

**HOMESTEADING PROGRAM  
CROOKED CREEK CAMP PROFILE**

**Name of Camp:** Crooked Creek

**Time Period:** 1875

**Camp Theme:** American (“Anglo” or not Hispanic) Homestead in New Mexico

**Significance in American and Local History**

Many families immigrated to the West after the Civil War for economic, social, political or strictly personal reasons. The US government was encouraging this immigration with the Homestead Act. It wanted to fill in the vast territory between the Eastern seaboard and the gold fields of California as well as the other rich resources of the Pacific Coast region. The army was charged with the duty of forcing the American Indian tribes of the West onto reservations while protecting the building of the railroads which would increase immigration dramatically. The last of the trails were bustling with wagons, hope, hearty men, women and children. The Santa Fe Trail which ran from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, was one of those. One of the spurs of its Mountain Route passed through Rayado on to Fort Union, through Las Vegas (New Mexico), and into Santa Fe.

**Characters**

**Mollie Casey.** The oldest of the Casey siblings, Mollie is a strong willed and capable young woman who took over the duties of her mother when she died of consumption the last winter before the children left the southern Appalachian Mountains in Johnson County, Tennessee, to come West in the spring of 1867. Their father was killed accidentally a couple of years before in a skirmish between Union and Confederate soldiers traveling home after the war. The family has had a tough time since then and believe that settling in New Mexico will work out to be a new life for them. Mollie is a great dancer and is always ready to travel to the nearest community dance.

**Jack Casey.** The older of the two Casey brothers, Jack has been the “man” of the family since he was barely a teenager. Jack is always seeking ways to improve the homestead. Although he grew up in the mountains of eastern Tennessee, he loves the sunshine and open spaces of New Mexico. The Crooked Creek site, where the family settled with permission from Lucien Maxwell, has the mountains as well as the openness that he found so liberating while they were crossing the plains on the Santa Fe Trail. It was Jack’s idea to come back from Fort Union to Rayado and look for land in this area. They arrived in the fall of 1869. It took over two years to get here since they had to stop several places in between to work for money in order to continue their trip. Finally for the last leg of their journey they got jobs as cooks and bushwhackers on a train of wagons heading out from Independence, Missouri, on the Santa Fe Trail.

**Mick Casey.** A little younger than Jack, Mick is a gentle soul who has a way with animals, children and lost creatures of any kind. He, like his brothers and sisters, are sick of the graft,

corruption, racism, backlash of violence and conflict that continued in Tennessee after the Civil War. He is especially sensitive to the same kind of conflicts that have erupted in Colfax County since the Maxwell Land Grant was sold to a foreign company of investors. Homesteaders like the Caseys are afraid that “the company” is going to run them off their land or demand an unreasonable amount of money for the land that they received permission from the former owner to settle.

**Sally Casey.** A younger sister who excels in needlework or craft works of some kind. She is artistic and is often seen knitting, sewing, crocheting; perhaps planting or arranging flowers. She could like music or poetry as well; might have an interest in clothing and fashion of the era. None of these preclude her from active participation in the hard work of the homestead. Sally has fallen for a cowboy who works for the Abreu family who own the Rayado Ranch.

**Andy Casey.** Another brother who is the practical joker and storyteller of the family. True life or tall tale -- Andy will spin one out on a moment’s notice. He also treasures any books that come his way and enjoys reading to the family after supper – Shakespeare, Dickens, or Mark Twain – that contemporary writer who was becoming very popular. Andy is always looking for Twain’s stories as they are published in various magazines. His stories of California are particularly popular, but the only novel published at this time is *The Innocents Abroad*, 1869. Andy is also a great hunter.

**Luke or Lucy Johnson.** Raised like a member of the Casey family from the time s/he was a child. Could be an African American or Native American, if a staff member fits that description that was rescued or found or left with the willing and tolerant Casey family for safety during slave times. Invent a historically plausible story for this character’s early life. Gardening might be his/her specialty. The camp needs a good gardener and gardening in the Southwest is different from that in other parts of the country. Some research on this is needed.

**Josie Morris.** Joined the Casey family on the Santa Fe Trail in Fort Larned, Kansas, where she was working as a laundress with her mother. Her father was stationed there as a private in the infantry that was still fighting the Kiowa and Pawnee from time to time. Josie was tired of being an army brat and army life in general. She definitely did not want to marry a soldier, which seemed like her only prospect, even though she had many suitors. She and Mollie became instant friends; so she got a job with their wagon train and joined the Caseys on their trip west. While her father was fighting in the Civil War, Josie spent her childhood at her maternal grandparent’s farm in Western Pennsylvania near Beaver Falls. She has missed the mountains and farm life, but she is very happy at Crooked Creek.

