

## **We grew up on a farm between two rivers.**

When I was a boy, I thought that was normal.

Only later in life did I realize how uncommon and fortunate growing up close to a river was.

Our 80-acre dairy farm also had two permanent ponds and a vernal pond.

The Crow River was less than two miles to the south.

We could walk overland easily on a Sunday afternoon to fish, play, or hunt.

It was simple to stick to tree lines, woods, or rolling terrain to avoid the farmsteads.

Our Uncle John taught us how to hunt cross-country without being noticed.

The Crow was a good river for carp, suckers, and especially bullheads.

We fished that river from the bridge on the Rogers Road, all the way to Dayton.

When we fished at Dayton, we often walked to town and fished around the old rock damn.

But the most pleasant place to fish around Dayton was the McNeil pasture, south of Slabtown.

That was the same pasture where the McNeil Reunion was held at seven-year intervals.

The Mississippi was less than a mile to the northeast.

Only one farm was between our farm and the Mississippi river.

That farm was owned by Bottoma's when I was very young, and Schwab's later.



We fished for big carp in the Mississippi.

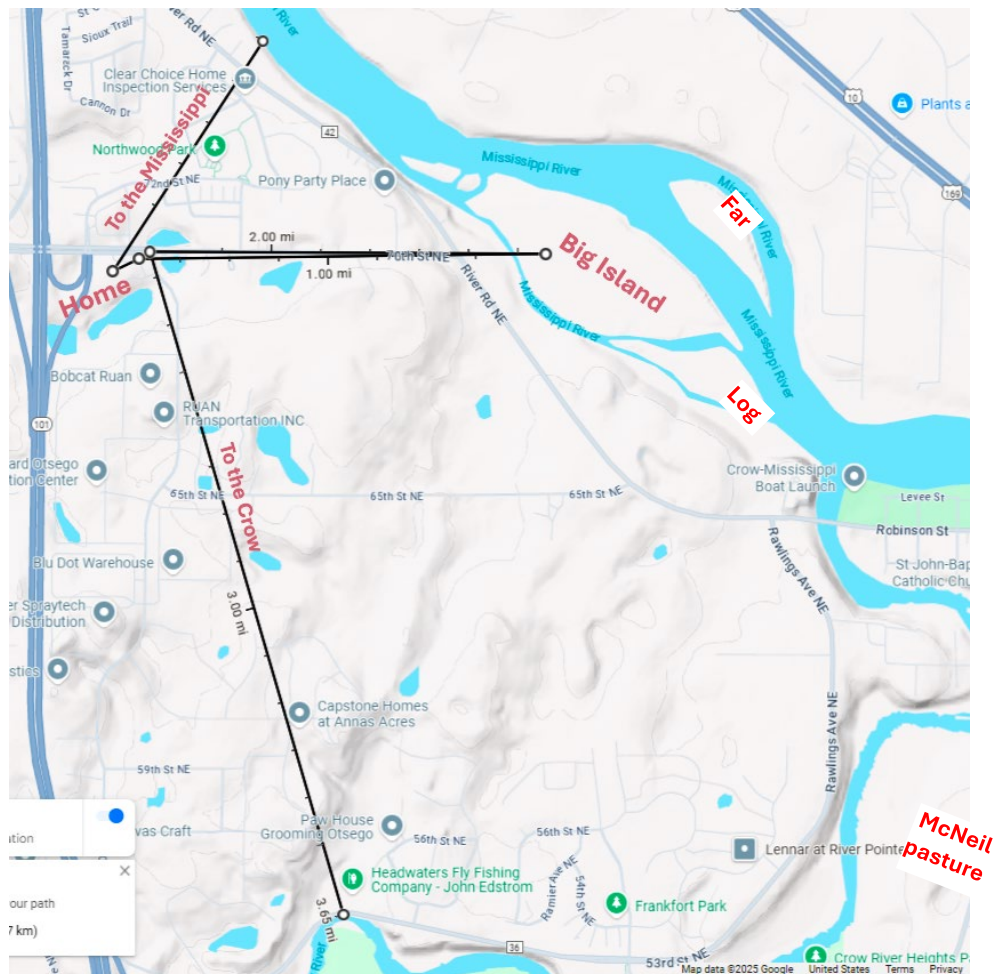
We carried them all the way home.

I don't remember why.

The big ones weighed ten pounds.

Lugging three or four of them was a struggle.  
 Carp are bottom feeders, and they taste like mud.  
 We threw the carp to chickens and pigs.  
 The Crow and Mississippi rivers met at Dayton.  
 Dayton was a small town of less than 300 people.  
 Dayton was our hometown. That is where we went to church and grade school.  
 Because the rivers converged at Dayton, the Mississippi was also east of our farm, only one mile.  
 When two rivers meet, the disturbance frequently results in islands both up and downstream.  
 There are five significant islands in the Mississippi upstream from the mouth of the Crow and two downstream.  
 The boys from Dayton used the downstream islands, primarily, leaving the upstream islands to us, with one exception.  
 The main swimming spot was on the upstream side of Big Island.  
 But the swimming hole is a different story.  
 From our farm, the upstream islands were one-mile due east.  
 I first explored the islands with other boys my age when I was seven.

The islands had informal names.  
 Big Island was about 60 acres, completely wooded, and home to rabbits and squirrels.  
 The swimming hole was on the upstream end of the Big Island, between it and the smallest island.  
 The tree with the rope swing grew on Big Island.  
 Upstream of the small island was Arrowhead Island.  
 Downstream from the Big Island was Log Island.  
 Log Island had several rows of huge, treated posts placed across the channel.  
 They were used to catch and hold logs during spring log drives.  
 The last log drive was around 1920.  
 Saw logs were stored for the sawmill which was a half mile up the Crow; the same mill that gave Slabtown its name.  
 Remnants of the rock dam still exist on the Crow.  
 The Far Island was directly cross-stream Big Island.



To reach the Far Island you had to cross the main channel of Mississippi.  
 We did get to the Far Island now and then, but those are different stories.  
 Tom.