

PAINTING
NO. 35

SEARCY MOUNTAIN LOG CABIN
CIRCA 1870'S
MILL SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

This painting shows the cabin and members of the family on Christmas Eve bringing home the Christmas tree. Life was hard in these rugged mountains of Western North Carolina just after the War Between the States. The people made their living by farming, logging, breeding farm animals, hunting wild animals from the forest for food and fur which they sold and some trading with the Cherokee Indians still living in the mountains. Neighbors were few, chores were hard and endless but these conditions made for a strong family bond which exists in the descendants of these families today.

During this era the people truly lived off the land with few necessities from the outside world. William "Bill" Franklin Searcy (1848-1904) and his wife Malinda Ellen Ruff (1853-1930) built this log cabin and kitchen in which they lived along with two others in the area, including the one above this one in which their son William McGuffie "Guff" Searcy lived. In 1904 when at the age of 55 William Franklin Searcy and others, with family and neighbors watching, were snaking a huge log out of a hollow on the mountain above this cabin with a team of four oxen - two older experienced animals yoked together in front and two young inexperienced ones behind them. After having gotten the huge log out of the hollow the younger oxen acted up and the log got loose, rolling downward pinning William Franklin Searcy against his son's (William McGuffie Searcy) cabin and crushing him mortally. He was taken home to this cabin in critical condition where he lay in much pain. A doctor was summoned, arriving late that night by horseback. William was placed on the kitchen table and examined but there was nothing the doctor could do and he died early that morning while breakfast was being prepared. Immediately after his death a small open container of salt was placed on his stomach believing this would prevent swelling because no embalming was done and the burial was always on the third day.