pole chasing each other as before.

I reached the top of the little hill between my home and that of my Grandfather Floyd. There, on the left of the road stood a church, with a wooden stand about 4 feet high, and a deck 4 x 12 feet and steps leading up to the deck on both ends. This was used by the ladies who came on horseback to drop gently into their sidesaddles. There were two boardwalks leading from this landing place to the two church doors. The remainder of the front church yard was pure and (un)adulterated red clay. Behind this church were two cemeteries – the old and the new. In the old one, near the gate, stood the only monument. All others were marble and hand carved stone slabs. This monument stood about 6 feet high from the ground, which was about 7 inches taller than my beloved mother (Angeletta Stout Floyd) and on whose grave side it was erected. My eyes filled with tears and I bade goodbye to the lonely grave because I felt as much alone as she as I trudged on down the hill along a winding road.

There in the first bend in that road stood an immense chestnut tree. There were several chestnut burs in the road underneath those spreading boughs. I picked up several to see if they had dropped of their own accord or had been cut by a spendthrift fox

squirrel such as I had shot from that same tree only the day before. I might add too that this was the first of this species I had ever killed.

I failed to reach any decision concerning the nuts lying in the road, because I glanced at my watch and saw that I would only have about 30 minutes to spend with my Grandfather Floyd if I hurried on. A few hundred yards away and the last turn in that dirt road, I saw 2 farmhouses standing, one on each side of the road. The one to the left was built from logs cut and hewn by my Grandfather Floyd's own work roughened hands, more than 75 years before. In this same house I had lived for 2 years during and after the Spanish American War.

This log house was built on a little knoll, which meant that in order to have a level foundation on which to lay the logs, some parts of the chiseled rock foundation was higher than others. The side next to the road was about 4 feet high. There were 2 openings about 2 feet wide and the full height of the walls. The natives called these openings "cat holes", but these same holes were used by other animals other than cats. I remember on rainy days that all of the smaller farm population such as turkeys, geese chickens, and even pigs took shelter from the cold rain. This house had been abandoned for 10 years when the new house was built on the other side of the road.

This new house was a two-story frame house painted white, and having a slate roof and a small two-story porch in the middle of the side facing the road. During the 10 years which preceded the day of my visit, there were 2 immense climbing roses which struggled up at each end of the porch, reaching as high as the ceiling of the second story of the porch, reaching as high as the ceiling of the second story of the porch. On this particular day, there were a few pale pink (a color I detest) blossoms clinging to the stalks. It was behind these vines my Grandfather Floyd was accustomed to bask in the sunlight and read his big family Bible. This Bible, when open, was spread 2 feet each way when spread out flat on knees clad in shiny dark trousers.

His feet were shod in handmade shoes, which he told me at one time he had worn every day, Sundays excepted, for 20 years. They were kept soft, shiny, and waterproof by constant application of a mixture of beef tallow and bees wax.

This day Grandfather was not in his accustomed seat on the front porch. He liked to sit in a straight ladder-backed split bottomed chair, made soft for his aging bones by a large home-tanned sheepskin dyed a rich tobacco brown by walnut hulls.

I did not wait, but went around the house in search of him. Grandfather was never idle. I noticed the cellar house door was wide open. I thought, perhaps he was up there by himself sorting onions, so I climbed the steep, rail less steps which were built up under a wide protruding gable roof to the second floor. No one was there, but I did see two objects, which I thought, at the beginning of my search for antiques, I would have given half my earnings from 5 years of hard labor to have owned. One of the objects was a flail made for my Grandfather when he was 16 years old. The other object was a four-poster wooden bed that my grandparents used when they commenced housekeeping, when each was in their early twenties. The flail was a simple device consisting of 2 pieces of wood fastened together by a heavy rawhide thong and was used to beat or flail the ripened grain from the straw during the years preceding the advent of the two-horse powered threshing machine.

