

**Theron Maybin**  
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**Interviewer: David Schenck**  
**Transcriptionist: Cathy Mann**  
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David Schenck: So this is David Schenck and its February 14, 2008 and I'm at the home of Mr. Theron Maybin up on West Rock Creek Road, right?

Theron Maybin: Yes.

DS: And we're going to talk about some of the questions about the Green River history. Where would you like to start? We can either start with those specific ones I wrote for you, or we can start on the general ones.

TM: Do I need to make comment on this first? [TM refers here to the letter and specific list of questions DS prepared for him.]

DS: Yeah, that would be good.

TM: I'm Theron Maybin, lifelong resident of the Rock Creek area. Born in a little house up on the east side of Rock Creek in 1943, the second child of the Lincoln and Carrie Maybin family, of ten boys and four girls, all of whom still live in the Green River Township. Seven children born at home, seven children in the hospital and there's no difference in the ones born at home and the ones born in Green River due to Pearl King that was an excellent midwife. We grew up without a lot of things but we always felt that we was well blessed because Mama and Daddy well provided far as food, shelter. We look back sometimes and think boy, we had a life of Riley being able to roam through the woods or the streams and things of that nature that a lot of people today don't have that privilege of. We didn't have a lot of the luxuries of the world but we had never had them and we never missed them.

This area has always been a favorite spot to me because of my birthplace and the marks that you leave along the way is always remembrance, not only to you but to others that come by. And there's no other place that will ever compare to home whenever your home is a place of love and understanding. A lot of the things that has changed over the years of different people moving in to the community that there's not the community life that there was growing up. In growing up most all was family members. You knew where family members was at and what they did and with a lot of newcomers that come in, you know where they live, but you know very little about them. They are a much more private type people than what family type people are.

We've witnessed changes through different storms and one in particular was in 1958 whenever considerable flooding and erosion took place. It took two bulldozers and a dragline

better than thirty days to straighten the streams back and get them in the courses of where they originally ran. It washed out two bridges along with culverts at the head of Rock Creek that used to go into Sky Valley Camp. These bridges was never replaced and the road was closed. It left our community more secure in some ways, only one inlet and one outlet. Even though we used the road occasionally to go to Crab Creek Church to different singings and events, we still miss the closing of the road.

DS: Well, it's absolutely beautiful up here, still is.

TM: Far as the land, it's some of the best land. It's some of the most purest water that you'll find in western North Carolina. The headwaters, there's nothing above the headwaters that actually pollute the water.

DS: What I tried to do when I wrote you the letter was just to, you know, we spent four or five hours talking, looking at four different cemeteries I think, and I learned a lot during that time so these questions are partly just to ask you to repeat here so other people will have the information. And part of it was questions that occurred to me, kind of woven into it, of more information about those things. And you're welcome to start at the beginning and go through or just kind of wander around. I don't think we're going to have any shortage of things to talk about.

TM: Alright. Matthew Maybin was the first Maybin to come to the area in 1770. He came over on the Pennsylvania Farmer in 1772, born in Ireland, January 13, 1756. He came to the United States because of the high taxes and all in the mother country. He spent time in Newberry, South Carolina in his early days and then entered into revolutionary battles and crossing through the area here he fell in love with the area and for time spent in revolutionary battles he received different grants for his time spent in service. In 1787 he received, 1787 he received a land grant of twelve hundred acres and at different times he received land grants of five hundred acres in the area, along with buying land from the old Heatherly people in the early 1800's for a nickel an acre. They gave him over three square miles of land at one time in the Green River Township.

The mountain directly behind my house is Maybin Mountain that was named for him years ago. Much of the area is named for him and for his descendants such as Uncle's Creek up Green River was named after his uncles. His uncles also gave the land for Cedar Springs Church in 1847 that was later named Meeting House Branch. The church moved to its present location in 1902 and the land was given for the church there from a grandson of Albert Capps. The church still exists there today. A new one was built February 13, 1966. Also, he gave land for the Cedar Springs School, which set directly across the road from the church. His family and descendants

of his family, there's been seven generations through the church and involved in the community for well over two hundred years.

