

**ORAL HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS WITH TRADITIONALLY ASSOCIATED PEOPLE
OF CANE RIVER CREOLE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**

**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

**Final Report by
Dayna Bowker Lee, Ph.D.**

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**Prepared for
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Natchitoches, LA 71457**

December 2015



Photographs on Cover, L-R from top left:

Cabin on Cane River, ca. 1930s (Louisiana State Library, LOUIS)

Workers Hauling Cotton to Gin in Derry, ca. 1930s (Louisiana State Library, LOUIS)

Gallien Family Collection (CARI-182)

Marion Post Wolcott, 1940 (Library of Congress)

Cotton Gin in Cloutierville, ca. 1930s (Louisiana State Library, LOUIS)

Magnolia Plantation Store (CARI)

LaCour Brothers Band at Magnolia Plantation Store (Ambrose J. Hertzog III Collection, CARI-150)

Matt Hertzog at Magnolia Plantation (NPS DF03-2011)

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Acknowledgments

Our appreciation goes to Cultural Resources Specialist Dustin Fuqua of Cane River Creole National Historical Park (CARI) who developed this project. His knowledge of the Cane River region and the relationships he has built with its people enhanced and richened this project, and his assistance in identifying participants and arranging interviews was crucial to its success. His commitment to the people of the Cane River region is evident. Thanks also to CARI Superintendent Laura Gates for her valuable insights and continued support.

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Our greatest appreciation and recognition goes to the community consultants who generously gave their time and shared their memories to provide an archive of Cane River culture and history for generations to come.

Amard Babers
Barbara Bailey
Dr. Herbert Baptiste
Rev. Ardonul Brinson
James Cannon
John Oswald Colson
Rev. Otis Corley Sr.
Lynell “Doc” Coutee
Sadie Maggio Dark
Vivian Prud’homme Duggan
Cathy Prud’homme Guin
Gloria Sers Jones
Henry Kennedy
Julie Kennedy
Ambrose J. Hertzog III
Betty Hertzog
Henry “Buddy” Maggio
Clyde Masson
Becky Thomas Meziere
Mayo Prud’homme
Charles Roge
Doris Delouche Roge
Cheryl Rushing
Glennie Dowden Scarborough
James Scarborough
Shirley Small-Rougeau
Betty Shields
Ginny Williams Tobin
Lesley Vercher
Arthur Welch
Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth
Loletta Jones Wynder

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ORAL HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS WITH TRADITIONALLY ASSOCIATED PEOPLE OF CANE RIVER CREOLE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Introduction

In 2006, H. F. Pete Gregory, Dayna Bowker Lee, Susan E. Dollar, and William Fagan of Northwestern State University completed a Phase I Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA) of Cane River Creole National Historical Park (CARI) and associated communities. Phase I of the project traced cultural development and community formation, examined changes in the regional economy, provided an ethnohistorical overview of populations associated with the park and Cane River National Heritage Area (CRNHA), and targeted communities and themes for ethnographic research to be conducted in a Phase Two EOA. It became apparent during the course of the Phase I research that the park properties of Magnolia and Oakland Plantations cannot be viewed independent of the larger, more inclusive region. The research area was therefore expanded to include the extent of the CRNHA (Figure 1) and the parish at large in order to enhance the understanding of NPS personnel and provide better interpretation for park visitors. Nevertheless, efforts were made in Phase I to link identified sites and populations within the heritage area directly to park properties whenever possible (Lee et al. 2006:195).

It was recommended that Phase II research should build upon the Phase I EOA to concentrate primarily on the twentieth century and the social, political, and economic changes that began especially after World War I and which continue into the twenty-first century. In the waning of the nineteenth century, sharecropping and tenancy were well-established labor systems that served to keep the post-bellum plantation system reasonably intact. Workers remained economically, culturally, and emotionally tied to the large plantations that remained in Natchitoches Parish. The break-up of these large plantations began after the Civil War, but was more evident within this region during and after the Great Depression (Lee et al. 2006:195-196).

The social landscape began to change noticeably with the Great Flood of 1927 and the introduction of New Deal programs designed to put land in the hands of the un-landed. Most importantly, the advent of mechanized cotton farming in the 1960s sundered whole communities and forever altered ways of life that had defined the region for over 200 years. Once-vital communities like Cloutierville, a hub for cotton plantation-related populations and businesses, became almost empty villages in the span of just a few years. Many churches and schools that had served tenants and sharecroppers disappeared altogether. More importantly, families and whole segments of society still tied closely to pre-mechanization plantation agriculture relocated to cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston to find work in the industrial sector (Lee et al. 2006:195-196).

Recommendations for a Phase II study targeted not only contemporary populations with direct relationships to the two plantations that comprise the park units, but also locales and communities within the CRNHA at the point just prior to the advent of mechanized farming. Recommendations also included an examination of twentieth-century immigrant populations like Italians, Croatians, and Syrians, as well as new populations including seasonal and permanent immigrants from Mexico and Latin America, as well as Middle Eastern and Asian immigrants who may be more recent additions to the area. Also suggested for future research were the rise in historic preservation efforts in Natchitoches Parish; cultural tourism as economic development; the implications of Natchitoches as a retirement destination; the return of diaspora populations; and the impact of the federal presence on park-associated properties and on the other historic properties and diverse communities within the heritage area (Lee et al. 2006:196).

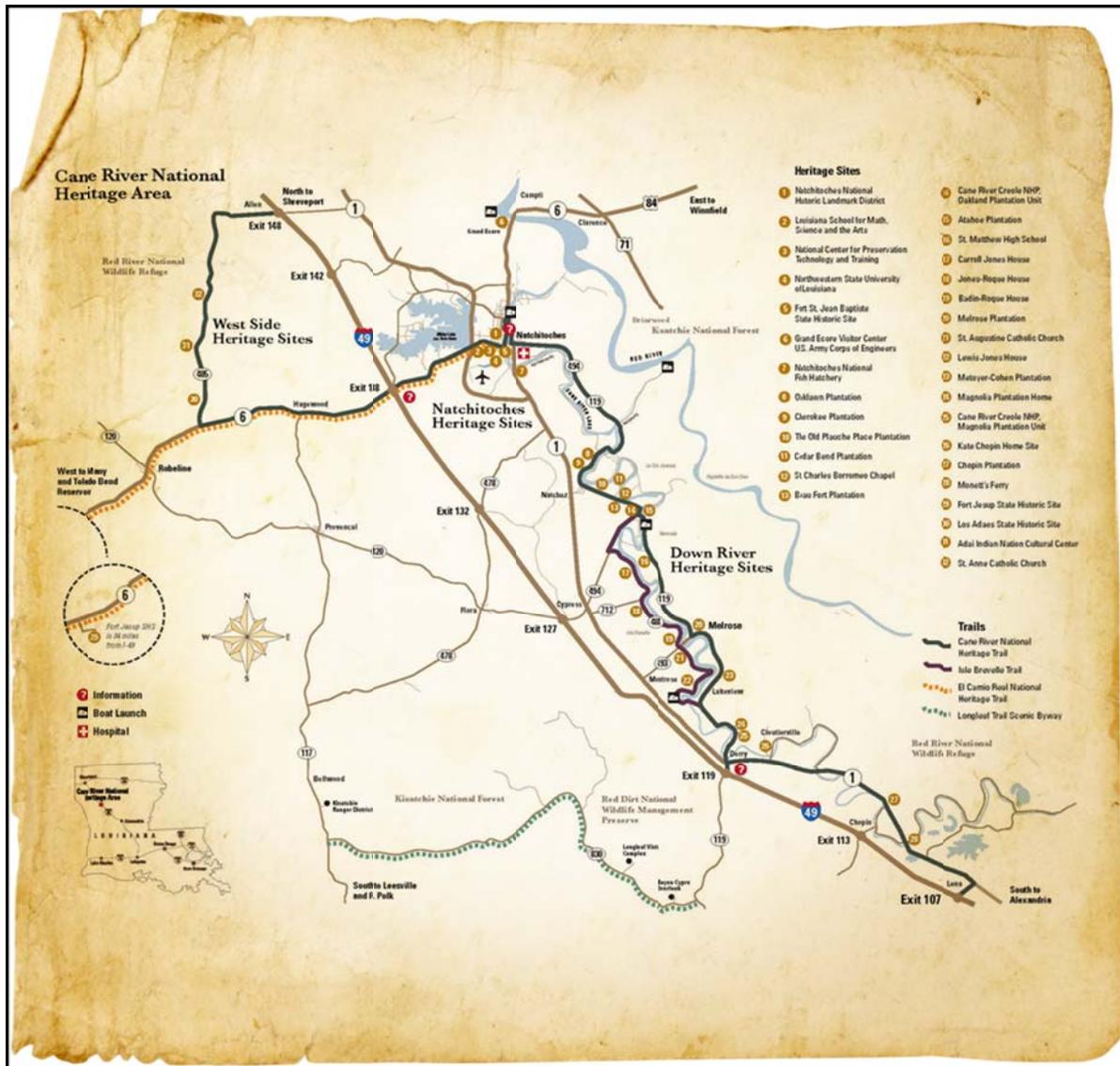


Figure 1: Map of the Cane River National Heritage Area (CRNHA, Natchitoches, LA)

The present project—Oral History and Ethnographic Interviews with Traditionally Associated People of Cane River Creole National Historical Park—represents an initial attempt to address recommendations in the Phase I EOA. A total of 22 community consultants were interviewed using digital audio format and 10 community consultants and activities were recorded using digital video format, with all interviews transcribed. In addition, five interviews previously conducted by NPS staff members were abstracted and partially transcribed. Archived interviews associated with various projects and presentations, ca. 1970 to 2014, were also consulted and may be referenced in this report. Included in these previous studies are over 100 African American oral histories collected in a cooperative project between the Ben Johnson Foundation and CARI; *We Know Who We Are*, the initial CARI documentation with the Cane River Creole community; *Oakland Plantation: Its People's Testimony*; and the *A Brief Ethnography of Magnolia Plantation* that documented people and traditions associated with Magnolia Plantation and the Derry/Cat Island area. Ethnographic interviews and oral histories collected by the Louisiana Folklife Center and Louisiana Regional Folklife Program provide additional resources.

Community consultants interviewed for the present project represent diverse backgrounds and experiences: plantation owners, plantation workers, yeoman farmers, ranchers, clergy, business owners, professionals, educators, and peace officers. Culture, ethnicity, and occupations of community consultants are indicative of the diversity of the Cane River region. Interview participants include descendants from the first French colonists, Cane River Creoles, African Americans, Anglo-Europeans, Italian Americans, and American Indians. Community consultants were associated with fifteen communities, settlement areas, or properties within the Cane River region (Figure 2). While brief historical introductions will provide background and context, the report will focus on the late nineteenth century to the present and the interviews conducted for this research.

Efforts to implement the recommendations of the EOA and other ethnographic resource documentation projects were initiated by NPS-CARI Cultural Resource Specialist Dustin Fuqua. The project to Conduct Oral History & Ethnographic Interviews with NPS-CARI Traditionally Associated Peoples was developed in 2012 as PMIS 189964. Component A of the project was funded in 2014 and managed as a contract with Earth Search, Inc. for professional ethnographic data collection services (P14PC00679). Compliance with NEPA and NHPA was achieved by the park's Division of Resource Management and documented via PEPC 53382.

Park staff and project team members utilized archival collections and consulted with former interviewees, subject matter experts, and partners to identify potential informants, research needs, and interview themes. While the majority of those invited to be formally interviewed agreed, approximately five informants declined to participate. Signed consent forms were obtained for all but one interviewee whose verbal consent was recorded.

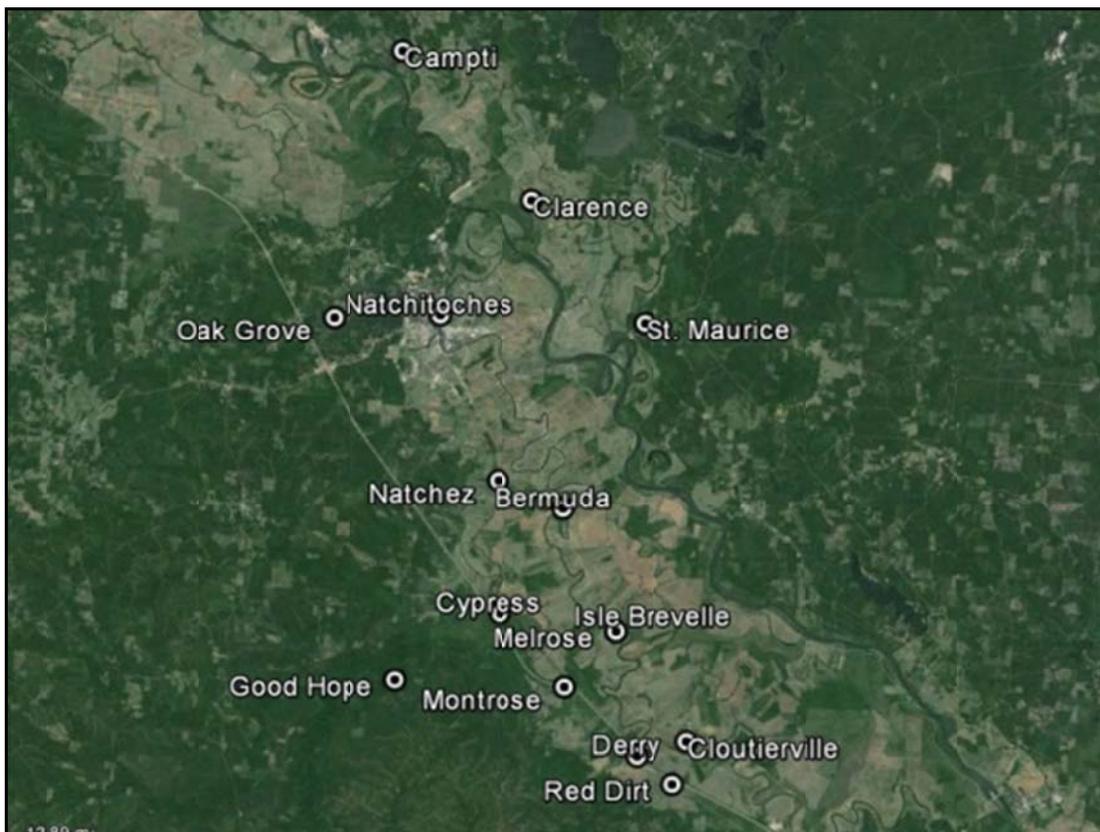


Figure 2: Communities and Settlement Areas within the Cane River Region Associated with Interviews (base map Google Earth)

The Cultural Landscape of the Cane River Region

In the waning years of the seventeenth century on the lower reaches of Red River, three nations—Caddo Nation, France, and Spain—converged at the edge of empires. The Natchitoches Caddo were the prominent indigenous inhabitants of the region, having only recently arrived to settle in present Natchitoches Parish in the late Mississippian era (ca. sixteenth century). Intimate relations created new layers of identity, varied and enriched by subsequent voluntary and forced migration that brought new cultural elements to an already diverse population. African and Afro-Caribe slaves and American Indian slaves, primarily Chitimacha and Apache, were an early presence in the colonial population, followed by immigrant tribes like the Choctaw, Pascagoula, and Biloxi, and European immigrants. The process of creolization¹ gave rise to generations of *métis/mestizo* (American Indian and Catholic European) and *gens des couleurs libres* (free people of color, i.e., Creoles of color, identified as Cane River Creole in the present study). Culturally mixed families grew into ethnic communities located beyond the consolidated settlement areas surrounding the French and Spanish posts (Lee et al. 2006:80-81).

The French established Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in 1714, extending their reach from the gulf coast to the interior of the newly authorized colony in lower Louisiana. Before crossing into Spanish territory in 1714, St. Denis and his mixed French and American Indian entourage left a small contingent of soldiers at the village of the Natchitoches to establish an outpost on France's western frontier. Construction of Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches was completed in 1719, the same year that Spain founded mission St. Miguel de los Linares de Los Adaes just 16 miles to the west. The French also established a small post near the upper Caddo villages on Red River near present Texarkana, manned by soldiers and traders who would return to settle in the remote areas around Natchitoches after 1763 (Avery 1999; Gregory and McCorkle 1981-1981:1-11; La Harpe 1971:100; Lee et al. 2006:82-83, 90; Shelby 1923:170).

