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Iowa Anecdote

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Iowa Anecdote

TWO CREEKS

Most of the lesser streams in the vicinity of the pioneer village of Redman in Tama County were not named before the community developed. They were of little importance, too small to be charted except on purely local maps. Nevertheless, they played their part as landmarks in the neighborhood.

To the north of the town, flowing westward to join Salt Creek, was a shallow, spring-fed stream called by various names. Most general usage simply designated it as "The Crick". Its course carried it directly across the county-line road, running north and south. Spring thaws and fall rains often turned "The Crick" into a raging flood. At such times crossing was almost impossible for a day or two. Northbound travelers were forced to wait at the Redman inn until the flood abated.

During the flood periods, derogatory comments of the stranded people flew thick and fast. "Such a bother. That 'crick' is more trouble than it's worth", said one early traveler, voicing the sentiments of all concerned. The appropriate epithet

was remembered. Little by little the usage of that description grew. From a nameless "crick" the little stream became Troublesome Creek.

Flowing near Redman was another brook. Unlike its more unruly sister to the north, this stream caused no trouble. According to local tradition it was named in quite a different manner.

James R. Graham, founder of the town, was passionately fond of buttermilk. The neighbors who knew this usually saved some when they churned. On one such occasion Graham was told that his neighbor, Simon Overturf, had that day churned, and so, though the sky was already dark, he sent his small son, Charles, after it.

Charles made the trip in record time. Hurrying across the fields, he secured the buttermilk and started homeward. Unfortunately, as he crossed the brook, he stumbled. The open pail fell from his grasp, spilling its contents into the water. For a moment, dismayed, he stared at the pail. Then, with thoughts all his own, he trudged home, swinging the empty pail.

Graham met his son at the door. "Where", he asked, "is the buttermilk?"

"You know that crick of ours? It used to be water — but it's buttermilk now."

And it still remains Buttermilk Creek.

WALTER E. KALOUPEK