

Mr. Robert Foy, Jr.
Interviewed Jan Lewis & Gary Eyster
11/15/1979

Robert: I lived at Poplar Grove until 1937 when I went off to college.

Jan: Were you there as a little boy?

Yes, I was born there. Born and raised there.

Jan: What room were you born in?

I am not sure, but I was born in the house. As a baby, I can remember being in the back bedroom on the second floor, which is now the back parlor. We went to grammar school.

Jan: Which school did you attend?

The Topsail School. We played just everyday games played in the hay barn or out in the woods.

Gary: Like chase?

Yes, and baseball, and football. When I was small, I had to help with the chores, bring in wood, help feed the cows, and things of that nature.

Jan: What time did you get up in the morning as a little boy?

Well, we had to catch a school bus at 7:30 a.m., so we had to get up in time to catch the bus. We didn't have a bus that stopped at our front door. We had to walk to the highway, and sometimes we would wait an hour to one half hours. The bus was not regular; it might break down.

Jan: Was it a dirt road?

At that time, the road was paved. I don't remember what year they paved the highway; it was only eight feet wide when it was paved from Wilmington to Scotts Hill. There were very few cars. There were mostly mules and buggies and carts and things like that. I remember when they paved it from the house on North. They did it with mules, hauled the dirt with the mules, and they did have a truck that hauled the asphalt, and they would spread it out by hand, and then packed it by hand.

Gary: With rakes and that sort of thing?

Rakes, the men would put on tow sacks on their feet to keep their feet from getting so hot they would tape their feet in tow bags.

Gary: Was there anything like a trolley running?

The train ran. In fact, they had a passenger train. They delivered feed and ice. They had regular stops, and there was a station here, had a telegraph operator here.

Jan: Was there a depot?

Yes, it was across the street from **the Eubanks** between the Eubanks and the church.

Gary: Are you telling us about the earliest times you remember?

Yes, as I was growing up. We had very little money to do things with. There wasn't that much to do. You didn't jump in an automobile and run to town and things like this. You made your own entertainment even after you got up in high school, very few students had an automobile matter of fact, I don't remember one that had an automobile. And they drove from Folkstone to Hampstead to go to school. They were the only folks to have an automobile. The teachers had automobiles; the students just didn't have automobiles.

Gary: Then they didn't trade with a lot of money then? They just traded with each other?

Right.

Gary: There weren't any taxes then, were there?

Yes, there were taxes, but on the highways, I think you gave so many days a year toward working on the roads.

Gary: That is just like the colonial days.

Yes, you either furnished the labor or did it yourself. I guess my Dad would furnish the labor for his part of the highway work. The main crop on our farm was peanuts at that time. They raised sweet potatoes. They did all the farming with mules. They raised corn for feed for the mules.

Gard: Did the produce get taken on the train?

There was very little produce raised – like sweet potatoes, we had like a market man who lived on the place, and he every morning would get up about one or two o'clock in the morning and drive a mule into Wilmington with a cart load of sweet potatoes, or he would sell those, and they would use that money to buy things that we needed.

Gary: Then the country store was in Wilmington?

There was a country store out here. At that time over next to the Methodist church there was a big saw mill, and they had what we call a Commissary. They had a store in there, and the mill workers had an account with them, and they would get their groceries on credit. Upstairs, they had rooms where some of the workers lived. It was a two story building at that time. It was the only industry around, the lumber business. In 1937, we got electricity at the plantation.

Jan: What was it like before you got electricity?

We had gas lights, made from carbide. We had a carbide plant outside that made the gas, and it was piped into all of the rooms. In the ceilings, where the lights are now, there was lights hanging down and you lit those. It wasn't a bright light but it gave off pretty good light. We used kerosene lamps and Aladdin lamps. The Aladdin lamp gave out a bright light – like a Japanese lantern.

Gary: Did they carry them from room to room?

They had some in the parlor, but if you wanted to go to a room that did not have a lantern, you would carry the lamp with you. In 1919 they put up the windmill, and we had running water then.

Gary: What were the pipes made of?

Galvanized pipes, same kind we use today.

Gary: Are they steel?

They were galvanized pipes. After that, we got electricity and we put in an electric pump, but up till then the windmill pumped the water till then.

Gary: Was the water pressure good with the windmill?

It wasn't great pressure, but we got water. Because it was gravity fed, there wasn't any pressure other than the weight of the water. The water was in a tank, and the pump pumped the water up to the tank, and the tank as higher than the house, so you could get water up on the second floor. And third floor. There was a tank built on the inside frame of the windmill.