## **Relevant Dates and Events**

### **Past**

**1000-1700** -- Ponil People inhabit the area where the Plains meet the mountains, now Philmont. They are followed by the Jicarillo Apache, Moache Ute, and, the Kiowa, Cheyenne and Comanche peoples who hunt, camp and use the land seasonally into the mid-1800.

**1598** -- **Don** Juan Onate brought the first settlers to New Mexico from Mexico, then a colony of Spain.

**1821---** Mexico became independent of Spain – New Mexicans became citizens of Mexico. Trade with the United States began on the Santa Fe Trail from Independence, Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**1846 ---** General Steven Kearny and troops arrived in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and from a rooftop facing the plaza there claimed New Mexico as a territory of the United States.

**1847 --** Rebellion against American occupation in Taos results in the assassination of the newly appointed governor Charles Bent and many of his family and friends among them Ramon Abreu's uncle.

**1848 --** The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo transfers New Mexico to United States and guarantees that the United States will honor Spanish and Mexico land grants. Lucien Maxwell begins Rayado settlement.

**1851 --** Fort Union established on Santa Fe Trail; it was a major supply center for the US Army in the SW and became a large factor in the economics of the area. Forage for animals, food for soldiers, drivers and tenders of stock, etc. created jobs and market for agricultural goods.

**1857 --** Maxwell moves to Cimarron River settlement.

**1861-1867 -- US** Indian Agency established and maintained near Cimarron for the Utes and Jicarillo Apaches until its closing due to increased settlement and influx of gold seekers

**1864 --** By this time Jesus Abreu and his wife Petra Beaubien Abreu (daughter to the original land grant owner and sister in law to Maxwell) took over the settlement at Rayado. This became a stop for traffic and travelers along the Santa Fe Trail. It provided safety, food, hospitality and camping. It was a ranch and agricultural operation that supported 20 or more families in the old patron/partido (landowner/worker-resident who received 50% share from the portion of land that was worked) system. During the next 20 years they had 6 children who are most of the characters at the Abreu Homestead/Camp. Ramon was the youngest.

**1865 --** War Between the States ends with Lee's surrender of the Army of the South to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia

**1866 --** Gold is discovered on Baldy Mountain

**1871 --** Lucien Maxwell sells the Maxwell Land Grant to European investors.

### **Current**

**1875 --** Unrest builds in the area as Maxwell Land Grant Company officials try to remove or extract large sums of money from settlers ("scatters" as they call them) in the area

### **Future: (Not known to characters)**

**1879 --** Santa Fe Railroad completed to Las Vegas, New Mexico. The closest stop to the Abreus at Rayado Settlement was in Springer.

**1900 --** Don Jesus Gil Abreu, patriarch of the family, dies. Jesus Librado and Narciso take over the ranching operation without great success. Times are changing.

**1906 --** Ramon Abreu and Gertrude Brown marry and set up housekeeping in Rayado settlement across the road from the main family ranch house (next to Kit Carson house).

**1908 --** Rayado District School is closed -- the families who were working the land of the Abreus in exchange for a portion of the crops (the partido system) had dispersed and the old system of patronage was disintegrating statewide.

**1910** -- New Mexico was granted permission by US Congress to write a state constitution as the first big step toward becoming a state of the United States. In the state constitution, voting and educational rights for Spanish speaking citizens were guaranteed unequivocally.

**1911** -- Main Abreu Ranch at Rayado is sold to Colorado investors; Petra, Narciso, Sofia, and Victoriana move to a home built in Heck Canyon, 3 miles south of Rayado settlement. Ramon and Gertrude move to the Abreu campsite to homestead.

**1912** -- New Mexico became a state on January 6.

**1922** -- Waite Phillips purchases the 42,000 Hawkeye Ranch later to be given to BSA

## **Characters' Clothing and Appearance**

**Women:** High necked or collared, loose workdresses with aprons to draw into the body; or a skirt and blouse; one petticoat, low-heeled lace-up work shoes or boots. No bare feet. Prints and simple plaids in a variety of colors. Look for drawings and pictures in references listed below, but take care to notice dates on the photos... 10 years either way makes a difference in the styles, especially for women.

