

Letter From: Pauline Pruett
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Edmonson County

Basket weaving in Edmonson County is yet in action, especially by the widely known Rev. Mr. Walter Logsdon who now resides in Brownsville.

Mrs. Have Gibson of the Pig community yet does some basket weaving. Mr. Dennis White of the Huff community bottomed many chairs during his life span. Leslie Lindsay of the Mohawk country, Oak Grove community did bottom chairs for meager pay.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Burns of the Forks Precinct around Mammoth Cave bottomed chairs for own use.

The Rev. Mr. William Miller, aged 72, yet bottoms chairs when he can find them to do. Mr. Miller started performing the art at the age of eighteen. He then resided in Warren County (Riverside, Ky). He usually got one dollar per chair, didn't have a set price. He was raised on a farm and now is a retired Baptist minister, resides at Rhoda near Brownsville.

His father Mr. Sam Miller also wove the chair bottoms. He possessed a long beard and was called Fuzzy Sam. Mr. William Miller remembers when wagons came through loaded with baskets to sell at very small prices.

Mrs. Drucilla Woodcock used to weave baskets for very small prices. She also made willow chairs and love seats. Mr. Woodcock was blind. He carved walking canes and inserted colorful marbles. They also bottomed chairs. They did this for a living. These fine old country folks resided at Round Hill or Cub Creek.

Mr. Enoch Elijah Elmore and wife Allie used to bottom chairs. Mrs. Elmore's sister, Miss Priscilla Elmore an old maid and blind, also of Sweeden, bottomed chairs.

Mr. George Elmori who gave this information also has bottomed chairs beginning about fifty years ago. He is a resident of the Poplar Springs community.

Mr. Joe Vincent wove baskets, bottomed chairs, and made magazine racks with woven sides.

Mr. Chester Carroll, a young man of Sweeden, cut timber for Mr. Vincent, his uncle, up to about 1961. Mr. Vincent also made (wove) long fireside baskets for kindling — which often consisted of corn cobs as they were plentiful. Mr. Vincent at that time had moved to the city of Louisville, Kentucky, and thus offered his works of art for sale there. He now resides somewhere around Munfordsville.

Mrs. Zonia Carroll now of the Black Gold community bottomed chairs for fifty cents per chair.

Mr. Washington Meridith wove some baskets — also his daughter Mrs. Bette Vincent of the Bee Spring community wove some baskets and bottomed chairs. Mr. Meridith owned sheep. Thus they were adept at shearing, carding and spinning the wool, of which they knitted their socks and sweaters, etc.

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Rance Lindsey of the Lindseyville community bottomed chairs. Mr. Nathan Minton has bottomed many chairs, was one of our busiest of the Kyrock community. He also made fancy walking canes and a lot of doll furniture, until he has become severely crippled with arthritis.

Also Aunt Dadie Brooks of the Forks Precinct, later of Kyrock, bottomed many chairs for the people of Kyrock Asphalt Company camps or villages. Aunt Dadie was a childlike old maid who was very religious and active in our church at Sweeden.

Mr. Obed Crowder also a resident of the Sweeden community bottomed chairs and made stools which he presumably also wove the bottoms. Mr. Crowder is very much a gentleman of shy nature, yet very generous. He never charged anything for his labor of love to his friends and neighbors. His fine tenor voice has been a beautiful asset to our church choir. He now leads us in an olden hymn quite often. We yet appreciate his efforts in his senior years of ill health.

The small village of Sweeden was named for the group of Swedish families who settled here. Only the Erlandsons remained here at Sweeden until death. We yet have the one old maid, Ms. Ida with us and we cherish her dearly. I had a talk with her concerning basket weaving. They used many of the baskets but did not weave them. The Erlandsons did raise sheep. They carded and spun the wool, then wove their carpets which were beautiful -- also blankets and counterpanes for their beds. They knitted their socks and long stocking from the wool. They were a fine Christian family of quiet disposition. Besides the Erlandsons there were the Swansons, the Pearsons, Johnstons, and the Norenes, some of whom reside around Brownsville at this time.

Mrs. Martin Jagers of the Cove Hollow community used to bottom chairs.

Mr. Henry Sanders, now of Brownsville, graduated at Western University, taught school ten years, retired from teaching in 1940. In 1944 began the occupation of social worker. He remained in this position for twenty-six years, then retired. Mr. Sanders began basket weaving when just a child. Just four years ago he wove some baskets and bottomed chairs.

Mr. Sanders' father was Mr. Ed Sanders, whose family were in the weaving business for their living, around the turn of the century. They sold baskets to their friends and acquaintances, and traded them for sugar, coffee, and such groceries as were needed. They were then residents of the Stockholm community in the Forks Precinct of Nolin and Green rivers. Mr. Henry Sanders, now one of our most prominent of elderly citizens, is as always, a jolly and cheerful gentleman with a youthful outlook on life, and the father of a fine family.

Sorry I've been so long in sending this -- hope it will help just a little.

Pauline Pruett

P.S.: Uses for Baskets, etc.

The art of weaving came to us in forms for many uses. The round baskets such as Mr. Logsdon now weaves were used for carrying eggs to our stores to exchange for groceries and the beautiful callicos used for clothing; also muslins and other dry goods or patent medicines. No one went shopping without a basket as there were no paper bags to be had. They were used to carry Bessy's corn to the manger to keep her still while she was stripped of her milk for the family's use. They were often used to carry a meal to a sick neighbor. Some even tied the fat of a chicken together and carried her to the store to exchange for some needed item. Sometimes Grandmother brought her sewing materials or quilt pieces in one of the baskets, when visiting for the day. Everyone took some sort of project of embroidery knitting. Crocheting, or the above mentioned. No one thought of losing a day of work as idleness was considered very bad.

Many living rooms today are adorned with a basket for magazines or filled with artificial corn and vegetables in a dining area. As mentioned before, there were baskets for kindling, and magazine racks.

The larger baskets were used for the Church reunion on Decoration Day. Much food was brought on this day as visitors came from far and near. Some weaving was done with corn shucks, such as small mats, etc. My mother used to make beautiful shuck hats with gay ribbon streamers, to be worn especially on these special occasions of reunions and Easter services.