DS: You just finished working on a, well not just, but you finished doing a history of the church, the hundred and fifty year anniversary, is that right?

TM: Right. And in becoming involved in doing the history of our church I became interested in not only the church but also in the family trees that was involved in it. John Capps moderated the meeting, which was my great, great, great grandfather on my mother's side. And on the Maybin side George Maybin was the first church clerk in 1847. So the two families have been closely tied to each other for well over two hundred years. Both William Henry Capps and Matthew Maybin was both revolutionary soldiers that helped shape our country for today.

In looking back over history, I can only imagine the sacrifice that a lot of them did that we might have what we have today as far as the freedom, having churches and cemeteries and things that are established with records for today, along with for the future. Also Matthew, there's records of where that he went to Greenville at the age of eighty to check on his pension because his pension had stopped. Even though in today eighty dollars is not much, but at the time he could take a day's pension of twenty-five cents and buy five acres of land.

DS: Pretty good pension.

TM: In that to young people no matter what that you have whenever you're young, if you'll take it and sow it as seed it will grow and develop for you over the years, that you won't have to work as hard later in life by taking care of what that you have whenever you're young, compared to sowing to the wind. In the area of farming in this area, in the early '50s most all farming was done by stock either horses and a few oxen. Even on the roads below my house was pole bridges that you crossed with an automobile but when you went down the road with your stock you opened the gates to go around and the cattle roamed between each side of the road and you always watched out for them.

DS: So you grew up, you were telling me when we were riding around last week, you grew up on a farm. You had hogs from early on. I mean you've been farming virtually since you got going on the earth.

TM: Farming has been my main goal. In school in choosing a course to guide you through I chose the vocational course. My heart was always into seeing things grow and develop and to be able to place seed in the ground and watch the mystery of how that they come forth and the things that they bring and the tender loving care that is required to give to plants to get good quality vegetables for market today. Common sense and love for what that you're doing adds by far more to your productivity than for the fact of the dollars that are involved.

DS: That stewardship thing that we talked some about when we were driving, how important that is, not only for farming but in the community and family and everywhere else.

TM: Good stewards is one that takes care of nature to the best of his ability, that he can see it used for a natural potential for the enjoyment of himself and for others to be able to view beautiful mountains undisturbed, streams that are not polluted, but also be able to utilize land that's suitable for farming for good agriculture purposes, recreational purposes, and for summer camps to give children the opportunity to come into the area and to view nature at firsthand. These are some of the things that are involved around a good steward is being able to understand creation and the natural habitat of animals along with men.

In our area compared to Tuxedo or town areas, people have a lot more freedom to go where that they please without being worried about you're on my land because with a community that has a good community watch, you're welcome on your neighbor's property because of your stewardship of leaving in place the things that they have placed there and not taking without permission. And most people in our area, if you have a need, if your need will be made known, your need will be supplied.

DS: Part of where that question came from was just the time I've interviewed some people who live near Tuxedo and Lake Summit and it seemed like their life growing up and their parents' lives were shaped by the mill and by the vacation homes around the lake and by the camps. And as I've talked with people who live up here at this end of the valley, particularly in Rock Creek, it just seemed like a very different rhythm. It seemed more tied to, there's more agriculture, just a whole different, well, not a whole different sense but a different sense of land or how things worked. So that's why I was asking that question.

TM: Country life people depend upon themselves, whereas when you come near city life people are dependent much more upon others. And the Tuxedo area as a whole and the mill could be greatly appreciated for the jobs and all that it provided from the mid '20s through the '60s, of people being able to earn a living for their family, even though at an early age an aunt went to work at nine years of age receiving a dollar a day for working in the plant. With a dollar a day was still able to buy the necessities that was needed for her family. In that day in time people did not drive backwards and forwards to work, they wound up and boarded in a boarding house or someone close to the mill because of working ten hours a day and then walking five to seven mile back home, it was just almost impossible. The area was booming with street lights, a caution light, but as time has went on a new road has came through, the mill is closed, the school is closed, cafes, grocery stores, and filling stations have all closed. At one time there was five cafes that you could go in, sit down and order a meal. Today there's not one that's available.