Accessories include: Shawls, wool for warmth and rain protection; Coats, 3/4 or full length "dusters" or men's jackets; Cardigan sweaters of plain design in dark or neutral colors, collared or with V-neck. Sunbonnets and/or wide brimmed straw hats for outdoor work are essential to look right; Jewelry, Pin or necklace watches; otherwise, none; Handkerchiefs, fine cotton often trimmed with a bit of crochet or lace; Hairpieces and combs for ornament if a simple tortoise shell; Stockings, black or dark brown opaque tights.

Appearance: Neat, clean and orderly even in work clothing; housekeeping is always neat and clean even though rustic; hairstyles of the period and class are long hair drawn back into a bun or twist. If hair is short, wear a bonnet, scarf tied behind the head, or wide brim sun hat to disguise the short hair. No obviously dyed or colored hair.

**Men:** Heavy cotton collarless shirts with fuller button-fly trousers of the period in heavy cottons, twill, gabardine and wool with button on suspenders and work boots. Wool collared or V-neck cardigan sweaters; and wool jackets -- dark and neutral colors --for nights and cool weather.

Accessories include: Handkerchiefs, white or subtle print, or bandanas; Pocket watches; Socks; Hats are necessary, wide brim for sun protection. See pictures of the period for details but take notice of the dates; Lace up work boots. No bare feet ever.

Appearance: Neat, clean and orderly as much as possible; dirty only as work has made you; barns, tools, etc. in order; hairstyles of the period were medium to short -- to and over the ears slightly, and above or at the nape of the neck -- but without "buzzed" or shaved areas. No obviously dyed hair colors like orange, purple, and such.

## **Language**

The Tennessee characters of Crooked Creek are the **only** interpretative staff that could legitimately use a "Beverly Hillbillys" like accent, and then only if it is used respectfully and judiciously. Don't ham it up, please. Think Southern mountain folk, not hicks.

## **Props**

- Tools and implements for farming, gardening, chopping wood and livestock
- Household implements and cookware and kitchen utensils of the period
- Family photos in the home
- Fountain pens with the look of the period, notebooks and ledger looking books reminiscent of the period (no electric colors, plastics, etc.)
- Laundry tub and scrub board
- Knitting, crochet, quilting, embroidery, or just mending needlework plus yarn, thread, needles, embroidery hoop etc.

### **Program Activities Provided for Campers**

- Animal care and feeding (Cows, Burros, Chickens)
- Home Visit (Tour)
- Gardening
- Corn Grinding
- Candle Making
- Misc. homestead chores
- Water Gathering
- Wood Chopping & Splitting

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities as Historical Interpreters.**

- Welcoming campers as travelers passing through - In character, first person interp
- Check in - Out of character, third person interp
- Home visit - In character
- Gardening, care of livestock, activities above, homestead chores -- In character as much as possible

### **Campers' Roles.**

Visitors passing through and invited to camp for the night. They in turn help out with whatever needs to be done on the homestead while they are there.

### **Positive Values to the Depicted at Crooked Creek.**

- Hard work and cooperation within family and extended family units to accomplish the tasks at hand
- Respect and value for the work of all of genders and ages
- Contribution to the American West of its immigrant population
- Hospitality to travelers

### **Relationship to BSA Program Goals.**

- Appreciate the role played by each member of the extended family unit of that era
- Experience the hard work and resourcefulness that it took to survive and succeed as a post-Civil War immigrant to the West
- Learn skills such as quilting, chopping/splitting wood, gardening, etc.
- Enjoy games, stories, and music from the period and origins of the Crooked Creek settlers
- Respect and understanding of the diversity of the homesteaders of the American West

## References and Research.

***The Homesteaders.*** The Old West Series, Time-Life Books.

***The Settlers.*** The Old West Series, Time-Life Books.

***The Women.*** The Old West Series, Time-Life Books.

***The Foxfire Books.*** These pertain more to the skills and stories that the Caseys would have known from Tennessee than to their new life in New Mexico.

***The Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Sloan Russell Along the Old Santa Fe Trail.*** as dictated to Mrs. Hal Russell, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque

***O. P. McMains and the Maxwell Land Grant.*** By Morris F. Taylor

***Philmont: A History of New Mexico's Cimarron Country.*** By Lawrence R. Murphy

***Out in God's Country: A History of Colfax Country, New Mexico.*** By Lawrence R. Murphy

***New Mexico: A Brief Multi-History.*** By Ruben Salas Marquez, Cosmic House, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

*Revised 2/7/2017 DWO*