

HISTORIC DICKISON RANCH

The history of Big Park here in Sedona is fascinating! And the Dream Maker Bed and Breakfast Inn and beautiful Owner's home share in this history. The following verbage is from an article in the Old West Chronicle, from March 1994:

'The Story of Big Park - or The Village of Oak Creek'

The Homestead act passed by the U.S. legislature to encourage westward expansion gave more hope to Americans than almost anything they had ever done. An opportunity to own land, was like giving a gold mine to every American family. But it was only a certain breed of Americans that actually prospered by the Act. As folks moved west into the wilderness of western deserts and mountains, only those of strong faith and courage survived to build homes, families and towns.

Such were the people who settled into the Arizona valley of Big Park, later to be named Village of Oak Creek. Probably, in all the world, there was not a place more beautiful - with it's red rock sculptured mountains towering above the valley on one side and flat mesas on the other. And in between, a huge park of poppy-covered meadows and rolling hills.

One of the first families to take advantage of the homesteads available in Big Park was Kelly Dickison family. Kelly was a hard boned, rough rid'n cowboy. He was "cowboy" through and

through, just like his dad, Vick, who raised his family down on the Verde River.

Young Kelly came with his sweet little wife, and found a spot on the south end of Big Park where the Jack's Canyon Creek came around Wild Horse Mesa. With plenty of open land to grow crops for his family, wild horses to catch up the canyon and now into the cattle business, he staked out his claim to a 160 acre homestead.

They built their home out of red rocks and logs cut into the hillside above the creek. Little by little they gathered chickens, hogs and milk cows. All the while he cowboied with his good buddies, Ira Smith and Earl Van Deren. No less than a book could be written about the episodes of those three!

For about four or five years things went fairly well, as there was water in the creek. But for some reason the spring up the canyon dried up and so did the creek. Now with no well anyplace around, the only place to get water was the Oak Creek which was seven miles to the west, or Pine Springs five miles south to Beaver Head Station. To supply water for the family and animals became one of the biggest tasks and challenges of daily living.

... On the calmer side of things was the farming. But again there was the challenge of farming without irrigation. With dry farming, they relied wholly on the mercies of Nature. But the rains would come, enough to produce watermelons weighing over thirty pounds, fruits and vegetables like you wouldn't believe.

And talk about good eat'n. Kelly could make the best pancakes in the whole dern west. Just ask the kids! Dad was special in his own quiet way. Once a month when they would all go into 'town' - little Cottonwood - he would always find some way to give each of the kids a quarter to spend. And you could buy a lot for a quarter! Mom would bake five to seven incredible loaves of fresh bread every week! It took a lot of bread and smashed beans to make lunches for six kids everyday!

They would grow most of their food, but there were some things that had to be bought. They would either go to 'Dad' Hart's store in Sedona, or Ma Green's store in Cornville. Ma would let them buy on credit as cash money was so hard to come by. But Mom (Hazel) would make quilts and trade them for \$10.00 of credit on their bill. Folks were accustomed to do whatever it takes to make it.

As far as the Indians were concerned, Grandpa Dickison used to tell stories of the Cliff Dwellers that could chase the kids, and scare them to death. But just remember, Gramps was a cowboy, who knew how to tell stories.

Every Sunday, some of the families would meet up at the Dickison's place for church. From time to time there would be a circuit rid'n preacher to come and give a sermon. But if there were none around, they'd read the Bible, sing songs of praise and worship. Life was tough and keeping in close touch with God was essential to their survival and to their happiness.

...There are many families and individuals that make up the history of Big Park. Each one left his own mark. Some were examples to be followed, and there were others who didn't fare so well. But all who have come and gone cannot help but to have been greatly inspired with the beauty of God's creation...

Appreciation to George and Millard Dickison, Ruth Davidson (Dickison) and Mary Wyatt for their contributions of valuable, historic information.'

So there you have some of the wonderful history of the Dickison Ranch. And the Dream Maker Inn sits on 1.69 acres of the original ranch, where the magic of the land and the dwellings still wrap around your heart, as you pause and appreciate the beauty and the peace of Sedona.