The handle to this flail, which hung on a nail from a rafter in the cellar-house was made from a splinter obtained from a chestnut oak tree. It was probably half again as large as the average broom handle as well as half again as long. There was a deep groove cut around the top end of this handle allowing the doubled rawhide thong to revolve around this staff, the other end of the doubled thong was securely fastened by means of a hole in the large end of the flail or beater. I do not know whether it retained its original shape or whether it was worn down by 50 years of hard usage, but when I saw it that day, it was the shape of an elephant's tusk about 2 ½ feet long, made from hickory wood and apparently the same hardness, smoothness, and color of old ivory. This being a true story, it did not contain the original rawhide thong, which bound the two pieces of wood together. I am sure that the thongs had to be replaced every year or two.

That bed, since I knew its complete history up to that time, was a real conversation piece. The material which went to make the bed was cut from a wild cherry log 8 feet long at a water-powered saw mill by an "up and down saw", since that was the only saw and power used in those days. (Coincidence? My Dad, Jesse L. Floyd, Jr., and mother's, Pauline Yerkey Floyd's bed was a four-poster bed made of cherry. They bought it about 1948 before we moved from Sand Fork, WV to the place of my father's birth, the Jesse L. Floyd, Sr., and Eva Elizabeth Reed Floyd house at Trubada, WV, which Ike Morris not only tore down but totally destroyed the landscape so it is impossible to see where the house was unless you just know like I do because I lived there. This is the house owned by my Dad's sister, Aunt Lucille; the only two offspring of the Jesse L. Floyd, Sr., and Eva Elizabeth Reed Floyd marriage, that Uncle Duffy speaks about in this story as his home and of Aunt Lucille as "the best sister a man ever had". It was through Uncle Duffy's efforts that Aunt Lucille came to own the property. That is another story in itself.) The parts were cut 5 1/8 x 5 1/8 x 8. The other material 4" x 8 ". All these were hauled home several miles to air dry for 8 or 10 years. Then the wood was laboriously planed down smooth on all sides. Then such excess as needed turning was returned to the Mill, where the turning was done on a handmade lathe. I was told that it took a full day's work to saw out the material and twice as long to do the lath work. They also turned wooden pins with a knob on the end to put the bed together, also, to insert each 8 inches in both of the end rails and both side rails, around which pins the cord was strung, to support the immense straw tick and feather bed.

I turned away from these coveted things, and with bowed head returned to the ground thinking, perhaps, even these rare objects would one day meet a similar same fate as did the Old Grandfather's clock many years before, by the hands of my dead cousin, when it was split up, one rainy day, into kindling wood.

I glanced at the orchard behind the house. No one was there; but I saw the trees, all bearing fruit of different colors, red, green, and yellow. Some trees were tall and stately, others low and squatty, and still others bent and gnarled. I thought how much those trees resembled the life of the man who planted them so many years before. Almost a full century spent in spreading happiness in the lives of others.

Grandfather was evidently in the house, getting a new book when I first arrived, because there he sat in his accustomed place reading a book tracing each line with a thin bony finger. I did not have time to discuss the book he read, as it might have been a very lengthy discussion making me late.

I barely had time to ask him about the coming election. I told him he could not vote for Teddy this year as he was on a different ticket. He said, "he is still a Republican at heart, and I will stick to him. I voted for Lincoln, the first Republican; it's too late to quit now".

How true he spoke, for it was on the following election day, just a few minutes after he had voted for Teddy that he was killed on the courthouse lawn (in Glenville, County Seat of Gilmer County.), by two unruly mules, upsetting the spring wagon in which Grandfather Floyd sat just one birthday less than a hundred.

(Signed in *Blanche Crummit Floyd's* hand)

By: Charles Duffy Floyd Christmas – 1964)

Addendum: My Dad, Jesse L. Floyd, Jr., related that great grandfather, Thomas Riley Floyd was indeed thrown from a springboard wagon on the Courthouse lawn after voting in an election by a pair of unruly mules, but he was not killed there. However, he was 'no good' after that and died of his injuries later.

Patty Floyd Johnson