

Lost in the Woods

By Bill Page

... There have been several instances, in this country, of persons getting lost in the woods ...

Two instances of this kind occurred in the company of____, who were with Colonel Austin, when he first explored Texas, in 1821.--The first was a young man who had been raised in one of the cities of the U.S. He went ahead of the company near the middle of the day, in July, between the Navasoto and Brasos, on the Saint Antonio road, for the purpose of hunting; and disregarding the caution, not to leave the trace any distance, he followed off a deer, and was soon bewildered in the mazes of wood-land, small prairies and thickets, which characterise that section of country. After tracing out numberless paths, made by the "mustangs," or wild horses, (which were very abundant at that time, all over the country,) to the termination at a watering place, or in some open prairie; and wandering four days, he finally struck the Brasos river, and being afraid to leave the river, lest he should lose it altogether; and the vines and under brush being too thick to admit of travelling near its bank, he turned his horse loose, and followed up the bed of the river on foot, wading in mud and drift-wood, twelve miles, to where the trace crossed, and by that means rejoined the company, who had halted at the river, and sent out parties to hunt for him. His clothes were nearly torn off, and he was wretchedly scratched and worn down with fatigue, hunger and fright. He was near turning down the river, instead of up, so completely was he bewildered, and his danger of perishing was therefore very great, for Texas at that time, was an entire wilderness, from the Sabine to Bexar ...

. Texas Gazette, 7 November 1829, p. 1

1837: March – "... We camped on the ground now occupied by the city of Bryan ... Look out now, through the window, as the wheels of thunder underneath you are rolling over that magnificent bridge, that spans with its mighty arms the Navasota River, and take a look at my craft, crossing about one hundred yards above. The stream was very high, nearly level with the banks; water in the bottom almost swimming, before we reached it. We were soon through this, and on the bank of the main channel ... I now cried at the top of my voice, to gain the attention of the man who, I was informed, lived on the hill on the south side. An answer was returned, and the man in quick time stood on the bank. "What will you have, sir?" – "I want a man to tie a rawhide lariat round that stump near where you stand, and the other end and an inch-auger brought to me, and all the assistance necessary to enable me to get my wagon and team over." Five dollars was announced as the price for which he would undertake, and the trade was closed. The end of the lariat and the inch-auger were soon brought over. At great peril, logs were cut of proper length, hauled up, and fastened securely together. On this little craft my son and I placed our camp equipage, and pulled across the river by the lariat, fastened on each bank. The man left behind then loosed his end of the rope, and, after tying the bed of the wagon fast to the wheels, tied it to the end of the tongue. The wagon was pulled over, and the team swam. By this time our contractor, one of the best swimmers I ever saw, was on the home side and ready for another contract. He then engaged to dig a canoe, by our return, for five dollars more. Here was ten dollars for crossing the Navasota River twice, with great labor and peril.

All this was done inside of three hours ... [they then went to Houston and returned] ...
“Reaching Navasota, we found the canoe ready, according to contract, and paid five dollars for it; also five dollars additional were paid to the same man for assistance rendered in getting wagon, team and cargo across the river. Here, you will remember, fifteen dollars have been paid for ferriage, going and coming, over one stream ...”

Morrell, Z.N., Flowers and Fruits in the Wilderness, 1872, third edition, revised, undated paperback reprint edition, pp.28-29

A Negro Taken up: On the night of the 5th inst. at the house of John Millican, on the east side of the Brazos, ten miles above Washington. Says his name is Luke, and his master, Eli Bordlow lives in Louisiana, on the east side of Red river, seven miles above Campy: he is about 40 years old, 5 feet 10 inches high, nose short and thick, brow high, hair mixed with grey, complexion common; he has a scar over the right eye about three inches long, caused by a blow with a stick from a mulatto; a little impediment in his speech; states that he has now none of the clothes he wore when starting, which may have been in the latter part of May. Washington County, Sept. 10, 1837. Telegraph and Texas Register (Houston), 30 Sept. 1837, p.3