

Mrs. Rachel Blackwell  
Route 4, Box 218  
Oxford, North Carolina

11:30 AM

Age: 92 years old - February 29, 1891

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QUESTION: WHAT SECTION OF GRANVILLE COUNTY WAS YOU BORN IN?

I wasn't born in Granville County, I was born in Vance County.

QUESTION: HOW OLD WAS YOU WHEN YOU CAME TO GRANVILLE COUNTY?

I was 31 years old.

QUESTION: WHERE WAS YOU LIVING WHEN YOU CAME TO GRANVILLE COUNTY?

I was living, I don't know what you call that section, but I was living in the Mountain Creek Area

QUESTION: HAD YOU EVER BEEN TO OXFORD BEFORE YOU MOVED TO OXFORD?

Yes, I'd been there several times. I had been here before I moved here but I moved here in 1921 and I been in Oxford township ever since.

QUESTION: YOU BEEN HERE EVER SINCE?

Yes, after I married in 1921 I've been here ever since.

QUESTION: WAS YOUR HUSBAND FROM HERE?

Yes, He lived in Granville County

QUESTION: HE DID, WHAT PART WAS HE FROM, WAS HE FROM MOUNTAIN CREEK TOO?

I think so, yes.

QUESTION: WHERE DID YOU GO TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, IN HENDERSON?

Yes, Henderson

QUESTION: YOU NEVER WENT TO SCHOOL IN GRANVILLE COUNTY?

No

QUESTION: WAS YOUR HUSBAND'S PARENTS BORN HERE IN GRANVILLE COUNTY?

My husbands parents? I never seen them, they was dead when I came here, but they lived in Granville County then but where they was born at I don't know where.

QUESTION: WERE THEY IN SLAVERY?

Yes, his parents was slavery.

QUESTION: FROM WHAT FARM DID THEY COME OFF OF?

I don't know, oh! they came off the Blackwell farm.

QUESTION: WAS YOUR HUSBAND BORN IN SLAVERY?

I don't know, he's been dead now 30 years.

QUESTION: HOW OLD WAS HE WHEN HE DIED?

He was 79 years old

QUESTION: YES, HE WAS BORN IN SLAVERY

QUESTION: DID HE EVER MENTION ANYTHING HE SAID HIS PARENTS SAID ABOUT SLAVERY?

No, I never heard him talk about slavery.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS SIDE?

My parents was slaves.

QUESTION: CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THEM AND WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT SLAVERY?

Well I'll tell you the truth, I really don't remember much what they said about slavery but they was raised, my father was was a Brame and the Brame's raised him and my mother was a Reeves and the Reeves raised her.

2QUESTION: SO YOUR MOTHER WAS A REEVES AND YOUR FATHER WAS A BRAME, SO WHO'S NAME DID THEY TAKE?

My mother married Taylor Grim so we went in Grims' name.

QUESTION: WAS THE BRAME THE WHITE SLAVE MASTER'S NAME?

No, the old white masters name, I can't remember.

QUESTION: HOW WAS THEY TREATED. DID THEY EVER SAY THAT THEY HAD HOUSE ONES AND ONES WORKED IN THE FIELDS?

They said that the slaves that own them treated them good.

QUESTION: DID THEY HAVE FIELD SLAVES AND HOUSE SLAVES?

They had to work, but they was good to them, they'd give them plenty to eat.

QUESTION: WOULD THEY RUSH THEM WHEN THEY'D TELL THEM TO DO SOMETHING?

No, they didn't whip them, my daddy said that if one of them hit him he let them have it back.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK HE WAS THAT KIND OF A GUY?

He said he was.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT CHURCH, WHAT DID THEY SAY ABOUT HAVING CHURCH?

They had church but they went to the white folks church.

QUESTION: HOW DID THEY GET TO GO TO WHITE PEOPLES CHURCH?

Well, they had to walk there, they had no other way to go.

QUESTION: THEY WENT TO A WHITE CHURCH.

Yes, now Williamsburgh was the church the Episcopol church that they went too and they pulled out of that church and I recon you hear of Flat Creek, well they builded Flat Creek Church and it was a little log house and they say that the colored folk went to that church. They say that that church is over 200 years old.

QUESTION: SO YOUR PARENTS WAS ALLOWED TO GO TO CHURCH?

Yes, they could go to church.

QUESTION: THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO GO NO CHURCH IN THE BUSH HARBOR?

No they didn't attend church in no bush harbor, they use to have church meetings in different people houses, but they didn't say nothing about no "bush harbor".

QUESTION: DID HE MEET YOUR MOTHER ON THE SAME PLANATION OR DID THEY WORKED FROM ONE TO THE OTHER ONE?

I don't know how he met my mother but my mother was raised up here around Stem and my father was raised here round Henderson.

QUESTION: YOU RECON YOUR MOTHER COME OFF THE REEVES PLANATION IN STEM.

Yea, come off the Reeves' planation in Stem.

QUESTION: DID SHE EVER TAKE YOU BACK OUT TO STEM?

No, never been back out to Stem to see none of it.

QUESTION: DID SHE HAVE ANY RELATIVES LIVE OUT THERE?

She may have some relatives live out there but I don't know anything about them.

QUESTION: SO SHE CAME FROM STEM WHICH WAS IN GRANVILLE COUNTY?

Yea, Stem is in Granville County.

QUESTION: DID YOUR MOTHER EVER TALK ABOUT, UH! SHE NEVER HAD HARD TIMES?

No, she never had a hard time, the people that raised her, she had it good.

QUESTION: COULD YOUR MOTHER READ AND WRITE?

No she couldn't read nor write, my father neither.

QUESTION: WELL HOW DID YOU GET YOUR EDUCATION?

Well, my mother them sent me to school, yea, they had one teacher schools then. They sent me when I was six years old until I finished school, and I finished the eight grade and I started teaching.

QUESTION: YOU WENT TO TEACHING AFTER THE EIGHT GRADE? YOU WAS SMART.

QUESTION: HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU TEACH SCHOOL?

I taught school for about 35 or 40 years. I stopped teaching in 1945.

QUESTION: WHERE DID YOU FIRST START TEACHING AT?

At Henderson and the first school I ever taught in was a little school in Henderson named "Shady Grove" and at that time you had the first grade teacher and they would teach from the first grade to the seventh grade.



QUESTION: CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME HOW YOU SET IT UP, HOW DID YOU DO IT?

Well, I taught the first grade first and then the next grade. I pick the little children and carry them over their lesson, then I would take the second grade, carry them over their lesson and the third with theirs, etc., see, I didn't have all of them at the same time cause you see, the most of the children was in low grades.

QUESTION: WHAT TIME DID YOUR SCHOOL START IN THE MORNING?

We started school at 9:00 AM in the morning and turned it out at 4:00 PM and gave the children an half hour at 12 PM and ten minutes between 9 AM and 12 PM and turn out at 4PM.

QUESTION: HOW MANY MONTHS DID YOU ALL TEACH SCHOOL?

When I started teaching, I taught five months. Started in October, November, December, January and February, then school was out. When I started teaching school I wasn't getting but \$20.00 per month and it went from \$20 to \$22 and from \$22, when I stopped teaching, I wasn't getting but \$45.00 a month in 65. I had moved up here then, my husband and I taught together, I taught from the first to the third and he took the other three.

QUESTION: WHERE DID YOU FIRST START TEACHING WHEN YOU CAME TO OXFORD?

My first teaching job when I moved to Oxford was over here at South Hill School.

QUESTION: WHY WAS IT CALLED SOUTH HILL SCHOOL?

I don't know why they called it South Hill.

QUESTION: WAS IT NAMED AFTER SOMEBODY?

It might have been. Old school house stand there now, it was two rooms.

QUESTION: WAS IT ON A WHITE MAN'S FARM OR BLACK PEOPLE PROPERTY?

The county had bought six acres of land there to put that school on.

QUESTION: HOW MANY CLASSES DID YOU HAVE THEN?

From the first through the eight grade there. This was in Granville County.

QUESTION: WELL HOW DID YOU TEACH THERE AT THAT SCHOOL?

Well I had from the first grade through the third grade and Rev. Blackwell taught from the fourth grade through the eight grade.

QUESTION: REV. BLACKWELL WAS BORN IN OXFORD, IN GRANVILLE COUNTY?

Yes, I think so, as far as I know.

QUESTION: WHERE DID HE GO TO SCHOOL AT?