There was also a hardware store at the depot and the depot was a center of a lot of attraction at the time where pulpwood crossties, timber could be sold and loaded on the rail cars. But in time the train station closed that moved all of that either out or into Hendersonville and much of the stuff was carried to the Zirconia Depot by horse and wagon or by oxen.

DS: So if you were logging up here in this end of the valley you would take your lumber, whatever else, down there to the depot and actually sell it there and then they would move it on from there?

TM: Yes. All of it was, you was paid a portion for what that it would be sold at, at the time. It was not take and leave on consignment but you received pay the day of delivery.

DS: This next question really came from people talking to me about how different life was in the valley after the second war and then I talked to a couple of people who served in the Korean War but it sounded like in particular making a living, farming got more and more difficult as time went on and a number of things in the valley changed after the second war. So I was just wanting your thought about what you had seen. Of course, you were a young man at that point.

TM: Through the study of agriculture and those involved in it, today only 1.8% of the people depend directly upon agriculture as their living. During World War I and the registration of men going into service, better than 60% of the people was tied to agriculture. Through automation farmers are still able to feed the nation today with a small percentage compared to a large percentage approximately a hundred year ago. Not only are they able to feed the nation but they are able to feed with a much higher quality of produce because of the chemicals, the fertilizer, and the things that we have today that we didn't have years ago.

DS: You mentioned a little bit ago that new people have come into the valley and part of that means that the land is owned and held in different ways. I mean your family and some other families had very large tracts from land grants or other, a hundred and fifty or two hundred years ago. But those tracts are mostly fairly small now I guess because of descendants and so on. But what's changed that you've seen in your life about how the land is held, who owns it and the size of the parcel, what it's used for; what have you seen happen?

TM: A lot of the people realize how hard a work that there was in the early '50s and whenever the boom came they saw a much easier life of being able to go nearer town or go to public work. Farm life had changed considerably because of the amount of income that would be coming from the farm and also income coming from public work. And not only that but the taxes and things that was upon the land at the time was difficult for people to pay, that they had much rather to sell the land than to pay the taxes on it. And today we're blessed with people with knowledge of seeing the potential of preserving land through different programs and in these

programs we need to understand is this land going to continue for the conservancy of the land with good stewardship of the land, or are we going to see land grow up and convert back to nature and eliminate the value that it has been to the county over the years of providing crop land, whether it be for fresh vegetables or whether it be for cattle or what. Some of these are things that need to be looked at and look at the fact of limited taxed on land but taxes based upon what's placed upon the land. Much of our county is being looked at in a way to preserve for the benefit of all without the expense of being to the landowner himself.

DS: I don't know exactly how to ask this question but when you were growing up and growing up on the farm you had a sense of the land, of what could come from the land, the idea of planting and watching the mystery of things grow out of the land. There are different people now in here. There are some people in the old families who have left, like you said, particularly after the second war. There are new people who have come in. Is there a change in the way people are experiencing or approaching the land here? I mean you were partly just talking about it I guess. Some people want to see it convert back to nature. What are some of the ideas that you see people having now about the land or what it should look like as we go on forward? Does that make sense?

TM: Some of the people from outside, they like to see the beauty but they don't want the smell of manure or a hog pen that was part of life for us growing up, of having cows in a stable, that manure was hauled out and placed on the field that created considerable odor for a few days; or a hog pen that whenever the wind blew they could catch an odor from it. And many of the people that have been used to city life does not prefer to smell part of farm life, whether it be from the animals or whether it be from the fact of chemicals sprayed that are necessity to keep down insects.

DS: Of course, they used to have plenty of smells in the city but I guess they forget about that, huh?

