

# Moving to Bloodland

by Ronald Wenger

choke wire in his left hand so while he was pulling on the choke wire with his left hand he cranked the motor with his right hand. A Model T Ford had to be hand cranked as they didn't have a starter on the motor. As soon as the engine started, my Father had to run back and push the gas lever and spark control lever in their right position so the motor wouldn't die.

Our family made the move from Hartford, South Dakota to Bloodland, Mo. in March 1934. Our family consisted of my father Emil Wenger, age 34, and my mother Millie, age 30, and their children Ronald, age 9, Marie, age 7, Ramona, age 5, Emil Herbert, age 3, and Marvin, age 1. My mother was pregnant at this time.

This trip to Missouri was made in a Model T Ford car towing a four-wheel trailer. As Marvin was the baby, he made the trip in my mother's lap. That left Ronald, Marie, Ramona, and Emil Herbert to share the back seat. The gas tank on a Model T Ford is under the seat on the passenger side. What this means is that every time my Dad had to buy gas my mother had to get out of the car while my Father unscrewed the gas cap. He did this after removing the seat cushion. Needless to say, that Model T had to be gassed up pretty often, as a Model T Ford did not have a fuel pump to feed the gas to the motor. It was a gravity feed for true gas to get from the gas tank to the carburetor on the motor. After we got gas, stopped to eat, or made a rest stop and we all got back in the car except my Father. He set the gas and the spark control levers on the steering column and turned the ignition switch on. Next, he got up in front of the car and got the crank in his right hand and the

I don't remember too much about our trip on the road as to where we stayed at night or where we ate. I do remember when we crossed the Missouri River at Jefferson City my mother telling my father to be careful. Also, I remember my father making a wrong turn after we crossed the Missouri River and this turn that he made took us over Capitol Hill, which was a very steep hill and the Model T car wouldn't pull us over the hill so my father had to have a wrecker tow us over Capitol Hill. There was a highway that went around the hill but my father missed it.

The next thing I remember is us pulling up in front of this old house at Bloodland, Mo., about a mile or more out of town. This old house, it didn't look like anybody had lived in it for many years and it certainly didn't look like it was a fit place for anyone to be living in now. I remember seeing a tow sack [potato sack] a flapping over a window. A more rundown place I have never seen in my life to this day. Before we got out of the car my mother looked over at my father and she said, "Emil, how



Charley Vaughn's store in Bloodland where the Wenger's got groceries, sometimes on credit. One end of a horseshoe court is visible in the foreground. The store disappeared, along with the rest of Bloodland, when Fort Leonard Wood was built. State Historical Society of Missouri.

could you do something like this?" This house, if you could call it that, was back in the woods and a sprout patch. We moved into that old house as we didn't have any other choice. I don't remember too much about our first night in this old house, as I was just nine years old at the time.

do was to gather up some wood and build a fire in a little King Heater, as this was in March and it was cold and it was about as windy in that house as it was outside. We didn't have much of anything to eat or hardly any clothes to wear. Needless to say, there wasn't any electric or water close by.

The first thing that we needed to

We had to carry the water from a



Emil Wenger stands beside the school bus in downtown Bloodland. Behind and to his left is Herb Wenger, one of the seven children, ca. 1940.

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spring that was a long way from the house and in the summertime, when the springs dried up, the water had to be carried from the neighbors who had a drilled well. The well was 100 feet deep and the water had to be drawn up with one of those long well buckets and a rope. That was a big job drawing the water up a 100 feet and then carrying it home, which was a little over half a mile. If you were lucky, you would get home with about a half a bucket full because a lot of the water would splash out of the bucket as you were carrying it home. In the summertime, when it didn't rain much, all the water that was used for drinking, cooking, and bathing had to be carried from Preacher Smith's well.

The year 1934 was at the start of the depression. What this meant was that there wasn't any jobs or work to have income for food or clothing so the government started sending out what they called a relief truck to give commodities, which was food, to the poor people that didn't have any income or food. Also, we got some foods on credit from Charley Vaughn's store. What we got on credit was 25 lb. sacks of flour, baking powder, lard, salt pork, and some Pet Milk. My mother baked all of our bread. We never did have a loaf of store bread. We also got yeast when we got the flour.

These groceries had to be carried home as my father had sold the Mod-

el T Ford for \$25.00 and we never did have another car while we lived at Bloodland as we wouldn't have had any money for gas or oil and tires and other car expenses. It was always my job to carry that 25 pound sack of flour home. I had to do a lot of resting on the way home. When the grocery bill got up to about \$10.00, Mr. Vaughn would give my father a job of cutting sprouts on one of his farms. Mrs. Vaughn always liked my father, fixed up a lunch which was mostly jelly sandwiches. She would fix me a jelly sandwich if I went along with my father to cut sprouts, too. My father got 50c a day for his work. All I got was my sandwich to eat at noon.