After he started teaching, or before he started teaching he went to the Borgen School in Virginia.

QUESTION: HE WENT PAST THE EIGHT GRADE, HE FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL?

Yes, thats right.

QUESTION: HE DIDN'T GO TO COLLEGE?

No.

QUESTION: WHERE WAS HIS FIRST SCHOOL AT?

Now I couldn't tell you cause I don't know. The first school I ever heard him talking about was here in Oxford. School was named "Berry-Go" here in Vance County.

QUESTION: YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT PART BERRY-GO WAS IN HERE IN OXFORD?

Berry-Go school was tween here and Bullock.

QUESTION: HE TAUGHT THE SAME WAY YOU DID, HE HAD ALL OF THE CLASSES?

Yes, he had all the classes in Berry-Go School and I don't think he had a two teacher school until we got together here in South Hill.

QUESTION: DO YOU KNOW WHICH CHURCH HE STARTED MINISTERING FIRST?

I think his first church was New Grass Creek down here.

QUESTION: HOW LONG DID HE SAY?

I don't know, when I married him he was a preacher. I know he preached at Grassy Creek and Flat Creek.

QUESTION: DID HE HAVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO TAUGHT SCHOOL?

No, I don't know nothing but him and I married him his mother and father was dead, and he said he had a brother, his brother was gone away and I never did see him. I didn't see nobody but Willis, his name was Albert Willis.

QUESTION: HOW MANY YEARS DID HE TEACH SCHOOL?

Now I don't know how many years he taught school, when I married him he was teaching, and I know after I married him, he taught school up here for 20 years.

QUESTION: DID HE GO TO MARY POTTER?

No, I don't think he did.

QUESTION: WHO WAS THE FIRST TEACHER YOU KNEW IN OXFORD OTHER THAN YOUR HUSBAND. WHO WAS SOME OF THE FIRST TEACHERS YOU MET WHEN YOU CAME IN THIS COUNTY? DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE NAMES?

Ms. Susie Cooper, I met Mrs. Brooks, I can't call all them names.

QUESTION: WAS IT STILL SLAVERY IN THIS COMMUNITY WHEN YOUR HUSBAND STARTED TEACHING OR WHAT?

Could not understand what she said.

QUESTION: HOW OLD WAS YOU WHEN LEE SURRENDERED? DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

I don't know how old I was when Lee surrendered.

QUESTION: YOU EVER HEARD YOUR PARENTS TALK OR SAY WHAT THEY DID WHEN LEE SURRENDERED WHAT DID THEY DO WHEN THEY WAS FREED, DID THE WHITE MAN GIVE THEM AN ACRE OF LAND OR WHAT?

They didn't give my parents nothing when they was freed, they just turned them a loose.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER AND HER SISTERS AND BROTHERS?

Just turn them a loose all I know, said they was free.

QUESTION: YOU EVER SEEN YOUR MOTHERS SISTERS AND BROTHERS?

I seen my mothers sister and one of my mothers brother. They lived in Henderson.

QUESTION: CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT OXFORD WHEN YOU WAS A LITTLE GIRL?

When I was a little girl I didn't ever come to Oxford.  
When I came to Oxford I was 31 years old, married and come  
up in this section to live.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER MEET PLUMMER CHEATHAM?

I knew him, yea, I met Mr. Cheatham

QUESTION: YOU EVER HEAR PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WHAT KIND OF GUY HE WAS?

They said he was a business man.

QUESTION: DID THEY SAY HE RAN A GOOD SCHOOL AND EVERYTHING?

They said he did. I use to work when his wife, Ms.  
Cheatham was teaching, we taught the same time up here,  
I'd meet her at the teachers meeting.

QUESTION: OH! HIS WIFE WAS A TEACHER?

Yes, his wife was a teacher.

QUESTION: WHERE DID SHE TEACH AT?

Over there in Oxford somewhere.

QUESTION: WHAT TYPE OF TEACHER WAS SHE?

Willis said she was a good teacher.

QUESTION: DID SHE EVER SAY WHERE SHE WAS FROM OR EVER TALKED TO YALL ABOUT  
HER HUSBAND?

No, I didn't know where she was from.

QUESTION: DID SHE EVER TELL YALL HER HUSBAND WAS A CONGRESSMAN AT ONE TIME?

No, I didn't here her say he was.

QUESTION: DID YOU KNOW HE WAS A CONGRESSMAN?

Yes, Senator Cheatham.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT DR. SHAW, DID YOU KNOW HIM OR MEET HIM?

Yes, I'd seen Dr. Shaw, he was the principal over Mary  
Potter, when he died his body was on Mary Potters ground  
but I think they took it up and carried it away

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER HEAR HIM MAKE A SPEECH?

No, I never heard him but I know him. I know Ms. Shaw too.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER TALK TO HER?

Not too much. I use to go to summer school in Oxford when Dr. Shaw was living.

QUESTION: CAN YOU NAME SOME MORE TEACHERS WHO TAUGHT WITH YOU THAT JUST WENT TO THE EIGHT GRADE AND STARTED TEACHING?

No, I don't know.

QUESTION: YOU MUST HAVE BEEN VERY SMART TO GO TO THE EIGHT GRADE AND START TEACHING?

I don't know whether I was that smart or not, but I got out of school cause they didn't have the teachers I recon. I had to go before the board to be examined and I passed and they gave me a school. I started teaching in 1911. I hadn't even finished high school. I finished high school after I was married. I was still teaching and going to summer school. I finished high school in Durham. Hillside park in 1935.

QUESTION: CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT THE CHANGES, HAVE TIME CHANGED A WHOLE LOT ... BLACK PEOPLE COME A LONG WAYS SINCE YOU COME ALONG?

Black people have come a long ways. Now when I was teaching school it was just a one teacher school and I worked and worked hard, but now I couldn't teach school cause the books and everything has changed and I just wouldn't know, even if I could see good, I wouldn't know.

QUESTION: HOW DID YOU GET TO SCHOOL?

They had committees, they had three or four committees in each township and if you wanted a school, you applied to that committee and if that committee wanted you to have that school they would give it to you, if they didn't they give it to whoever they wanted to have it.

QUESTION: DID YOU WALK TO SCHOOL OR WHAT?

Had to walk.

QUESTION: HOW MANY MILES WAS IT TO THE SCHOOL FROM WHERE YOU LIVED?

I was home with my parents. The first year I taught, I boarded at school, I wasn't getting but \$5.00 a month and I boarded from home and that the five dollars was for my board and you see to stay clear, I didn't have but 15.00. You know a child now, if they don't get over fifteen dollars a day, they won't work.

QUESTION: SO YOU BOARDED NEAR THE SCHOOL?

Yes, I boarded near the school.

QUESTION: AND YOU WON'T GETTING BUT \$20.00 A MONTH AND FIVE DOLLARS OF THAT WAS FOR THE BOARD? YOU COULD EAT, SLEEP THERE FOR \$5.00 A MONTH?.

Yes, that right, now you can't hardly get a meal for \$5.00.

QUESTION: DID BLACKS HAVE A ROUGH LIFE WHEN YOU WAS A LITTLE GIRL GROWING UP, CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THEN?

Well it didn't seem to be so rough it seemed to be very pleasant. Sometimes you would hear them talking about a few people having a rough time but not so many.

QUESTION: EVERYBODY HAD SOMETHING TO EAT?

Yea, because they worked and made it.

QUESTION: DID YOU HAVE OTHER BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

I had sisters and one borther.

QUESTION: DID THEY WORK, TEACH SCHOOL OR WHAT, WERE THEY OLDER THAN YOU OR YOUNGER?

I had some older and I had some younger. Did you ever hear talk of Pearl \_\_\_\_\_, that was my sister. She just died here two or three years ago. The last sister I had died last year in November.

QUESTION: WELL SOME OF YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS WAS BORN DURING SLAVERY TIME?

Well you see I had sisters much older than I. My mother and father had 18 children. I come along with some of the last.

QUESTION: SO WHERE DID MR. BLACKWELL END UP TEACHING SCHOOL AT WHEN HE FINISHED?

The last school he taught was South Hill.

QUESTION: SO WHAT DID HE DO BEFORE HE TAUGHT SCHOOL? IS THAT ALL HE DID?

He was preaching.

QUESTION: DID HE HAVE A FARM?

The children done the farming, he didn't do no farming.

QUESTION: SO ALL HE DID WAS JUST PREACH AND TAUGHT SCHOOL?

Thats right.

