

TAPE LOG COVER SHEET

Fieldworker Grithen Geringer Date Jan. 30 1999
Artist/Informant So Webb Time 3pm
Recording Location Donalsonville GA Project Eng 8700
Other People Present husband - Julian
General Subject Julian Specific Subject father's memories
childhood stories
Cultural Group _____
Equipment Used Wollensak
Stereo _____ Dolby _____ Tape Brand/Length Maxell 90
High Bias Normal/Low Bias _____ Metal _____
Amount Tape Used: Side 1 All & 1/2 of second tape

Summary Description of Recording Context/Technical Assessment of Tape Quality

Some background noises: clock, phone, t.v.

Summary Description of Tape Contents

Discusses her memories of Julian & stories her father told her. Also talks about her political involvement in local, state & national affairs

Transcription

Jo Webb Interview

January 30, 1999

When I was a very small child an airplane one of the first type of jenny planes landed in a field not too far from the school and my grandmother's house. It caused quite a sensation 'cause no one there had ever seen a plane and few had ever heard of one. the population of the town started running across the field to see it. My cousin Blondie was pregnant and could not run so her husband raced home hitched up the horse and buggy and at a breakneck speed raced towards the field, so it was about 1920. Donalsonville was to pay \$100 to have the plane land at the agricultural fair there where crowds had gathered to see it. Having no road or air maps the plane had followed the railroad as a guide. It ran into difficulty and had to land in Jakin.

Harry Mosely said it was around the time Mr. Watts taught in Jakin and the school had been notified by telegraph and the children were allowed to be outside and were waiting to see it fly over town. He forbade any student from leaving the school with a promise of a switching to each one who left. This was no avail, the entire school tore out at breakneck speed across the old Mayhaw Pond (Mayhaws are local thorny shrubs which grow in shallow waters) they're skirts and dresses were torn in shreds. Their faces and arms were scratched in numerous places. ~~On return to school Mr. Watts kept his promise~~ and wore himself out switching all the children who had gone to see the plane. Today we would encourage such intellectual curiosity but in those days discipline was strict and development was limited largely to the ABCs.

First plane

Daddy was especially privileged when the pilot gave him the bad sparkplug which had to be replaced so he could resume his flight. For many years Daddy guarded it as a treasured souvenir and proudly displayed it between Mammy's hand painted urns at either end of our reception hall. Shade and Deanna an old, old childless Negro couple, purely African, lived in a little log shack across from the field near where the plane landed. With all the roaring noise and descent of the crash, both who had never seen such a thing as a plane began shouting and trembling with fear, calling loudly on the Lord with every running step. Literally scared out of their wits they were among the first to arrive. When the pilot stepped out of the craft, the old cockpit type, with his flying helmet, muffler, duster, and large flying goggles resembling a man from outerspace somewhere, Shade trembling like a leaf, and with his black skin ashen from fear mumbled "Good Morning, Mr. Jesus, how's your Pa?" He spoke the thoughts of many there, but when the pilot assured him he was a man and the plane was man made, he heaved a great sigh of relief and toppled over in a dead faint. For a few minutes Shade required more attention than the grounded plane.

(GG) Was the schoolhouse in Jakin where it is now?

JW No, it was across the rail road back of where the yellow house is on the highway and back of that on the other side of the road from that, see the road didn't go that way. They called it the Bainbridge Road.

(GG) The dirt road that follows along parallel to (Hwy) 84?

JW Uh-huh, yes (husband interrupts-it was called the Bainbridge/Gordon road) Yes that's what it was called. And that went right in front of my grandmother's by Pearl Street, which was the main street of Jakin. And the way she got her land there, the first deed of that land of Early County which came from the Wild Lands was that property and they owned all the property where Jakin is then they sold it off by lots. I traced the transactions. But, let's see, in 1878 I'm not sure about the date, this is such a young nation, you know. But in 1878 the controller general of Georgia decreed the Wild Lands would be sold and the Wild Lands were these three counties across the state: Early, Irwin and Appling. They covered it all. Out of Early were carved 9 counties. And so he decreed the Wild Lands would be sold to the highest bidder on the courthouse steps in Blakely. So my grandfather who lived in Cedar Springs, C.A. Minter he went to Blakely and on the courthouse steps he bid on a lot of land—that's 250 acres—for \$5, he bid in another lot for \$5, and he had swapped a shotgun to a man for another lot. So, for \$10 and a quarter and a shotgun he had 750 acres of land, which included all the land where Jakin stands. And there was a man come from North Carolina and he got on the boat in Columbus. And he was a turpentine man and he took that boat he was coming down the Chattahoochee River and he said he was going to stop at the first place where he saw pine trees without Cat Faces. Now Cat Faces were a V cut into the side of a pine tree and it oozed turpentine. And he would put under there a tin box and that would catch the turpentine and he would have black men go into the forest to gather turpentine and they would bring it into a still, a turpentine still. (Husband—that's not turpentine, that's rosin) Yeah, yeah, that's rosin the raw ooze from the pine tree. And then they would take that rosin and bring it to the still and distill it, they heated it someway, took some of the vapors from it, I don't know about that. When he got to Saffold, he got off the boat. So, he bought the first land he had from my grandfather. That's the first deed given to that property. And he owned all the land west of a sweet little branch that flows through Jakin. And then my grandfather had all the land.

deed by
him

(GG) Was that Kirkland's Creek?

