

# Crocker Enters The Roaring Twenties

By Gary Knehans

Seventy-five years ago, the decade now known as the "Roaring Twenties" arrived with little fanfare in the bustling railroad community of Crocker.

Still in the future were things like the Charleston and bathtub gin, but residents could buy the very latest in home entertainment, a Thomas Edison Diamond Amberola, for only 68 dollars from Crocker's J. L. Hoops and Company. This console record player promised to provide "real music through a real diamond and NO NEEDLES ever to change."

A new doctor arrived in the community early in 1920. Dr. W. J. Sell of Waynesville moved to Crocker after purchasing Dr. Short's pharmacy.

Community leaders meanwhile were determined to improve the road from Waynesville through Crocker to the Miller County line. In April, L. B. Bell and L. A. Carmack of Waynesville, Charles Ousley and C. A. Burchard of Crocker, and C. O. Short of Iberia went to Jefferson City to attend a meeting of the state highway commission, which was formulating plans for a new state road system. County voters recently had approved \$250,000 in bonds for improving their public roads. The state promised to provide additional funding for approved stretches of roadway, a total of 50 miles per county. State highway commissioners already had approved 30 miles of roadway in Pulaski County. Pulaski County road project number 1 would run east and west from Waynesville (the forerunner of Route 66) with a connecting road through Dixon to Maries County (now Route 28). This left 20 additional miles of roadway construction to be funded in county by the state. These representatives from Waynesville, Crocker, and Iberia wanted the highway commission to approve the construction of 15 miles of state roadway (Route 17) from 5 miles south of Waynesville through Waynesville and Crocker to a connecting road in Miller County. The commissioners agreed, but declined to extend the new state highway south from

Waynesville until Texas County officials made arrangements to intersect this road.

The Pulaski County Court promptly ordered a grader and other machines for each of the six townships. But interests in Crocker were chompin' at the bits.

"Money is in waiting," said Editor Charles Iden of the 'Crocker News'.

"The season is at hand. Let's go." The month of April passed without any work being done on the roads. Finally, after most of May had passed, Crocker citizens took action.

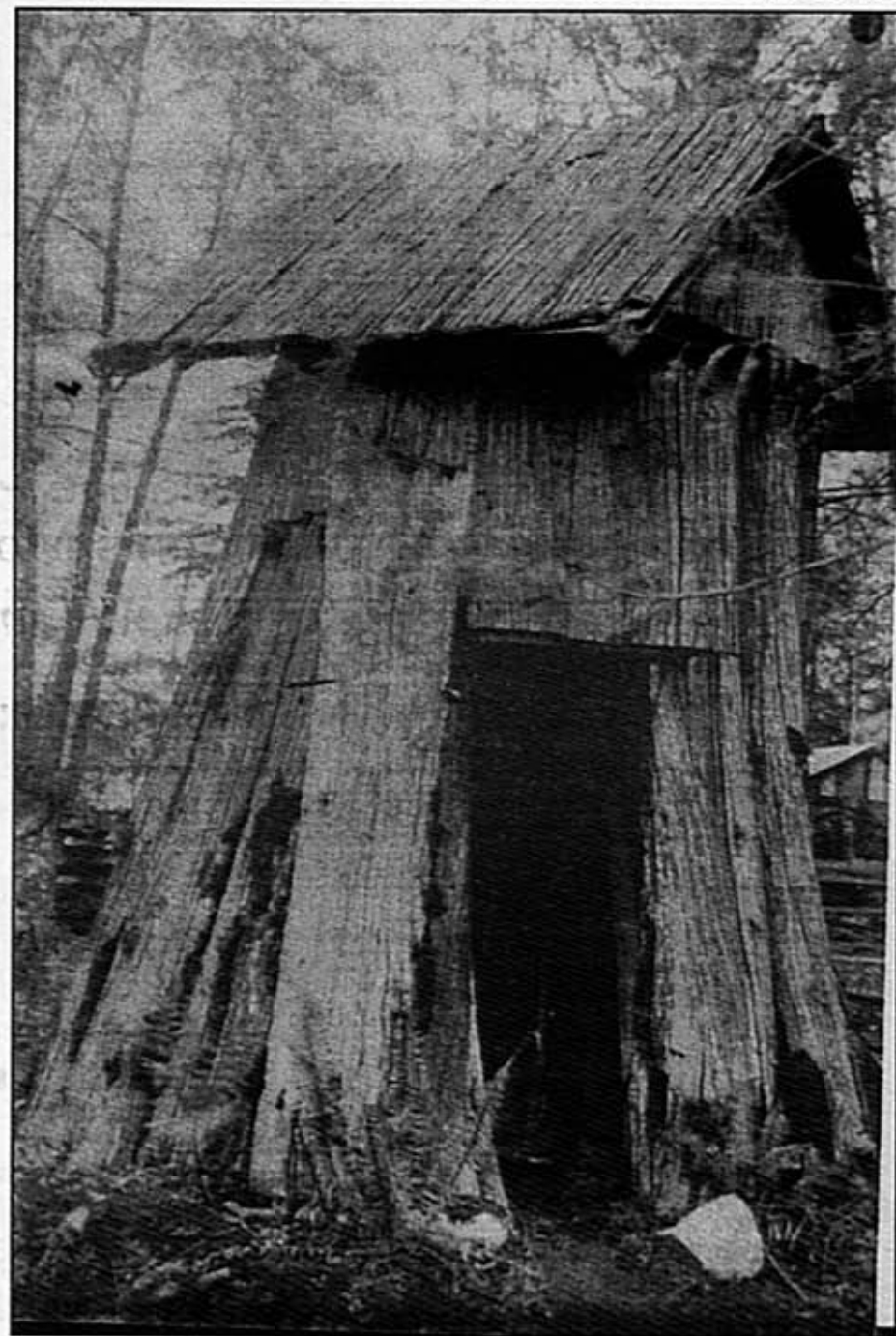
"The actual work of building roads has begun in Pulaski county, and as usual Crocker took the lead, the first work being done by the Tavern township crew and machinery on the road leading to Waynesville," the 'Crocker News' reported on May 27th.