QUESTION: HOW MANY CHILDREN DID YOU AND HE HAD?

We had five children.

QUESTION: DID ANY OF THEM FINISH SCHOOL?

Yes, Albert finished Mary Potter and went to A&T and finished that; and Julian, he went to Winston Salem after he finished Mary Potter, and they took him out put him into the Army and Sara, she finished Mary Potter but she didn't go anywhere after she finished high school. All of his children finished high school.

QUESTION: DID YOU TAKE YOUR CHILDREN WITH YOU TO SCHOOL AND TEACH THEM ANYMORE AND DID THEY GO TO SOUTH HILL WITH YOU?

If they was old enough.

QUESTION: WHAT AGE DID YOU START TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN?

Six years old.

QUESTION: YOU DIDN'T EVER START WHEN THEY WAS THREE AND FOUR?

No, there was no kindergarden, started teaching children when they was six years old, we didn't teach anything under.

QUESTION: I'M TALKING ABOUT IN YOUR HOUSE?

Oh! children at home, yea, I remember giving them lesson every night.

QUESTION: DID YOU START THEM OFF EARLIER?

Yea, I started them off early, I'd read to them when they was babies. My little grandgirl, Rachel, Sara's daughter, I kept her six years cause Sara was working, she'd get up



in the morning, wrap that baby up in a blanket and bring her to me and I would be in the bed, she'd put that baby in the bed with me and I taught that child and when she went to school, she knew all her alphabets, she could count from one to a hundred could add two figures and could write her name and she never stopped. And when Rachel, see she was one year back cause her birthday came wrong and she didn't go to school until she was seven years old. She was in the first grade, but she was the leader and she led from the first grade until she finished and she finished North Carolina on the Dean's list and she had gone two - three years and come out and went on teaching. And she taught a half of session, and she had to marry and now she is in California, she have a little girl but still work but she said teaching didn't agree with her. So Sara told her she didn't want her to teach so she's doing some kind of Secretary work now in the Navy, she married a boy in the Navy. He joined the Navy in California so they are there in California, she was here this summer and brought the baby. On week days she take the baby to the babysitter and pick her up each evening and on Saturdays, she take her to work with her.

QUESTION: DID YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR LIFE OR DID YOU EVER LEAVE OXFORD?

I ain't never been no where but in Granville County and Vance County.

QUESTION: DO YOU KNOW MS. CHAVIS?

Yes, Frank's wife and I was good friends.

QUESTION: CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT MS. SMITH, WHAT TYPE OF SCHOOL TEACHER SHE WAS AND HOW MANY SCHOOLS SHE TAUGHT AT?

Ms. Smith was an extra good teacher, she taught Art. She was a fine artist.

QUESTION: SHE TAUGHT AT ONE OF THOSE ONE ROOM SCHOOLS DIDN'T SHE?

Yes, just like I did.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER KNOW ANY CHAVIS' LIVE IN SATTERWHITE OR WHAT CHAVIS' DID YOU KNOW WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO OXFORD?

I didn't know any Chavis' when I first come to Oxford, I got acquainted with Mack Chavis and his crowd, Ms. Smith was a Green and she married Mack Chavis.



QUESTION: DID YOU EVER KNOW MAJOR CHAVIS? DID YOU EVER KNOW THE SATTERWHITES THAT LIVED IN SATTERWHITE?

I heard of them but I don't know them.

QUESTION: BY YOU BEING A SCHOOL TEACHER, DID YOU EVER HEAR TALK OF A JOHN CHAVIS USE TO WORK IN THIS AREA?

No, I didn't know him.

QUESTION: YOU NEVER HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT A JOHN CHAVIS?

Somebody said John Chavis had some boys and he was kin to Mack Chavis wasn't he. So he's the boy use to come out here and work with my husband's brother.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER KNOW OF A LADY CALLED MS. LOTTIE YOUNG?

No I never knew her.

QUESTION: THE CHAVIS' WAS VERY SMART PEOPLE A LOT OF THEM DID A OF SCHOOL WORK, A LOT OF TEACHING AND EVERYTHING. YOU EVER KNOW THE WRITLEYS?

I know Ms. Writley, she was a teacher, didn't she have a sister that married Mr. Gibson?

QUESTION: YES, DID YOU EVER WORK WITH HER?

I never worked with her, but she taught, Mrs. Gibson did.

QUESTION: CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL ME YOU THINK WOULD HELP ME WITH HISTORY IN WRITING A BOOK ABOUT WHAT WENT ON IN YOUR CHILDHOOD AND YOUR CHILDS TIME, CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE, OR THINGS AND EVENTS OR GREAT LEADERS IN YOUR TIME?

Well I can't tell you about the leaders in my time cause look like my remembrance has gone from me.

QUESTION: YALL NEVER READ ABOUT NAT TURNER PEOPLE LIKE THAT, OR BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER?

Booker T. Washington was a great man but I'll tell you, since I've gotten so old my memory has gone from me. I can't remember things that was way back.

QUESTION: WHO WAS A GREAT LEADER IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Well we don't have anybody now, but when I came up here Ms. Martha Harris was a midwife, she went far and near. They called her from so far, they had to start taking them to the hospital.

QUESTION: WAS SHE A BLACK LADY?

She was a black lady, she was John Downey's mother, she was a nurse.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT THE WHITE CHILDREN, WHO WAS THE MIDWIFE FOR WHITE CHILDREN?

She went to white and black. Anywhere they called her.

QUESTION: WATKINS, BILLY WATKINS, NOW WHO WAS HIS MIDWIFE?

Martha Harris was Billy Watkins midwife, she delivered him she was Jethro's mother-in-law.

QUESTION: JETHRO WHO?

Jethro, my daughter's husband. Mrs. Cora Howell, she was a midwife, she's dead.

QUESTION: DID THEY EVER TALK ABOUT DIFFERENT WORK THAT PEOPLE DID IN THE COMMUNITY THAT PEOPLE JUST NEVER GAVE THEM CREDIT FOR.

I know one woman in the hospital now but when she was up on her feet and could go, she'd go far and near to see people if they was sick, Zula Mae Smith, but she's in the hospital sick now.

QUESTION: WHO WAS THE FIRST BLACK DOCTOR YOU EVER HEARD OF IN OXFORD?

Dr. Tony.

QUESTION: YOU NEVER HEARD OF DR. BOWIE?

Well I heard of Dr. Bowie, but I wasn't thinking of him of that time, Dr. Tony was the first came in my mind.

QUESTION: YOU EVER SEEN DR. BOWIE?

No, I never saw him, but Dr. Tony, he doctored on me.

QUESTION: YOU NEVER HEARD OF DR. BOWIE AS WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY, DR. DILLARD, YOU EVER HEARD OF HIM?

No, I never heard of him.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT A DENTIST, DR. BURKE, YOU EVER HEARD OF HIM?

Yea, I heard tell of him.

QUESTION: WHAT DID DR. TONY DO FOR THE COMMUNITY?

Well I'll tell you, Dr. Tony went far and near when you called him.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER HEAR TELL OF ANY BLACKS HAVING BUSINESSES IN OXFORD? YOU EVER HEAR OF ED SMITH?

I may have heard of him but I don't remember him now.

QUESTION: HE WAS THE UNDERTAKER?

Oh! Ed Smith was the Undertaker and I've heard talk of a George Wright being a Undertaker and Sheperd.

QUESTION: WHEN YOU WENT TO THE ANNIVERSARY DOWN AT THE ORPHANAGE DID THEY HAVE ANY SPEAKERS FROM OUT OF TOWN TO COME AND SPEAK?

I don't know cause I didn't ever go.

QUESTION: DID YOUR HUSBAND GO?

Sometimes he did and sometimes he didn't.

QUESTION: YOU EVER HEAR TELL OF WALTER PETILLA?

Yes, now Walter was a preacher, he was the paster of Flat Creek Church for a long time.

QUESTION: YOU EVER HEAR HIM SPEAK?

Yea, I've heard him preach several times.

QUESTION: WAS HIS SON A TEACHER?

Now I don't know about his son.

QUESTION: WHAT KIND OF MINISTER WAS HE?

He was a baptist.

QUESTION: WAS HE RELATED TO ANYBODY HERE IN OXFORD OR HOW DID HE GET HERE?

I don't know how he got here.

QUESTION: HOW DID THEY GET TO CHURCH BACK THEN, ON BUGGIES OR WHAT?

They walked or on wheelcarts.

