

TAPE LOG COVER SHEET

Fieldworker Gutchen Geisinger Date 2/20/99
Artist/Informant Virginia Harvey Time _____
Recording Location Sakin Museum Project Eng 8700
Other People Present Mantyn Geisinger
General Subject Sakin Specific Subject Town Revitalization

Cultural Group _____

Equipment Used Wollensak

Stereo _____ Dolby _____ Tape Brand/Length Maxell 90

High Bias Normal/Low Bias _____ Metal _____

Amount Tape Used: Side 1 All

Summary Description of Recording Context/Technical Assessment of Tape Quality

Echos sometimes, but otherwise OKAY

Summary Description of Tape Contents

Discusses her memories of Sakin & need for town revitalization

Virginia Harvey
Interview in Jakin at library/museum
February 20, 1999

We discuss some of the items in the museum, which I photographed. They include pictures or articles that were part of the stores/ businesses during Jakin's hey day.

Ms. Virginia explains where the Flowers mill was located and the function of the now defunct bank. Talks about some of the mail carriers and the ghost towns of Josephine and Echodell.

GG- How did you start working on the centennial. I remember the stores being open when I was young, but they've been closed for at least 10 years.

She names the former store owners and describes the items in the store: canned goods and meats.
GG- Were the canned goods local or packaged and were the meats locally butchered.

VH- no packaged, don't know about the meats, maybe trucked in.

MG- Miss Daisy had chickens in the back of her store, live chickens "it was awful" in cages and she sold eggs.

VH remembers that she sewed clothes for sale.

(they discuss the location of the chicken room. I remember the front of the store, but not the back as it is. The rear was closed off due to disrepair at one time. Talk about original structure of the general store prior to its becoming a museum)

Ms. Virginia discusses the process of renovating the store into a library/museum which called for an architect to completely rebuild the structure since the original had deteriorated beyond repair. "Made a replica of stuff that won't spoil vinyl siding, and cement floors"

Talks about owners of the storefront and the steps taking to revitalization. After owners the Rogers had an unsuccessful business they tore down the existing buildings, which had caved in. Bulldozed in March, held centenn on May 27. The town received a grant to build the gazebo, but not for any of the rebuilt structures. The town paid for half of the work while volunteers held fund-raising to get the rest.

Since the centennial the library is opened on Saturdays.

GG- What kind of things are you planning to do or hoping to do and are you planning on having a Jakin day on or near the centenn date?

VH- have thought about it, people have asked, but she says that they have run out of volunteers. Currently other than the library the gazebo is used for picnics, birthday parties, and Christmas and other seasonal things.

MG- didn't you have gospel sings?

VH- yes the churches participated. The centenn she says brought about participation by the blacks with joint sings. Sings were held at Christmas, but "that fizzled". Says she doesn't know if that will be tried again.

The Jakin Community Club is still active and has been for 30 plus years. They meet monthly and she insists that they are not going to let it die. Everything else is going on the summer when they have children's programs.

Jakin also made arrangements for a health unit to come once a month to do free screening and tests.

GG- at one time the town had a dentist and doctor?

VH- talks about finding the dentist chair and some tools, but someone stole them.

Apparently the offices were upstairs above the stores.

VH- when we came in the summers we wanted to go upstairs but her father wouldn't let them. The masonic lodge met there. She has ledgers and notes from meetings on display in the library.

GG- when did you move back?

VH- Christmas or January of '38-'39. Her father bought the old Donalson place and her two uncles were here and running one of the stores in town and also had two gins. Her father had been their partner prior to the war.

Everything was in the store, shoes, overalls, groceries remember ice box of cold drinks you'd reach down and pull out an Orange Crush. Talks more about store

GG- People gathered in the store

VH-yes they'd hang around see some of these benches there were more up and down the street.

GG- I remember the bench outside Miss Daisy's

VH- people just sat there and the men had checker games at Harry Mosely's. People just come to town to visit and stayed on. The stores were opened until 11 p.m. on Saturday night. You could park here, of course it was horse and buggies before.