Goaded into action by the French presence at its border, in 1721 Spain placed presidio Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Los Adaes near the site of mission St. Miguel. Juxtaposed on the extreme eastern border of Mexico, the presidio was to serve as military post and capital of Spanish Texas until its closure in 1773. Los Adaes, soldiered by a largely *mestizo* detachment from Mexico, was positioned to check French expansion and influence and to prevent French traders from taking merchandise and weapons to the tribes in Spanish Texas. In truth, Los Adaes did little to limit French commerce or influence. Instead, it gave traders at Natchitoches and investors in France their long-awaited contact with Spanish Texas. Inter-marriage cemented relations between the European outposts, and members of the Spanish clergy were often called upon to minister to the French community (Avery 1999:26-28; Gregory and McCorkle 1981-1981:1-11; Lee et al. 2006:82-83).

After the post at the upper Caddo villages officially closed ca. 1763, shortly after Spain took over the western Louisiana colony, displaced soldiers, traders, and their families drew back towards Natchitoches. Unaccustomed to the confinements of town living, these largely *métis* families sought remote and unclaimed tracts of land on which to establish habitations. Jean Baptiste Brevel *fils*, the *métis* son of Jean Baptiste Brevel² and Anne of the Caddo, settled with

¹ Herein defined as the formation of new social identities among descendants of Catholic European colonials who formed inter-racial and/or inter-ethnic unions.

² It is not known at what point spelling of the surname, Brevel, transitioned to Brevelle, but a survey of extant records suggests it was some time after the Civil War.

his German-French wife in the region that would come to bear his name, Isle Brevelle³ (Figure 3). The exact location of the original Brevel property has not been pinpointed. Within a few years, Brevel was joined on the Island by Spanish land grantees including former trader, Jean Pierre Emanuel Prud'homme, who established his plantation at the upper end of Isle Brevelle. The community that would come to be called Bermuda grew up around Prud'homme's plantation, now known as Oakland Plantation. Prud'homme also maintained a habitation at Bayou Pierre probably used as a *vacherie*, or cattle ranch. The inter-racial Cane River Creole community consolidated at the lower end of Isle Brevelle. Free blacks often chose to settle down river near the Creole families with whom they often shared kinship, separating themselves from predominantly white settlements (Lee et al. 2006:90; Teal 2007).



Figure 3: Isle Brevelle (base map Google Earth)

³ Côte Joyeuse was the area along Red/Cane River between Natchitoches and Upper Isle Brevelle (Figure 4). Isle Brevelle is the land lying between Cane River Lake and Bayou Brevelle (Figure 3).



Figure 4: Côte Joyeuse (base map Google Earth)

The Rivière aux Cannes region developed along the old channel of Cane River below Isle Brevelle. Two distinct settlement areas emerged: upper Rivière aux Cannes around present-day Derry and Cloutierville, and lower Rivière aux Cannes centered around present-day Chopin and Monette's Ferry. Inhabitants of Rivière aux Cannes, both upper and lower, interacted closely with each other, with the Cane River Creole community at Isle Brevelle, and with immigrant tribes like the Apalachee, Choctaw, and Pascagoula. Among the first to settle upper Rivière aux Cannes were *métis* brothers, Jean Baptiste and Gaspar Derbanne—two of the five known children of François Guyon des Pres Derbanne, keeper of the King's warehouse, and his Chitimacha wife, Jeanne de la Grande Terre. Jean Baptiste married Victoria Gonzalez, the daughter of the Spanish governor at Los Adaes and Gaspar Derbanne married Marie Françoise Verger, whose mother was Natchitoches Caddo. Other early inhabitants of upper Rivière aux Cannes were the families of Jean Baptiste LeComte, Alexis Cloutier, and Pierre LaCour. No church existed to serve the early community, but the devout held baptisms and marriages in their own household chapels or in the Metoyer chapel, later St. Augustine Catholic Church, at Isle Brevelle (Lee et al. 2006:90-91; Mills 1981, 1977; Father Pierre Pavie, 1799 census of the parish of Natchitoches Parish, Notre Dame Archives).

The economic focus of upper Rivière aux Cannes was largely agricultural and plantations soon covered the landscape. Jean Baptiste LeComte and his wife, Marguerite Le Roy, established a successful tobacco plantation at upper Rivière aux Cannes. LeComte and his descendants acquired vast landholdings over the next century, including the tract that would become Magnolia Plantation. Rural inhabitants engaged in both Indian trade and grew indigo and tobacco, but turned almost exclusively to large-scale cotton agriculture by the beginning of the nineteenth century. By the 1840s, cotton plantations stretched south from Natchitoches along Côte Joyeuse, Isle Brevelle, and Rivière aux Cannes to the southern extent of the parish (Lee et al. 2006:91-92).

Concepts of race had little importance for the Creole population on the colonial frontier and racial blending was common. Ethnicity was fluid and situational, while kinship, status, and prosperity exerted greater influence on social status than did race. With the Louisiana Purchase, however, narrow Anglo-American concepts of race and identity overwhelmed Creole society. White Creoles slowly distanced themselves from their racially mixed neighbors and relatives, claiming Creole identity solely as their own. By the end of the nineteenth century, the multi-faceted society that had once defined the colonial borderlands fell subject to a binary system that measured race by a single drop of blood. American Indians withdrew into *refugia*—areas of refuge in the hills and swamps away from communities like Natchitoches and Cloutierville—while Cane River Creoles, most of whom were landowners and even slave owners, were increasingly marginalized from the dominant population (Gregory 2004:654; Lee et al. 2006:81-82).

At Grand Ecore, the Red River divides into two streams, which reunite some forty miles below; one of these, called Cane River, which was formerly the principal channel, is now only navigable when Red River is running above its ordinary level; and the other, called Rigolet du Bon Dieu (streamlet of the good God), takes, at low stages, sometimes even the whole stream [Olmstead 1904:624].

The clearing of the great log jam that blocked large extents of Red River from above present Shreveport to Natchitoches caused the Red River to jump into the Rigolet de Bon Dieu channel in the 1830s, bypassing the town and the plantations from Natchitoches to below Cloutierville. The old channel of Red River became part of the muddy, often unreliable Cane River, which was dammed at both ends in the 1930s to form the present Cane River Lake. Prior to damming, steamboats were still able to traverse Cane River at certain times of year. Red River was still accessible from Cloutierville via Little River and lower Cane River.

Railroads expanded rapidly in the parish after the Civil War, crisscrossing the region by the late nineteenth century to serve the needs of farms, plantations, and sawmills. Sawmills like Frost Johnson Lumber Co. at Montrose and Clark & Morse Lumber Co. at Derry maintained their own tram railroads that connected with the main rail lines (Figure 5), and small towns developed along the railroad to accommodate transportation of agricultural products, timber, supplies, and passengers with each its own depot (Figure 6).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the town of Natchitoches was home to an increasingly diverse population. Anglo-Americans flooded the region after the Louisiana Purchase, some of the wealthier marrying local planter families and merging into the Creole Catholic landowning community. Others established businesses in town like banks and general stores. African Americans, many who were brought into the region enslaved by Anglo-Americans, added to the burgeoning population. After the Civil War, they, too, established small businesses, joined the service industry and general workforce, or became craftspeople or educators. African Americans also established social aid and benevolent societies to assist families in times of need and with burial expenses. Chinese immigrants came into the region as indentured laborers to work in agriculture after the Civil War, and those who stayed married into African American and Creole communities but retained vestiges of their Chinese heritage. Immigrants from Ireland and Italy and, later, Syria engaged in the building trades, and opened small businesses like restaurants, groceries, and cobblers. Others worked as tinkers and peddlers. Anglo-Americans brought Protestant religion into the region, the affluent founding churches like Trinity Episcopal in Natchitoches, while newly emancipated African Americans established their own houses of worship like Asbury Methodist Church (Cohen 1984:152-154;

Lee et al. 2006:2-3; Henry Maggio and Sadie Dark, interviewed November 7, 2014; Teal 2007; U.S. Census 1810-1940).

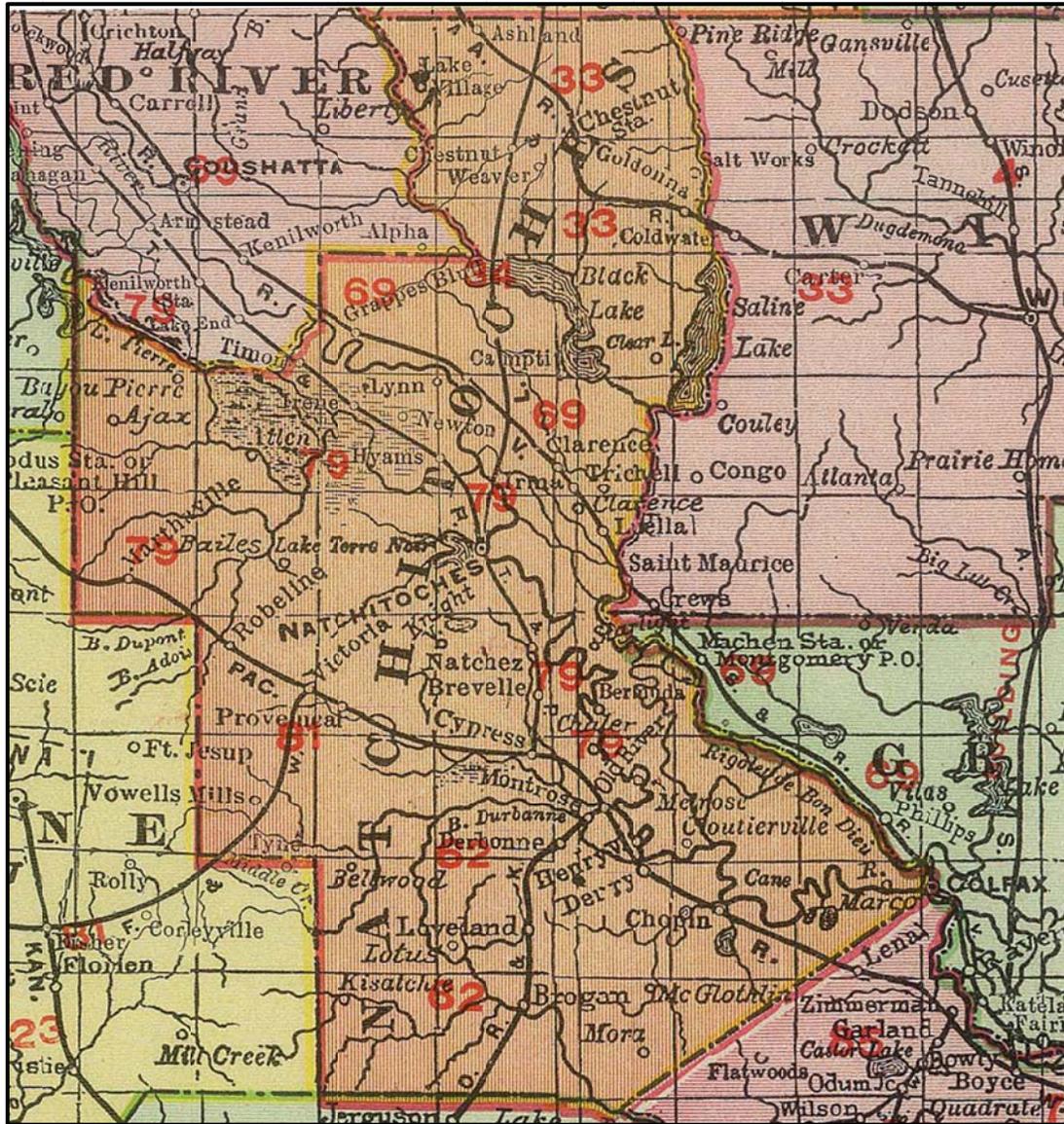


Figure 5: Natchitoches Parish Settlements and Railroads (excerpt, Rand McNally 1903)



Figure 6: Natchez Station Depot Building, Natchitoches/Little Eva Pecans (Lee 2006)

The hills and upland areas away from the towns and rivers were largely uninhabited during the colonial period, except for the occasional *vacheries* attached to the Creole plantations. Anglo-Americans with few resources typically settled in the unclaimed uplands and piney woods where they became yeoman farmers. Homesteads were widely dispersed in the creeks and at springheads, with housing and outbuildings of hewn pine or hardwood notched-log construction instead of the more common raised houses of cypress construction preferred by planters. Gardens were planted near the houses and small fields of less than 50 acres were typical. Cattle and hogs were marked and roamed free on the open range in the woods. Although cattle was kept by colonial planters in the eighteenth century, large-scale cattle ranching increased with the Anglo-American expansion in the area. Small settlements and communities like Good Hope developed along major creek drainages creating a new cultural landscape more typical of the rest of the upland south. Small Baptist and Methodist churches sprang up in the settlements, some serving no more than one or two extended families (Lee et al. 2006:174-175).

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the Cane River region expressed a diverse cultural landscape. Creole planters, both Caucasian and Cane River Creole, maintained family holdings that dated back to the eighteenth century; but Anglo-Americans and European immigrants now numbered among the landed gentry along Cane River. Cotton still reigned supreme, but cattle and pecans were gaining a foothold. Cane River Creoles who owned no land worked as craftspeople, servants, overseers, sharecroppers, and tenants on the plantations, or worked in the service industries and labor force in town. Many African Americans in the rural parish sharecropped or tenanted on plantations. Those with their own small farms stuck close to the river and left the uplands to the Anglo-Saxon yeoman farmers and small native communities like the Apalachee in Kisatchie Hills. A number of Protestant churches and local schoolhouses could be found scattered throughout the region. Some like St. Augustine Baptist Church near

Melrose bore the same name as the nearby Catholic church, suggesting a common origin for the historic congregation. African American churches, brush arbors, and cemeteries were common on the rural landscape where the religion and spirituality of African descendants once went unmarked. From the Civil War to the post-World War II era, the Cane River region maintained a rural character and lifestyle built around agriculture and to a lesser degree, the timber industry. Advances in agricultural technology that led to increasing mechanization, however, would tear the social fabric of the region and reorder the cultural landscape of the Cane River region.

People of the Cane River Region

Upper Isle Brevelle/Bermuda—Côte Joyeuse/Natchez:

Associated Interviews: Prud'homme Family, Betty Shields, Mary Sue Metoyer, Ginny Tobin, Gloria Sers Jones, Henry Kennedy, Julie Kennedy

Bermuda/Oakland Plantation

Between ca. 1787 and 1797, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme purchased a tract of land from Nicholas Rousseau on the upper end of Isle Brevelle, part of which contains the present Oakland Plantation unit of Cane River Creole National Historical Park (CARI). Emmanuel was the grandson of Jean Baptiste Prud'homme, a native of Dauphine, France, and one of the earliest inhabitants of French Natchitoches (Mills 1981:4; Firth and Turner 2003:40). It was necessary for landholders to prove ownership by prior sale or grant before the U.S. Land Commissioners after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and Prud'homme applied for confirmation of title to seven tracts of land including the Rousseau tract. According to the certificate of ownership issued on February 5, 1850, the Rousseau tract/Prud'homme claim measured 1600 arpents of 1354.04 acres (ASP 1834:717; however, the 1816 survey found the tract was about half that size, i.e. 554.35 acres on the east side of the river (Section 104) and 162.39 acres on the west side (Section 44), totaling 716.74 acres (Firth and Turner 2003:42). The official plat map for Township 8 North, Range 6 West, dated August 14, 1850, delineates four tracts including Sections 40, 44, 102 and 104 totaling 797.57 acres belonging to Emmanuel Prud'homme on Isle Brevelle (Figure 7).

Emmanuel Prud'homme was one of the first planters to engage in large-scale cotton agriculture on Red River. At the time of his death in 1845, Prud'homme had a workforce of 104 enslaved individuals. The Prud'hommes intermarried with other planter families like the Lambres, Metoyers, Cloutiers, Deblieux, and LeComtes, enhancing the success of the plantation and preserving French Creole culture and traditions (Malone 1998:6). Mrs. Elizabeth Prud'homme Lambre observed, "The Lambres and the Prud'hommes have been marrying back and forth for almost 300 years, keeping the families together and the land in the family" (personal communication, 1989). Both Elizabeth Prud'homme and her sister, who were reared in Baltimore, married Lambre brothers from Cane River.