QUESTION: ON WHEELCARTS?

Yea, I seen several people come to church driving in Oxford.

QUESTION: DID THE PARENTS TELL CHILDREN A LOT BACK IN YOUR DAYS TO HELP THEM, SAT AND TALK AND TELL THEM ABOUT TIMES?

Not so much, they didn't tell children about the times like they do now about what they want you to be. They didn't sat down then and talk. But a child ten years old now can tell you more now than I knowed when I was 20. People take more time now and explain things more than they did in times when I came.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK THAT IS CHILDREN WAS SO SLOW BACK THEN, PARENTS DIDN'T TAKE TIME WITH THEM AND TEACH THEM.

Well the parents done what they know to do they didn't know to do because they had not been taught themselves. But the parents now know and they teach their children from the cradle on up.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK IT SHOULD BE RECORDED ... DO YOU THINK WE HAD A LOT OF HISTORY BACK THEN THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN RECORDED, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

I think it should have been recorded and the nation thats comes on after we're past and gone, they will know what we did while we was here.

QUESTION: WELL THATS THE PURPOSE OF ME BEING HERE, I WANTED TO KNOW SOME OF THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN AND PASS ON TO OTHER CHILDREN AND JUST PASS ON AFTER YOU'RE GONE AWAY BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT OF HISTORY THAT WASN'T RECORDED AND THERES A LOT OF THINGS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN RECORDED THAT WASN'T RECORDED.

Yes.

QUESTION: WHAT DID YOU READ BY WHEN YOU WAS A KID. CAN'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE LIGHTS?

Oh!, when I went to school, I had to walk from four to five miles a day going to school and when I got home that night we didn't have convenience like we got now. We would have to pick up a whole lot of liden knots, you know the knots on trees, liden, well at night daddy would make us get our lesson, he wouldn't do nothing but throw a knot of that liden in the fire place and that would give a light over the room.

QUESTION: YOU COULD SEE BY LIDEN KNOTS?

Yea, I guess thats why my eyes are like they is now. We would study by liden, then we went from that, we had lamps, they was little tin lamps, they would burn oil, then from that to glass lamps, we used them and part of the time we was studying by candle.

QUESTION: AND YALL WOULD PICK UP LIDEN KNOTS ON THE WAY HOME THROUGH THE WOODS AND CARRY THEM HOME?

Yea, we had a big fireplace, we would make a fire in that big fireplace and sit around the harve and daddy would throw a knot in there to make a good light and say, "now children, yall git ya lesson".

QUESTION: AND THEY COULDN'T READ NOR WRITE AND THEY COULDN'T HELP YOU AT ALL?

They could not help us cause they didn't know.

QUESTION: IF YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT YOU'D HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT DAY IF SOME SISTER OR BROTHER DIDN'T KNOW?

Thats right.

QUESTION: COULD YOU GO NEXT DOOR OR GO OVER TO ANOTHER?

No, it was to far, we waited till we got to school the next day and asked the teacher.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT FOOD WHEN YOU GOT HOME THAT NIGHT, WAS THAT READY?

When we'd go to school, my mother had a big old tin bucket, she cook the food and put it in that tin bucket, enough for each child, when recess came at 12:00, the oldest child would take that bucket and give us our portion of food that mother had put in there for us and we would eat it. Then when we get home that afternoon she didn't bother about fixing nothing to eat till suppertime and when suppertime come, she'd fix supper and we'd gone and eat.

QUESTION: WOULD YOU HAVE THE SAME FOOD YOU HAD FOR LUNCH OR WOULD YOU HAVE DIFFERENT?

No, we wouldn't have the same food cause we would have some meat and bread, a sandwich, and at night we would have a vegetable supper for us.

QUESTION: WHERE DID THEY KEEP THE FOOD AT BACK THEN, IN THE SELLAR, UNDER THE HOUSE, OR WHAT?

Some of them had it in the sellars but the most of them just had an open safe to keep food in.

QUESTION: AND YOU JUST ATE UP WHAT YOU COOKED TO KEEP IT FROM SPOILING?

Yea. Now they cooked three times a day, they cooked breakfast, dinner and supper.

QUESTION: WHEN YOU GOT HOME WOULDN'T IT BE DARK?

Oh no, no it wouldn't be dark, sometimes the sun would be down but it wouldn't be dark.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT RAIN, WOULD YOU HAVE ENOUGH COATS ON WHEN YOU WAS GOING TO SCHOOL?

Yes, we'd put on heavy coats and gone to school.

QUESTION: WELL WHO WOULD MAKE THE FIRE WHEN YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

The first one get there would make fire in he school. Sometimes when the teacher get there, the school would be hot.

QUESTION: CAUSE CHILDREN HAD EXPERIENCE IN MAKING FIRES BACK THEN?

Yes, they knew how.

QUESTION: DID WHITE KIDS HAVE A LOT OF SCHOOLS DURING YOUR TIME TOO?

Yes, in each district, they would build a white school, the white on one side and the black on the other side, sometimes we'd have to walk 4 or 5 miles to school. Now when we started going to Grady School, we had to walk 5 miles every morning. And we would be trying to get to school on time by running and those boys would go in their and sit down and take off their hat and their heads would smoke, be done got so hot running and the principal would make them put their hats back on their head, said yall take cold, you too hot and would tell them to leave home in time to keep from running themselves to death.

QUESTION: WHAT ELSE WAS SOME HARD TIMES YALL HAD, PEOPLE WENT THROUGH DURING THAT TIME?

Well they had to work hard, the most of them.

QUESTION: WHAT KIND OF MONEY DID YOUR PARENTS MAKE FOR TO SPEND, DID THEY FARM AND SELL TOBACCO OR DID WORK ON THE WHITE MANS FARM?

Some of them worked on the white mans farm and the white man took half they made and then some worked for the fourth of what they made and some worked for wages. Some men worked all day long and didn't get but 50¢ and a woman go work all day long in a field and she didn't get but 25¢. I have worked a many days for 25¢.

QUESTION: PICKING COTTON OR WHAT?

Picking cotton, weeding tobacco or anything.

QUESTION: DID YOUR PARENTS EVER HIRE YOU OUT TO WHITE PEOPLE OR DID THEY BELIEVE IN THAT STUFF?

He didn't believe in that stuff but we had to work, he'd hire us sometimes.

QUESTION: TO BLACKS OR WHITES?

To whites.

QUESTION: WELL HOW DID THEY TREAT YOU WHEN THEY HIRE YOU OUT, DID THEY (THE WHITE MAN) GET FRESH WITH YOU?

No, all he wanted you to do was just to work, longs as the grass was out of his tobacco and corn and not play.

QUESTION: IF HE CUAGHT YOU PLAYING WHAT WOULD HE DO?

He just wouldn't hire you no more.

QUESTION: SO ITS WHAT WE CALL FIRED? HE WOULDN'T NEED YOU ANYMORE.?

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF A KID WAS TOLD NOT TO COME BACK ANYMORE, WOULD YOUR PARENTS WHIP THEM OR WHAT?

No, some parents might punish them.

QUESTION: WOULD THE WHITE KIDS BE WORKING WHEN YALL BE WORKING?



Yea, the white children would be their working with the black ones. Yea, they worked together.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT HIRING CHILDREN OUT BACK THEN, DO YOU THINK THAT IT WAS RIGHT OR FAIR?

Well I think that if they hired us children to get some money because they couldn't get none, and when the children was making 25, 30 and 50 cents a day and when they get home, they had to hand it to the parents.

QUESTION: MRS. BLACKWELL, HOW DID YALL SURVIVE THOSE COLD DAYS WHEN YOU WENT TO SCHOOL, .... YOU JUST DIDN'T GO THOSE COLD DAYS.?

We went to school in any kind of weather.

QUESTION: IN ANY KIND OF WEATHER?

Any kind, we'd leave home pouring down raining.

QUESTION: THESE CHILDREN DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL NOW JUST WALKING OUT THE DOOR CATCHING THE BUS?

I know it, when I was teaching school at South Hill, I left my home a many morning walking, rain, snow, hail, sleet or what, I didn't stop going, if it was raining, I'd pick up my umbrella and keep on walking, these children now, walk a hundred or hundred and fifty miles and they can't go if rains.

QUESTION: CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE FIRST SCHOOL BUS COMING THROUGH HERE PICKING UP CHILDREN?