Gary: Did you ever grow tobacco?

Yes, there was tobacco barns, and they grew tobacco.

Gary: Did life change much until the intention of electricity?

Life in this area didn't change much until World War II. Life was very simple. That changed the area when Camp Davis, the highway then went from Wilmington to Camp Davis, then they put in Military cutoff which went to Fort Fisher. Then a lot of people moved into this area. The area has been growing ever since. Up until 1942, life was very simple in this area.

Gary: So from 1859-1900, your relatives went through the War Between the States and the Reconstruction Period, would it have affected on the planation?

During the Civil War, they came through the Northern army and took whatever they wanted. If they saw a cow and wanted it, they took it and butchered it for food. As far as I know, they didn't burn any houses in this area. My aunt asked them if they would like to see in this room, if they didn't find what they wanted in the other room. The only horse we had was in that room, and they said no. My aunt later said she was afraid that horse was going to pick up his feet and stomp on the floor and the soldiers would hear it. They really had hard times back then.

(Caroline, typist, what aunt? Aunt Nora didn't live at Poplar Grove during the Civil War, and J.T. would have been 14 years of age, and his mother, Mary Ann Simmons Foy would have addressed the soldiers, unless Aunt Nora is repeating a favorite tale from Mary Ann. Additionally, there is documentation of what the Union army took when they passed through Scotts Hill. 05.21.2017)

Jan: What would have been your favorite time of year?

Summer and spring because we were always glad to get out of school. There were more things to do in the summer than winter. We used wood to heat with ... you could build fires (in the fireplaces), but we used wood stoves. It took so much wood for an open fire. Just the essential rooms were heated. The bedrooms were not heated. Living room and kitchen were heated, and that was it. If you were sick, you were put in a room where there was heat. We had feather beds and quilts.

Jan: What part of the house was used the most?

The second and third floors. The bedrooms were on the third floor, the second floor was used for kitchen and dining room. The two parlors were the same.

Jan: Was the library used as a library?

That room was used as a sitting room. I was never used as much as the other rooms. Theresa and Abby took piano, and there was a piano in there. We always had square dances on Saturday nights at somebody's house. We had a big double room so most of the time the dances would be at our house. The dances were on the second floor in the double parlors. There wasn't much furniture in the house, so it could be pushed to the side. My daddy put hardwood floors down, oak floors, and they would put corn meal on the floor to make it slick.

Square dances at that time were precision dance. There were certain motions you went through. There was an old man that called the figures, and you had to do exactly like he said, or he would stop the music because he was teaching the younger ones. If they did it wrong, he stopped the music until they got it right. We had live music, a fiddle, banjo, bass fiddle, guitar, violin. There were about four or five men that played. They played regular square dance music. Everyone lived within a 10 to 12 mile radius. That was one of the big entertainments on the weekends. They did not play past midnight on Saturday night. So it was told that someone would set the clock back so the dance could go on. They were religious people. At that time, the church was the center of activities, picnics and things of that kind. People were very true to the church.

Jan: Did they have oyster roasts? Or pig pickings?

They had that type of thing in the 30s. BBQ, oysters, fish and shrimp were plentiful. People would gather oysters, open them, and put them in pint jars and come around to our house and sell them. There were hard times in the 30s but you had plenty to eat. We had our own meat, and they would cook biscuits. Sugar and coffee were the only things we had to buy. Fresh beef was hard to get because of refrigeration. There were no freezers. You had to go into town to get beef.

Jan: They used the herb cellar then?

Sweet potatoes were stored. We had a regular house that was insulated to store sweet potatoes. It was insulated with saw dust, and there was a stove in there. As the house was built, saw dust was put between the outer and inner walls.

Gary: Was there insulation in the house?

No, when the house was built, you could throw a rock from the top of the house between walls, and it would go to the basement. They put a 4x4 down and ran the floor joist across it. There was space between it, and it created a draft that went from the bottom to the top of the house.

Gary: Did that cool the house?

I guess it would cool in the summer.

Jan: Was the kitchen there when you were a little boy?

Yes, the kitchen was on the second floor and under it was open. Then later they added the brick wings to it.

Jan: What kind of furniture?

All the furniture was old antique at that time. We had very simple furniture. We had a sofa and some wicker furniture. The beds were wooden with big heavy backs, and they had regular springs with mattresses and then a feather mattress on that. When you got in bed, you would sink down. It was real warm.

We had a Billy goat, and Theresa and I could play with it, but Abby was afraid of it. We would play with it, and Abby would come down the steps and the goat would chase her. One day, we opened the door and let the goat go in the house. Of course, my mother wasn't very pleased with that.