In 1868, the Prud'homme estate was divided between two heirs, Jacques Alphonse and Pierre Emmanuel, with Jacques Alphonse retaining the west side (Section 104) that included the Big House and the present plantation. Pierre kept the east side (Section 44) which he named Atahoe Plantation.¹ By this time, the enslaved workforce that supported the plantation through the Civil War had been replaced by tenants and sharecroppers, many of them previously enslaved by the Prud'hommes.

"Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme ... and his wife, Catherine Lambre, were the builders of the home.... They originally had a home on the banks of the Cane River, which was then the Red River; but because of flooding, in 1818 they decided to push back and build a larger home.... When they finished the home in 1821, Emmanuel and Catherine went back to Paris to visit relatives and to purchase furniture for the home ... [that] was shipped to New Orleans.... It was put on [a] boat and went up the Mississippi, and transferred to another boat to the Red River, and it docked right out front.... As Catherine bought too much furniture on their trip to Paris, they immediately ... had to start renovating the house and making it larger.

¹ Atahoe, from the Natchitoches Caddo *nataho*, turnaround place, perhaps referring to a depth or bend in the river that allowed boats a place to reverse direction (personal communication, Ruby Edge Resoff, 1985). Little River was also called Atahoe River (Figure 4).

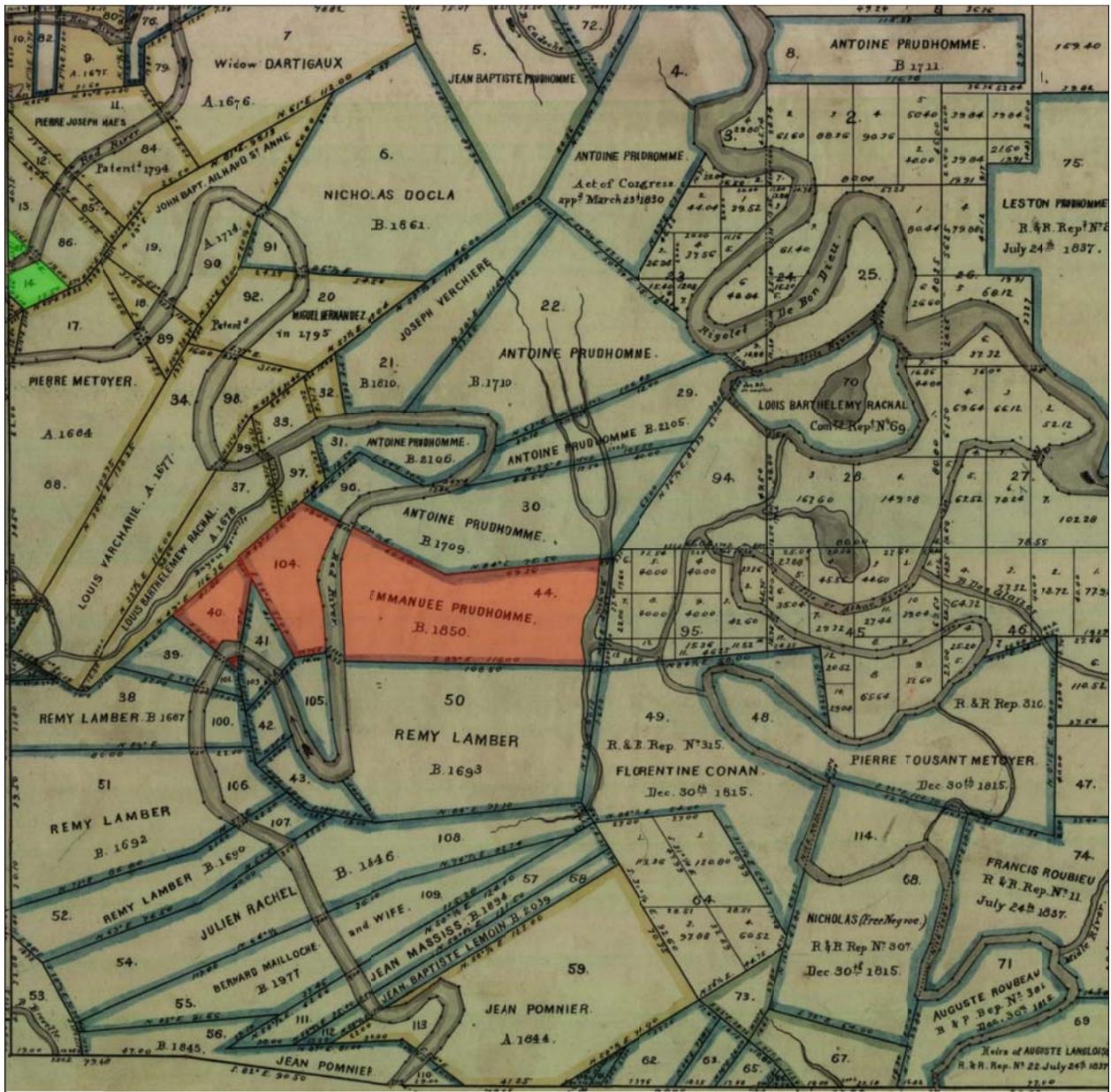


Figure 7: U.S. Check Plat Map, Township 8 North, Range 6 West (excerpt): Properties of Emanuel Prud'homme (red) and Philippe Frédérique (green [location of Cherokee Plantation]) (1850)

The Big House (Figure 8)



Figure 8: Oakland Plantation Big House (NPS-Historic American Buildings Survey [HABS] J. Rosenthal, D. Fuqua n.d.)

“In my lifetime during the 1950s, my grandfather had a very good cotton crop, and he put in the new pine floors. He put in a new bathroom. He put in some more closets in the house.... [Grandmother] Lulu got the new red couch. They put in a new kitchen; they took in part of the gallery, the porch. They were always taking in the porch, adding to the house, always” (Kathy Prud’homme Guin, interviewed October 10, 2015).

“[In] 1927, when my oldest brother was born, they cut a door into the stranger’s room to make it accessible from their bedroom; but we still call it the stranger’s room.

“I was the last baby born here, and it’s just been home to so many of us for generations. It’s still the Big House; it’s still home to all generations.... For all of us, really, it’s the Grand Lady of the River” (Vivian Prud’homme Duggan, interviewed October 10, 2015).

The Plantation: Agriculture, Technology, and Economy

“Jean Pierre Emmanuel was the third generation Prud’homme in Louisiana. He was the one who built Oakland Plantation.... I took up a flying career; and for a while I tried farming, but ... I got called back to active duty and lost what interest I had in farming. But my two brothers, Al and Ken ... continued to farm for many years.... Oakland is known as a Bicentennial Farm. It has been farmed by the same family since before the Constitution was signed in 1776, and also Magnolia Plantation is considered that. They’re the only two west of the Mississippi River. Cotton was first raised on a commercial basis here at Oakland by my

great-great-great-grandfather, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme" (Mayo Prud'homme, interviewed October 10, 2015).

"He was a planter, and his first crops were indigo and tobacco; but around 1797, after Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, he decided to try his hand at cotton, and was considered to be the first man to successfully grow cotton in the Louisiana Purchase.... Since Emmanuel, all the Prud'homme men were cotton farmers, all the way down to my dad, James Alphonse Prud'homme III, and his brother, Kenneth Prud'homme. They farmed until the 1980s, and almost always cotton.... If you're a farmer, ... you have good years and bad years. So, there were a lot of early really, really good years; and then of course different things happened [like] the War Between the States ... that changed the dynamics here on the plantation. We're very fortunate that the family was able to hold on to the plantation during difficult times, ... the family persevered through that" (Kathy Prud'homme Guin, interviewed October 10, 2015).

"We enjoyed [harvest time] as kids because we always got to ride on the little trailers, wagons ... of cotton. We enjoyed going down to the gin and have it suck [the cotton] up. I have a cousin that lost a hat in every bale of cotton that went through there! It was a gay time. It was fall and all the crops were in and the gardens were plush. A little bit later, they had the *boucherie* where they would kill the hogs for the plantation. It was great then.... Can you think of anything that was more festive than harvest time?" (Vivian Prud'homme Duggan, interviewed October 10, 2015).

"My dad ran the post office for 37 years.... He was the Postmaster at Bermuda. It was a fourth-rate post office, and ... I became Assistant Postmaster and handled all the chores of the Postmaster.... My dad ... knew everyone from here down the river [and] out to Red River.... We had two mail riders who went out from here, one that brought the mail in and went on down to Magnolia Plantation. The other one started here, by horseback usually in the wintertime, and he would go out to Red River delivering the RFD mail.... I used to ride with him sometimes when they later upgraded and used vehicles to make the routes" (Mayo Prud'homme, interviewed October 10, 2015).

"My father and Uncle Kenny ... had their office over at the store (Figure 9). My grandfather ran the store and was the postmaster there. Most all these old plantations had a store that went with it" (Kathy Prud'homme Guin, interviewed October 10, 2015).

"We had at least five families [tenanted on the plantation]. Most of them were Helaires and Behars... Daddy retired from the post office in '49.... He retired from everything in '50 because he was losing his hearing and his eyesight. At that time the overseer [Leo Metoyer] said, 'Well, when Mr. Phonsie retires, I will retire,' and so he did, and he moved into Natchitoches.... All of us were Creole. It was Creole the white and *de couleur*.... They were all like family, but they all scattered and went all their different ways. And then my brothers began to take over the farming here" (Vivian Prud'homme Duggan, interviewed October 10, 2015).

"In the 1960s, they still had people that were picking cotton; ... [but] mostly they had moved on the large cotton pickers.... They had all their equipment, all their cotton pickers and tractors on the side yard, but there was a pretty large workforce because they were farming a lot of cotton at the time" (Kathy Prud'homme Guin, interviewed October 10, 2015).



Figure 9: Oakland Plantation Store (NPS-HABS, J. Rosenthal, D. Fuqua n.d.)

Family Heritage and Tradition

“Our elder was a French marine at Fort St. Jean Baptiste, and he came over in 1716 or ‘17, somewhere in there, and he married a Casket Girl in 1725. Casket Girls were poor orphans who were brought over from France to marry into the colony to help populate the colony. She was twenty; my ancestor was fifty-three. They had numerous children, about seven or eight.... My siblings and I were the eighth generation to live at Oakland Plantation. We were the tenth generation of the Prud’hommes in the family.... My father was Alphonse Prud’homme II and my mother was Lucille Keator from St. Louis, and I was the third son of four children. I had one younger sister, I had two older brothers” (Mayo Prud’homme, interviewed October 10, 2015).

“People always asked us what was it like growing up at Oakland, and my brother, Mayo’s, answer was always, ‘What was it like growing up in your home?’ It was home... We didn’t know any different; it was what it was.... Christmases were a ball. When we were little, all my aunts and uncles, and all the kids came here. My grandparents were still living, so we all had Christmas here at the Big House. We had oodles of table space, and it was always a great, great time” (Vivian Prud’homme Duggan, interviewed October 10, 2015).

“This was my grandparents’ home when I was growing up. I’ve spent a lot of time here. My father was born here.... This was the room that we spent a lot of time as children. I have thirteen first cousins, and we would gather here at Christmas ... [and] we always had our Christmas tree right here.... I have four brothers and sisters, and we were here a lot along with my first cousins, Uncle Kenny’s children. We lived in the area. My aunt lived in Dallas with her children, and my uncle was a pilot for Eastern Airlines, so he traveled a lot and lived in different places, but they would always be here for family gatherings. We were almost here on a daily basis, us kids were” (Kathy Prud’homme Guin, interviewed October 10, 2015).

Religion and Education

“All the old families down here were Catholic.... We went to a little church up the road, about half-mile from here, ... St. Charles Church (Figure 10).... The priest would come up from [Isle] Brevette every Sunday, either by horseback or by car depending as the times progressed, and we would have 7 o'clock Mass almost every Sunday morning. At Lent, he would come up on Friday, and we would have the Way of the Cross. The kids would go out and we'd play football up to the time of the services themselves” (Mayo Prud'homme, interviewed October 10, 2015).

Early generations of Prud'homme children were educated in France, but later generations attended American colleges and universities. All three Prud'homme descendants interviewed for this project attended St. Mary's Catholic School in Natchitoches.

“My great-grandfather was planning to go to Yale, and his father—my great-great-grandfather—sent him to a preparatory school. It was in the 1850s and there was a book that had been written by ... Harriet Beecher Stowe [that brought the Southern institution of slavery into question].... Instead of going to the preparatory school for Yale, he went to the University of Virginia for a couple of years, and then went to the University of North Carolina where he received a degree in engineering.... I went through St. Mary's Academy in Natchitoches, the Catholic high school, and then on to Northwestern State, now the University, at Natchitoches” (Mayo Prud'homme, interviewed October 10, 2015).

Hospitality and Historic Preservation

The Prud'homme family has a long tradition of opening their home to visitors, dating back to the builders of the Big House, Jean Pierre Emmanuel and Catherine Lambre Prud'homme.

“The stranger's room ... had no entrance into the main house. They had access to the outhouse, bowl, linen, pitchers. Anyone traveling late in the day they knew could not make it to Natchitoches, they'd invite in to spend the night and gave them bed and breakfast. They would invite them in to eat dinner, and they always shared news of where they had been and who they were, and that sort of thing. Then they took news from here on up the road—the river—with them.

“Mama ... and my grandmother started taking tourists in back in the '20s. My Mom and Dad married in '27, and my grandfather had moved the two cabins that were behind the house—[originally] for the carriage driver and the cook—to the northeast side, and my grandfather rented them out as camps. Cane River was an excellent spot for fishing, so they did a lot of fishing in there, and people from those camps would come and say, 'Ms. Prud'homme, would you take us through the house?' ... It was just something Mom did. We'd be sitting at the dinner table, in the dining room ... and people would walk in the front door, because we never locked the door, and they'd see us and [say], 'Oh! You live here.' ... Mom said, 'If you wait, I'll give you a tour.' She was always the gracious one. It started way back then, and progressed to the historical group....

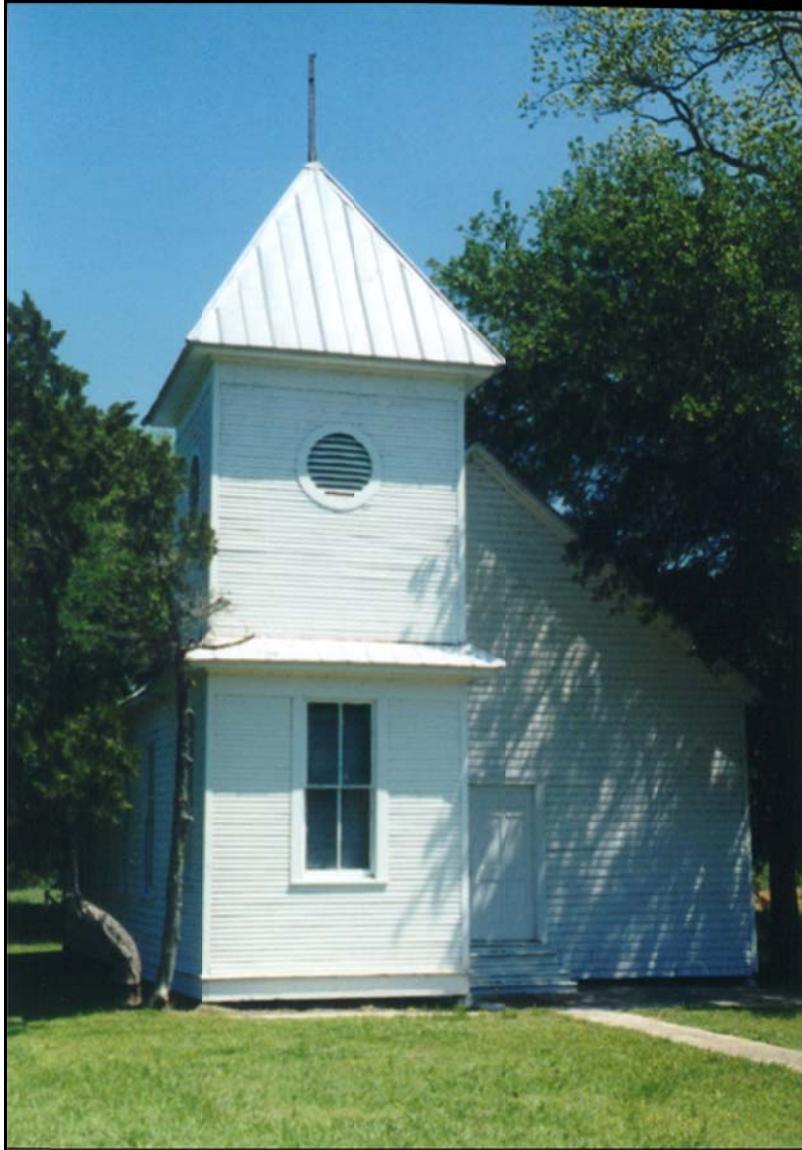


Figure 10: St. Charles Chapel, Bermuda (Lee 2006)

“After World War II, so much of the old metals were ... showing up that they started what they called the museum ... under the house. They had two rooms down there with all the old things that we used to build the house and things we used on the plantation. Everything in there was from Oakland.... I’m truly not sure of the year that the historical group took over in Natchitoches.... [Due to Alphonse Prud’homme’s declining health] they had to take it off the tour for several years. Then my Mom passed away and we got all the cousins, first cousins and grandkids, ... and we put it on tour ourselves the next year and I think two years after that. Then the Park had gotten it to a point when it could be viewed, and so we began to staff it or put docents in here to tell everything about the house” (Vivian Prud’homme Duggan, interviewed October 10, 2015) (Figure 11).