The first school bus came by here picking up children was the white bus and they was picking up children then around that had build Oak Hill School and that was a three or four teacher school up there and the white bus came through here two or three years before a colored bus did. The bus carried the white children to school and the black children was walking and the white children would come back that evning and spit on the black children from the window.

QUESTON: I HEARD THAT?

Rev. Blackwell told the principal up their that the children was spitting on his children when they passed us.



QUESTION: WHAT DID THEY MEAN BY "FREE ISSUE" PEOPLE?

They said that Free Issue people was white men taking black women and they having children and they called them "Issued Free".

QUESTION: WHY DID THEY SAY "ISSUE FREE" THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK OR WHAT?

The white man would help support that old colored woman and them children and they would be real bright and the other children would be black.

QUESTION: AND HE MADE SURE HIS CHILDREN DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK HARD?

I don't know whether they had to work hard but they was the one called "Issue Free".

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER HEAR TALK, DID YOUR PARENTS EVER SAY WHAT THEY WIFE THINK OF THIS, WHITE MEN GETTING CHILDREN BY THESE BLACK WOMEN?

She couldn't say or do nothing about it.

QUESTION: AND THE LADY STAYED RIGHT THERE IN THE HOUSE AND COOKED AND WASHED AND IRONED FOR THEM AND HE WOULD GO WITH HER?

Yea, he go with her, the colored women. Dick Sneed, he was an old man who lived in Townsville and he had an old black woman and she had a daughter by him and she sent this daughter to Shaw University when it was first built and she graduated there and she came back there and she was so proud until she disowned her mother. Jimmy, he was a colored man just finished school in Raleigh and he was studying to be a lawyer and he liked Anderson, he liked her real good and they came to Flat Creek one Sunday and her mother came up and spoke to her, they was engaged to be married and she denied her mother, sort of not taking up no time with her and Jimmy was talking to her and he never stopped inquiring until he found out who she was, he found out that she was her mother. From that day on, he never went with her no more. He said if she denied her mother and he get old and look bad, she would deny him too and he wouldn't marry her.

QUESTION: WELL HER MOTHER HAD GONE TO BED WITH THIS WHITE MAN AND SHE WAS THAT COLOR AND SHE THOUGHT SHE WAS BETTER THAN HER MOTHER AND HER MOTHER HAD LOW RATED HERSELF, DIDN'T HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO GO TO BED WITH THE WHITE MAN AND THEN SHE COME BACK FROM SCHOOL THINKING SHE WAS BETTER THAN HER MOTHER?

Oh yea.

QUESTION: WELL WHO SENT HER TO SCHOOL?

The white man.

QUESTION: OH! HE MADE SURE HIS CHILD WOULD BE EDUCATED?

That's right. She finished what we called Oak Hill School and then he sent her to Shaw University and see this old black woman was still there working for him.

QUESTION: DID THEY HAVE PAPERS DURING THAT TIME?

I don't know whether they did or not.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER HEAR TALK OF BLACKS LIVING ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS OR SLAVES LIVING ON INDIAN RESERVATIONSS?

I don't know bout blacks living on Indian reservations.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT PROPERTY? DON'T YOU THINK ALL THIS PROPERTY THAT BLACKS USE TO OWN WHEN YOU WAS A LITTLE GIRL LOST A LOT OF IT?

Well, I just don't know, I guess they just wanted some money and the had a little to sell it to get.

QUESTION: AND THEY JUST DON'T CARE?

No they don't care.

QUESTION: WELL IF PEOPLE BACK THEN WAS CALLED ISSUE AND THEY WAS FREE, WHY DIDN'T THEY WORK HARD AND HELP THEIR PARENTS AND TAKE THEM AWAY FROM THESE WHITE PEOPLE INSTEAD OF LEAVING THEM THERE LIKE THAT GIRL LEFT HER MOTHER THERE?

I don't know. You see a heap of those people would leave the children their home. You see when Dick Sneed died, he left the old lady a home and the girl too.

QUESTION: SO DICK SNEED MADE SURE HIS CHILD WAS TAKEN CARE OF?

Yea

QUESTION: DID YOU KNOW CARPENTERS WHEN YOU WAS YOUNG, GUYS THAT BUILDED CHIMNEYS, PEOPLE THAT WE CALL PROFESSIONALS?

Well some of them was good, Church Cooper lived out in this section, he was a mason, he builded chimneys, a whole lot of these chimneys around here, especially the ones made out of rocks.

QUESTION: WAS HE A GOOD MASON?

Yes, he was good.

QUESTION: HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE TALK, SINCE YOU BEEN A SCHOOL TEACHER, WHY SO MANY BLACKS COME OVER IN NORTH CAROLINA FROM VIRGINIA. WHY DID A LOT OF PEOPLE MOVE TO NORTH CAROLINA?

A lot of them moved cause they couldn't find work out there.

QUESTION: WAS THE PEOPLE IN VIRGINIA SMARTER THAN THE BLACKS IN NORTH CAROLINA, DID THEY HAVE MORE EDUCATION OR WHAT?

I don't know, but a lot of them in Virginia that came over here said they could come out here and get work.

QUESTION: DID YOUR FATHER RAISE A LOT OF COWS, BEEF, AND STUFF LIKE THAT?

Well raised enough hogs to supply the family, and he always keep enough cows to supply the family. He always kept milk at the house at all times. We always had a plenty milk, meat and butter. He grew his peas, beans and corn on the farm.

QUESTION: YALL DIDN'T HAVE TO GO TO TOWN TO BUY NOTHING?

Yea, we had to go to buy sugar. Couldn't raise no sugar. The biggest thing we bought was sugar and coffee.

QUESTION: SO YOU JUST LEARNED TO LIVE WITH WHAT YOU HAD AND LEARNED TO SURVIVE? WAS BOOKS FREE THEN, DID YALL HAVE A LOT OF BOOKS IN THE HOUSE?

Didn't have a lot of books cause you had to buy them and they didn't buy many books. He always said he couldn't read, he could write a history.

QUESTION: YOU DIDN'T TRY TO HELP THEM READ, YOU DIDN'T EVER SAY COME ON DADDY LET ME HELP YOU, OR MOTHER COME ON AND LET ME HELP YOU READ?

No, I didn't try to help them.

QUESTION: WHY, CAUSE THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO HELP THEM?

Biggest thing he done was laid by me and told me if I didn't get my lesson he was going to whip me. So I didn't try to learn him nothing, I was busy trying to learn my lesson to keep from getting a whipping. And you see my sisters that was older then the young ones, he make them, make us say our lesson to them, and if we didn know it then he'd whip us, so we had to get it.

QUESTION: OH! YOUR SISTERS KNEW WHAT YOU ALL HAD TO DO SO THEY COULD WHIP YOU?

No, daddy would be sitting there listening and he'd whip us if we did it wrong.

QUESTION: WHAT WAS THE FIRST BLACK BOOK YOU EVER READ OR SEEN THAT A BLACK PERSON HAD WRITTEN. DID YOU BELIEVE BLACKS COULD WRITE BOOKS BACK THEN WHEN YOU WAS A LITTLE GIRL. WHAT DID YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE?

I didn't teach them much about black people cause I didn't know enough to teach them. I just taught them white people.

QUESTION: AND YOU TAUGHT THEM THAT THE WHITE MAN COULD PREACH, THE WHITE MAN WAS THE DOCTOR, THE WHITE MAN WAS THE LAWYER, THE WHITE MAN HAD ALL EDUCATION, THE WHITE MAN MADE BOOKS AND EVERYTHING YOU WAS TEACHING THEM WAS ABOUT THE WHITE MAN?

I told them about Goerge Washington.

QUESTION: HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT GEORGE WASHINGTON?

We had a book about George Washington.

QUESTION: WHEREER DID HE GET THAT BOOK FROM?

I don't know where he got that book, fromt he white people I recon.

QUESTION: DID THEY KEEP A LOT OF BOOKS THERE?

Who, my daddy,

QUESTION: NO THE WHITE PEOPLE?

Yes, they had librarys then but the blacks didn't have nothing.

QUESTION: DID ANY OF YOUR KIDS EVER TURN OUT TO BE LAWYERS, DOCTORS OR BE BIG SPEAKERS, THE ONES THAT YOU TAUGHT?

Well I got one good student I can put out against any of them, thats Mrs. Gertrude Watkins, I learned her a little.

QUESTION: OH! SHE WAS ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS?

Sure she was.

QUESTION: Oh yea, she's a great lady.

