

**Wolf, John Quincy. Life in the Leatherwoods.
Memphis State University Press, 1974**

John Q. Wolf was born in 1864 across the White River from Calico Rock, Arkansas, and lived there in a one-room log cabin for his first six years. He and his older sister, Ellen, thought that there was nothing in the world so beautiful as the mile long, 300-foot-high, wildly painted limestone bluff and the crystal-clear, spring-fed river which ran past. Excitement was added to this beauty when high water allowed the large steamboats to make their way up the river.

As soon as John and Ellen heard the first musical tones of the steamboat whistle, they would run the two hundred yards from their cabin to the river:

And what a breathtaking sight she was, gleaming white against the blue Ozark hills, her exhaust pipes puffing great jets of white vapor, and her twin smokestacks pouring forth gorgeous smoke as black as night. Speechless, we would watch her grow larger as she slowly, ever so slowly, crept by the great Rock, which made her look like a toy boat, and finally vanished from sight up the River.

John Q. never forgot the Rock and the River, and his first important job was clerk on a steamboat.

Their father died when John was six and Ellen was nine. When their mother died six years later, they were taken to the home of their father's sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. William T. Swan. The Swans, a good, industrious couple, provided an abundant life for these and two other orphaned children in their two-room log house some four or five miles back in Leatherwood hills. In fact, they cared for several other children both before and after they reared the Wolf siblings.

The Swans made sure that the children knew how to work,

study, and behave. They encouraged the children to read from their limited library, which consisted of the Holy Bible, Dr. Gunn's Domestic Medicine, a Virginia Bitters Almanac and a chest full of back numbers of the American Agriculturist. With this background, John Q. prepared himself for the business world and became a successful banker in Batesville, Arkansas, who was noted for his extensive library and for his ability as a naturalist and as a storyteller.

In 1931, when he was approaching retirement age, John Q. began to write pieces for the Batesville Guard-Record and later for the Arkansas Gazette. He remembered scenes of his childhood, stories and local history in detail and recorded it with style and humor. Though encouraged in 1937 by H.L. Mencken to write and publish a book of his reminiscences, he never did so. When he died in 1949 he left a great mass of articles and sketches.

The book had to wait until John Quincy Wolf, Jr. (called "Quincy" to distinguish him from his father), retired from teaching English at Southwestern (now Rhodes College) in 1971. A trained and disciplined scholar who loved the scenery, folksongs and customs of the White River country, he was uniquely qualified to edit and complete his father's book.

Life in the Leatherwoods is a "must" for readers who have an interest in the Reconstruction Era, Nineteenth Century family life and folkways, or who are serious tourists of the Ozarks. Those who do not find themselves within these categories should still enjoy it for the human interest and entertainment value of its many good stories and anecdotes.

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