"The township committee, consisting of B. E. Stites, G. S. Hamilton, and T. R. Thornsberry, met here and outlined the work for the near future. It is the purpose of the committee to 'dress up' the graded roads leading into Crocker for five miles out first and then go to the lesser roads and to greater distances as rapidly as possible."

"Crocker had the honor of building the first graded road in Pulaski county a few years ago when the road between town and the railroad crossing was built, and has been foremost in every step for good roads since that time."

"Emmer Penland and Boycie Kimmell, both of Crocker, have been employed to handle the tractor and machines and are now at work. We can look forward to the time of good roads with a greater degree of expectation than ever before, and the new era means much to our town and county in many ways."

Editor Iden reported the construction of the Springfield and St. Louis highway through Pulaski county was to begin within a few days. State Highway Divisional Engineer Harry D. Griffith had presented the county court with plans for the roadway, which was to begin one mile east of Waynesville and extend to Devil's Elbow. Griffith told



Cristen Adamsen lived in this "tree house" during the five years he spent mining gold in Alaska. Photo Courtesy of Chris and Edna June Adamsen



Cristen Adamsen and the crew he organized to mind gold. Adamsen was age 16 at the time.

Photo Courtesy of Chris and Edna June Adamsen

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members of the county court that the state would furnish four large army trucks equipped with dump beds and one army truck with a hoister. These trucks were to put gravel on the road as quickly as it was graded.

Crocker lost several beloved citizens in 1920. Cristen Adamsen, a prominent farmer who lived west of town, succumbed to pneumonia on February 11th. Adamsen was born in Denmark in 1868, came to America when he was 16 years of age, spent 5 years gold mining in Alaska, and came to Pulaski county in 1904.

Adamsen struck it rich in the gold fields of Alaska. He shipped a considerable amount of the precious metal in a trunk by rail to Crocker. However, the trunk and valuable contents were stolen from the Crocker depot before Adamsen arrived and claimed it.

The Danish immigrant still had money enough to buy 210 acres of farmland near Crocker. Through hard work and modern practices, Adamsen made his farm operation profitable. A few days before his death, he sold his farm in preparation of a spring and summer of rest and travel with his family. In the fall, the Adamsen family was to move to some land he owned near what is now Melbourne, Florida.

On the evening of April 27th, the lifeless form of Mrs. J. H. Turpin was found in her home by a little granddaughter, Mabel Carmack. The child ran to Hoops' store for help. A doctor was called, but could not revive Mrs. Turpin.

The 76-year-old widow had been visiting Mrs. Susie Rayl earlier and had appeared healthy as usual at that time. When she arrived back at home, Mrs. Turpin apparently spooned out some feed for a baby chicken, which was in a box by the stove. She kneeled on the floor to feed the little chick when she was stricken.