Jan: Did the goat go all over the house?

All over the house, chasing Abby.

Jan: Did the black girl do the cooking? How many black girls did you have helping you?

We had one woman named **Mary Jane**, and she did the cooking and house cleaning, and her daughter did the washing and ironing.

In later years, when the **Whittings** were here, they hired a couple extra people to wait on them; they were more used to having servants than we were. They came down hunting from Thanksgiving til Christmas, then they would go back to Massachusetts, then come back after Christmas and hunt until hunting season was over. They had their own maid and chauffeur. But at the same time, they hired these two black women to cook and help out. I always hated to dress up because we would have a formal dinner at night. The dining room then was in the library, and they stayed own on the first floor. What I liked was the puzzles. They had wooden puzzles, and I would go down at night and work on those puzzles.

Jan: Where was this dining room?

It is where it is now, but they had two dining rooms. They served from the present dining room into what is now the library.

Jan: How many of you would eat?

There were the **Whittings**, my mother and father, **Theresa, Abby** and myself. Sometimes, they would have guests in. Most of the time, it was my family and the **Whittings**.

Jan: Did you have someone to serve you?

One of the girls that was hired would serve. There was a colored girl named **Lelora** that served. The **Whittings** maid was what you call a downstairs maid.

Jan: Did the help live on the plantation?

Most of them did. There were some that lived off the farm. Some lived across the street. There were only about four tenant houses left that were livable.

Jan: Did you have field hands and house hands?

Most were field hands. They only ones were this colored woman and her daughter. There was an old colored man, and he was deaf and he wasn't able to work out in the field, and he would stay around the house and brought in wood and do work around the house **{Talton}**. He had been living here all his life, and he didn't have to do a lot. He eat right in our kitchen after we had eaten. He and the cook would eat in the kitchen.

Jan: What was your favorite meal?

Gary: Was breakfast big?

Yes, you had biscuits, grits, bacon, ham. Biscuits were made every meal. We ate lots of sweet potatoes.

Jan: What was your main meal?

Your main meal was at night.

Jan: What was that like?

You had a variety of greens and lots of things were canned during the summer. And those things were used during the winter.

Gary: Could you dry any things?

They did butter beans, field peas, and dried beans. Some of the things were purchased from the country store. We had chicken, pork, fresh pork, cured pork, rice, canned beans, and beets.

Gary: Was there iced delivered?

Yes, we kept it in the big chest; your milk was kept in the chest.

Jan: Where was the chest?

I was on the back porch. There was a door where the window is now. A door coming from the dining room onto the back porch, then into the kitchen. Later, that door was closed, and there was a pantry added, and you went in opposite direction from the way you go out now. A pantry, serving area, and the pantry was where the bathroom is now. There was a step down from the pantry to the kitchen.

Gary: Were there restrooms in the house?

They were on the back porch. There were none inside the house. They were on the second and third floor.

Jan: Do you remember any outhouses?

There was one in the corner of the yard. It is now in the blueberry farm - what is left of it. The lightning struck it and tore it up. It was a three-holer. It set near the garage near the peach tree. The foundation and a pit are still there. It has been covered up with dirt.

Jan: Where did they keep the mules that they used?

Originally, down where Nim's (Nimrod Nixon) house was. Later, my dad built the big barn that was just torn down and moved everything up closer to the house.

Jan: What other animals did you have?

We had guineas, chickens, turkeys, ducks and sheep. Bees, there were lots of bees. In the spring of the year, the bees would reproduce and have to move on to another place, so they would come out and be in the pear trees, so the colored boys and myself would get rocks and throw at them. We really made the bees mean. That was the kind of thing we did for entertainment. We did a lot of hunting, squirrel and possum hunting.

Jan: Did you have wooden toys you played with?

We had a metal rim off of an automobile and put a stick and put a nail through it and rolled it along the road and see who could roll it the furthest.

Jan: Did you ever have a wooden game on a stick?

We had a bat with a string and a ball on the end we used to play with. We had **yoyo's and croquet sets**. It was in the back yard near the windmill.

Jan: Was that considered a boys or girls game?

Both played it. **Horseshoes** were mostly played when we had church gatherings.

Jan: Wasn't brick made on the plantation?

They say that all the bricks in this house were made on the plantation. All the buildings, even the ones outside. The timbers in the house were hand hewn and put together with pegs. The main staircase is black walnut. It was made with a lathe. The molding is made out of plaster of Paris. Everyone was a craftsman, and they were proud of it. All the work was done to perfection.

Jan: Did you ever slide down the banister?

