

The Bart Monahan Homestead

By Esther Chrisman

The Bart Monahan homestead in the North Fork became ours in the summer of 1958. Bart had spent his last two years in the County Home. His small 10' x 14' cabin with a 10' x 12' dirt floor porch was trashed. The roof leaked, the door was broken in, and a bear had hibernated in his root cellar. It was disheartening for us. The neighbors all came to see what we had purchased. We thought the little cabin was past redemption until Ma Holcomb suggested "You would be surprised what a little whitewash would do!" Ma and Pa were dear to us and most of the North Forkers. They were so quick to help, provide whatever they could, and feed any and all who came to their door. We were new and gladly learned from them how to live in this remote area. Their first advice was to cut an escape road to the river. We had only one way in and out of our place.

After thinking about the cabin we decided if Ma Holcomb thought it salvageable we would try. What an experience! We cleaned out Mr. Monahan's possessions. It was a strange assortment. He had great tools, a few dishes, some very interesting drinking glasses and one bright and shiny serving spoon. On a shelf that was obviously his pantry were quantities of dried beans. We think he received government commodities and did not like beans. A strong odor of anise lingered in that area for years. We laid all of his things out on thick grass by the cabin. We left at the end of the day to return to our neighbor's cabin where we were staying. When we returned the next day, all the tools and the shiny spoon were gone. And we had thought we were alone in the woods.

Another neighbor and friend was a logger working across the border in Canada. We decided to buy some of the lumber he was milling for the roof and the floor in our cabin. We had no power, so all the cutting of the boards was done by hand. The floor was laid and roof boards put on. The boards were not all the same length. The see/saw edges of the roof were left for another day, or until we were able to get a power saw. We knew the lumber was spruce and was green. We weren't smart enough to know how it would affect our project. When we returned the next year we were made aware. The gap between our floor boards was amazing. We used the cabin for 7 years and I never had to use a dustpan to collect the dust in the cabin – it fell between the cracks in the floor. The cracks were just starting to fill up when we moved in to our new cabin in 1965.