JW No, Kirkland's Creek was this side, Early County, and that was a good bit later. And I can tell you about Kirkland's Creek. He put in a gristmill and it was right on the road south, west of your house, you know where that high hill and you go down the hill.

(GG) Double Bridges?

JW Yeah, Double Bridges, and some of his descendants last year went down and took some of the foundation logs that had been there. And it was named Kirkland Creek for Green Kirkland who lived there in Early County. See, this was later and I was tellin' you the very earliest.
And so they. . .

(GG) So they had a turpentine plant in Jakin at one point?

turpentine

JW No, Uncle Alec (pronounced Elec) Fort, but he wasn't kin to us, he was an ole bachelor and he was very wealthy. He brought down from North Carolina the blacks who had worked in his turpentine stills up there. And he built their quarters South, behind the Flowers' homes in Jakin and the Flowers came down in there in 1898. They bought some of the land from Uncle Elec, but he wasn't any kin to us. He had kinfolks around; Daisy Nunnery was his niece.

And um, he got off there. The forest had never been harvested in any way, just wild lands and they were magnificent, tall virgin pines and they were the long leaf yellow pines and they've all been cut now except a few. Every now and then, and they were tall and the limbs came out so they didn't have a knot in them. So he got off there and made turpentine still. Now, I'm not exactly sure where that was located, but it was somewhere I believe the Flowers bought part of his land. But I believe that it was located on that street that goes past the First Baptist Church to the Highway back in there. And later that land was the quarters of the Flowers people. Or it was farther East of there, somewhere. You can go look it up at the courthouse. He brought a lot of blacks who were just wonderful people. And when he died he left them all an acre or 1/2 acre. So he, 1989 the Flowers lumber company came and they bought the property that Uncle Elec Fort had in the Jakin town area. And the Forts inherited, they were kin to him, and the Wards inherited, and all from Uncle Elec. But everybody in town called him Uncle Elec.

*Black
reunion
in Jakin*

Now the interesting thing to me is the blacks in Jakin have an association and a reunion and they come back to Jakin every 10 years. They had it last year in '98 and that would have been '88 they asked me to go to Dothan and tell them something about the early history of Jakin. And I went and I was the only white there. I was waiting for Julian to park the car, 'cause there were so many cars around so a woman behind the desk said what can I do for you and I said I've been invited to come meet with a group tonight. Where do I go? She said we've set up tables in the ballroom. And I said how many have you set up and she said 450.

(GG) That's more people than live in Jakin

JW Uh hun, now. And we went back there^p and they were setting up tables around the pool cause they had more than 450.

Talks about Shirley Harding's speech to the children and youth present.

Mentions church.

(GG) What's the name of the historic black church?

JW St. Paul's its the red brick with white columns in the front. It's on the left side of the road as you go to Cedar Springs. And it's the church they all went to when they were slaves. Nice lookin', fairly big church. It's not the original church.

Returns to convention talks about Mrs. Walker's speech. Must have started reunion 30 years ago.

(gg) I believe that somebody spoke at the Jakin centennial.

But I love Jakin. It was named by Mr. Major Bivings mayor of Jakin who took the name from one of the columns that held up Solomon's temple. It was Jachin so he took that and it was spelled Jakin.

(GG) Was it originally Josephine?

JW No, Josephine was out there at the crossroads, where that store is (Hwy 84 and River Road). And Josephine was across the railroad. And then later there was a, Oh the barn that Joe Harvey owned. . .

(GG) Echodell. (a town that no longer exists)

JW Yes, Echodell, Joe Harvey owned it at the time, but it was a part of the Peterman place I believe. Before the Peterman's, Dr. Shoemaker owned it, I believe. I can't remember.

(GG) They always said that house was haunted.

JW Yeah, that's right. That's a beautiful old home, it's got a lot of history. Uh, so then the Flowers moved in 1898 and bought that property from Uncle Elec. Uncle Elec was a character, he dressed up everyday in a suit and wore a shirt with a collar string tie about that wide (pinkie finger) black. And he had a big birthmark on his face. And he spoke with a lisp, but he was a smart man. They used to tell this story on him. You know they say When in Rome do as the Romans do, Well he said "When in Turkey, by god gobble!" And the stores in Jakin, the time I'm telling you about from 1898 to 1918, they had several stores and they had travelling salesmen with their surreys—with the fringe on top(Ha)—with their goods in trunks. And my grandmother's house was the first house built in Jakin and my grand father hollowed out that branch part there and sawed just enough to build his house, ceiling and floors about that wide (width of palm) all hand hewn. And they had seven children and they were all born there. That was a swimming pool for us in that branch. See all that was forest there. I was born in 1908 and lots of

woods were cut out. They saw mill came and they stayed about twenty years from 1908 to 1918 and they just denuded the land. Big oaks and pine, virgin land. Andrew Jackson came in and ran the Indians out. That's when Early was set up. You know what they didn't all go out. (Confusion about Indian wars) They had to run them all out. We are part of the Creek and the Seminoles broke away and some settled in this area. Andrew Jackson ran them into Florida. Some whites had come in, the Flowers moved in whites and blacks and it (Jakin) grew right well and they had about 2000 people. So, when the Flowers mill cut out the available land they moved on to another place, that made Jakin dry up overnight, 'cause they had 1000 employees. So later, in 1924 Daddy decided to move as near as we could to Jakin, so we moved to Donalsonville. People began to move because you couldn't make a livin'. There wasn't any opportunity.

