

Published in Deadwood
Proseurmes 4-29-'51.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE TOLL-GATE?

I am told that in the very early days in the Black Hills there were several toll-gates. The operators had some agreement with the county which allowed them to collect tolls in return for keeping the roads in condition.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick Griffin operated the one in Lower Blacktail in the 1890s. This was near the foot of Garden City Hill near Central City, So. Dak. Griffin's front porch was even with the edge of the road. The toll-gate was simply a long pole which could be raised and lowered from a big post on the far side of the road. With the aid of a rope the pole could be operated from the porch.

My aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Rasmus Nelson and their family, lived next door to the Griffins. We children loved to sit on the porch with Mrs. Griffin and watch her operate the toll-gate and collect the tolls. She untied the rope to lift the gate for teams to pass thru; then she pulled it down and tied the rope near the corner of the porch on which she stood.

We children thot this was a very easy way to get money,

but there was work attached to it. Dick Griffin worked the road from the gate to Garden City (later Maitland). The hill was a real hill - long and steep.

Wood was the fuel of that day and was used by the mills, so many wood haulers passed thru the toll-gate. I quote from my cousin, Nels Nelson, who lived next to the Griffins. "A lot of wood haulers passed thru the toll-gate - French, Swede, Irish, English, -- Joe and Louis Bodreau, Louis and Victor La Fleave, Pete Aspland, Andy Palmer, Charlie Weedon and many others, and each one claimed to have the best four-horse team. Most of them were excellent horsemen."

Mrs. Anna Mossing tells me her father and two brothers, the Goulettes, were among these wood-haulers and adds, "They drove big strong horses, well broken and well matched and splendid pullers. Of course they had to haul big loads in order to make ends meet. And such blacksmith bills there were to pay! The horses had to be kept well shod and in winter had to have shoes sharpened every week and that made it necessary to have good blacksmiths." Mrs. Mossing says that Louis La Fleave drove four oxen.

My uncle, Rasmus Nelson, was a blacksmith and he had a shop near-by. His principal work was horse-shoeing.

The road these men traveled was far from being a highway, but the haulers appreciated having the rocks rolled out of the road and the mud holes filled in. Few, if any, of these men seemed to mind paying the toll and they laughed and visited with the Griffins as they came thru. Mrs. Griffin was a lovely Irish lady, kind and friendly to all whom she met. I remember how she played the organ and sang "The Wearin' of the Green."

Tolls varied according to the load. Foot travelers went free. A man with team paid more than one with a single horse and the driver of a four horse team paid accordingly. Mrs. Mossing says her father and brothers (regular haulers) paid by the month.

Others who used the toll-gate were valley farmers who hauled farm produce to sell to the people of Garden City, Central, Gayville, Ferraville, Lead and Deadwood.

The Griffins operated the toll-gate for several years, finally disposing of what ever interest they had to the county. Dick Griffin went to Alaska during the Klondike Gold Rush of

DO YOU REMEMBER THE TOLL-GATE? Page 4.

1898 and was never heard from since.

This was the last of the toll-gates in the Black Hills.

Sent to Seaton Pub. Co

Lead, S. Oak.

Geo. E. Cyler, Gen. Manager 4-18-'51.

Published 4-'29 in

Promontoria