Transition and Legacy

“It was always a very lived-in house until the end.... It was very bittersweet.... [NPS] had come to us years before and ... talked to my grandfather about it. He said he didn’t think so; but Pawpaw lived to be 94, and ... I believe was beginning to see the value of having [the property preserved].... At that point, the house was about 187 years old.... We had a family meeting.... My father was deceased at the time, and my grandparents were deceased, and Uncle Kenny said, “You know, guys, this house is going to fall down or it’s going to burn down if we don’t really think about this and do something to save it.” We couldn’t have done, if we put every penny we had into it, we couldn’t do what the Park did.... They had to structurally reinforce the house and do all their renovations, so, that was the hardest part, the first few years. But it’s really great what they’ve done, and we have a good relationship, so we’re very happy we did it.

“I left and went to Dallas in 1979 when I was in my 20s. Even though I loved the home and I loved my grandparents very much, I didn’t have the appreciation for it. I don’t think it comes until you’re older. I came back 28 years later and ... have the appreciation for it. It’s very rare that you find bicentennial farms that are owned by the same family, and farmed for over 200 years. It’s a great legacy, and I’m so happy the house will go on for years and years. It is very special” (Kathy Prud’homme Guin, interviewed October 10, 2015).



Figure 11: Members of the Prud’homme Family, Natchitoches Tour of Homes, October 10, 2015 (Vivian Prud’homme Duggan, seated center; Mayo Prud’homme seated right; Kathy Prud’homme Guin, standing right [Lee 2015])

Bermuda/Oakland Plantation Quarters

Family, Childhood, and Community

“My parents were Leo Metoyer and Camille Metoyer. I was born here and my father also was born here. His mother and father [Rainy and Suzette Metoyer] lived with us after his father had the stroke [and Leo] took over the overseer job.... I was born in November 1933, and I stayed here until August ‘55. My brother ... was born in August ‘35 and he ... must’ve been 17, 18 when he left. And my sister ... was born in ‘37 and ... she left here in ‘57 or ‘58 and went to work in Natchitoches” (Mary Sue Metoyer, interviewed October 10, 2015).

“Elvin [Shields] and I both grew-up in this area. Elvin grew-up in this house (Figure 12). He and his family lived here from about 1954 till about 1962 and then they moved away to other areas in this Cane River area” (Betty Shields, interviewed February 5, 2015).

“At one time there was two ... sharecroppers.... The one we used to pick cotton with ... only had two children, and the other had I think ... about seven or eight children. The other lady that moved here and stayed in that house at one time, she was raising her grandchildren. She had three granddaughters that she raised, but they didn’t have a crop.



Figure 12: North Tenant Cabin, Oakland Plantation (NPS-HABS, J. Rosenthal, D. Fuqua n.d.)

“[We] played hide and seek and all kinds of games. Children don’t know all that these days. You see, this house was so high we could hide up under the house.... I played [marbles] with my brother. I had to shoot the cap pistol for him so he could put his hands on his ears! And we played ... hide and switch. You hide the switch, and whoever found it would get behind everybody and try and whip ‘em before they got to the base” (Mary Sue Metoyer, interviewed October 10, 2015).

The Overseer's House (Figure 13)

“When we were first born, there was that little [bed]room ... and this living room, which was a living room and bedroom together. On the back, to the right, there was a really small kitchen.... [There] was a back porch my dad closed in, and then ... he took this room ... for a kitchen. There was a bed in there when we were small, and he made a kitchen out of it.... A little refrigerator would hold a block of ice and we'd use that for the food. [There] was a regular iron stove; it wasn't a fancy one” (Mary Sue Metoyer, interviewed October 10, 2015).



Figure 13: Overseer's House, Oakland Plantation (NPS-CARI, Dustin Fuqua, n.d.)

Daily Life and Foodways

“We had a little garden here and we had fig trees. We had three fig trees right out there, and I can see myself climbing those trees.... [Mother] would can a lot of vegetables and stuff. [There was] no freezer, or electricity.... My brother and sister and I were the ones that would cut the wood. We would saw the wood, had a little thing to hold the logs up and we would saw, and if it needed splitting we had to split the wood. Daddy was always working” (Mary Sue Metoyer, interviewed October 10, 2015).

Before refrigeration, when produce was harvested much of it was canned for later consumption.

“These figs would have been available during the late summer months. The children would usually pick the fruit and put them in buckets, bring them in to the parents. The mother usually and the daughters would process the fruit. They would pick through the fruit and throw away the bad ones. Pull some of the bad stems off the figs and the smaller figs are the ones that I grew-up with, learning how to can from my parents and my siblings. They are called the little Brown Turkeys, I believe, from this area—native to this area.

“I cut the figs, put them in the pot and put sugar in and usually you’ll use about two parts figs too one part sugar.... Put it in this pot and just cook it until the liquid is just about as thick as you want it. Until it’s like a syrup. You’d cook that down on this wood stove ... and, that would have been a slow process.... We would have to lift this [burner eyelet] and put wood down in here to make the fire burn faster if necessary. Put this back on and continue to stir until it was as thick as needed.

“I thought it was fun. We all seemed to be enjoying ourselves during the process. We got to eat all the figs we wanted ... and, of course we knew that it was also a necessity because the family was very poor and anything that we could preserve for the winter months was very important to feed the family ... during the winter time when we didn’t have gardens—when it was very cold and everything. So, it was very important to save or preserve food for those periods when you didn’t have the things available—fresh.

“I learned ... mainly from my older sisters. They ... were the ones who had to help with the cooking and all of that stuff. And, we sort of took turns. And, I was the youngest child so I had a lot of older siblings to do this stuff and I would mainly just watch. And they would let me get up there and stir a little bit, you know, to sort of teach me a little bit” (Betty Shields, interviewed February 5, 2015).

Religion and Education

“I first started at St. Paul’s school, then ... we did move away in ‘47 after my grandfather died. He died in December ‘46, and Daddy said he was going to try and work in Natchitoches, so I went to school from January to May at St. Anthony’s Catholic School in Natchitoches. [But] my grandmother grieved—she wanted to come back home; this was her home. So dad asked ... and they took him back, and we went to St. Matthew then. Well, St. Paul closed right after that, and I finished high school at St. Matthew’s.... We went to St. Charles [chapel] sometimes and sometimes we went to St. Augustine.... We picked pecans that year, and [Daddy] went and bought a ... Model A Ford” [making travel to St. Augustine easier] (Mary Sue Metoyer, interviewed October 10, 2015).

Working on the Plantation

“Daddy took care of the cattle, did a lot of plowing.... He did the [vegetable] garden [and] the flower garden.... My grandmother did the cooking over there at the Big House, and when she got to where she couldn’t, my mother started working over there.... My mother did babysit for Alphonse and Jane Prud’homme. She did that, too, and my sister babysat for a while.”

[Camille Metoyer] “did breakfast and whatever you had to do around the house.... [Leo] milked the cows and stuff like that, ... plant the garden if it was time to plant, tend to the garden. Lot of times we helped with the garden, too, because we cut the grass in the garden, hoe the garden, yeah.... I picked cotton; first started out with the sharecroppers, picking with them; had a little flour sack, picking cotton.... I guess when we were teenagers my dad took a little crop for us to do. But he was always busy on the farm; he didn’t pick.... We picked pecans too.... My brother ... after he got old enough, he tried plowing, did some stuff around the plantation until he left.... [Tenants] were still picking cotton by hand. [After mechanization], people went to Chicago and places like that” (Mary Sue Metoyer, interviewed October 10, 2015).

Legacy and Tradition

“Now it’s not a necessity [to can and put away food], but it’s something that’s part of our history and we need to preserve our history anyway we can. So, I hope that others will, you know, perhaps think about teaching their children or grandchildren this process and pass it on and anything else you learned while you were young, as a child. Pass those things on to the future generations so they’ll know and they’ll be able to pass it on to their children and grandchildren. That’s how we’re going to keep our history going” (Betty Shields, interviewed February 5, 2015).

Typo Plantation

Sometime after 1910, Dr. LeRoy Cockfield established a plantation on the boundary of Sections 50 and 44 (see Figure 7), across the river within the original Emmanuel Prud’homme property. Cockfield grew up on Beulah Plantation on Red River near the Grant Parish boundary. In 1917, he married Marie Noelle Prud’homme, daughter of J. Alphonse Prud’homme and Elisa Elizabeth LeComte, and turned his attention toward agriculture.

While a highly educated and very capable physician and surgeon, Doctor Cockfield has found most of his time and energies absorbed in his ... Typo plantation, twelve hundred acres of land, thoroughly cultivated and managed in up-to-date, efficient style. He grew up in his father’s store and has always had a liking for the mercantile business. In connection with his plantation he operates a store and cotton gin, and also looks after the medical practice of his own community” (Chambers 1925 [2]:370).

LeRoy and Noelle Cockfield’s daughter, Marcia, married Sam Tobin who assumed management of Typo Plantation after Dr. Cockfield’s death (Chambers 1925 [2]:370; Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 6, 2014). James Sers was overseer at Typo Plantation and lived with his wife, Blanche, and children, James Jr., Gloria, and Irene, across the road from the plantation house (Figure 14) (Gloria Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).



Figure 14: Typo Plantation Big House (Lee 2015)

The Big House and the Plantation Landscape

“From Bermuda ... you come across the bridge, from [Oakland] plantation side, and turn right.... Sam [Tobin] built that bridge, and the old house is right before you get to the gin. It was a beautiful old place; it had a three-room fireplace.... That’s so unique. Who had heard of a three-room fireplace? You hear of double-room fireplaces all the time, but a triple-room, a three-room? It sat back and the store was on the corner there.”

“It had little houses all the way down... [Sam Tobin] built two or three of those cinderblock houses, several of those cinderblock houses; I think there’s only one left now.... [After Sam and Marcia Tobin divorced], Sam stayed, ... but he didn’t live in the [big] house.... He moved into the overseer’s house, and that’s where he stayed for the rest of the time he owned that plantation.

“The property went down to—there’s fence row of trees—and the property went that far, and then over across the river, ... and all down in there to the river, back to the river the other way. It was a big place” (Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 11, 2014).

“That was a pretty large place—the houses were all down that road. The houses were along 119. There were a lot of houses along that, too. It was a large plantation” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

The Plantation: Agriculture and Technology

“After I was born, they [parents, James and Blanche Sers] moved to Bermuda, where the ... Waterworks #2 is. There was a gin there (Figure 15). My father operated the gin—[he was] an overseer, what’s called the overseer of the Cockfield Plantation.... [The overseer’s] house was right behind where the waterworks sits now, and that’s where we lived, in that house.

“It was cotton and corn back then when I was a kid.... I remember going with my dad in the fields at night, when they would put the poison ... on the cotton, and they would have to go out after dark [when plants were wet with dew and the poison would adhere to the plants]. They didn’t have a tractor on the place then, and one would be driving and one would be turning—it was a hand-turn [broadcaster].⁵

“I rang [the bell] to call the hands in. That was a pretty large place” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

⁵ Both arsenic and strychnine were used into the twentieth century to poison weevils and other insects who destroyed cotton.



Figure 15: Cane River Gin (Lee 2015)

Cherokee Plantation

Upriver from Bermuda on the old Côte Joyeuse, Philippe Frédérique received a Spanish land grant in 1795. After his death in 1803, the land sold to Thomas Metoyer whose daughter, Marie Elizabeth, married Narcisse Prud'homme in 1806. Clarisse Prud'homme, their daughter, married C. Emile Sompayrac in 1837 and the couple purchased 1,133.36 acres of land on both sides of the river that included the Frédérique tract where Cherokee Plantation is located (Figure 7). A house was already on the property when it was purchased by the Sompayracs and may form the core of the Cherokee Plantation Big House (Figure 16). Commonly referred to as the Sompayrac Place, the plantation later took its name from the Cherokee roses that grown along the fence line (Cherokee Plantation History n.d.).

Although the property escaped destruction during the Civil War, the post-war economic decline had serious effects on Natchitoches Parish plantations and Cherokee was no exception. Emile Sompayrac died in 1878 and Clarisse took over the management of the plantation and was occasionally forced to sell off small tracts of land in order to keep the plantation solvent. In 1890, Robert Calvert Murphy, a native of Arkansas by way of Union Parish, purchased the Sompayrac Place consisting of 356 acres, the house, and all improvements, later adding several tracts of land to his cotton plantation. The plantation passed to Robert's son, Emerson, in 1936, then to Emerson's wife and daughter. It was purchased, ca. 1975, by Theodosia Nolan, a granddaughter of Robert Murphy, and is owned today by Mrs. Nolan's heirs (Cherokee Plantation History n.d.; Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2014). Neither Mrs. Nolan nor her heirs were/are permanent residents of the plantation, but the family works closely with a long-term staff dedicated to its preservation. Together, they carefully safeguard the family plantation's legacy and heritage.



Figure 16: Cherokee Plantation Big House (Lee 2014)

Ownership and Occupation

Theodosia Nolan maintained the tradition of strong, determined women having stewardship over Cherokee Plantation. Clarisse Sompayrac kept the plantation solvent both before and after the death of her husband.

“The one who built this house [Emile Sompayrac], ... that’s his bedroom on this side by the elevator there, from the kitchen—his room’s on the other side of the kitchen. He had a trap door up under his bed, and he used to drink a lot, and they say if it wouldn’t be ... for his wife, they would have lost this whole farm.... They say she was a strong woman ... and she kept his place going. He’d ring that bell, [and] Tom, I believe, lived right there [in the cabin], he’d get up and go up under the cellar and hand that whiskey to him.... They covered it up, but the trap door was right here, and the slave would hand the liquor to him!” (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

Mrs. Nolan’s aunt, Leola Albritton Murphy, also ran the plantation after the death of her husband (Cherokee Plantation History, n.d., Cherokee Plantation, Natchez, LA).

[After the death of Robert Calvert Murphy] his youngest son and wife, Emerson and Leola Murphy ... continued to farm and after Emerson died, Mrs. Murphy (nee Albritton) was the overseer. She lovingly and competently cared for the place until her death in 1966. It is because of her appreciation of the house and her realization of its historical and esthetic value that Cherokee stands as it is today. She left the [plantation] to her daughter, Mrs. John Bell ... [who] sold it to another granddaughter of Robert Murphy, Mrs. William Nolan. Work was immediately started to preserve the house ... with the least possible alteration.

Under Mrs. Nolan's ownership, Cherokee was less of a working plantation than it was an embodiment of family legacy. While the Nolan family was not resident at the plantation full time, Mrs. Nolan centered many family activities at Cherokee and the plantation continues to serve as a gathering place for the Nolan heirs.

"When I first began working here, they [family members] stayed. Many times they would come and stay at the plantation. Mrs. Nolan ... and her family ... would come in and they stayed for days and weeks at a time. But, no one actually lives here anymore even though the family still comes and they stay. It's not what you would call a person in residency here at all times, so, that has been the change" (Julie Kennedy, interviewed February 5, 2015).

