

Believe It Or Not In Western York County

According to reports during 1887 it would seem that Western York County was vying for some kind of book of records in agriculture, wild and domesticated animals. Near the Gould Post Office, located southwest of Bullocks Creek, a kitten was born on the Thomson farm with two distinct bodies, eight legs and feet, two tails, but only one head. Later in the year, in the Bullocks Creek Township, M. R. Nichols showed off a kitten preserved in a “bottle of spirits” having three eyes, two mouths, tongues and faces.

Snakes were prevalent in the rural areas one hundred and twenty years ago, and some grew to extraordinary size. Jonathan Buice killed an “upland moccasin” measuring four feet long and as large as a man’s arm. Near W. B. Good’s store in Hopewell a Coach Whip was killed that measure seven feet and four inches long.

Hunting was an outdoor sport enjoyed countywide, and is still enjoyed by many local and out of state hunters who practice their art in western York County. John C. Blair of the Blairsville community undoubtedly earned the title “Nimrod” (the mighty hunter of the Christian Scriptures), and held that title for at least three years. In 1885 he shot 306 squirrels, 337 in 1886 and broke his record in 1887 by bagging 486. Rats, ever seeking an easy meal, over ran many farms and that of James P. Blair, a kinsman of John C., was no exception. He claimed to have killed four hundred on the nasty creatures. In August James Hambright should have been named “Fisher of the Year,” when he caught a fifty-four pound sturgeon measuring more than five feet. Hambright believed the Broad River leviathan had swam up-stream during a recent freshet.

Being an agricultural based society, farmers were forever hoping for bumper crops, but sometimes their produce staggered the mind. Mrs. Isabella Donovan, who lived near Howell’s Ferry, had a field of oats that grew a record second crop from volunteer seed. The oats were nearly three feet high and fully matured before the first killing frost. W. Y. White of Blairsville raised enough cane on one acre that produced seventy-seven gallons of syrup. Not only that, but fifteen bushels of seed and two-hundred bushels of fodder--all at the cost of \$7.00. In December Mrs. J. L. Stacy of Clover showed off a turnip weighting nearly twelve pounds. Not far away, in the Bethany community, W. F. Smith was boasting of having raised two pumpkins on one vine with a total weight of 200 pounds; the largest weighed in at one-hundred and nineteen pounds. John L. Rainey had good luck with his piggery. Three of his hog had a combined weight to 990 pounds.

Birds of prey were not always on the endangered species list, at least not in 1887 if you don’t count irate farmers. A daily visit by a hawk could easily deprive farm families of a fried egg for breakfast or Sunday dinner, by swooping in on unexpecting hen. Frank Watson killed a hawk in September measuring over four feet from wing tip to tip. Frequently, if the farmer was a good shot, one could see a crow strung up by the feet from a shade tree, giving fare warning to this kin