She was survived by four children: T. H. and John E. Turpin, Mrs. Janie Carmack, and Mrs. Stella Burchard, all of Crocker.

But there were also happy moments in 1920 in the Crocker area. The girls of Crocker High School organized a basketball team. Anna Carmack and Georgia Vaught were guards, Ica Henderson and Gertrude Tully were the forwards, Carrie Tully was the jumping center, and Mabel Carmack was the running center. In their first game, the Crocker girls beat Richland 16-to-3. A basketball ground just opposite the school house in Mr. Smith's pasture was being planned for practicing and for home contests.

In late September, Dr. Sell, in promoting the Turkey Ridge Fair, said he believed 1200 pounds of mules could outpull the same weight of men because mules were trained to pull and men were not. Seven men in Turkey Ridge answered that they would pay ten dollars to the owner of any mule that could get the best of them in a tug-of-war. Sam Rollins joined the discussion, saying, "There may be seven men in Turkey Ridge, who in a tug-of-war can outpull one of my mules, but I'm from Missouri

and will have to be shown."

It was about this time that W. E. "Ed" Vickers broke his arm cranking the engine of a Ford truck. Both bones of his right arm between the elbow and wrist cracked under the onslaught of the engine crank.

Mrs. Gusta Peterson, of southwest of Crocker, was thrown from her horse near the lumber yard, also in late September. She was severely bruised, but no bones were broken.

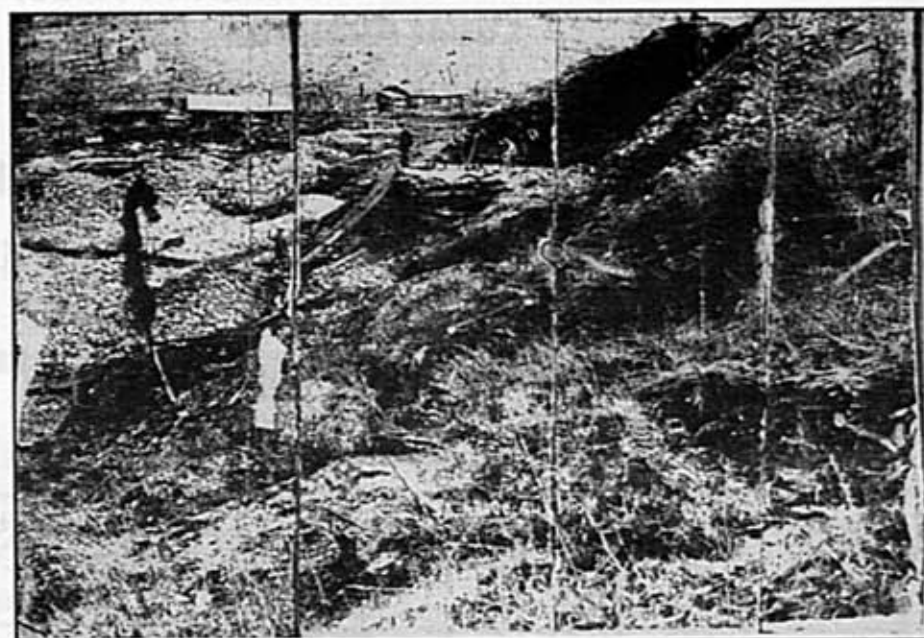
Meanwhile, H. L. Dalrymple, manager of the canning factory, thanked his workers for their faithful efforts during canning season by treating them out to dinner. They repaid his generosity a few days later by presenting him with a box of cigars and a large cake.

September 30th was the wedding date for two Crocker area couples. Carrie Mc Millian, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Mc Millian, who lived south of Crocker, married Edward Williams, the son of Mr.

and Mrs. Ben Williams of Crocker.

Reverend W. D. Johnson performed the ceremony in his home. W. H. Moore, the son of Mr. and Mrs. S. M. Moore of near Crocker, was united in marriage to Sylvia Ferguson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ferguson of Hancock. The new groom and his brother, C. F., were in the mercantile business in Crocker.

On October 13th, the community played host to soldiers, sailors, and a navy band, who were touring the state in a fleet of army trucks to promote a 60-million dollar state road improvement bond amendment. The tour originally had been routed from Dixon to Waynesville by way of Hooker. The planned route, however, was changed by the efforts of Clarence Burchard, who insisted that bringing the contingent through Crocker not only was shorter, but also was more likely to attract the attention of more voters than the proposed swing through Hooker.



Cristen Adamsen in the Alaska gold fields. Photo Courtesy of Chris and Edna June Adamsen



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