Taking Care of the Plantation

When Mrs. Nolan purchased the plantation in 1975, the house and grounds were in great need of attention. On the recommendation of long-time cook, Gladys Stephens, Mrs. Nolan hired Henry Kennedy (Figure 17) who had retired from Rice University and relocated to Natchitoches. Mrs. Nolan hoped to address the needs of the plantation grounds that had long gone without much attention.

"You like planting, flowers, sir?" I say, "Yes." "It's a big place, Henry." I say, "Yeah, I just looking at it.... I want you to work right in this yard ... three days a week.' Six month later, she say, 'Henry, what all you want, [as] many hours you want, the place looking good.' She give me the keys ... and I start" (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

Mr. Kennedy helped Mrs. Nolan assemble a group of dedicated workers who would remain with the plantation in the coming decades.

"I got a gentleman named Anania Clark. He was the mayor at Natchez then. He started helping me, and we start ... a little bit at a time 'til we got most of that cleaned off to up there around the barns. She came back again and say, 'Henry, you need some help?,' and I think and I say, 'Well, Anania's helping a little bit.' She say, 'No, you need someone else.' And a young man works here now, he was going to high school up to Central High School, and I asked him. He come here ... after school and he helped.... When he finished high school, he say, 'I need a, a full-time job.' And I say, 'You got one.' And he been with me 20, 25 years.

"It's woods all out there—old pecan trees on the fence line.... We clean off a lot, we did lots—all this out here, ain't nothing but woods off behind this fence line and down here at the camp. We clean all this off—took us two or three year—and ... now you can look out there and see we got beds, small beds and a big bed back there."

Mrs. Nolan re-established the oak *allée* that extends from the front of the house to the river.

"The four big trees you see up there (Figure 18), they were [planted] when the plantation was built; but then she planted eight more back in '75" (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

Mr. Kennedy's wife, Julie Kennedy, has worked for the Nolan family as long as Mr. Kennedy and today cares for the Big House. Their son also works for the Nolan family on the plantation.



Figure 17: Henry Kennedy at Cherokee Plantation (Lee 2014)



Figure 18: *Allée*, Cherokee Plantation: four trees in the foreground are original to the house; others planted by Theodosia Nolan (Lee 2014)

“Normally, there are two people here inside [the Big House] on an average time during the week. Then, outside there’s usually from two to three persons on the grounds that come daily to Cherokee still. Because not only is this house maintained, but there are other properties owned by the owner here that has to be maintained also. So, that’s why there’s quite a few of us working still here even though it’s not occupied on a regular basis” (Julie Kennedy, interviewed February 5, 2015).

Over the course of thirty years, the Kennedys visited the Nolan family at their homes in Arkansas and New Orleans and they maintain a close relationship with Mrs. Nolan’s heirs. Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Nolan shared a special bond.

“I don’t know how I describe Miss Nolan.... Every time I think about [her] I get tears.... I would get sick and she would get up and get on her plane and fly down to the hospital to see me and I’d get up and ... I’d get sick again, she come down here and bring me soup and stuff, and I never met a lady ... a person before like her. I miss that.... [Upon her arrival] she’d tell me, ‘Call all of them in [workers], up to the Big House,’ and we’d gather around in the living room and hold hands and she’d pray just like my grandmother.... I tell my wife, ‘You know, the Good Lord move me ... to come back here and to meet her’” (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

The Big House and Associated Structures

Upon purchasing Cherokee from her aunt, Mrs. Nolan set about to improve not only the grounds but to preserve the Big House. It was apparently a labor of love for Mrs. Nolan, who cherished the plantation and its history. The house was built “I think 1830; I think up to 1836 it says on the sign up there.”⁶

“I used to come down here in the morning [to see] Miss Nolan, her husband, and her ... two friends that she carried with her all the time—Mr. Harris was her decorator and Mrs. Winter.... She’d fly down here ... at least twice a month.... She used to stay in the Big House ‘til her husband passed. After he passed, she ... stayed back there [at the camp house on the river]. Sometimes [family members] may be up here with her, sometimes she’d stay by herself.

“In her 80s, I used to come down here and she said, ‘Come on, let’s walk up to the ... Big House, Henry....’ Some things she’d want to show me.... She liked to walk barefeet.... Sometimes she’d get here, get out the car, she’d pull her shoes off, and just walk around” (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

There are five outbuildings connected to the property. There is a small structure immediately behind the big house [that] was most likely built around the turn of the twentieth century. Three are positioned southwest of the house and include a log crib with square-notched logs and a board and batten door with hand-forged nails; a center-passage barn with two pens ... and a side-shed barn, or ... single crib with two side sheds. The last, across Highway 494 from the house, is a tenant house that reputedly served as a slave cabin for the plantation (HABS LA-1318).

⁶ According to the HABS report compiled, ca. 2000, the house was built “by 1839” (HABS LA-1318A). A plaque on the gate entry estimates house construction, ca. 1837.

The description of the outbuildings compiled by the Historic American Buildings Survey, ca. 2003, is somewhat at variance with Mr. Henry's descriptions and his estimated date of at least one structure, a cabin that sits behind the Big House and which figures into the oral history of the Murphy family.

"This [is the] camp house,⁷ and we got the tour house [slave or tenant house, HABS LA-1318].... It was built, I think, when they built the Big House. Then she's got, it's called Gladys' House—Gladys Stephens, the one that told me about Theodosia—she was living in that house over there.... We got ... three barns, and a place we keep the golf cart and stuff—well, ... four barns up there, ... and got one slave house back there (Figure 19).⁸ I think it was around 20-something slaves' houses, but they tore all the rest of 'em down. They left one for the people, the tourists, so they can see how people lived back during the slave times" (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

Agriculture and Land Use

Mrs. Nolan's aunt, Leola Albritton Murphy, was the last family member to manage agricultural production primarily through sharecropping on Cherokee Plantation.

"Back then, it was a working plantation. There's some part up there at the barn you can see some people picked so many sack of corn or peas or such, they got it wrote down on the [wall]."

When the property passed to Mrs. Bell, she began to lease the land for agricultural production.

"I think around, must be round about five, close to five hundred and something acres.... they leased it out. [The lessee] plant corn one year, and then on some of the property, he plant soybeans one year. He used to plant cotton, too, but he say cotton got too expensive. It's expensive [to] keep the boll weevil and all that stuff out of it. I'm glad he did stop planting cotton.... You see hummingbird back; butterfly came back; ... before, when they planting cotton out here, it killed all that. But now I step on the porch up there, here come a hummingbird. I look outside, I see pretty, pretty butterflies coming back there. Sometimes, now the birds, the quails and stuff, they be back.... Because, during that time when they was planting cotton, they do all that dusting with the plane and that stuff go everywhere" (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

⁷ The camp house, which Mrs. Nolan improved and enlarge sits on the riverside of Hwy. 494 and was seemingly built in the early twentieth century.

⁸ This is the small structure behind the Big House estimated by the HABS surveyors to date to the turn of the twentieth century. Mr. Kennedy, however, believes it predates that time and is one of the surviving slave cabins.



Figure 19: Cabin Behind the Cherokee Big House (Lee 2014)

Hospitality and Tourism

Under Mrs. Nolan's stewardship, Cherokee was a place where guests were welcomed. She entertained often, hosting gatherings of family and friends as well as visiting dignitaries, scholars, and other visitors to the Cane River region. It was the job of Gladys Stephens and Julie Kennedy to prepare the house and make sure the events were successful. Although Mrs. Stephens is now deceased, Mrs. Kennedy continues to oversee the Big House.

"We've had celebrities to come out and government officials at some of those gatherings, so, we've had a chance to meet some different people here. Also she just had family gatherings which we've also served here.... I'm basically here during the week making sure that everything is ready if there are guests that will be arriving. Make sure that the house is kept clean at all times and if there are any preparations that need to be done. If we're having a gathering, then my job is to get those things done prior to the gathering.... First of all she would tell me what things would be needed to be purchased for that gathering. She would describe what type of gathering it is. What we would be serving and the day and the time.... She would decide which China pattern she wanted to use, which glasses ... so I would have those things washed and ready for her. Normally, she would do the table setting. The napkins and things would already be ironed and ready to be out on the table. All of those things would be ready by the time she arrived.

"Usually if we're having a large gathering, she brings the food pre-prepared already from Arkansas if there's some favorite things she wants to serve. If not, the food is catered ... and, there may be, like, rice, rolls or something that is prepared here to go along with that, but the basic meal is usually done elsewhere. Usually those things are cooked and brought with her if she flies in from Arkansas and she'll bring those things already prepared" (Julie Kennedy, interviewed February 5, 2015).

Mrs. Nolan was very interested in preservation and allowed Cherokee Plantation to be included in the Fall Tour of Homes at which she presented the history of the Cherokee Big House, the families, and regional history to visitors. Mrs. Nolan's granddaughter, Donna, now represents the family during the Fall Tour.

"She always told me, 'Henry, you know the house is not open all the time.... It's only open during the tour; but someone I know and you know, some of my kids know, come and want to look at that house, let 'em in. Open up everything.... [If] there's people come from out of town, they want to come look at the house, then let 'em in, look at the house.... But we don't have any programs ... like Melrose; but they want to see the house and spend money to drive down here, open it up and let 'em look at it. Walk 'em through'" (Henry Kennedy, interviewed November 7, 2015).

There is great anticipation for the fall tour among both the Nolan family and the workers.

"Quite a few people come in [to visit], but actually the tour that they have once a year [is] basically the thing that we all look forward to each year and work toward getting prepared for that. So, that's when the most excitement [is] at this house" (Julie Kennedy, interviewed February 5, 2015).

When asked if Mrs. Nolan's heirs plan to continue to open the home during the fall tour, Mrs. Kennedy was confident the family would maintain their matriarch's tradition of hospitality. "They will continue to have the tours because that was one of the things she most wanted, them to enjoy this place and to carry that on.... They're going to continue to do that because this was her love—the life that she loved was Cherokee. This was her family's place before she owned it" (Julie Kennedy, interviewed February 5, 2015).

Lower Isle Brevelle/Cane River/Melrose

Associated Interviews: Gloria Sers Jones, John Oswald Colson, Loletta Wynder, Becky Thomas Meziere, James Scarborough, Glennie Scarborough

The Cane River Creole community is made up of descendants of French and Spanish colonials, American Indians, Africans, and Anglo-Europeans who inhabited this region. The community is centered on Isle Brevelle, an area of land between Cane River and Bayou Brevelle that encompasses approximately 18,000 acres of land, approximately 80 percent of which is still owned by descendants of these original Creole families. The progenitors of the Cane River Creole community were Marie Thérèse "Coin Coin" and Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer, a slave of African descent belonging to the St. Denis family and the French colonist who purchased and later manumitted her and their ten children. Their descendants became successful plantation owners and many have continued to engage in agriculture. A later community ancestor, Carroll Jones, was a former slave from Sumner County, Tennessee, who came to Louisiana ca. 1825. Jones was able to gain his freedom and married Catherine Clifton, a Choctaw woman from Rapides Parish, in 1844. The couple lived in Rapides Parish until after the Civil War, when they settled on a plantation downriver from Natchitoches (Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana 1890:353).⁹ Carroll and Catherine Jones had thirteen children together. Jones had an interest in thoroughbred race horses and had several that were recognized as

⁹The plantation and home in Ward 9 has long been presumed to be the (John) Carroll Jones House on Highway 484, Natchez on Isle Brevelle in the Cane River Creole community. However, based upon information from a granddaughter of Carroll Jones, Mrs. Lee Etta Coutii, Elizabeth Mills locates the plantation and home on the Spanish concession of Julien Rachal Jr. (Section 54, T8N, R6W; see Figure 7). Miss Mills' study detailing the two houses and their connection with the Jones family is forthcoming (Mills 2013:204; n.58, 347).

champions; however, he made his fortune in farming and was one of the most successful plantation owners in Rapides and Natchitoches Parishes.

The Cane River Creole community was primarily agricultural in focus into the late twentieth century, and a few families continue to engage in agriculture in 2015. While some were large plantation owners, many Creole families farmed their own small tracts and rarely produced more yield than contributed to their own support. Although many families have held onto their land, some tracts were lost over the years. Creole farms and plantations employed sharecroppers and tenants, many from Creole families who owned no land and worked for their landowning relatives. African Americans existed on a separate social plane from their Creole neighbors on Isle Brevelle, coming together rarely in social interaction. Many African American families worked as sharecroppers or tenants on the plantations or large farms of Creole landowners.

Just across Cane River Lake from the Isle Brevelle Creole community, Melrose Plantation was originally established in the late eighteenth century by Louis Metoyer, son of Claude Thomas and Marie Thérèse “Coin Coin” whose family owned the plantation until 1847. The plantation was acquired by the Hertzog family in 1847 and by members of the Anglo-American Henry family from 1884 to 1970.

Cane River Creoles have historically attended St. Augustine Church, established by Augustin Metoyer, ca. 1803, and sent their children to the associated St. Joseph School through the eighth grade until that school closed, ca. 1967. Many went on to parochial schools and convents in Alexandria, Shreveport, or New Orleans. After 1967, some Creole students attended St. Matthew School in Melrose, a school for children of color attended primarily by African Americans prior to the closure of St. Joseph. Others attended St. Mary’s in Natchitoches. African Americans on Cane River by and large attended Protestant churches, although a few were Catholic and attended St. Augustine.

Isle Brevelle

Community History in a House: Badin Roque (Figure 20)

One of the most significant standing structures in the United States is located within the Isle Brevelle Creole community in Natchitoches Parish. According to the National Park Service (n.d.), the house was built in the late eighteenth century by Jean Baptiste Metoyer, a grandson of Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer and Marie Thérèse “Coin Coin.” It is one of only a few surviving examples of *poteaux-en-terre* construction in the nation and is the oldest surviving structure in the community.

Oral tradition and recent scholarship vary in some respects between community history and recent scholarship. Community historian, John Oswald Colson, is a Metoyer descendant with deep vernacular knowledge regarding Badin Roque’s construction and of the people associated with the house.

“The house was built between 1770 and 1790 ... [of] *poteaux-en-terre*, post-in-the-ground [construction]. They stood the posts upright in the ground up to two feet ... and they started the *bousillage*, started packing the *bousillage* between the two posts. In between both of the posts they have what they call *rabbets*.”



Figure 20: Badin Roque House (Lee 2004)

“Every spring and every fall, to keep the floor the way it is now, they would put lime on the floor and wet it and let it dry, so that way it would harden.... On the *bousillage*, they used sand and clay, Spanish moss, and lime. They used whatever was available, and they made a mixture of that.... To build a house this size, you wouldn’t use small containers like they do today. They’d build a hole out in the ground, a large hole in the ground, and that’s where they made the mixture in there and then they hauled it to the site, started building the house.

“The sand was closer to the river [and] you could find your clay behind the house, further back in the field like that, and you had to mix the two of them together. The sand wouldn’t hold, so the clay is more of a binder, especially with the Spanish moss in it. If you used just the clay, it would harden too fast, and it would crack—it would break open. It wouldn’t work very well.

“A really long time ago, they buried the moss. They dug a trench in the ground, just like right outside here, and they buried the moss in it for about two months or so, and that’s the way they would cure the moss—they would kill it. There’s some people I know, they would boil it in the big iron pot, you know. Because when you get the moss green, it’s gray; so what they did by boiling it and putting it in the ground like that, it killed it, turned real black. Because if you used it green in the *bousillage*, it would continue to grow because it grows just on air and on moisture; that’s why they would do it.

“The kitchen [Figure 21] was behind the house.... It was connected to the back of the house.... It had about twelve foot between the house and the kitchen, and it had steps on each side, and they called it a *colidor*¹⁰ in French, a breezeway. That’s in case the kitchen caught fire, you could move it away from the house.... [Zeline Roque] told me when she was young, ... she used the kitchen.... But then during my time when I would come in here, she was always

¹⁰ Corridor or hallway (Valdman 2010:158).

cooking on the fireplace. The old fireplace had the hangers that they hang their pots on the inside.”

“The first guy that owned it was a François Frederique, and ... he exchanged some more land with a François Roubieu in the area. They went back and forth with the land like that, you know, and several people lived here. Then an Italian baker ... lived here at one time, and during that time period that was when Augustine Metoyer bought it, and he give it to one of his younger sons, Dominique, and Dominique stayed here for a short period of time, and then around 1856, it was, I think, Bishop Martin ... [purchased it for] a girls’ boarding school....

