

5-1-2009

Untitled

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, James G. (2009) "Untitled," *Forces*: Vol. 2009 , Article 34.

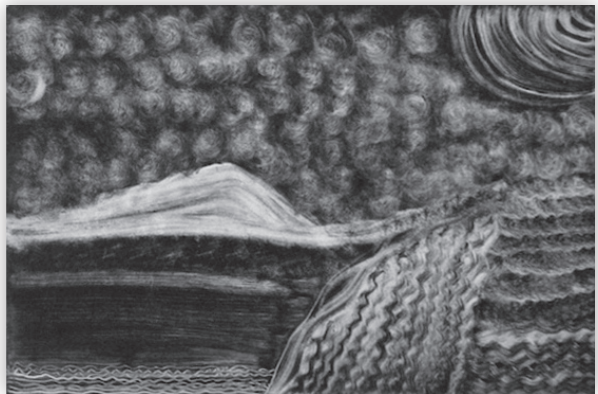
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when I got to the hen house and felt under the hens to get the eggs, they pecked at me and flew in my face. Hawks usually swept the sky above and the roosters kept wary eyes skyward. Maybe they thought I was a hawk. Anyway, I never stayed in the hen house longer than I had to. When I took the eggs to the house, I'd check the drinking bucket. If it were near empty, Shirley and I would take it to the spring. We passed by the smoke house on the left. It was always full of hanging beef and hogs. To the right of the smoke house was the potato cellar. Many times we went down in it just for the smell. It smelled like wet ground after a rain because Grandma, or one of us, turned the potatoes each day. We threw out any soft potatoes and pulled eyes from those trying to grow. After we emerged from the cool dark cellar, we were right at the edge of the ravine. We'd search for a hanging grape vine, then swing down to the bottom of the ravine, put our bucket by the pump, and make as many return swings as we wanted. Strangely enough, I never encountered poison ivy, but I think John did. The well below the pump was deep, and when the ice melted in the ice box, Grandmother brought the butter to the well and lowered it into the cool water on a long string. We pumped the water into the bucket then drank as much as we wanted and splashed as much on each other as we dared and then sloshed our way up the grade and back to the milk porch.

Now, we were free to run across the dirt to the barn. This was a treat. Granddad was always over there, filling the corn bin for the pigs, pitch-forking hay out for the horses and cows, or slopping the pigs. We usually went straight into the hayloft. The sweet smelling hay filled our senses, especially if it were freshly mowed. From the hayloft window, we watched the Washaita River roar by on its way to nowhere. It seemed so angry and in such a hurry. Each spring it flooded the vegetable garden at least twice and always carried brush and tree branches in its red foam. Many years it washed out bridges making it impossible for us to go to church. The garden contained every vegetable I could name, plus a few I couldn't. I remember peach trees, black berry patches, and the pecan grove. The riverbed held rich red silt and the fruits and vegetables tasted fresh and full of acid.

Granddad made his living selling to the Baptist encampment just over the hill behind the spring. He took any leftovers to town on Saturdays to sell at market. All they brought in the grocery store was blocked ice, flour, sugar, coffee and tea, snuff, and kerosene for the



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