Oh, yes, I had a hot seat many times from sliding down the banister.

Christmas and Thanksgiving were two big holidays. All the Foy family would be here for Thanksgiving. We had a big meal, **turkey, ham and chicken**. It was a very big time. We had **corn bread dressing, sometimes oyster dressing**. Christmas was almost a repeat of Thanksgiving on the meal. The house was decorated with a live tree, and it was decorated with cookies that were in the shape of Santa Claus and men and women. The house was decorated **with holly and yaupon and smilax**, and the banisters were draped with smilax, and over the doors, they hung the holly and yaupon.

They made wreaths. You took **moss** and wrapped it around a wire and stuffed your **pine needles and pine cones and holly** and made a pretty wreath. The mantels would have holly and yaupon and candles. There was a homemade wreath on the front door. They used berries for color and clusters of pine cones as decorations.

Jan: What was your dress?

You wore dungarees and old brogan type shoes during the week and to school. When you dressed up, you wore knickers with elastic around the knees. We wore high socks and patent leather shoes, white shirt and little bow tie, and you were all dressed up for Sunday. We wore a cap that had a button that would button down the bill, the kind like the English wore. The women wore long dresses, very full. They wore a black ribbon with some type of locket around the neck. The women wore their hair pulled back, and the young girls wore their hair down. They did not wear makeup. A girl would be around sixteen before she was even allowed to look at a boy. If a boy came to the house, they would set in the parlor with the adults.

Jan: After the dinner at night, what did you do for entertainment?

We had a radio, and we would listen to Amos and Andy. Our first radio had a crystal set, and it was more static. The station came from New York. We listened to Guy Lombardo, Paul Whitman, and Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller for music.

Gary: When did you get movies?

Back in the 30s. Always went to Westerns on Saturday afternoon. It cost .10 cents to get into the movies. You did not go out to eat because there were no restaurants. We made snow ice with snow, vanilla and sugar. We had a tornado that moved from east to west that took a strip of trees. We were in the basement at the time the tornado came through, and the house is so sturdy we did not know it had struck until the next morning when we got up and saw all trees down.

Jan: Did you close the shutters up?

Yes, at that time the shutters had hooks so you could close them. They also worked up and down, so you could open them for light. You could do this by leaning out the window because there were no screens.

Jan: You had diphtheria? What did they do for that?

A doctor came out and gave me medicine. He came from Wilmington on a regular basis and checked me. I stayed at home. I did not go to the hospital. The hospital at that time was James Walker Hospital. The doctor was a friend of the family, and he would come from Wilmington. We had a telephone, I don't remember what year it was put in, it was the kind you had to crank. It wasn't grounded, and lightning hit nearby and knocked it off the wall. Another time it happened, and most of the weather boarding came off, and my father had the phone removed.

THE FOLLOWING TRANSCRIPT FROM CASSETTE TAPE TRANSFERED TO CD

Jan: Alright, Papa, can you remember a storm, a real bad storm & what would have happened? Did you all run and hide under the bed? What would happen to the negro nanny?

Well, when it was raining, just raining, you know, things was normal, but if it started thundering and lightning, you had to go either get in the closet, or get under a table, and you had to be perfectly quiet that was the way they wanted you to be.

Gary: That's about the worst thing you could do. What if the house had been hit and there was a fire? You would have been in the closet?

Well, they didn't think about that I don't guess. You was always taught that if you were in a draft, or under a tree, or something like that, you know, that was where you would get hit, so you got somewhere where you were out of a draft – in a corner of a room, and you'd just sit there, quiet, until this storm passed, and then, go to playing or doing anything else you wanted to – but you just had to be, had to be real quiet when it was thundering and lightening.

Gary: What about a lightning rod on the house?

Seemed like there was some kind of rods up there, but as, as like the lightning rods what you see on houses today, I don't think there was ever any put on this house. But a lot of houses did have lightning rods, salesmen go around through the country, you know, and sell them.

Gary: They would run up on the roof and then run a wire down, and ground it.

Ground it, yeah. They were usually put on the, well, this house doesn't have as much of a peak on the roof as a lot of houses, but they were put on the peak of the house, on the front and back, and then they joined together, and then they went down and grounded. They put them on the highest spot that was on the house.

Gary: If they didn't, your house could be hit.

Jan: Did you ever have a negro nanny who used to watch you when you were a child and take care of you?

Yeah.

Jan: What was her name?

Well, this **Mary Jane that did the cooking**, she looked after us children too during the day, of course my mother didn't work, so she was there too. And uh, she just kept us in line. If she saw us doing something we shouldn't do, she had, she had full authority to tell us stop doing whatever we were doing.