QUESTION: WHAT GRADE DID YOU HAVE HER FROM?

From the first grade through the third.

QUESTION: SHE WENT TO SOUTH HILL TOO?

Yea, she went to South Hill, thats where she got her first training from, South Hill School.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER HEAR ABOUT NAT TURNER WHEN YOU WAS A LITTLE GIRL?

No, I don't know about Nat Turner.

QUESTION: YOU NEVER HEARD OF ANYTHING ABOUT BLACKS WHEN YOU WAS TEACHING SCHOOL, COULD YOU TEACH BLACK CHILDREN ABOUT BLACKS BACK THEN?

I didn't teach them about blacks cause I hadn't read about blacks, I'll be fair with you.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT YOUR HUSBAND, DID HE EVER TEACH THEM TO BE A PREACHER LIKE HE WAS OR BE?

Yea, he was a minister.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT HISTORY, IF YOU WAS TO WRITE A BOOK OR HELP WRITE A BOOK WHAT WOULD YOU HELP PUT IN A BOOK ABOUT BACK WHEN YOU WAS A KID OR WHEN YOUR PARENTS COME ALONG?

I hardly don't know what to tell you.

QUESTION: WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU WOULD WANT THEM TO LEARN AS MUCH AS THEY CAN ABOUT THE BLACKS, THE PAST AND HOW THEY STRUGGLED, HOW HARD IT WAS TO GET AN EDUCATION AND WHAT THEY HAD TO GO THROUGH WITH THE WHITE MAN TO SURVIVE AND TO JUST SURVIVE DURING THOSE DAYS AND TIMES.

QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU WENT TO CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE FOR YOU THERE?

I went to Sunday School every sunday. We would have lesson, we had sunday school books and we had sunday school lesson up until I came down here to live with Sara Lee and I missed sunday school because of \_\_\_\_\_.

QUESTION: DID YOU EVER SEE LADIES WALKING TO CHURCH BAREFOOTED AND PUT THEIR SHOES ON WHEN THEY GET THERE, DID YOU EVER SEE A LOT OF PEOPLE DO THAT?

I been to church a many times and walked until I'd get a mile or mile and a half and sit down and wipe my feet off and put my shoes on and go on in.

QUESTION: YOU WENT TO SCHOOL ALL WEEK AND WENT TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TOO?

Yea, he'd make us go to Sunday School every Sunday morning.

QUESTION: HOW FAR WAS THE CHURCH?

The church we had to go to was about five miles.

QUESTION: FIVE MORE MILES TO WALK, THAT WAS SEVEN DAYS A WEEK SOMETIMES A WEEK YOU WAS WALKING.

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I ENJOYED YOU TAKING UP YOUR TIME WITH ME TODAY AND I APPRECIATED IT.

I appreciate you coming and asking me about it.

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Interview

with

BERNICE PENNINGTON HUBBARD

by James Edward McCoy, Jr.

Transcribed by Sally Council

The Southern Oral History Program  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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[START OF TAPE, SIDE B]

BERNICE PENNINGTON HUBBARD  
SEPTEMBER 9, 1981

JAMES EDWARD McCOY: ... Bernice Pennington Hubbard. September the ninth, nineteen eighty-one. Time, approximately two p.m.

Mrs. Hubbard, I'd like you to start off and tell me about your mother and when you first—when she first came to Granville County or where she was born and where was she born at in Oxford.

BERNICE PENNINGTON HUBBARD: Well, my mother was born in northern Granville County. July the fourth. I can't tell you the year, now.

EM: July the fourth?

BH: Yeah, but I can't tell you the year.

EM: OK.

BH: Her parents were David and Rosa McGhee.

EM: David and Rosa McGhee? Uh-hum. What part of northern Granville did they come from, up near Toler School?

BH: No, up around Huntsville.

EM: Huntsville?

BH: Huntsville Baptist Church.

EM: OK. And they was McGhees?

BH: That's right.

EM: Did her mother and father go to school? Were they ever—?

BH: No, they were slaves.

EM: They were slaves on whose farm?



BH: Oh, my Lord. I think Grandfather was a slave on Richard Taylor's farm. I think that was the white man's name. And my grandmother—Mr. Burrell. I can't even think to tell you who the master was.

EM: Who was on Mr. Burrell's farm?

BH: My grandmother.

EM: Your grandmother?

BH: Uh-hum. Or rather, her mother. She was a child at that time, during slavery.

EM: Did you know your grandmother?

BH: Yeah, Rosa McGhee. Yeah, I knew her.

EM: Did you know your grandfather?

BH: No, I didn't know him.

EM: Can you tell me about your grandmother, Mrs. Rosa McGhee?

BH: What do you want to know?

EM: I want to know what did she tell you about slavery or how they treat her?

BH: No, she hadn't told me much about slavery. She was young when Lee surrendered. I think they said she was about twelve years old.

EM: She was twelve when Lee surrendered?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: OK. What did she say after her—can she tell you any—did she tell you anything else about—did she have any brothers or sisters that was older than she?

BH: No, she was the oldest.

EM: She was the oldest?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: OK. Did she stay right there on—whose farm was she on?

BH: Oh, I declare I don't know whose farm she was—they said she was on.

EM: You said Mr. Burrell.

BH: I think the last name was Burrell. I'm not sure.

EM: Did y'all—were your mother born on that plantation?

BH: No, she wasn't born on that plantation.

EM: Where was your mother born at?

BH: I don't even know whose farm she was born on. I've seen the place where she was born but I don't know whose farm it is.

EM: OK. How many sisters and brothers did your mother have?

BH: Oh, there's ten girls and four boys.

EM: Was your mother the oldest, or where did she come in?

BH: No, she was the fifth child.

EM: Can you name up to her, from one to up to her?

BH: The oldest one is named Cynthia. Mattie, May Della, Charlie, and then Meeder.

EM: OK. Your mother was Meeder. OK. Where did your mother first go to school at, elementary school?

BH: Here in Granville County.

EM: Whereabout? What was the name of the school she went to?

BH: I don't really know.

EM: She didn't tell you the name of that—?

BH: No, I never heard her say.

EM: OK. What did your mother tell you? When she got to Mary Potter, did she tell you about Mary Potter?

BH: I never heard her mention Mary Potter. All I know is she went to school there and then went to Borden Institute in Borden, Virginia.

EM: She went to Borden Institute?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: How many years did she go there?

BH: She finished high school there. About four years, I reckon.

EM: And where did she go to college?

BH: That's the only place she went to.

EM: Well, what year did she start teaching school? How did she become a school teacher?

BH: Well, she finished Borden and started teaching.

EM: Whereabout? In Granville County?

BH: In Granville County, out here at Big Zion.

EM: Big Zion?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: How long did she teach there?

BH: I think they say—I think she said she taught there about three years.

EM: Where did she go then?

BH: She went to Orange Street Graded School.

EM: Orange Street Graded School? This was before you was born?

BH: Yeah, before I was born.

EM: She taught school before you was born?

BH: That's right. Before she married.

EM: Before she was married. And she taught approximately three years out at Big Zion?

BH: That's right.

EM: OK. Did she teach school with Mr. Ridley's wife?

BH: William Ridley's wife?

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: I never heard her say.

EM: What about—did she ever tell you anything about Professor Patillo?

BH: Yes, I heard her mention Professor Patillo.

EM: What did she say about him?

BH: I think—I remember distinctly—I think she said that was her principal.

EM: That was her principal?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: And wasn't that school named the First Graded School?

BH: I imagine so, uh-hum.

EM: Huh?

BH: It was on Orange Street and I just called it Orange Street, but I imagine it was named the First Graded School.

EM: OK. Now, did she ever tell you she taught school in a house over there?

BH: Seemed like it was. I believe she did say it was a house.

EM: Did she tell you that street was on Lewis Street?

BH: No, she said Orange Street.

EM: OK. The First Graded School was on Lewis Street. I'm going to tell you where it was. You know where Mrs. Littlejohn used to live? And James Hunt lived there on Lewis Street?

BH: No, uh-uh.

EM: Well, you know where the car lot is around there on the corner?

BH: Yeah.

EM: That's where the First Graded School was, right there. Now, that is where the First Graded School was.

BH: Was Charlie Gregory's house—was that ever a school?

EM: That was the second—Mr. Gregory's house was the second school.

BH: Well, it was on Orange Street, there. I think it was Charlie Gregory's house.

EM: You're sure she didn't teach with Mrs. Minnie—Mrs. Mary—Mrs. Lassiter?