People began to make farms. When the mill cleared the land it left stumps, so people had to take up those stumps and the only way they could take them out was by hand and they were pine hard hearts. Mr. Pace, Tommy Pace, do you know him? His father pretended to be a preacher, he got an education by going to theology school. But he said he wasn't going to be a preacher and he just did that to get an education. He got peculiar. But anyway, Mr. Pace got the idea of riggin up a chain someway and put a metal collar around the stump hitched to a mule. He charged 10 cent a stump and they begin to clear the land.

Now we have wonderful farms when you ride down River Road it's a thrill. It's sad to me in a way 'cause when I used to ride down the trees bent over together across the road. And they had big plantations even when the Indians were still here. And they had 2000 acres of farms and they had a culture, a Southern culture just like it was in the 1860s.

(GG) But that would have been the early 1900s when they came in?

JW No, these people came in during the 1800s. That Peterman house was built during the 1860s and the Gibson place and they had one plantation on either side of that River Road. And after Emancipation some of them gave a plot of land to the slaves 'cause they had no way of making a living. Some were very cruel to them, but you'd find a kind one along. And the slave quarters were standing when we were there in Jakin on the Peterman place. The first man who owned it was a Shoemake and he married Judge Allen old Judge Allen's daughter. And Judge Allen had built the Cummings house. I can't remember where the Shoemakes came from, I think they came from Alabama. And so Mr. Peterman came in as overseer of the labor and Miss Nettie Shoemake was an old maid and she fell in love with him and they got married and it became the Peterman place. And their son Jude Peterman. And when we was growing up Jude was my age and we'd go to the fair and we'd have a dollar to spend and they'd give Jude \$20. He was spoiled rotten. When Mr. and Mrs. Peterman died. He didn't care anything about that farm he took the money and sold it and left.

(GG) What kind of things did you have at the fair for \$1

JW Oh, they used to have a big fair here in Seminole County. And the Chataqua would come and they put up a big tent. In Jakin, I guess it was the smallest town to have a culture of its size. They had a Women's club and a Red Cross. Smallest town to have a Red Cross during the First World War.

JW In 1860 they had governessness. Aunt Ollie, she was a slave. We had a UDC chapter in Donalsonville, and I asked her to speak. She lived on the River. She died they said she died a 117, I don't know but she was real old. This was in the 1950s. We came back to Seminole in '43. So she came and told us about her life as a slave down there. Then I had Aunt Lucy who was from Decatur County come tell about her early life. When they came on the porch they fell on each other's necks and so glad to Sis Ollie and Sis Lucy. They had the same father and he was on the Shoemake place and sold to the Donalson's in Bainbridge. Lucy was his daughter by somebody over there. It just hurt my heart to think about it, like property. But they told us some stories.

Aunt Ollie told us about she was the water girl and she had to pump the water, draw it up out of the well, rather and take it up on the second floor of the house to the children who were being taught, they had a tutor. And then she stood on the gate and opened it for people. They came down the driveway to the back of the house, they had one around front too, but if they were going to stay they went around to the back of the house.

She said one time she was walking down the road there and she looked up and saw a Yankee soldier and she got scared. And I said, "what'd you do, Aunt Ollie?"

And she said, "I ran out into the woods till he passed by."

I didn't think she knew what she was talking about. So I said, "How did you know he was a Yankee soldier?"

And she said "He had on a blue coat and us boys had on a grey coat, I knew he was a Yankee."

And what had happened he had gotten off down there at Neal's landing, they were hauling troops and he had a horse and was riding down that road. Now I don't know what battle ensued or anything like that. But she knew what she was talking about, and she told us some stories. After the Peterman's died and the house was abandoned I went down there and tried to find that old Bible; they had the birth and name of every Slave born on that place. And the quarters had a dozen houses, one room very small with an earthen floor. Now there's not a one standing.

Well, I've gotten off the subject now. Do you want some doctor tales?

(GG) Yes, stories or superstitions.

JW Oh, yes. We used to have some superstitions. Well, the blacks really did. And see my father being a doctor he treated all the blacks and we loved them. We were taught to call them Aunt so in sew and Uncle so-in-sew and that old culture was just different. We had a black nurse when we were about eight or nine years old and we called her Aunt Lizzie. And she gave me the sword that her husband, we called him Preacher had as a guard at Andersonville when they had the Yankee prisoners there. And uh, she wore a cap, white