Gary: Did you get spanked?

I don't ever remember getting a spanking.

Gary: Is that right?

Jan: You must have been pretty good.

Well, I probably did a lot of things I wasn't supposed to do, you know, but I just don't remember getting spanked from any of it.

Jan: I remember you telling me one time about you and **Theresa** making some kind of stuff and you didn't want somebody to find out about it, or Mary Jane got into it.

Oh, that was the wine **Theresa** and I made. We made a barrel of wine and, uh, put it in the pantry. We were going to wait til it for a long time for it to get ripe. And we went in there to get some wine, and **Mary Jane** had already drank it all up.

Jan: Did she ever put water in it?

Yeah, she started out putting water in it, you know, and it got so watery.

Gary: My mother watered down some wine last year, it was so strong, Italian wine, and she watered it down, and dad said it tasted horrible.

I imagine it did.

Gary: You don't do that to wine.

Whiskey, yeah, but not wine.

Jan: Did they have any whiskey around, or was your father supposed to keep it outside?

Well, my father didn't drink, and uh, but he had whiskey in the house that they used as medicine, you know, if you got sick or something, a cold, or something like that, they would put a –

Gary: Hot toddy like?

Yeah, they gave you a hot toddy.

Jan: Did they ever put honey in it?

Yeah, honey and sugar. And, uh, one of the remedies for a cold was to take a teaspoon full of sugar and put a drop of kerosene on it.

Gary: I heard about that. That would kill you.

Jan: How about petroleum? Did they ever give you petroleum?

What kind of – uh, what do you call petroleum?

Jan: Oil.

Castor oil, yeah!

Jan: Yeah, did you ever have a dose of Castor Oil?

Gary: Yeah, that'll keep you well.

That'll keep you running. Yeah, we took, uh, castor oil, and there was for colds, there was a remedy called three G's. It was a cold remedy, it was very bitter, so it must have had quinine or something in it. It was real bitter. And uh -- there was a lot of home remedies. I don't know, you know, just what they consisted of, but you got sick you took certain things, you know.

Gary: Probably better for you than what you get now. Well, they say a temperature, a high temperature helps fight a cold... so in the old days, they were doing right with a hot toddy to raise that temperature.

A lot of herbs, roots and herbs, were used as remedies for things.

Jan: Did they have an herb garden that grew these things?

No, there were things that grew wild that they used.

Jan: Now would Mary Jane fix all these herbs and spices up?

No, my mother, you know, always administered medicine. Mary Jane didn't give that.

Jan: Do you remember some of them?

No, I really don't, other than the sugar, and, uh, maybe either whiskey or kero - a drop of kerosene. I don't know what the kerosene was supposed to do. You didn't, you know, you didn't take a whole lot of it, just one drop.

Jan: They used to do that in the north.

Did they?

Jan: My aunt used to did that.

I can't think of some of the other things that they gave you.

Gary: I have a chart of herbs, maybe you could, looking at the chart, maybe you can see things that you recognize. I'll bring that out one time.

Just all in all people really lived a simple life.

Jan: Did you read a lot?

Well, uh, you know, the old people did, when they could get books to read. They'd just, they would go to, like say, maybe our library, or something, and if there was a book that they wanted, they came and got that book and return it. And, there was, uh, my aunt was the post mistress there at one time, and the post office was in the house, where the library is now. And I don't know how many years she had the post office there.

Jan: So then there would have been a lot of people coming in?

Of course, there wasn't that much mail, but, you know, for like the saw mill and the commissary, and some of the, uh, there was maybe say a dozen families in Scotts Hill.

Jan: Do you know where the name Scotts Hill ever came from?

Well, I was told that, uh, that during, that way back, people coming from up around Sneads Ferry and towards Jacksonville, they drove their mules and carts and mules and wagons to Wilmington to sell their wares. And, uh, maybe be going along, they would say, well, where are we going to spend the night? And there was a man by the name of Scott that lived down here, and it was kind of on a hill, so they would say, "Let's spend the night at Scott's hill." And so that's how it got its name. They would stop there and spend the night, and then the next morning they would get up and go on into Wilmington. It was a two-day trip.

Jan: Now do you remember the house having a fence around it?

Oh, yeah. They had, I wouldn't call it a picket fence, it was a paling fence because it didn't have the pickets on the top. It had a flat board on the top and one on the bottom and, you know, the slats in between.

Jan: Was that all the way around the house?