BH: No, I haven't heard her say Mrs. Lassiter.

EM: She didn't teach with her?

BH: No.

EM: OK. So, the Second Graded School was in Mr. Charlie Gregory's house.

Now, did she teach in his house?

BH: I think she did. I'm going to guess about some of it.

EM: OK. How old were your mother when she passed?

BH: About eighty-two, I believe.

EM: What year do you think that was?

BH: That was nineteen fifty-nine.

EM: She was eighty-two in nineteen fifty-nine?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: OK. That would make her have to teach—you and we know that there's people's kids here in Oxford that's eighty-nine years old that your mother taught. And I talked to one today.

BH: Who was that?

EM: And she taught at Big Zion School. I talked to two or three people, now, that your mother have taught and they're in their eighties. Now, at Big Zion. Now, from their age and talking to you today, your mother, I believe, taught school in that First Graded School on that hill first.

BH: Well, I don't know about the First Graded School. I do know about Orange Street. She might have taught at First Graded School.

EM: Well, if she taught on Orange Street, I think she taught in Mr. Gregory's house first.

BH: Yeah.

EM: Before she taught anywhere else. Because that was the only school on Orange Street.

BH: Uh-hum. Yeah, I remember it being at his house. I remember that.

EM: OK. What else did your mother tell you about teaching?

BH: Well, I mostly heard what people said. They just said she was a good teacher. She taught the upper grades. And that she took the state examination and herself and Mr. Patillo and another teacher made the highest score on the state test, the same thing that the teachers are taking now.

EM: Uh-huh. So your mother was very smart? She taught herself?

BH: Yeah, she was smart. And everybody said she was a good teacher.

EM: Where were you living at when you was born?

BH: Oh, ( ) living in Madison, Georgia. They were living in Madison, Georgia.

EM: Your mother left Oxford?

BH: She married, went to Tennessee. I don't know the exact city in Tennessee. Then she went to Arcadia, Georgia. She went to Madison, Georgia. You want to know where the children come in at?

EM: Yes.

BH: Well, the first child was born, which was a girl, was born at Arcadia, Georgia. Then she had a boy that was born at Madison. I'm the third child. I was born in Madison.

EM: You're the third child? You was born in Madison, Georgia?

BH: The third child, the first one to live. The other two died in infancy.

EM: Oh. OK.

BH: My brother was born in Greenville, South Carolina.

EM: What kind of work was your mother doing—and father—while they moved around so much?

BH: Well, my father was preaching at these different places.

EM: Did she marry him in Oxford?

BH: He came down from Lincoln University and married her at the home of her parents.

EM: Where? In Oxford?

BH: At right—that house right down there.

EM: Where?

BH: Back of the orphanage.

EM: Well, how did he meet your mother? He was doing some work in Oxford?

BH: No, he was at Lincoln University. He met her through a friend of his that knew Mama.

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: And they started writing each other. And he came here to see her.

EM: Did she tell you how many years she taught school in Oxford?

BH: No, she didn't.

EM: How many years do you think she taught school by listening to people and since you've lived in Oxford?

BH: It might have been about nine in all. I don't—.

EM: You think it was about nine years?

BH: Now, I won't say for sure.

EM: OK. How did you—?



BH: Wait a minute. Hold it a minute. It might have been longer than that because she was about thirty-one when she married and she said she started teaching when she was a young girl about seventeen or eighteen years old, something like that.

EM: So she taught school in Oxford around sixteen years?

BH: That's right.

EM: OK. What year did you come back to Oxford—did you remember getting back to Oxford?

BH: Forty-nine.

EM: You came back—did your mother come back with y'all?

BH: Oh, yes.

EM: Where did she start working at then?

BH: Oh, she was just a housewife then.

EM: Oh, she had stopped teaching school, retired?

BH: Well, while we were in Greenville, she taught school in some places. [They] were in Gaffney. At Seneca and Belton, they were in a denominational school, a high school, boarding school. And she taught school there at those places.

EM: Your mother was a great school teacher.

BH: Yeah, she was a teacher and a matron.

EM: Uh-hum. Where was she a matron at?

BH: She was a matron at Seneca Institute and—.

EM: Seneca Institute?

BH: It's in Seneca, South Carolina. And Union High School in Belton, South Carolina. [I would like Mr. Curridan]—he could tell you some things about them. My father passed. [Do you know John Curridan]?

EM: Yes. Did she have sisters and brothers, your mother?

BH: Yeah, it was nine—ten girls—.

EM: Did any of them live in Oxford while y'all was moving around? Continue to live here?

BH: Oh, yeah.

EM: Name some that stayed here and what kind of work did they do, that worked in the education field?

BH: [coughs] What you want to know? Whether some more was teachers or not?

EM: Yes.

BH: Well, Mattie Cannady was a teacher.

EM: And that was one of your mother's sisters?

BH: She taught—I don't know whether she taught after she married, but I know she taught before she married. Ida McGhee taught until she died. Carrie taught school. Carrie, Mrs. Carrie Burrell. And let's see, who else taught school? Mrs. Bessie [Bethay]. And Mrs. Rosa Cousins down there taught school in North Carolina for forty-six years.

EM: These are all your mother's sisters?

BH: That's right.

EM: How many children—sisters did she have go to college? All of them went to college?

BH: I don't think anyone went except Mrs. Rosa Cousins.

EM: The rest of them just taught school after they finished high school?

BH: Just after they finished high school.

EM: What about the brothers?

BH: Well, her baby brother, Jeffers McGhee, went to A&T and took up brick masonry. The others just went to public school and that's all.

EM: Uh-hum. Was any of them carpenters or brick masons around here? Or midwives or anything else your aunts—can you tell me about any of the rest of your mother's brothers and sisters? What did they do and—?

BH: Well, her brothers—it wasn't any midwives in the family. Her brother, Jeffers McGhee, was a brick mason. And Charlie McGhee was a carpenter.

EM: Here in Oxford?

BH: Uh-hum.

EM: Well, who did he carpenter with? Did he work with Mr. Payton Brandon?

BH: Not that I know of. I don't think he did.

EM: Jimmy Howell?

BH: I never heard of him working with anyone. It seemed like he was just by himself.

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: I've heard people say that he did neat work.

EM: Did you know any buildings downtown he worked on or any houses he built in Oxford?

BH: No. No, I don't. I think they said he did some work down there around the orphanage, though.

EM: Uh-huh. Where did you live when you was a young girl after you moved back to Oxford?

BH: Where did I live?

EM: Uh-huh. How old were you when you got back to Oxford?

BH: Oh, I was a grown woman.

EM: You was married?

BH: Yeah, I'd been married once and divorced.

EM: Where did you go to college at?

BH: Livingstone College.

EM: You went to Livingstone College in North Carolina?

BH: Salisbury, North Carolina.

EM: OK. And then you first started teaching where?

BH: Oh, Mount Airy, North Carolina.

EM: Where did you start teaching when you got to Oxford?

BH: Oh, I was down in Gibson, North Carolina.

EM: Did you ever teach school in Oxford?

BH: Just substituted.

EM: Uh-huh. Is there anything else you can tell me about your mother that went on in Oxford before she moved, as a teacher?

BH: Before she left here?

EM: Yeah. How did she get back and forth to school?

BH: Oh, when she was out at Zion, she said she used to walk.

EM: How far? Whereabout did she—?

BH: Oh, from the homeplace out here, back of the orphanage.

EM: She walked from the orphanage over—?

BH: You know where the homeplace is, down here back of the orphanage?

EM: Yes.

BH: To Zion, to Big Zion.

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: And when she taught here in town, she had an uncle that lived in town. I think she stayed with him.

EM: Who was the uncle?

BH: What is his name? It was one of Grandmother's brothers, but I declare, I don't know his given name. All I know is Norman, his last name.

EM: Norman? You don't know what street he stayed on?

BH: No, not now, I don't.

EM: Who were some of your mother's friends when she was teaching school? Can you name some more school teachers that taught school with your mother?

BH: The main one I used to hear her speak about was Lizzie Cousin, Albert Cousin's first wife.

EM: Lizzie Cousin? Where did she teach school at?

BH: I believe one time she was principal of the school down here at the orphanage.

EM: She was a principal of the school at the orphanage?

BH: Uh-uh.

EM: And did she teach with any of the rest of these teachers around here besides Professor Patillo?

BH: No, I can't think of anybody now.

EM: What about Mrs. Annie Rogers?

