

# A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

Franklin Blanton of the Rover Community wrote these memories of Mr. Worth Brown, in 1986 for "The History of Rover and the 10th District of Bedford County". Mr. Brown was a man of many talents but well known through out the area as the man who caught and killed rats with his hands.

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Having lived a neighbor to Mr. Worth and Mrs. Tennie Brown from childhood until they both died, I loved both of them dearly. They believed in doing good deeds for others. He was a devoted man to his family and to the community. He was always willing to help anybody, day or night. He didn't go to church very often, but he did believe in reading his Bible. He was a farmer and blacksmith and could make almost anything out of iron or wood. He did general repair work on farm machines. In those days people used horse drawn wagons and buggies. He would repair wagon wheels often making the rims, and would put the steel tires back on them. He put new rubber tires on buggy wheels also. He made a lot of furniture. He said he started shoeing a few gentle horses and mules. A man brought him a horse to put shoes on. He asked him if he was a gentle horse to shoe. He said he was gentle that a child could shoe him. So he got his tools ready and reached down and picked up his front foot and began to work on it. The horse turned his head, bit him on his back, shook him and lifted him off the ground. The man got the horse loose and Mr. Brown ran in the shop and the horse came in there biting at him. After that he didn't shoe any more horses.

In the year of 1940 his shop burned. But right away neighbors gave material and labor and a new one was in operation soon.

He did his work for a reasonable price. Often people would charge the work they had done, to pay later. And some never did pay him. Living near Simpson's Cemetery, the custom was at that time for men in the community to dig the graves. On weekends and bad weather there would be several to help. But during the week without much notice, Mr. Worth would close his shop and get his shovel and go up there. If Carroll Blanton, Webb and Fred Simpson and Bob Smotherman, were working the fields nearby, he would tell them and they would hitch their horses or mules to the fence and help dig the grave. During the warm weather late in the afternoon we could hear him playing his banjo. He along with Bob Smotherman, Holland Davis, Howard Lamb and others would play their musical instruments at neighbor's homes on Saturday nights.

But most of all he was noted for catching rats with his hands and killing them. Sometime he would get bit on his fingers. He would put kerosene or turpentine on the bite and they wouldn't even bother him. He would go for miles around to catch rats in barns, corncribs, chick houses or anywhere they were. In his later years his grandson Eris Brown and others would go along and dig the rats up with a shovel so he could catch them. He would charge a nickel for each one that he killed. Sometimes it would be several hundred and sometimes not very many.

Mr. Worth was very fond of turtle meat. He would go to the nearby creeks and wade in the water and catch the turtles in holes in the banks with a gig he made out of an iron rod with a small hook on the end. He could even smell them. He said that he was plowing one day and told his brother to hold his team of horses that he smelled a turtle. He

started walking in that direction and met the biggest turtle he ever saw.

I would go over to his shop on rainy days and he would tell stores of things he had done when he was a young man. About going squirrel hunting. He said he would get up early and go the woods before daylight and the moon was shining. He killed several squirrels in the trees before daylight, shooting them between him and the moon. He would talk about cutting men's hair. He said he had a new style of cutting hair and he called it a half shingle. A man came to him to get his hair cut and told him to give him a half shingle. When he got through cutting his hair, the man just paid him half price. He said he would pay the rest when he cut the other half.

Brown would talk about trapping animals. He said he went to his traps one very cold morning and he had caught an opossum and it had frozen. As he was taking it out of the trap, his dog jumped a red fox and he heard them coming toward him. He stepped behind a tree and as the fox got to the tree he killed it with the frozen opossum. As he was coming home one night, when he lived with his parents, something scared him and he ran so fast that he ran into the yard gate and knocked it upon the porch of the house.

This could go on and on. Some things were very exciting and some of the things could not be put in this book. But he was a very dear friend to me.

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Mr. Worth Brown was born in 1882 and died in 1946. He and his wife Tennie had two children, Sallie Rachel and Robert Brown. Their son Robert, and grandson Eris were well known for their work in

## MR. WORTH BROWN A MAN OF MANY TALENTS



Mr. Worth and Mrs. Tennie Brown

the community grocery stores and driving the peddling wagon for Puckett's Store and later others.

My appreciation to Mr. Franklin for letting me use his story. I never knew Mr. Worth Brown, but have heard of him and his talents all my life. His grandson, Earl Brown, of the Rover Community inherited the trait of being a friend and good neighbor from his grandfather. I think I can speak for all of the Rover Community, we are all very lucky to have the grandson of Worth and Tennie Brown, Earl, as our neighbor and friend. Thank you, Earl, for all you do for Rover and surrounding communities.