“It was built in the two-room structure. This room and the other room and what they called ... the front gallery and the back gallery, and when the nuns were here, they closed in the back gallery to make two *cabinet* rooms to have more space for the nuns and the kids.... The nuns wrote letters back and forth to their parents in France and they talk about how the conditions, the living conditions were so bad here. It was wilderness at that time, and they had twelve or fourteen kids here at that time, and that’s why they closed in one the rooms, and the priest would come once a week to say mass here, and the kids stayed upstairs” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

Older community members associate the house with Mrs. Zeline Badin Roque who, along with her husband, Joe Roque, occupied the house until the middle twentieth century.

“The way it got into the Antee’s family, a guy by the name of Norbert Badin, he dealt in trade up and down the Red River. Cane River out here was the Red River in the 1700s and 1800s, and he came up by boat and he noticed that the taxes had gone unpaid on the place here, so he looked it up and he paid the taxes. They had sixty arpents of land, which would be sixty acres, and he paid the tax on it, and it was \$10.37 for the sixty acres, and that’s how it came into the Badin and the Roque family.... Norbert, that was Ms. Zeline’s ... dad, and it was passed down to her. She was a Badin and she married the Roque fella, Mr. Joe Roque.



Figure 21: L-R: Unidentified (possibly Catherine Badin or Julia St. Ville) and Zeline Roque, on the porch of the detached kitchen, Badin-Roque House (Melrose Collection, , n.d., Cammie Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA)

“Zeline and Joe Roque [Figure 22] ... were the oldest people in the community at that time. And the big pecan tree that’s falling down up there, when they got married, he planted that; that’s what he give his wife for their wedding present. He planted a pecan tree. That was the story they would always tell me” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

Badin-Roque house was acquired by the Saint Augustine Historical Society in 1979 and stands as testimony to the history and unique culture of the Isle Brevelle Creole community.



Figure 22: L-R: Zeline Roque, Joe Roque, and Unidentified (possibly Catherine Badin or Julia St. Ville); Wedding Pecan is behind cistern (Marion Post Wolcott 1940a, Members of the Rocque [*sic*] family. Library of Congress [LOC]; see full citation in References Cited)

Family, Community, and Social Relations

Although the Cane River Creole community was centered on Isle Brevelle, families extended along both sides of Cane River from Natchitoches to Cloutierville by the early twentieth century. Even if somewhat distant, most families from Bermuda to north of Cloutierville attended St. Augustine Catholic Church on Isle Brevelle where they were able to maintain cultural and family ties. The experiences of Gloria Sers Jones and her husband, Lewis “Sonny” Jones, were common to many Creole young people.

“I probably knew him before school, because my grandfather and his step-father were very good friends, and they’d visit all the time and I would go with my grandfather. So, I probably knew Sonny from childhood—early childhood, I think” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

Mrs. Jones’ mother, Blanche Monette, grew up in the Bermuda community near Oakland Plantation. Her husband, James Sers, was born at Red Dirt in the Kisatchie Hills near the sawmill town of Montrose where members of the Sers family homesteaded and farmed. Gloria Sers Jones, was born in Bermuda and spent her early years on the Cockfield or Typo Plantation, where her father worked as overseer. Her future husband, Sonny Jones, was a descendant of Carroll and Katherine Clifton Jones who joined the Isle Brevelle community after the Civil War.

As was common among Creole families, both Gloria Sers and Sonny Jones were sent away to high school, she to New Orleans and he to Virginia (see *Religion and Education*, this section). Gloria Sers returned home in 1948 and taught at St. Anthony’s school in Natchitoches. She also renewed her friendship with Sonny Jones and the couple married within two years.

“We moved in with his mother and her husband ... and we lived with her for about a year. His older sister had built this house for her and her husband, and she had a terminal illness and ... so they just built this room, and next to it is the one bedroom, and a bath, and a kitchen—that was all the house.... After she died—my baby was six weeks old when she died, the first one—her husband decided he was going back to school, and he went back to school and became a doctor, and so he sold out whatever he owned in the place, and Sonny and I moved over here” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

Mr. Jones had already taken over running the farm that had been in his family for generations and Mrs. Gloria Jones took over the plantation store and kept the books. “I raised five children in the store. You’d see me walking back and forth with the babies. I had help at the house sometimes, and when I didn’t have help, I’d have them over there with me” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015) (see *Agriculture*, this section).

John Oswald Colson grew up on a small family farm on land that originated with Augustine Metoyer, the eldest son of Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer and Marie Thérèse.

“My mom’s name was Mary Veronica Metoyer ... and my dad was Joseph Ira Milton Colson.... My mom was the only girl and she had three brothers. She had Uncle Amédée, Uncle Alvin, and Uncle Joe.... And where they lived, they had fifty acres of land, and that was her great-grandmother’s, Madame Amédée Metoyer, that was her property.... I guess it was probably part of Augustine’s, that seventeen, eighteen thousand acres, you know, because it’d been in my mom’s family ... for over 160 years. I looked in the courthouse ten or twelve years ago.... They divided it up the 50 acres back in 1949.... My mom had twelve acres, and each one of her three brothers had twelve acres” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

Before they built their house “on the front” (facing Cane River), the family lived on Bayou Brevelle while Milton Colson worked at Montrose sawmill.

“We were living down on the bayou then, Bayou Brevelle.... From the Roque brothers’ store about to [Badin-Roque], I would say about half the people [on Isle Brevelle] were living on the bayou then because ... that was the busiest part.... They had the sawmill out there, and then you had Cypress up there, and that’s where the train stopped. It was very busy out there, and people would work there and it would be easier for them to go through the woods to go up there. The Delphins had a house on the bayou, my parents did, and the Joneses had one, I think, and also Uncle Vercher Chevalier. There was about four or five families I knew during my time that lived back there.... I was four years old when I moved to the front.

“When I was growing up, I guess in your community or your area, like from the [Melrose] bridge to where I lived, about a mile one way or the other, hardly ever you’d go on down past the church, hardly ever. You had no business down there and why go down there, you know? And the [same with] people farther up, I guess, all the way up to the Big House, F. J. and them’s house [John Carroll Jones House at the upper end of the community]. The same with people across the river, you know, like Terrell [Delphin] and his brothers and sisters, they went to Melrose and back to their place over there. [You] used to be more or less confined to your neighborhood” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

Although the Colsons farmed their land that stretched back all the way to Highway 1 (see *Agriculture*, this section), Miss Veronica was widely known in the community for her garden and the ground peppers and *filé* she bottled and sold.

“My mom raised a big garden at that time, and then she also had, behind the garden, she had what they called a truck patch ... that consisted of, like corn and beans, and bigger stuff like that, and in the front yard, that was like onions, and garlic, and tomatoes and stuff like that, and she raised a lot of it.... A lot of people ... I guess on the Roque Brothers’ plantation, they’d come in and they’d ask my mom could they have stuff and whatever, and she’d say, ‘Yeah,’ and she’d pick whatever they wanted and give it to ‘em; and ... her main thing was, she raised ... red pepper.

“I’d sit on the porch and it was hot, and you’d string peppers from eight o’clock in the morning until the afternoon, just string peppers, and then she’d ... hang ‘em up to dry in the wash house, and then once they was dry, we’d have to sit there and take a knife, and depending on her customers—some wanted the peppers real hot, and some of ‘em wanted mild. So the ones who wanted it hot, she’d grind ‘em with the seeds in, and the ones that wanted mild ones, we’d sit there and take all the seeds out, and she would bottle it. It wasn’t like today. She’d go to like the Roque Brothers store and down here to Sonny Jones’ store and she would ask ‘em to keep some of their beer bottles and the half-pint and pint bottles, and they would, instead of throwing ‘em away. They’d save ‘em for her, you know, and so that was my job. I had to wash the bottles and everything and pull the labels off, and first of all, she’d put ‘em in scalding water ... to process, and I’d get ‘em all clean, and that’s what she’d bottle her pepper and the *filé*.

“Then in the summer months, ... you came around the 15th of August. It was a Holy Day of Obligation, like a Sunday; no one worked. And when I first started, I’d go with my dad, we’d go on the horses [Figure 23] and we’d go out in Kisatchie to Red Dirt, and we’d go pick sassafras leaves in big burlap sacks—with two horses and a lot of the guys, like Jerry Jones up there and my uncle, Uncle Amédée and Alvin. They’d all go up to Red Dirt, but nobody does that today ... go up there and pick sassafras leaves all day long. And we’d come back and spread it out in my mom’s house in the dining room and the living room. The floor’s covered with sassafras leaves and every morning ... she cut a sassafras branch. She didn’t like to use the broom. She said you had to use something off the tree.... She’d turn the leaves every morning.

We'd turn the leaves so they would dry faster, and once the leaves were dried, I would start destemming, pulling the stems out of it. Maybe I'd work on the sassafras leaves today, and maybe tomorrow, she'd pick another tub full of red pepper and I'd string red pepper. We'd just go back and forth" (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).



Figure 23: John Oswald Colson, ca. 1945; Amédée Metoyer Family Home, background (Courtesy, Colson Family)

Associated with the Isle Brevelle Creole community—but not a part of it—were the African Americans who sharecropped or worked as tenants. Although they formed close friendships with some of Creole families, they were by and large culturally and socially distant from the Creole community. Mrs. Loletta Jones Wynder grew up on Isle Brevelle where her family worked shares on the Roque family farm.

“My mom and dad, ... John L. Jones and Almeda Rollins Jones ... got married.... Daddy had three children and my mother had two children, ... a boy and a girl. Daddy had two boys and a girl. They got married in 1947, I was born in 1949, and from there ... it was five children that came into the marriage. My mom and dad together had 13 children, so, it was 13 plus the five, a total of 18 children. We lived right next door to [Walter Delphin family] in that big curve. There was a house there and ... growing up, that's where we lived. When I was in the first grade, I believe, our house caught fire and burned. My dad was working as a sharecropper for the Roques; and so after that house burned, they moved another house into that same spot and we went back into that house. It was owned by the Roques. They owned a lot of property down there, and we weren't the only ones that were sharecroppers for them; but my dad farmed, and my mom. Between our house and the ... Delphins ... there was just a big field in between the two houses, and this is the property that daddy farmed. He farmed that in cotton, and there were pecan trees there where we picked pecans” (Loletta Jones Wynder, interviewed January 27, 2015).

Economic status more than race drew a line of demarcation between African Americans and Creoles on Isle Brevelle, resulting in limited interactions. Creole sharecroppers were subject to the same social distance, although kinship may have ameliorated the effects somewhat. While

social conditions have changed for the better, those divisions and their effects are still remembered and felt.

“My dad’s family, that was the only place they lived. His family was from Cane River, and we were from Cane River, and that was the only thing we ever knew. We grew up down there; we lived our life down there, school down there. Our culture was just as theirs was. My mom was Methodist, so our culture was the same as theirs, and it’s just a part of my life that, I don’t know, you’d have to be able to live it, to actually be there, [to] ... understand how things were.

“Daddy had a car, but we didn’t go a lot. I just enjoyed family, and we would, my brother and I, ... we’d walk and we would either go to Roque’s store, or we would go down to Sonny Jones’ store. If we needed something from the store, we’d go and get it. I remember going into Roque’s store and they had the cookie jar, you could get cookies two for a penny, and things like that. That was some of the fun times. Going to school, ... a lot of times it would be okay; but I guess [school was] what I would call the public area, because ... you weren’t able to associate a whole lot. You’d have to kind of ‘stay in your place’ type thing.... One of my best friends [was Creole]; her parents were sharecroppers also. They worked for Sam Jones and she didn’t have no more than I did, so we kind of bonded together, and she would be with me ... all the way through the rest of high school.

“My brother and my sister, they looked more Creole than anything, and my brother played the saxophone and my sister would sing, and they kind of played with some of the bands that were down there [at Wood’s Hall]. Daddy’s talking about how he wanted to hear Oreatha sing and my brother, Junior, play, and so this one particular time ... they were going to be able to go and play at Wood’s, and Daddy wanted to go and hear ‘em. When he got to the door, they let them in, but they wouldn’t let him in. He was not allowed to go in, and that was another turning point, I think, for my daddy. He wanted to go hear ‘em but, uh-uh, that wasn’t something that he could do.

“I know some families, ... they had a lot of problems, and right now a lot of them don’t even talk about it; they won’t even talk about it. I remember talking to this one lady who was a Porter, she said, ‘That’s stuff I just want to forget about. I don’t even want to deal with it.’ And they don’t” (Loletta Jones Wynder, interviewed January 27, 2015).

Religion and Education

St. Augustine Catholic Church was and remains the heart of the Isle Brevelle Creole community. As such, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014 as a Traditional Cultural Property. All the Creole families on Isle Brevelle attended St. Augustine, which served as a social as well as religious center. The church fair, now held each October in conjunction with the Fall Tour of Homes, began as a harvest celebration to which the congregation contributed.

“People would just give donations and all the food, ... because everyone up and down the river here, they raised chickens and ducks and hogs and cows and everything so the food was actually free. You didn’t have to buy anything. Each household gave something, whatever they had.... Several people would ... donate so many hundred pounds—this one would and that one would—and then they would gin it and give the proceeds to the church” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

Most African American families on Cane River were Protestant, but some families were born Catholic or became Catholic through education or other influences.

“When we lived down Cane River, my dad was staunch Baptist. My mom ... was Methodist. There was no Methodist church that she could really attend down Cane River, but ... she still tried to follow her Methodist training, which was similar to Catholic. We were brought up fasting, and abstaining, and celebrating Good Friday and Easter holidays, all kind of parallel [Catholicism]. My sister ... was baptized at St. Augustine. Belle [Delphin] Arceneaux was her godmother from down there, and then that really kind of sealed me with being Catholic at that time, and also when I went to St. James, I was baptized ... and confirmed at St. James.... When I came back home, all my brothers and sisters—we had this white station wagon—and I started going to St. Anthony; ... we all went to St. Anthony” (Loletta Jones Wynder, interviewed January 27, 2015).

St. Joseph School stood alongside St. Augustine Catholic Church until ca. 1967 (Figure 24).

“My sister and all the kids along here, we’d walk to school every morning. The school was only to the eighth grade. They didn’t have high school down here at that time, and then I graduated from grade school to the eighth grade.... Back then they had a lot of people speaking French. I guess we would have learned more. When we went to school I knew more, but when we went to school the nuns ... told us, ‘You come here to speak English, not to speak French.’ They called it foolishness” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

To prevent their having to attend African American public schools, Creole families with economic resources sent their children away from Cane River to attend private high schools elsewhere. Gloria Sers and Sonny Jones attended St. Joseph before Gloria left to attend Holy Family Convent in New Orleans and Sonny entered military school in Rock Castle, Virginia. “We went to St. Joseph’s school, and then, when we finished the seventh grade, which was the way the schools were at that time, he went off to military high school and I went to New Orleans” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).



Figure 24: St. Augustine Catholic Church, ca. 1920s; L-R: Rectory, Church, St. Joseph School (Arthur Babb Sketchbook, Cammie Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA)

The St. Joseph school building was in great need of repair at the same time that student population began to decline in the 1960s. “It was an old regular, square frame building with two stories. It was in bad shape, and, of course, as population declined, the need [and] the means to keep it up had also declined.... We had a reduced school; the nuns had pulled out to one or two, and then laypeople came in and filled in the spots (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

School attendance was often difficult in sharecropping families, but many sharecropping parents saw education as the key to a better future for their children.

“School was always starting late, or whenever school started a lot of the kids were not able to go to school right away because they had to help the parents pick the cotton, ... pick the field—but it wasn’t like that with us. That rule, my mom and my dad—I don’t even know if he agreed or not, but it was my mom’s rules—you’re going to school. If you do anything else or not, you’re going to school. So, we went to school!

“I went to St. Matthew [Figure 25] all the way ‘til I got in the ninth grade, and then I was transferred to St. James in Alexandria--St. James Catholic School. It was just kind of ironic... The rule was you’re going to school, but I was going to St. Matthew and then when I got into the sixth grade, ... they were giving these standardized tests [and] I took my tests and the scores showed that I should’ve been in the eighth grade.... As a result, I went from sixth grade, skipped seventh, and went straight to the eighth grade. When I finished eighth grade and got to go to high school—I was twelve—Daddy said, ‘You’re not going to no St. Matthew High School at twelve years old!... Uh-uh. You’re not going to St. Matthew.’ Daddy was kind of a protector.