Talks about the road being paved and acquiring one of the hitching post they dug up prior to paving. Thinks the road may have been paved in the '50s.

GG- so more people came to town?

VH- Wasn't anywhere to go much Mr. Sewell even after he stopped operating his store would come sit at Daisy's (points to photo of town front and his car is parked there)

She also has picturers from the '30s and '50s.

GG- What were some of the social things?

VH- not too much for young people outside of church and school stuff. Jakin school had good ball teams.

Discussion between my mother and Ms. Virginia about Jakin basketball.

VH- they played on a dirt court before the gym was built. Father back they had a Jakin Study Club. There were 2,000 people in Jakin then. Mentions her aunts yearbooks and notes from this club

Talk about the population of Jakin compared to today. She explains that so many of the houses have been moved away.

Talks about the houses, which used to be boarding houses for school teachers. The men were on one side and women on the other. She used to come to town to spend the night at the boarding house. Also young men on leave from WWII used to be in town, to date the teachers.

MG- the school was the biggest part of Jakin and when it closed Jakin really started going downhill.

VH- yes, names of boarding houses that existed but are now gone. "Jakin was livelier." They talk about how school and church were the center of the community and everyone was involved.

MG- mentions the concession stand at high school games served only homemade treats.

VH- mentions how once the state and county were short on teacher salaries and the school served Sunday dinners in the cafeteria to make up the difference.

Discusses former and potential uses of the cafeteria.

GG- why did the school close?

Discuss state and county consolidation. Mentions other states, abandoned schools in Northwest Florida. "It destroyed the community of Jakin, but things didn't go to pot until people quit farming and the gin burned" Talks about her uncle's work, the decline of farming. The paper mill which was the main source of employment for the area.

Talk about busing problems and sports at school. Mentions records of the community club.

GG- What does the community club do now?

VH- describes meetings, eating, singing "near about blow the roof off" Currently have 13-15 members but had 100 at one time. Used to everyone in town was a member.

Talk about Jakin high school jacket and trophies on display. Says they are in need of more shelves and need to hang pictures and display other records.

Says the upstairs of Jakin stores was a roller rink in 1912, lists owners of various buildings.

GG- What would you like to see happen, ideally?

VH- Some who live here have never been to the library, but doesn't know why. "If it was me I'd be hunting places like that but not everybody's like me." Says they have a lot of things to see and all of it is our past. (Pulls out ledgers, mentions visitors working on genealogy) Says they're running out of space in the store.

GG- have you thought about another Jakin Cook book?

VH- I don't know. Somebody to do these things asks me to come back and pick up where we left off.

"I can't help with the future. I want to, but we have to have more help." Says Jakin is a place you always love, says people who have ever lived here come back and say that they're years in Jakin were some of the happiest they've ever had. Has been good, clean community. We discuss the strides Jakin has made compared to larger towns nearby.

VH- I think these two fixtures will hold the town together. The council meets in the museum now and we are in the budget. Mentions money making projects, contributions received, Miss Daisy's dedication, make shift book drop and new pay phone.

"I know more about the past than what we can do in the future."

Virginia Harvey
Journal

Miss Virginia was instrumental in implementing the renovation of Jakin. She talks about how all of that came about and her desire to keep Jakin alive. Most of the work she talks about occurred prior to the 1995 centennial. All the projects which came about then have yet to be continued. Apparently directly following the centennial there was a lot of interest and community involvement which as dissipated. She laments the lack of volunteers and the hesitation of the grown children of Jakin to return home and help (people like me, for example).

She remembers Jakin school being the center for the community. She talks about the number of boarding houses in town for teachers and the school events which everyone would attend. She also talks about the Jakin Community Club which used to have everyone in town as members. Now, however they have about 15 members.

She talks about some of the original owners of the business that occupied downtown Jakin, particularly those of her uncles and Miss Daisy Nunnery whose store was converted to the museum/library.

My mother (Marilyn Geisinger) interrupts now and again asking her own questions and offering some of her personal memories of Jakin. Miss Virginia points to several times items on display in the museum. Obviously these can't be seen on tape. She also walks around the room while she's talking and sometimes her words are muffled.