BH: I never heard her say she taught with Annie Rogers. Boy, you are carrying me back [laughs].

EM: Huh?

BH: You are carrying me back!

EM: Come on and tell me some more about your mother when she was a young girl.

BH: Oh, there's not much to tell but just that she taught school here and married and left and came back here after forty—after staying away forty years.

EM: She must have been an A student. She passed the examination that kids taken that went to college and she could pass it.

BH: She was!

EM: Huh?

BH: Said didn't but three pass that examination when she was teaching. That's the same examination teachers are taking now.

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: And by her being able to pass that examination, she had an A certificate.

That speaks well for her, doesn't it?

EM: Yes, it does. So she excelled in her schooling, didn't she?

BH: That's right.

EM: But you don't know where she first went to elementary school at?

BH: It had to be somewhere in this county, but where, I don't know.

EM: Where was she living at?

BH: It was a school out at Huntsville at one time. She had an uncle named Jonathan Norman that lived near the school. You know, Vincent Norman and Eugene Norman.

EM: Uh-hum.

BH: It was their father. It was a school house there and she might have attended that school. I don't know.

EM: Did she name some of the kids that she went to school with out there?

BH: No.

EM: Any of the Hunts or anybody out there that she went to school with?

BH: No, she never has.

EM: Do you know of anybody that tell you that they went to school with your mother?

BH: No, I don't.

EM: You never had nobody tell you they went to school with your mother?

BH: Only some people say she taught them. That's all I know.

EM: Did any of her sisters and brothers go during the time she went?

BH: What? To school?

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: Mostly I heard that she taught some of them, sisters and brothers. I don't know who—.

EM: She taught some of her sisters and brothers?

BH: I don't know exactly who went to school with her. Ida might have gone to school with her, and Carrie. Maybe Bessie. They might have gone to school with her, but I heard her say she taught—.

EM: How did her mother manage to educate so many of the children? How did they do it?

BH: How did they happen to have so many teachers in the—?

EM: How did they get a chance to go to school and didn't have to work?

BH: I don't know. Just did.

EM: What did her father do?

BH: He was a farmer.

EM: He owned his own land?

BH: He owned his home down here back of the orphanage. But when they were living in Huntsville, they was renting. But he owned this home down here back of the orphanage.

EM: Did he ever tell you why he moved up to Huntsville and left his home down by the orphanage?

BH: No, I don't know why they moved down there. I guess he just saw that place for sale and just wanted to—decided he'd buy it.



EM: Did he farm up there in Huntsville?

BH: Yes.

EM: And he farmed and sent all his children to school?

BH: That's right.

EM: And how many was teachers?

BH: Mattie, Meeder, Ida, Carrie, Bessie, Rosa. Six of them.

EM: Six girls and one boy. Oh, the boy wasn't a teacher.

BH: No, six girls.

EM: Six girls were school teachers?

BH: Let's see, Cynthia didn't teach. Della, Blanche and Minnie. Yeah, six girls.

EM: OK. Is any of them living now? Any of your aunts?

BH: Rosa Cousins.

EM: Where does she live?

BH: Down here at the bridge.

EM: OK. Mrs. Cousins is one of your mother's sisters?

BH: And she has a sister in Baltimore, Maryland.

EM: She has a sister in Baltimore, Maryland?

BH: Named Minnie Allen.

EM: Uh-huh. Minnie Allen?

BH: Uh-hum. Those are the only two that's living.

EM: Them the only two that's living? Did Mrs. Cousins go to school?

BH: Oh, yeah. She has a AB, SAB degree from North Carolina Central. Retired from the Duke School that was down here at the orphanage.

EM: Did you ever go to the orphanage, after you moved back to Oxford, to the reunions? You ever remember any of the anniversaries?

BH: Yeah, I remember those.

EM: Can you tell me anything about them?

BH: Well, all I know. There was a lot of people gathered there, hundreds and hundreds of people. They had booths. They sold things. And you'd just walk around there and met people that you knew, saw people you knew. That's all I can tell you.

EM: How many children did your mother have?

BH: Five.

EM: You the only one living?

BH: I'm the only one living.

EM: The rest of them has passed?

BH: Two died while—the two older ones died in infancy and then my baby sister was three years old. My brother died in nineteen seventy.

EM: Uh-huh. Have you ever seen Dr. Shaw?

BH: Yes, I've been to his home and saw him.

EM: You went to his home and saw him?

BH: Saw him and his wife.

EM: I want—if I—if you were going to write a book about in Oxford—if you were going to write a book about Oxford, who would be the greatest man in Oxford you ever heard of, between Dr. Shaw and Plummer Cheatham? Would you think Dr. Shaw was the—did more for Oxford than anybody else?

BH: [Laughs] Well, Dr. Shaw was principal of Mary Potter.

EM: He founded the school.

BH: And he ( ). And let's see, Cheatham, he had to do with the orphanage.

EM: And he was a congressman from the second district.

BH: A congressman. That's kind of a pretty close race, isn't it?

EM: Well, I want to know which one was the most dedicated, which one you think was most important in Oxford. Both of them was, but in your opinion—you met Dr. Shaw and talked to him. Tell me about him. How—what did you think about him? Was he a convincing man?

BH: Well, I didn't do much talking to him. I was a child and I—.

EM: He was a businessman.

BH: I just happened to see him there at his home and see his wife. We met them there, but I was with my parents and they did more talking to him than I did. But at the time, he was principal and Mary Potter was an important school. It was a great school then. It was a boarding school, had a lot of boarding students and had a lot of day students. In fact, it was about the biggest thing around this part of the country.

EM: So therefore, you think Dr. Shaw, by coming here starting a school from scratch and the type of work and students he put out, you think he should be one of the well-respected men ever to come in this community?

BH: Yeah, I believe I would put Dr. Shaw up there first.

EM: He devoted all of his time and his life to Mary Potter in Oxford.

BH: That's right.

EM: He built a great school and institution.

BH: That's right.

EM: For higher learning and for kids.

BH: That's right.

EM: If it wasn't for Mary Potter and Dr. Shaw coming here, we would be a long ways behind in this county.

BH: I believe we would.

EM: OK, so you put Dr. Shaw first? If you was writing a book, you would put Dr. Shaw—?

BH: I believe I would.

EM: OK.

BH: Seem like a lot of people think that way about him. They—when this was a hospital, they named that after—that hospital after him. And the school in Stovall is named after him. Seems like that ran in a lot of people's minds.

EM: By your mother being a school teacher, and a lot of people come from your family is school teachers, did anyone ever tell you—you ever heard of John Chavis?

BH: No, I haven't.

EM: You never heard of him?

BH: Uh-uh.

EM: It doesn't ring a bell?

BH: No.

EM: OK. So, could you give me a summary of what you think about Oxford and the growth and the changes and how much you think Oxford have changed since you've been acquainted with Oxford?

BH: Oh, my goodness. Now, let's see, in what way can I think? Well, we have made a lot of changes. It has grown from a—when I first come here, it was mostly a farming town and had those factories here, warehouses and factories. And a lot of people did domestic work and now it has a lot of industries here. A lot of people have got employment that weren't employed when I first came here. A lot of young people have been able to get jobs and you couldn't get them when I first come here. And the teachers have become more qualified than they were when I first came here. When I first came here, a lot of these teachers hadn't even finished college. Now a lot of them have their master's degree. They have a lot of nice churches here.

BH: Did your mother ever tell you how Oxford looked when she was a little girl? How many stores was in Oxford?

BH: No, she never did.

EM: She never told you the history of Oxford?

BH: No, she didn't.

EM: Anyone ever told you the history of Oxford?

BH: No.

EM: How it looked, how it was built.

BH: No, I never did hear them say. [Have you ever heard] how it looked when it first started up?

EM: Uh-huh.

BH: Did you ever hear anyone say?

EM: Yes, I heard it. Did they ever tell you where the first post office was?

BH: No! Where was the first post office?

EM: The first post office was in—where Capehart Cleaners—beside Capehart Cleaners where they drive in to the Union Bank.

BH: Sure enough?

EM: Yes. I've been visiting with Mrs. Bernice Pennington today and I've enjoyed her and she's told me a lot about her mother, Mrs. Meeder McGhee. She was great lady, outspoken lady, well-thought-of in the community and it's given me a great opportunity to visit with her daughter, which is the only kid she has living. And Mrs. Pennington, I appreciate you taking up your time with me today.

[END OF TAPE, SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]