Figure 25: St. Matthew School (HABS LA-1340 n.d.; see full citation in References Cited)

”Daddy said, ‘Let me get with Marie Roque,’ ... because most of the Creoles down there, ... a lot of the kids didn’t go to school down there, especially if they went to St. Joseph, ... and when they got into high school, they shipped them off to other schools away [from Natchitoches Parish]. St. James was one of the ones they went to, and Holy Rosary, I think ... was several of them they would send their kids off to. So, Daddy got with her, because she was taking ... her children, they were going to St. James in Alexandria, and Daddy’s sister lived in Alexandria. So, he got with her, and asked her about taking me to St. James also.... He said, ‘You can go stay with Sister,’ his sister. ‘You can go and stay, and go to school down there’” (Loletta Jones Wynder, interviewed January 27, 2015).

After St. Joseph closed, some Creoles sent their younger children to private schools outside of the parish; but others began to attend St. Matthews. The influx of Creole students into the historically African American school stratified the student population and caused some administrators to preference Creole students over African Americans (Loletta Jones Wynder, interviewed January 27, 2015). With the integration of Natchitoches Parish Schools in 1970, Catholic students, whether Creole or African American, gravitated to St. Mary’s and St. Anthony’s Catholic schools in Natchitoches.

American Indian Connections

Many families on Isle Brevelle have at least one American Indian ancestor of Chitimacha, Apache, Apalachee, or Choctaw heritage. Not only are these native connections evident in family genealogies, but also in cultural traditions. Becky Thomas Meziere, a member of the Clifton Choctaw tribe, married into the Cane River Creole community (Figure 26). She has documented numerous genealogical connections between the two cultural communities, among them the connection through the Clifton/Jones lineage.



Figure 26: Becky Thomas and Rodney Meziere Wedding, 2014 (Courtesy of the Meziere Family)

“[In] about 1840, 1850, there was a gentleman known as Carroll Jones. He was a ... slave but he was later emancipated. His father was a white man from Tennessee. He moves into the area of Louisiana, ... I think it’s around 1850, ... and he was a fantastic horseman. He trained race horses, and he also sold race horses.

“So he moves into the Rapides/Cotile area, which is considered Ward 9, he meets Catherine Clifton. Now, Catherine Clifton is sister to Jesse Clifton. Catherine and Jesse Clifton are born around the beginning of the 1800s, somewhere between 1800 and 1825. They are known as Native American, Choctaw Indian. Because Carroll Jones is a horseman, he is also a businessman, which was the same type of business the Cliftons were in at that point in time. They were having a store, they owned lots of land, and the two met because they were in the same area.... I think maybe it was 1848, they meet, and the beginning of the Jones line starts in Rapides Parish; ... but after the Civil War, after the 1860s, Carroll Jones and Catherine Clifton decide to move to the Natchitoches area.

“When they moved to Natchitoches, they moved to the outskirts of Natchitoches first. Now, when they moved here, they moved with ... five or six children at that point. They move here, and making an establishment, he ends up being a successful businessman. At this point is when the entire Jones line starts, and they are going to start being part Native American, part African American, and part white. Interestingly enough, most of the Joneses today do not connect with their Native American side; however, documentation shows there is a direct line from our community, which is now the Clifton [Choctaw] community, with the Cane River people, and this is the Jones line.

“Around 1870, ... the census bureau’s going around at this point and they’re documenting these ... enclaves of Native Americans. This is around Hickory Flat, Barnes Creek area, ... St. Landry [Parish] ... and there’s a Clifton in this same Native American area and a Dupree. This same Dupree is going to come in later on as a major player in the Cane River area, and this Dupree is going to follow the same Native American families.

“I follow him [in genealogical research] right along with my family and other tribes all the way from Hickory Flat to Lake Charles, eventually to the outskirts of Rapides Parish.... I find this Dupree who’s traveling with my people. This is prior to all of the Jones connections. He is found in Natchitoches and ... is documented as being part Creek; he was half Creek and half white.... No one has ever done any genealogy on the Dupree family other than a little bit; ... but until now there’s never been a connection to my tribe.

“Some of those same Duprees from that family line ... marry back into my people, again going back to my statement, ‘Native Americans seek Native Americans.’ Sometimes even they don’t even know it, but all of these connections are going to come from Isle Brevelle, the river, and the Sang-Pour-Sang/Emmanuel Hills area.... With all those connections, my family is the only family that has kept the traditional basket weaving, and that’s only because my family has held their Native American identity through all this time” (Becky Thomas Meziere, interviewed September 26, 2015).

Agriculture, Technology, and Economy

Large-scale farmers and plantation owners on Cane River maintained stores where their workers could obtain goods on credit against their crops. After marrying Sonny Jones, Mrs. Gloria Jones took over running the store and handled the books. Her duties included keeping up with sharecropping records.

“Sonny would take care of the farm [approximately 800 acres], and I was the bookkeeper at all times. I was a runner; if something broke, I had to go to town for parts. I usually did

that.... We didn't use tokens; but back when we had people on the place, they would get their groceries and whatever they needed. A ledger was kept, then at the end of the year—that was when they were sharecropping—you settled up. Then you would get your money from what they had borrowed and ordered out of the store for that year.... They got a quarter, because you had the cost of the animals. First of all it was the animals, then it was tractors, and then also you had the cost of the fertilizer and the insecticide ... everything but the labor. It was their labor that they were working for. Many people had large families, and the kids did the work, so that was their way of making a living.... I think [each family worked] ten acres, depending upon the size of the family.

“When we married, there were seventeen [sharecropping families].... We provided the housing. When the window broke, we fixed it; roof came off, we had to fix it” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

Sharecropping families rarely saw a profit on their labors and sometimes found themselves in more debt than when they started the year.

“Daddy would go to the store, and buy ... clothes and shoes.... At the end of the year, I heard these words I can remember: ‘We’ve got to settle up.’ Then I didn’t really understand they had to settle up at the end of the year, and we were always in the hole, no matter what, always in the hole.... He would say at the end of the year, around December—I can hear him and mom talking, ‘Didn’t break even, didn’t break even.’ I can never remember him saying that they broke even, and now I realize that breaking even, when he finished at the end of the year, he owned them money rather than them owing him money, and that’s exactly what it meant” (Loletta Jones Wynder, interviewed January 27, 2015).

Some families on Cane River farmed their own small tracts of land. After the Montrose sawmill closed and the Colsons moved to the front on Cane River, they farmed the twelve acres Mrs. Colson inherited. They grew subsistence crops and a small amount of cotton, the profit on which rarely supported them through the next fall.

“A lot of people used mules but my dad had horses.... I never understood that, but ... he told me they lived in Shreveport when they first got married and then they moved back. They bought a car and they moved back here, and that’s when they built the house on the bayou.... I never understood that until now—he said they sold the car to buy a horse and a wagon. Why would you sell a car to buy a horse and a wagon? All my life, I never understood that, but he say, ‘Well, we needed the horse to farm and the wagon for transportation.’

“In the spring, as you know, it was king cotton then. Everybody—these small farmers, my parents—they only had ten acres over there, eight or ten acres of cotton, but they had a very good price for it. They would plant that and corn—that would be the spring time, and come fall, you start gathering it. Then after that in the winter months, well, then there was nothing to do. I remember after we gathered our crop, we would then help the neighbors. We’d help my uncles on both sides and Mr. Christophe. We’d help them, and after that was all gathered, then my dad ... had a cousin, Robert Chevalier, up in Shreveport and he worked at St. Vincent Academy ... and my dad would go meet his cousin up there and work at the St. Vincent Academy in Shreveport. He’d work up there the whole of winter. He’d stay up there until springtime again, then he’d come home. He’d do that every year” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).

Mechanized cotton farming brought an end to sharecropping in the South. As technology advanced, the need for families and individuals to work the fields declined. The character and population along Cane River saw a radical shift as families relocated to Houston, Chicago, and Los Angeles in search of employment.

“It was gradual, one at a time.... First of all, the young people started leaving because they didn’t want to do the hard work on the farm... If you had five or six children, that wasn’t enough to keep five or six adults going, so they would go off. Somebody would have gone already to Houston or Chicago or somewhere and then they would follow on, and so that made the household smaller. So the next step was that they turned to day labor and the men drove the tractors and then the women picked the cotton as long as we did handpicking; [but] eventually we got the cotton picker” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

Whether they worked just a few acres or hundreds, farming was not an easy life.

“We went through some very trying times. The economy hit bottom two or three times over our lifetime, and cotton, if you made a good crop, you got a rainy spell before you got it in, and the value of it went down, or it rained in the spring and you didn’t get it in until late, you know. There was so many hitches, which is why when we closed the store—the next year we had high water and lost a lot of the cattle, ... lost the use of the pastures—so I went to work in town. That was to help, but we always made it through. I don’t regret a minute of it, but it wasn’t easy with a house full of children” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

Few families still engage in large-scale farming in 2015. The Jones family is an exception. Sonny and Gloria Jones’ son, Emery, and his daughter, Christie, today manage the farm which has shifted from cotton as the cash crop to cattle and pecans.

“After my husband died and Emery took over, I still worked with him as long as he did row cropping; but he didn’t really need me with just the cattle, because he knew those cows backwards. He can look at them: ‘That’s Mary, that’s Joe....’ That’s the way Sonny was. He could drive out there and tell you exactly how old that cow out there was and where he got it from. I wasn’t into all that, so I lost my job once they quit row cropping.

“[Christie Jones] has done a marvelous job; and in addition to the acreage here she worked, [her father] made arrangements to take Melrose, and ... for five years she worked the whole pecan orchard, and then put cattle in there, too. That’s why they rented it, to raise cattle. They didn’t do any row cropping over there” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

Melrose Plantation

In 1796, Louis Metoyer, a Creole of Color and the son of Marie Thérèse “Coin Coin” and Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer, received 911 acres of land on which he established the plantation once known as Yucca and later named Melrose. Metoyer and his *métisse* wife of Lipan Apache maternity built the plantation house which remains standing today. Upon Louis’ death in 1832, the property passed to his son, Jean Baptiste Louis Metoyer, whose steady management gave the estate a value of over \$100,000 when he died in 1838. The property passed to Jean Baptiste’s son, Theophile Louis Metoyer, who lost the plantation through debt. It was purchased by Henry and Hypolite Hertzog in 1847; and in 1884, Joseph Henry purchased the plantation which remained under the ownership of the Henry family until 1970. Joseph’s daughter-in-law, Cammie Garrett Henry, became an art patron after the death of her husband and opened the plantation to resident writers and artists for many years. One of the kitchen workers at Melrose, Clementine Hunter, was greatly influenced by the art that surrounded her and translated her life’s experience into art, becoming one of the most highly celebrated folk artists of the twentieth century. Many of her paintings including large murals remain on display at Melrose Plantation. The house and associated buildings are presently owned by the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches (APHN n.d.).

In 1963, James and Glennie Scarborough and their two young sons moved from Horseshoe Lake near Cypress to Melrose Plantation, where Mr. Scarborough went to work for J. D. Henry. Mrs. Scarborough had some prior knowledge of the plantation through her family's connection to it. "My grandfather was a sharecropper at Melrose—my mother's father, Benjamin Moss. I don't know how long they lived there, but that's the first place my mother can remember telling us she lived" (Glennie Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

J. D. Henry had already planted the pecan trees for which Melrose is widely known today, but they were not yet fully matured.

"[Mr. Henry] farmed between the pecan trees. They were real young. They still row cropped between the rows of pecan trees ... [and] he used the cattle to keep it clean under the pecan trees in the pastures. Of course, they had some producing trees. He had Melrose and he had land back on Little River.... They farmed some of that and had pecan trees planted on it.... He must have had 5,000 acres almost; some of it doesn't quite join. He had Frost Johnson Mill land down at Montrose [where he kept cattle]. He bought that from Frost Johnson when they cut out the mill."

Mr. Henry maintained the herd of cattle at Melrose specifically to keep the area under his young pecan trees clear. Through careful management, however, Mr. Scarborough made the cattle a profitable enterprise.

"[Mr. Henry] told me that I couldn't make any money with cattle. The 1400 head he had, probably half of 'em would never make any money. I kept culling them out and about three years, he told me they were making a little money.... I cut them down to about 800 head, what the pastures were capable of carrying.... He had all kinds, and they didn't take care of them, ... cross-bred mostly—Brahman, Hereford, and whatever.... With your cattle, bulls are most important and I kept getting better quality bulls and we just improved them" (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

At first, the Scarborough family lived in housing furnished by Mr. Henry, but within a year had purchased property across the river on Isle Brevelle.

"We lived at Melrose from September of '63 until we built the house in March of '64. You talk about an interesting place to live!... It was a mess, but those little boys enjoyed living there so much—always something going on. I started back to school, James was driving a school bus, and it was a sight.... Housing was not Mr. J. D.'s strong point! ... [A friend] asked me where we lived and I said we lived in Bookie's house. She said, 'You did not!' It was a sight! (Glennie Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

With two young sons and Mrs. Scarborough enrolled in college, Mr. Scarborough took on additional work to supplement the young family's income.

"In '64, I told Mr. Henry I was going to drive a school bus. He said, 'Well, you can do both.' I drove a school bus 'til '69.... I started at the Derry bridge down here and went all the way to Natchitoches—five different schools.... [J. D. Henry] was postmaster [at Melrose], and Eugene Lavespere worked in the store and he was assistant postmaster. I told him I was going to quit driving the bus—I'd sold it.... Mr. J. D. told me, 'Well, I tell you,' he said, 'we'll just make you assistant postmaster and Eugene postmaster.' But he died the last day of '69 and that didn't happen" (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

The Scarborough boys greatly enjoyed their years at Melrose Plantation.

“They picked pecans. Mr. J. D. would pay them a little more.... Mr. J. D. was good to us. I had, our oldest son, he followed me. He was working; we were tearing some old boards down. I was going to build a barn, and Mr. J. D. came by, he talked to me, and he left. Bookie [Moran] was his driver. Just a few minutes, he came back and he told me, ‘Son, I see you’ve got Jim up there working;’ said, ‘Put him on the payroll.’ He was there a day or two, and he came back by one day and he said, ‘I need Jim,’ and I didn’t see him anymore. He drove Mr. J. D. and he didn’t have a driver’s license!” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

“They had a good time there, [but] it was not elegant! ... I had some of my funniest tales about the hot water heater singeing your eyes brown! But the boys enjoyed it; they had some good times.... I was teaching school ... [so] I was not part of the community as much as James—not by choice.... When I graduated from college, I got an opportunity ... to work at the Lab School, and I never worked anywhere else” (Glennie Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

Mr. and Mrs. Scarborough remember their time at Melrose fondly. Mr. Scarborough worked for the plantation during the year following Mr. Henry’s death, during which time he sold off all the cattle. In 1971, he would take over management of Magnolia Plantation where he worked until retiring (see below).

Magnolia Plantation/Derry/Cat Island

Associated Interviews: Betty Hertzog, Ambrose Hertzog, James Scarborough, Leslie Vercher, Herbert Baptiste, Ginny Tobin

Magnolia Plantation

The Big House: History and Family Life

Jean Baptiste LeComte arrived at the Natchitoches Post by 1753, when he received a grant for a tract of land situated on both sides of Red River, the foundation of what would become vast plantation holdings. Three years later, he married Marguerite LeRoy, whose parents were among the first French settlers at the post, and the couple established a tobacco plantation. Jean Baptiste and Marguerite’s heirs would separate the extensive family holdings into three separate plantations: Shallow Lake, Vienna, and Magnolia. An associated family plantation, Ferry Plantation, was located at the 24-Mile Ferry near the lower dam. Magnolia Plantation is the sole remaining property and has remained under the ownership of the LeComte/Hertzog family for over 250 years (Firth and Turner 2006).

Jean François Hertzog and his brother immigrated from Bourdeaux, France, in the early nineteenth century. Jean François married Marianne Prud’homme and their son, Matthew Hertzog, married Ursula Atala LeComte in 1852. The couple was given a 40 percent share in Magnolia by her father, Ambroise LeComte II. The original plantation house at Magnolia, built in the 1830s, was burned by Union troops during the Civil War and was not rebuilt until the 1890s (Figure 27). The present house sits on the foundation of the original (Firth and Turner 2006).

