

The Authors Corner

by Dutch Rhudy

Happy New Year and Welcome to The Authors Corner.

A brand new opening novel for the Roaring Falls series was completed in rough draft form during the November 2014 NaNoWriMo Challenge. So what better time than the new year to begin a fresh start here in The Authors Corner.

Many ideas for the opening novel were tried after the world building phase of the project neared completion. Each attempt required revealing way too much research and backstory within the story itself.

Rather than provide info dumps within the story, I chose to begin the first novel with the Stren family leaving their Virginia home. However, the story is told a century and a half after the fact by the curator of the history museum in Roaring Falls.

The novel begins with the museum acquiring additional diaries about Josiah Stren's early life. These new journals fill gaps in how the first pioneer who settled in Roaring Falls arrived at this location, and why he remained alone in the wilderness.

Previously, the story told by the curator began after Josiah settled in Roaring Falls. Nothing was known of his childhood, or the hardships he suffered as a slave laborer. This new information draws many new and returning visitors to the museum.

As you guessed, the main protagonist in my opening novel is still Josiah Stren. His parents, Jacob and Mittie Ann, and younger sister Selena, are new characters who appear in the story. The family leaves their Virginia home, stopping in Independence, Missouri to join a wagon train for their trek across the great plains.

Their time line in the story is brief. Josiah is orphaned at the age of ten, left alone in the hot prairie, and suffering from the cholera outbreak which killed everyone in the wagon train. Rescued by women who lost their husbands on the trail, Josiah spent many months recuperating in a children's camp.

With no family to receive him back home, Josiah was the last child left in the camp. The passing Nadeau family offered to adopt and teach him the millwright trade. This sounded like an excellent opportunity for the young boy, and he would learn the trade working beside Laurent Nadeau's three sons.

Wyatt, the youngest boy, rode with his father in the supplies wagon. His eldest son Pasquale, followed in the materials wagon. Josiah rode on the back of the equipment wagon driven by Mr. Nadeau's second oldest son Landers. Number three son, Therron, sat with Josiah.

This is when a communications problem arose, the boys only spoke French. Josiah learned some English in school, but his native tongue is German. Mr. Nadeau's English was sometimes broken, but normally clear and understandable.

Josiah was ordered to learn enough French from the mill components books to be of use when they reached their destination.

The family traveled south until they reached the Arkansas River, then turned west for several days before reaching the first mill site. Josiah learned enough French so Mr. Nadeau did not have to repeat his instructions in English.

Much time passed as the boys worked on preparing the mill site. Josiah learned a lot by watching how Mr. Nadeau performed various tasks, and made notes of each step to study later. Josiah worked hard to please Mr. Nadeau, and listened intently to his lessons.

When the family reached their second mill in Stafford County, Mr. Nadeau's paranoia increased exponentially. Although Josiah had no intent of fleeing, he was placed in chains at night. As the second mill neared completion, he was chained and hobbled both day and night.

Josiah was forced to work harder and longer than Mr. Nadeau's boys, and always made to eat alone away from the family. His abuse escalated as Mr. Nadeau's paranoia increased over the six year period before Pasquale helped Josiah to escape into the wilderness, which brought him through hostile Indian territory to Roaring Falls.

Other characters are introduced to the story in the scenes where they are necessary. The Shanler brothers, Ham and Emmit, are the owners who contracted the Nadeau family to build the second mill.

Because the story is told by the museum curator after the fact, and taken from Josiah's sons journals, Uriah and Morris Stren are mentioned by name. Characters necessary to the story have bit parts to play in the development of several scenes, and are left behind when the family moves to a new area.

When Josiah reaches Roaring Falls, he is over three hundred miles from civilization. He only intended to stay long enough to obtain provisions to continue his travels to Oregon. A lone fur trapper working the area befriends Josiah and coerces him to remain in the Roaring Falls area.

Told of heavy snows blocking his westward trek, and provided food by trapper Hiram Gray, Josiah agrees to stay the winter. As a gift for the old trapper, Josiah decides to use his best skills to build a hewn log home for the winter, with intent to leave it to the old trapper.

Old Hiram has many tricks up his sleeve to keep Josiah around for another year. Since I am not sure where I will set this first opening novels stopping point. Before I place a spoiler about why Josiah remains in Roaring Falls permanently, I will stop here.

I received several requests asking me to write about certain aspects of building a long series. The above gives a microscopic glimpse of the base for each scene. These little snippets are expounded upon, often in too much detail, before trimmed back down during editing.

Respectfully submitted
Dutch Rhudy