TM: After a period of time you learn to adapt and don't think twice about what it is and one that comes to mind is the people that lived around Canton to be able to smell the odor coming from it. The first time I remember smelling it I thought somebody had broke up a giant hen's nest.

In the '50s most people had a milk cow that the family relied on for their source of milk. Not only did they have milk cows, they had chickens and chickens roamed more or less freely. But in today's time in the Rock Creek, no one has actually a cow that they milk on a daily basis for milk. At one time there were three small dairies on Rock Creek that provided milk for ( )

Dairy. All of it has changed to bigger and better but sometimes it makes you stop and wonder whether it's bigger, you know it's bigger but is it better.

DS: So one thing you told me about when we were standing, I'm just going to jump around a little bit if that's alright, standing down in the Maybin Cemetery where you had put up the stones, and I'd like for you to talk about that some. But you were telling me something about, I can't remember if it was down around Newberry or up here when Matthew Maybin was involved in lead and silver trade. He had a number of different activities going I guess, economic activities.

TM: To my knowledge Matthew's time in Newberry, South Carolina was spent around Ebenezer Methodist Church that was built in 1772. And in studying the history Ebenezer is a beginning point. In our lives we have a beginning point and then the things that we do along the way we have beginning points, but we also in the things that we do we have the responsibility of recording history of yesterday that we made today or whether that this is passed on to the next generations. To Matthew and the headstone that is placed for his time of revolutionary battle, along with a stone with his name and his wife's name and his children's names placed upon it, this can be appreciated for their part of helping shape the area in which that we live. And not only has he spent time in the freedom for our country but his descendants down through the years have sacrificed time for the freedom of our country. A grandson, Jesse Maybin, entered the Civil War July 12, 1862 and May 28, 1863 a letter was sent to him encouraging him not to bring shame and reproach upon the name by being a deserter, but to be of strong courage and to continue the fight that's before us. His neighbor, Aaron Capps, inscribed upon his headstone is the words "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. I have finished my course." We should always look forward and never look backwards as a true soldier. In the Vietnam era our church was drawn much closer and the community was drawn closer by the different men from our community that was serving in the armed forces. Service men was constantly mentioned in prayer. Having served in Vietnam twelve thousand mile from home, the presence of the love of loved ones could be easily felt in the time of meditation, and not only could they be felt but a hand of security that was there. The price of freedom is far beyond numbers that can be recorded because it's one of the things that are taken for granted as well as the pure air which that we breathe today.

DS: Can you talk about that large stone that's in the cemetery where there are the names down through the generations? That's fairly unusual. I don't think I've ever seen that anywhere else.

TM: The large stone was placed there because of the appreciation of what the ancestors had done at the expense of our church and at the family of finding the dates of the family members and being able to go to Everton, Georgia and have the stone carved and brought back and established, and for the Daughters of the American Revolutionary coming and doing an honorary service in honor of Matthew. It was very touching because of knowing that a lot of the daughters had either lost loved ones through service or service people that had been a big impact upon their life.

DS: So that list of names, if I understood you correctly when we were standing out there, is one person from each generation from Matthew Maybin all the way down to present time, is that right?

TM: No.

DS: So tell me what those names are.

TM: Those names on the headstone of Matthew Maybin was his children.

DS: So you work on preservation of several of these cemeteries, the Thompson Cemetery and this Maybin Cemetery and maybe one or two others.

TM: The McDowell Cemetery and the Capps Cemetery, all of which contain descendents of my family, whether they be through the Maybin's, the Capps', the McDowell's, the Levi's.

DS: So I've heard a couple of stories from different people about the Maybin lead mine. Can you talk about that some because I've heard some things about it being down under the river in a cave. I've heard a lot of different stories. I guess you know most of those stories floating around.