All the way around, completely around the house, and there was, uh, a gate on the side where the air conditioners are. There was a gate in the back where you going over what we called the back style, and there was another one over next to where the toilet was, and then one over in the corner of the smokehouse, and then one in the front.

Jan: Sort of like they are now.

Well, yeah, you've got a gate, you know, next to the tea room there, there's a gate there, there wasn't a gate there. You had to go around by the smoke house, or you had to go out around the other side of the house.

Now the wash water was caught in the cistern, there was a cistern there, and they had a, of course, the gutters on the house ran all the water off the house ran into that cistern. And then, uh, there was either one or two, they called them rain barrels, they were big wooden barrels that sat under the down spouts, and, uh, when it was raining, they had a wooden lid on them, and when it rained they would open those lids and let the water go in and when they got full they close them back up because of the mosquitoes, breeding mosquitos. With the lid on, the mosquito couldn't get in there to breed. And they used that water to wash their clothes, they wash their hair, all with the rain water.

Jan: Alright, when they washed the clothes, where would they have done it?

Well, you had wash pots, and you put the clothes in the uh wash pot and boil them.

Jan: Where did they do this now?

Right out in the back yard between the windmill and the garage. There was two or three wash pots set up out there.

Gary: Did they use a stick to beat them?

Of course, they had a wooden stick that they would stir them up in the pot, and they'd boil those clothes, and then they had a big tin tub with a wash board, and they had lye soap, and that they'd get those clothes soaking, then they'd scrub it up and down on the scrub board, and then they had another tub they rinsed them in, and then, of course, they'd hang them out on the clothes line to dry.

Gary: A big ordeal.

Then when they started to iron, they'd build a fire. And there was just a solid, what they called just smoothing irons, you'd set those things facing the flame, and that would heat the iron, and then they had a cloth there you they'd run that cloth over that iron to get the smut or soot off of it. They had four or five these irons sitting in front of that fire and that's how they'd heat them.

And, of course, they used starch to starch clothes. They'd mix up a solution of water and starch, and when they got ready to iron their clothes, they'd sprinkle that solution over the clothes and then when they'd iron it they'd have starched clothes.

Jan: What was the starch?

It was corn starch. You used corn starch and water to make the stiffness in your clothes, and that lye soap made clothes white.

Jan: Did they ever make the soap there?

Well, yes, they made it out of tallow, beef tallow, the fat of beef.

Jan: Did they ever make any from pig?

I don't remember whether they did or not, they probably did. I didn't ever see them make any, but they said they made it out of beef tallow.

Gary: So from a very very early time, they probably did the clothes the same way, even in the 1800s, they did clothes the same way. That wouldn't have changed much.

Jan: Do you ever remember them using the old kitchen?

No, but I don't ever remember it being used.

Jan: But it was there when you were a boy?

It was there.

Jan: Was there anything in the old kitchen?

Yes, there was, you know, like canned goods and things like those on those shelves, and there was barrels with spices in them. And evidently, it hadn't been used in a long time, you know.

Jan: Was there an old stove in there?

Now, I don't remember a stove, but there was a place that a stove, was what you call a hanging flue, in there, and of course, it was, the roof was made out of wooden shingles, and this ivy had grown all over that whole building, and, uh, the roof was getting bad, so we tore all the ivy off and put a solid wooden roof on there with just regular roll roofing, you know. And that was a mess to clean that ivy off, I bet it was a foot deep in there, and the limbs, you know, had got that big around, and you couldn't even tell there was a building there, you know, and the door and the stuff was just hanging down, and it looked like a spooky place, you'd go there and have to part that ivy to go in there, and we kids, we were kind of afraid to go in it.

Jan: Do you ever remember at any time being ... would there have been any real structural flower gardens?

No, there never was any, uh, formal gardens or anything of that nature, mostly just, you know, trees. Now there was, uh, in the back yard, there were fig bushes, just tremendously big fig bushes that as a kid, you climb up and get figs, you know. People then didn't go for shrubbery. Your house was very simple, your yard was very simple.

Jan: Now, Papa, there is a garden type of plot over on the side.

My daddy built that back in the 40s.

Jan: What would have grown in there?

He had caladiums, and uh, oh, uh, pansies in there, and there's another flower that I can't think of that you see a lot in window boxes...

Jan: Geraniums?

Well, he had geraniums too, but that's still not what I'm thinking of,

Jan: Those little white flowers?

All different colors and looked like a bell,

Jan: Morning Glories?

No it wasn't morning glory, but the flower on it was shaped about like a morning glory, but you know a morning glory is a vine.

Jan: You remember what colors? All colors?