After we lived in this very old house for about two years, the neighbors thought that we needed a better home to live in, as they could see the house we were living in wasn't fit to live in. So they got together and built us a log house a short distance from the house we were living in. All the logs for this log house were cut on our forty acres. The shingles were made close by the log house. The chinks that went in the space between the logs were made close by the log house, as was the clay that was used to finish closing up the opening between the logs. Green oak flooring was nailed down for the floor. After this flooring got seasoned out, big cracks came in the floor so it got pretty drafty in the house. My mother washed our clothes on a wash

board with some water in a wash tub. Us children walked to school and to church.

After we made the move to Bloodland, Mo., I never did see another relative except my folks and my brothers and sister while we lived at Bloodland. I really didn't know that we had other relatives. About 1940, my father sold our place to Charley Vaughn and we moved into one of his farm houses. We took care of his stock and put up the hay crop on the farm. This is where we were living when the government came in and bought up the land for Fort Leonard Wood. We all had to move off of the land by March, 1941, I believe. I was a sophomore in high school at the time and I never did get to go back to school as my father had bought the old Holden place that was 8 1/2 miles out of Licking. The only way you could get to this place was down a real muddy road that was impossible a large part of the time.

The house on this place wasn't much better then the first house we had at Bloodland. Also, we didn't have a car and there wasn't any school bus that ran down the old road. My brothers and sister walked to a country school first at South Fairview and then to Shipp School. I remember my brother Herb telling that in the winter time when the snow was on he would carry our sister Nina Mae on his shoulders to school as it was a long way through the woods,

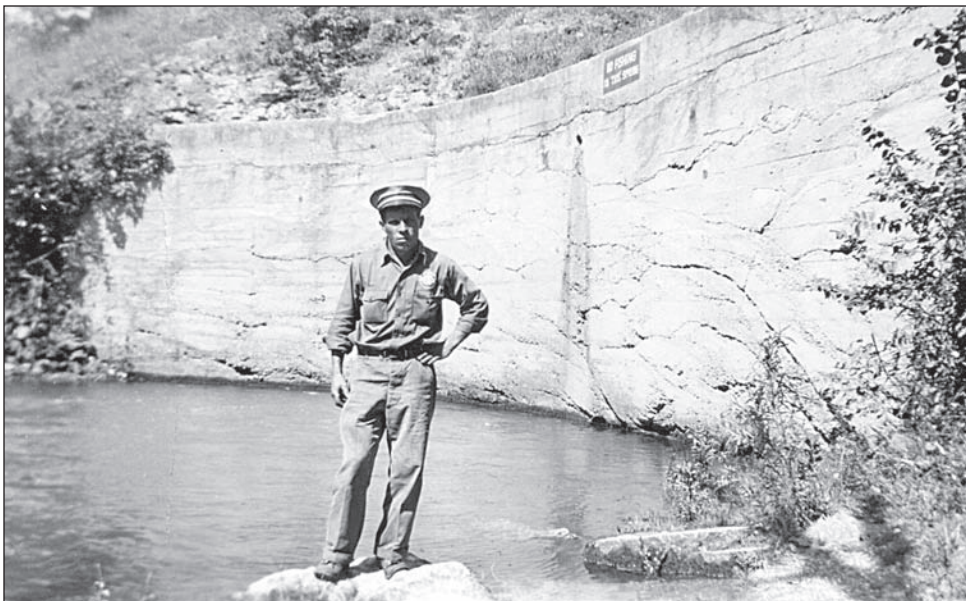
especially if it had snowed during the night. I was enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps on July 24, 1942. I was inducted into the Army on June 24, 1943 and received my discharge from the Army on March 15, 1946. So I wasn't at home when Nina Mae started school.

My brother Laurence Edward Wenger was born on August 27, 1934, in the old house at Bloodland. My sister Nina Mae (Wenger) Gaines was born on December 28, 1938 in the log house at Bloodland, Mo.

Our sister Jean Lorene Wenger was born in the old house at Bloodland, Mo., on December 16, 1936. Jean passed away on February 7, 1938, in the log house. Her funeral service was held in the Methodist Church at Bloodland by Rev. Smith with interment in the Methodist Church Cemetery on February 8, 1938. Our brother Robert Chester Wenger was born on July 10, 1921 and passed away on June 26, 1931. Robert is buried at Zion Wall Lake Cemetery at Hartford, South Dakota, beside his grandparents Wilhelm Lueth and Mrs. Wilhelm Lueth.

Ronald Wenger May 21, 2005

Thanks to Shirley Wenger, Ronald's sister-in-law and resident of Houston, Missouri, for sharing Ronald's memories of moving to Missouri and accompanying family photographs.



Ronald poses for a picture standing on a rock alongside the Big Spring in Waynesville in 1948. Today the spring is known as Roubidoux Spring.



Ronald Wenger standing by the remains of his family's log cabin in 1965. The cabin was built for his family by Bloodland neighbors in 1936.