TM: There's been many stories told about the mysteries of the Maybin lead mine and it's a mystery to me today that none of the descendants actually know where the lead mine is at that their great ancestor mined lead from. In his family as a whole, my father told me that a lot of them was witches and haints because they never married, they lived in one-room houses together, and making his living was secretly that a lot of it was not passed on down to generations. And to my knowledge, after the passing of Matthew no one else actually mined the lead and silver but there's many tales told that it had to be near water because he was always wet when he returned home.

DS: The haints and the witches when we were standing there looking over at the sawmill, they lived, there was a little cluster of houses over there, isn't that what you told me?

TM: Yes, there was seven one-room houses that was built close by and each had a porch on it and on the porches there was a lot of dried stuff. There was also staves around the house



that they kept their animals penned at night to keep the bear and other things from poaching there stock and their life centered around home. They preserved seed and whatnot from year to year along with being able to preserve food for the winter through drying, smoking, or salting. This was their means of food through the winter. Many green beans was not put in the jar but they was strung and hung up outside to dry and they was fixed through the winter as beans to eat called leather britches.

DS: Leather britches? So in the middle of the winter what would you do with leather britches to get them to eat? Would you boil them?

TM: You would take your beans, wash them, and put them in water and let them soak until the hull retained the moisture back. Then you put them in a black pot near the fireplace and let them cook until they was done. And people in that day in time used a lot of grease because they worked outside and they needed the grease to endure the cold. Today if people eat grease the way that people in the days of old it would kill them because they don't do enough physical work to burn up what that they're taking in.

DS: When we were talking about this before you said that because they had these beans other things hanging on the front porch, people thought they were doing some kind of witchcraft or magic or something?

TM: Yes, that's tales that I have been told that because of their style of living a lot of people didn't understand that they was labeled as witches and haints because of the way that they dressed, the lifestyle that they lived, that they was different from a lot of the homes because most people wound up married and raised family. But a lot of the family then chose to, their independency of being in their own home that was simply four walls with the bare necessities in it, no electricity. I can only imagine a lot of them maybe being lit a little bit by pine knots or by kerosene lamps. In my day and time I was fourteen year old whenever we received electricity and I was thankful for it that no more filling up the lamps and being able to see homework at night. Before much of this had to be done during the daytime, that little time was available because riding a school bus home and doing the chores around home of cutting wood with a bow saw or a crosscut with my brother Ted you learned to work together because if you rode the saw you answered to Daddy later. And milking two cows and feeding hogs all by hand. Not only that but when it came time for supper some of the family members had to run to the spring house and get the milk and the butter and the things that was to be kept cool because that was our only source of cooling. And not only as far as that, but all of the water, the water had to be carried in buckets and each one drank out of the same dipper. It was not as today of each one grabbing a separate cup when he comes by.

DS: That's good you had thirteen brothers and sisters to do all this work, right?

TM: Yes.

DS: Are there some places in this area that are favorite spots of yours, places that you like to go to or you remember from being a kid or any particular spots in the area? I know we talked some about Maybin Mountain. I've heard a lot of stories about caves and things up there but I don't know if that's a favorite spot or is there any particular thing?

TM: Far as actually a real favorite spot, the Green River Valley as a whole is the favorite spot of just being able to get out in it at night and to listen at the quietness and to be able to enjoy the fresh air, being able to see nature firsthand and to listen at nature as a whole. And the mystery of the Rock Creek waterfalls was always refreshing in the summertime to be able to go down on the falls and to be able to enjoy the mist that came from the falls. In the summertime it was always a pleasure to be able to be in open fields and to feel the rays of the sun not only warming you but warming the ground and to see crops coming forth. My favorite time is in the spring of the year when you see new life coming forth. The trees are budding and vegetables coming out of the ground. It's just a new life.

DS: All those smells that are just special to the spring, turning the soil, just how everything is coming to life again has it's own special smell to me.

TM: A farmer has a craving of smell, the turning of fresh soil in the springtime, just as much so as he has a craving for fresh potatoes when he smells them boiling in the pot. There's no comparison to potatoes that you buy out of the store.

