

Radersburg was founded 150 years ago this year. To celebrate this anniversary, the Broadwater County Historical Society and Museum would like to share some "Townsend Star" articles about Radersburg. We would also like to remind readers that on July 29th and 30th there will be a celebration in Radersburg of this event. We will be having a display there so be sure to look for us.

Following is an excerpt from "The Keaton/Woods Memoirs", which were written, as a diary, by Elizabeth Frances Keaton-Woods; although it is not only about Radersburg; it does describe early life in the area:

"In the fall of 1865 we (the James Jackson Keaton Family) moved from Virginia City to a remote part of the country on Missouri River Valley.

We passed through Last Chance, now Helena, then a new booming mining camp. Many of our friends and acquaintances had gone there from Virginia City, as richer mines were reported discovered there.

From Last Chance we followed a dim trail to Missouri Valley. As we reached the low pass near Beaver Creek the panorama spread out before us was beautiful, an open plain of some 20 miles dotted here and there with bands of antelope.

Midway was Antelope Springs, a green oasis. Beyond was the Missouri River, a silver thread winding its way through the Valley with cottonwood trees here and there along its course, while in the distance snow-capped Baldy reared its head. It was fine to look at, but oh, so lonely, not a sign of human habitation for the 40 miles, and not a human being to be seen.

The indifferent trail on which we started was soon lost and we jolted over the prairie in the direction of the place father had selected – a V-shaped place bounded on one side by the river and on another by the impassible foothills.

Father built a log cabin, with dirt roof and floor. Lumber or any building materials could not be obtained nearer than Helena.

Radersburg was a mining camp, with a little store and, of course, saloons, half a dozen miners shacks scattered along the gulch, some fifteen miles from our place on Crow Creek that emptied into the Missouri River.

That winter we lived in the most primitive way. We molded candles, and made soap from the fat of deer and antelope. Lye for soap making was secured from cottonwood ashes put in a hopper, water poured on, and the drippings made a good strong lye.

Mother cooked on the fireplace, but we had milk and butter, plenty of fresh meat, and my pullet laid an egg every day.

A long full skirt of mother's white dress, ripped up, was tacked overhead to keep dirt from falling in our food, but did not keep out the dirty water when it rained.

To father this lonely place was a haven of rest, away from the hate, the turmoil and the desolation left by the war, here he could say what he pleased.

But it was not so with my timid mother. To her nothing could compensate for the lack of companionship and for the advantages of civilization. When depressed and homesick for the old home and friends, she found consolation in singing.

By 1866 to 1867 there was a Post Office and school in a log cabin in Radersburg and it was thought I should start to school and board. Someone would take me up on Monday morning and lead my horse back home and come for me on Friday.

In the winter of 1867 and 1868 father employed a teacher for Charlie and me – a George F. Cowan, who had been a northern officer in the Civil War, a thorough gentleman, evidently accustomed to wealth and culture, but he accustomed himself to our simple way of living so completely, was so unassuming and kindly that he won the lasting friendship of us all. He ordered books beyond our years, but he was a good teacher and we learned rapidly.

By this time there was a one room frame courthouse built in Radersburg, the county seat. The courthouse was used for dances and church services.

The courthouse was also used for Masonic gatherings. My half-brother soon joined the organization and used to take me to the dances there and also to parties at the Macomber house, a stage station at the crossing of Crow Creek, two miles below Radersburg. Although I had invitations to parties, father never allowed me to go with anyone, but my half-brothers. I was painfully conscious of being unsophisticated and improperly dressed, but still I had a good time.

In the meantime father had erected a more comfortable log house.

In September 1872, Lizzie married E.P. Woods, a farmer of Deep Creek District and the information about Radersburg ends.