Yes, it had all different colors and they are very easy to grow, and he kind of made it just a little garden there, and he had a metal chair out there, and some lawn chairs, and around the tree itself he had another one, and he had what's these? Is it Caladiums? Different color, you plant the bulb? not caladiums...

Jan: Tulips?

No, I don't know, it was like a tropical plant,

Jan: What did it look like?

Well, it had a big leaf on it, it didn't really actually have a flower, some of them be green, some of them red, different colors, and the skin was kind of reddish looking.

He had begonias ... I can't think of the name of it.

Jan: Wasn't Snapdragon?

No.

Gary: It sounds like just about every flower would have grown there?

He had a beautiful plot in there. You know, this was in his later years when he wasn't able to do a lot else, and he just had that as a hobby, and he built a little green house down there and raised some of those things in his greenhouse.

Jan: Where did he have his gardens?

You know, where Turner and all of them got their garden now? That's where our garden was, down in there.

Jan: He didn't never have any by the house?

Not that I know of, as the land stayed so dry and they didn't have time or a method to water them.

Jan: What was that pasture used for? Did he ever have any cows?

Yeah, the cows came all the way up to the back fence, you know, all out where the barn is now. It was all fenced. And there was peanuts grown in there. That's the only thing I ever remember being grown in that particular field.

Jan: How about sweet potatoes?

No, the only thing I ever saw was peanuts. It is so sandy and in the summertime, it gets so dry in that particular field, you know, crops just don't grow that well.

Jan: Do you remember how much land the plantation had, where it went, and what the boundaries might have been?

I know where the boundaries were, but I don't know exactly how many acres. On this side of 17 there was approximately, I would say, 300 acres. And then out across 17, they had probably several hundred acres at one time.

Jan: Out near Sidbury Road?

On Sidbury Road, that was just timber land, strictly timber land.

There were never any crops grown out there. That was all timber land.

Gary: Sidbury Road in Wilmington?

Right in front of Jan's house, well, it's in Pender County this end, and the other end is in New Hanover. The majority of it will be paved in New Hanover, there's about a quarter mile not paved in Pender County.

I feel like this road is going to be like a bypass once they get this road coming from Benson to Wilmington, I think this road will tie into that road, it will be kind of a bypass without having to go into Wilmington, it will be a secondary road but still a means of cutting over from 117 over to 17.

Gary: Do you think there will be a development?

It's too low back in there, most of it is too low.

Jan: Alright, Papa, do you remember how much your father would have paid for the slaves, or any of his helpers?

Well, actually, my father didn't buy any slaves. It was his grandparents or uncles or somebody, you know, prior to him -- the slaves had been freed, you know, when he took over the farm.

Jan: Like the colored people who worked for your father? Would they have been ...

Ex-slaves. Some of them, yeah.

Jan: Would this have been a generation type of ...

They were the descendants from the slaves.

Jan: Yes, but did their families always live there?

I would say some of them did, and some of them had come in from other places, you know. But, uh, I am sure that there were some that were descendants of the slaves that worked here on our farm. Like, um, you know, **Nimrod**, that worked for me, was probably a descendant of somebody who at some time was a slave either on our farm or an adjoining farm maybe.

Gary: Was he the last?

Yes, he was the last one that was on the farm with me.

Gary: He just recently died?

He is still living.

Jan: Your father would have paid him his wages?

Yes, he paid wages.

Jan: Did he also take care of him, and any of his needs?

Yeah, if they got sick, he saw to it they got a doctor or he would doctor them himself.

Jan: It was more or less your father's responsibility to see that they were taken care of?

Well, they were tenant farmers.

Gary: What does that mean?

Well, they sharecropped, tenant farmers, and uh, during the summer, or winter time when there wasn't any work, we had, you know, meat in the smoke house, they got their meat from here and things like that. And they lived a very simple life just like everybody else, you know. *They lived on seafood, cured pork, corn bread, and uh, biscuits, and black-eyed peas, and uh, dried butter beans. That was the staple.*

Jan: How about Molasses?

Molasses, you eat a lot of molasses.

Jan: Isn't one of the favorite southern things slopping molasses on biscuits?

Oh yeah, that's good eating. Take hot biscuits and butter and molasses. That's good eating with a glass of milk.

Jan: What are Hoppin-Johns?

That's black-eyed peas and rice.

Gary: Was that molasses black strap?

Black strap molasses.

Sulfured or de-sulphured?

Well, if you boiled it, it was sulfured, probably. I don't remember ever making cane syrup here, but a lot of cane syrup was made in this area for home use.

Gary: How about a still?