DS: When we were driving and talking a couple of weeks ago, we talked a little bit about stewardship and you said something that I found very powerful about, I think we were talking about burning up the present, not preserving things for the future, people getting self-centered, not thinking about community. Do you remember some of that? Can you say that again? I liked how you said it before.

TM: Through education it's easily to become tunnel vision. You're very knowledgeable from your viewpoint but as far as viewpoints that come from other angles, you know very little about it. Whereas, someone that lives outside, they not only think of themselves but they try to think of others, whether it be other people or whether it be other creatures, of being able to leave habitats for them, being able to leave food for them, not so much that you want to leave food for the pests, such as the crows. They will always find theirs because it helps keep you on your toes to be a better steward, so how to help eliminate some of the problems. Through the stewardship of yourself, through the help of the county a lot of these can be passed on to the next generation.

DS: We were driving through up there where the development's coming over Pinnacle Mountain Road, those new developments or whether its old development but new part of it, and thinking about what that's doing. I mean it's burning up in the present time resources that could have been farmland, that could have been timberland, that could have been all kinds of things in the future, but now they're being translated into something that's not going to benefit the community in the same way. It's going to benefit maybe the people that have those houses.

TM: When large developments come into the area they basically help the tax base for the county as a whole in some ways. But in a lot of other ways it's not real beneficial because additional tax services are required to help protect the area, but in the meantime wildlife is driven from these areas, that what that you once saw you no longer see because there's nowhere for them to raise food for them. A natural habitat has all been destroyed. Not only that but in our mountains as a whole and the importance of them as far as water absorbency and the area setting on the Continental Divide, our water table is gradually dropping year after year that the average person don't see. But fifty year ago after a rain you would see many boiling springs running for days after a rain and today you no longer see that because of all of the wells that has been drilled on the mountains and how much absorbency has been destroyed through covering the land with either houses or asphalt or other things that will not permit absorbency.

DS: These are changes that we are making that we don't see them, like you said, and we certainly can't see what they're going to do in the future.

TM: Yes, there are changes that take place that are intentions of good but sometimes small seed sowed develop into problems later that others have the responsibility of trying to meet the needs through other sources that become much limited.

DS: One of the things I remember we talked about at that time when we were talking about stewardship was you told me a story about going to Washington, D.C. and the Washington Monument and that part of it was about how amazing it was that they were able to build it then with what machinery or lack of machinery, but also just the foresight and the idea of a gift to the community. Can you talk about that some?

TM: In 1963 being able to go to Washington and view many of the buildings that was built and later returning to Washington and also seeing them and the time that they was built and imagining the labor and the man hours that was put into the George Washington Monument, the height of it, and the size of the stone. People with love for their country, for the love for the first president of the New World, of making a tall statue that represented the life that he lived, standing tall and the beliefs that he believed in, that he wanted to pass to others, and for the beauty of the National Cathedral, which took ninety year to build, the dedication of the people

that worked for years, only two was present at the dedication of it that was there at the beginning. Two women, ninety-three and ninety-four years of age was present.

DS: So one other thing that I wanted to ask you was, and we've talked about several different subjects, but I have a kind of open question, which is are there other things that we haven't talked about that you would want people to know about the Green River Valley? And maybe in particular think about it this way. Are there things that if your grandchildren or great grandchildren were going to be listening to this recording down there at Chapel Hill in the University, what would you want them to know or hear about life in this valley that we haven't had a chance to talk about yet? Is there anything in particular that comes to mind?

TM: The biggest thing that I would say in generations to come is to think of what Ronald Reagan said in his first defeat. The decisions that we make today affect the people a hundred year from today. The choices that you make will affect previous generations. The history that is recorded from the life that you live today can have a large impact upon the generation to come because of your stewardship over the position that you was in, whether it be in farming, whether it be in school teachers or what, because of your love and your compassion with consideration for yourself and for generations to come. And I would ask all young people, before you do, think how is this going to affect my grandchildren.

DS: Well, that's very well said and I appreciate that and thanks very much for talking with us today.

TM: Thank you.