Whiskey stills, and such? No, there was a lot of whiskey stills throughout the area. But they were making it to sell, you know. But there wasn't one on the farm for farm use. Now wine, you could make up to so many gallons of wine, and you still can.

Gary: So it was restricted at the time?

Yeah, whiskey. Whiskey always been restricted.

Jan: How long did your daddy have his little store? Didn't he have a little store right next to the house?

Well, he just ran a filling station; he started that prior to World War II. And, uh, he ran it for several years and then leased it out to a Mr. Brinkley.

(Break in the tape)

Gary: You had a house for curing?

We talked about the curing. But there was a blacksmith shop, and uh, they forged a lot of their farm tools. They made plows, uh, their axes, they made their, uh, grubbing hoes, and a lot of the tools that went on the plows, you know. And they made, you'd be surprised what they could take and heat and bend and make into a usable tool.

Gary: They could have made a wagon probably then?

Oh yeah, they made the spokes and all right in there, and they repaired the wheels. And uh, the way that they uh put the metal rim that went on the outside of that wooden wheel, they built a fire all the way around it and got it heated and expanded it, then slipped it over there, and then poured water on it right quick, and it shrank right down on there. That was how a rim was put on a wheel.

Gary: Did you hear that? They were clever, weren't they?

One of the old forges is still down here, blacksmith forges. You put the coal in there, and it had a handle you pumped, and it heated that stuff, and you put like a horseshoe or something in there and make it shaped to fit that horse's foot, and you got it red hot and beat it, and they actually welded with heat, you know, and get a piece of iron red hot and beat it together, and those rims were actually welded with heat.

Gary: No rivets?

No rivets on it.

Jan: Do you remember the date the tractor came?

Well, I was the first one to have a tractor. This was in 1935. I got the first tractor that was on the farm. I was, you know, in high school, and I started farming, and my daddy, you know, helped me buy a tractor.

Jan: You never ever called the plantation Poplar Grove, did you?

Well, it was always known as Poplar Grove, but we just said the farm, we just said out at the farm.

Jan: How do you feel about what we are doing now?

Well, you know, I'm real pleased. It just makes me feel good that I know that somebody has taken the place, and restored it, and it is going to be, you know, shown to the public.

Gary: Best that could be done.

Of course, I would have liked to have seen a man and a wife, and a whole family in there, like it used to be with us, but, you know, that didn't happen but I'm still pleased.

Gary: It's a big house today.

But I'm really really pleased with it.

Jan: Do you feel that Poplar Grove could become a community venture?

I don't know exactly what you mean by a community venture.

I don't know about that, but you really have to interest is the younger people. You get them interested and then their parents would be interested.

Jan: Don't you feel that the men in the community would like to have a place to go where they could sit and talk like they used to?

Well, yes, but at the same time you know everybody is so busy today that they don't have time like they did then. Back, you know, in the days I'm speaking of, once the crops were laid by and harvested, then during the winter months, you had some time to sit around and talk, or you cleaned up hedge rows, or you cut wood.

You socialized in the winter time. But today, everybody is working on an eight to five job and when it comes the weekend, they've got their families, and they want to go and do things with their family. There are so many things to do. You've got t.v. programs to watch. You got to take the kids here and you got take them there, and people really don't take time to visit. I would hope that that would take place, but I'm just not sure that that many people would be just interested in just going and having a cup of coffee. Maybe it could work up to that. Once you get some few started, maybe some more will join. It could be a gathering place for people on rainy days or at night. Of course, though you don't want to open it up at night just for somebody to come and sit down and have a cup of coffee.

If you have something that people are interested in, they'll come. I'll put it that a way. If you put the interest in

Jan: Do you think people would like to come and see old movies? Back in Charlie Chaplin's day?

Depends upon what kind of response you have to it

It is just such a different situation. Had you had this say 30 years ago, it would have been a big success in the neighborhood because the neighborhood hadn't changed that much thirty years ago.

Jan: Do you remember any popular crafts during this time? Did you mother do quilting.

Yes, they had quilting parties through the church. They had bazaars. Most of the things they had to sell then was handmade, with crochet work, like pillow cases, bed spreads, and things like that, plus all kinds of canned goods. At Christmas time, you know instead of giving a man a shirt for Christmas, you gave him a practical gift, a lot of it was swapping canned goods. Maybe if you had a smoke house full of meat and your neighbor didn't have one, you gave him a ham, you know? It was close knit neighborhood. And you gave things that you had rather than money, you know.

Gary: It'll be getting back to that.

I feel sure it will. I hope it won't get back that far but the American people are really going to have to change their lifestyle very shortly.

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