At the height of Magnolia’s prosperity and production before the Civil War, the family produced the greatest amount of cotton in Natchitoches Parish. A workforce of approximately 75 slaves supported the plantation and lived in rowed brick cabins. The 1858 Walmsley map (Figure 28) shows 24 cabins comprising the Quarters, eight of which remain standing in 2015. Even before Emancipation, plantation quarters were often vibrant communities with their own sense of culture and belonging. This community aspect became even more apparent when the

Quarters at Magnolia transitioned into housing for day workers' families who had their own gardens, farm animals, and pets (Crespi 2004; Firth and Turner 2006).

Betty Hertzog was born and reared in the Big House on Magnolia Plantation. Although an only child, she was surrounded by family.

“The LeComtes ... came when the French army came. Ambroise LeComte was a large landholder and I think he probably built the first house, and the house that's over there now is built on the same foundation. It had a two-story basement ... and so it sat up higher than it does now.... I've never been able to find a picture. I guess the pictures burned when the house burned.... In reading a description, [there was] something like a two-floor basement, and I'm not sure what they meant by that, but [the present Big House] has the same floor plan, same walls, and the ell on the back and everything. There was a [detached] kitchen building in the back that's not there anymore.

“My parents were Matt and Lydia Compton Hertzog and she was from Cheneyville.... All these little towns used to have ballgames, and that's where they met, I think, at Lecompte at a ballgame. They were married in 1927 I think it was, [and] came up here and lived at Magnolia, the Big House.



Figure 27: Magnolia Big House (HABS, J. Rosenthal, D. Fuqua n.d.)



Figure 28: Magnolia Plantation, excerpt 1858 survey map; Quarters Houses in center (G. Walmsley, Betty Hertzog Collection, CARI-145)

“I grew up with my grandmother, Sarah, and Daddy’s sister lived there and her two children. It was just like a big family.... My parents and myself lived upstairs. My aunt and her two children lived downstairs. My grandmother lived downstairs.... We had sleeping porches. The back porch was screened, part of it, and you slept out there in the summertime, and then we had an upstairs sleeping porch and it was still hot, but better than inside.... I don’t think my grandmother ever slept out there. It wasn’t bad; it was screened, you didn’t have mosquitoes.”

The Big House had no electricity or plumbing until well after World War II.

“We had a lot of Aladdin lamps, and ... when we got electricity, Daddy gave them to different people on the place. The men who [installed the electric lines] came on weekends. They had another job and they’d come on weekends and wire the house for electricity. We had a water well and a big water tank, but you didn’t have running water until we got Waterworks #2, and that was later” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

Ms. Betty’s first cousin, Ambrose J. Hertzog III, grew up in New Orleans; but he and his sister (Figure 29) spent many summers and holidays at Magnolia before he moved there permanently in 1971.

“When I was little, Daddy used to get a whole month’s vacation. He was ... a pathologist at Touro Infirmiry in New Orleans, and we’d come up practically the whole month of August ... and then I started coming up here every chance I could get on my own. Daddy’d bring me up

here or I'd come on a bus, come on a train. That's when they had passenger service. I remember coming up, it was Texas & Pacific, and I remember ... passing the Derry depot. I had to go to Natchitoches and got off next to Northwestern campus, and my cousin, Betty, picked me up, and ... brought me to ... the A&W Root Beer place, and bought me a hamburger and a root beer, and we came on back here.



**Figure 29: Irma Jane Hertzog and Ambrose J. Hertzog III, ca. 1940
(Betty Hertzog Collection, CARI-145)**

“First thing we’d do was catch the horses, and that was our transportation, me and a little black kid named Andrew Rachel. They lived in the first house up the road, and we’d spend all day long riding up and down on the place on the horses, go out in the hay field and watch ‘em bale hay, then go on up the road. Daddy had bought me a BB gun and bought one for my sister, an old Daisy pump. My sister stayed here a little while and left and then Andrew used her BB gun. We’d go around, we’d carry those BB guns on the horses, we’d try to shoot things.

“My grandmother, and Uncle Matt and Aunt Dee, and Betty, and my other aunt, T-Sal—that was my daddy’s sister—and her two children, Mary and Norman [lived in the Big House].... We’d all stay in one room there, my dad and my mother and me and my sister. We’d stay in the back, what they called the back room” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

Religion

Although the family often attended St. John the Baptist Church in Cloutierville, a small, family chapel was established in the Big House (Figure 30).

“We had a chapel ... [for] family services and she’d [grandmother] get friends to come by; she’d always feed everybody.... The last person that said Mass there was Wilbur Cloutier.... It originally was a bedroom. It was Mr. Mathieu Hertzog’s bedroom, and I think he died around 1910. So, I’m not sure when they did the chapel” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

“I remember when my grandmother was there, we used to have the priest from Isle Brevelle. They had three priests up there then; they would come and say Mass. They’d have a big meal; she’d give ‘em a free dinner, a big meal. I always wondered ... why at the Cloutierville Mass, they had one priest, we had a little bitty small chapel and they had three priests come there.... Well, one of ‘em would say Mass, and all three would come and eat the meal!” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

The Hertzogs also attended Mass at a small chapel near Derry. The Derry Chapel (Figure 31) was sometimes identified as Father Becker’s Chapel, i.e., Father Michael Becker who served as priest at St. John the Baptist Church in Cloutierville and was a close friend of Matt Hertzog (Irma Hertzog and Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed September 23, 1996). Father Becker was a colorful character whose memory is kept alive in local oral traditions.

“We used the Derry Chapel a lot. I think when Father Lyons came to Cloutierville, they did away with the Derry Chapel. They said it took too much to keep up two buildings” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

“I don’t know when they tore that down, but I remember going there for Mass when I was little, and that was when they said Mass in Latin. Father Becker would say Mass in fifteen minutes and then we would be out in no time! He was an old man when I knew him there, and then they sent the priest, Father Lyons, to replace him. [Father Becker] wouldn’t let him stay in the rectory at Cloutierville because he didn’t want to leave. He was ready to retire—he’d been in Cloutierville so long that the bishop was ready for him to retire—but he didn’t want to go so Father Lyons, his replacement, stayed over at the Big House. Grandmother let him stay over there” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).



Figure 30: Family Chapel, Magnolia Big House (D. Fuqua 2009)



Figure 31: Aerial photograph showing Derry Chapel and Magnolia Plantation, 1950. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Production and Marketing Administration, Cartographic Information Center, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

Horses and Baseball

Matt Hertzog came from a long line of horseracing and raising enthusiasts who ran horses at local and regional tracks. LeCompte family horses won several challenges at the famous Metairie Racetrack in the 1850s, where their most decorated racehorse were Flying Dutchman and LeCompte. Horseraces were common on the Cane River plantations, most of which including Magnolia had brush tracks. Matt Hertzog maintained a stable of show horses and race horses and daughter, Betty, inherited her family's equine skills and interests (Figure 32).

“We have a picture of a race horse, LeCompte, and they say that the town of LeCompte supposedly was named after that horse. That's the tale anyway!... We had one there with Cohen's and then another one further on ... up in the field, and they had horse races—at Melrose too. So, he always had a horse that you were taking around, you know.... They weren't purebred, but they'd get a crowd every Sunday afternoon, and at one time up there they had a ball park, and this was across from the ball park so you got a crowd” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

“They had several [racetracks] here. I think they had one between our place and the Cohen's and they had some others down by Cloutierville. I don't know where they all were, but they said that was a real big thing. They had these match races (Figure 33). I remember those old films Daddy had, he's got the horse races running to the end. One guy does like that, turn around and walk off, and the other one's running down smiling, waving his hands. He must've won and the other one lost.

“They didn't have a starting gate like they have in races today. They had, Daddy said, it was mutual consent where they'd ... lower a flag or something and they'd both start off; but if one would jump the gun right then, they'd call 'em back. He said if somebody had a real frisky, nervous horse, the other one would try and do it on purpose so they'd have to call 'em back and let that other horse out before they'd start off.

“Sundays ... they had 'em. You can see everybody's dressed up. They had black people, and had Creoles, white people—everybody'd go to 'em.

“Uncle Matt, he had a bunch of ribbons that he won at horse shows and Uncle Matt just wanted to keep the blue ribbons, first place, and red ribbons, second place. And all these yellow and white ribbons and all, he wasn't interested in.... He had a bunch of ... gentle horses anybody could ride, so they had a horse show in the riding ring (Figure 34). He had a bull horn; he'd say, 'Ride like a dead man,' and they would lie down on the horses, and go around there. Then he'd say, 'Do the twist on the horse,' and they'd stand up on the back—and those old plugs were gentle, they wouldn't do anything, and they'd have, 'Ride backwards,' and they'd turn around and ride around backwards. Then at the end ... he'd give away the ribbons, 'First place, riding like a dead man!' He'd give it to one of 'em, and 'First place, riding backwards!' and he'd give it to another one. They had little girls from the quarters and they'd go give the ribbons to them” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

“Mr. Matt Hertzog, ... every Saturday, he'd have a whole crowd on that porch at the store, and he'd bring his saddle horses or walking horses and they'd parade 'em up and down the road right there. He had a bunch of kids, and people would be there on that porch—I'm talking about it'd be 40 or 50 people there watching his horses. He was so proud of those horses” (Clyde Masson, interviewed February 11, 2015).

“Both of my grandfathers [trained horses] ... for Magnolia [Figure 35]; on my mamma's side, too. They did horse training” (Leslie Vercher, interviewed January 28, 2015).



Figure 32: Matt Hertzog and Betty Hertzog, ca. 1950s (Betty Hertzog Collection, CARI-145)



Figure 33: Spectators at Magnolia Horse Race, 1940 (Ambrose J. Hertzog III Collection, CARI-150)



Figure 34: Competition Riding in Magnolia Plantation Riding Ring, ca. 1940s (Ambrose J. Hertzog III Collection, CARI-150)



Figure 35: John Vercher, Magnolia Plantation, ca. 1940s (Betty Hertzog Collection, CARI-145)

Many plantations not only had their own brush tracks for horseracing, but also sponsored baseball teams in the 1930s-1950s. Mr. Hertzog had a ballfield in front of the Big House.

“Norman [Gunn] used to have a baseball team they called the Black Magnolias, ‘cause he was the only white one and all the rest ‘em were black kids that lived on the place. They played in the front yard over there [Figure 36]. And Pat Henry—the Henrys owned Melrose—had a baseball team they called the Melrose Pecans. They would bring ‘em down here and they’d play out there.... And then Daddy said when he was young, they used to play ball, too. At the beginning of every inning, he’d be the first one at bat because it was his ball and his bat” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

“When Mr. Matt Hertzog was a young man, he was the catcher and Father Becker was the pitcher, and they had a team back then” (Charles Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

“They had a team here, and when Uncle Matt was young, they had different teams from places around here. Uncle Matt was a pitcher, said they used to play in the front yard over there, and they’d go over and play at different places. Sawmill towns would have baseball teams, and they’d go play them and all. Father Becker was the catcher, and they said the umpire would have a bad call, a strike that should’ve been a ball, a ball that should’ve been a strike, and Father Becker would go tell Uncle Matt, ‘You go cuss him out! I can’t,’ ‘cause he was a priest; he wasn’t supposed to cuss!” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).



**Figure 36: Ambrose Hertzog (left) Playing Baseball with Magnolia Children, ca. 1950s
(Ambrose J. Hertzog III Collection, CARI-150)**

Agriculture

Betty Hertzog studied business at Northwestern State University and Louisiana State University and worked at both People’s Bank and the cotton office in Natchitoches. When her father became ill, however, she was called upon to set aside her own career to help manage the plantation. “We had a real good overseer, and so I started doing the book work and everything, and you had this labor, ... they all worked on a share, so we had a lot of bookkeeping” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

Ambrose Hertzog III spent summers at Magnolia, where he observed and sometimes documented the agricultural cycle on the plantation. “I think the whole place is about 2400 acres but most of the land in the back is stiff land and it’s used for pasture and hay field, where the front is the good sandy land and it’s used for cotton. And they had corn, but most of the corn in those days was planted to feed the cattle; the cotton was the main crop, and soybeans came later” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

Mechanized cotton farming brought profound changes to the plantations on Cane River. The large workforce required to plant and harvest cotton and corn was replaced by tractors and combines. Tenants and sharecropping families that once populated the landscape were gone in a matter of months (Tenants and Sharecroppers, this section).

“That’s Atrice Anthony (Figure 37).... I had an old Brownie Bullseye camera, and I took that picture ... and it looks like they were picking cotton. It’s starting to open, but the leaves hadn’t been defoliated and it’s not ready for the machines to go in, so we went out there and picked what was already open by hand.

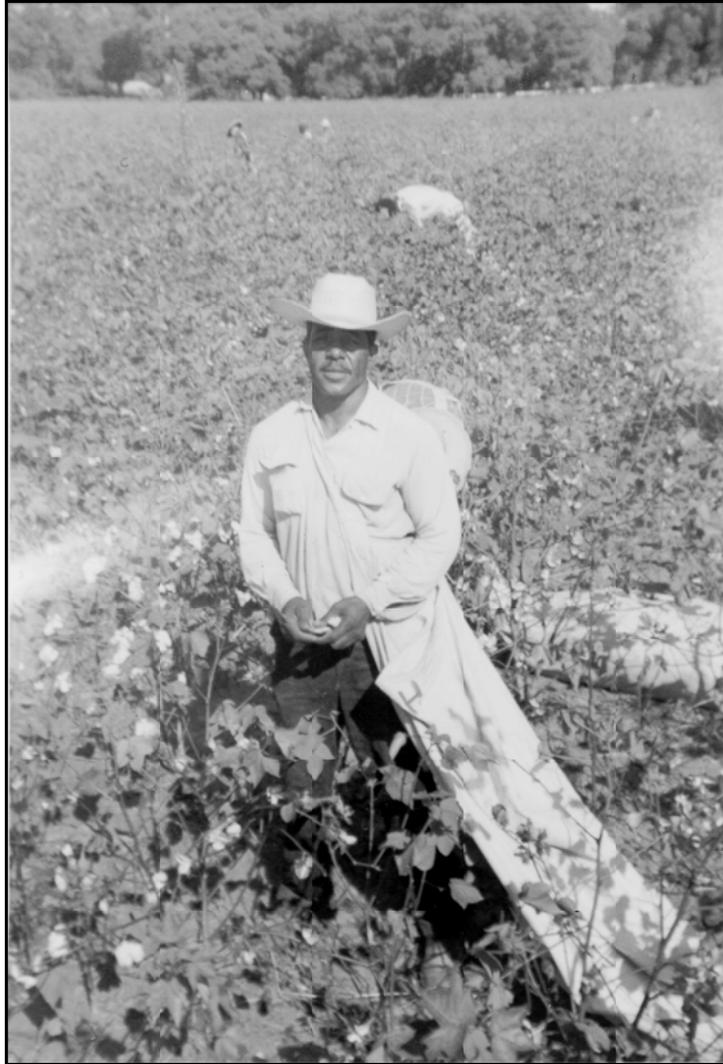


Figure 37: Atrice B. Anthony, ca. 1950s (Ambrose J. Hertzog III Collection, CARI-150)

“They would defoliate—spray stuff on it and knock the leaves off—and when most of the bolls were open, they would come through with a machine, and still all the bolls weren’t open. When the rest of the bolls would open, they’d call that scrapping cotton. They’d come in and run a picker at a higher speed and get what’s left.

“The ends, they call that pickin’ the ends, because then we planted cotton almost right up to the road and you’d have to pick up the drums and make a turn to go back and start off. It would miss pickin’, so before they would run the machine through there, when it was all open, they’d pick, I don’t know, about ten feet or so from the end. They’d pick all that clean so when they picked up the drums, they wouldn’t miss that. They picked those ends by hand.

“Those older people would come and ask could they pick the ends because ... they liked making that extra. They paid so much a pound. You’d see them all out there gossiping and talking, especially the women liked to gossip and talk, and they’d be talking right along picking the cotton” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

“Cohen’s had a gin and then Murray Lambre had a gin, and if Cohen’s got backed up, you’d take some up to Murray Lambre’s.... Then, later years, when you raised cotton, you’d

have to haul it to Boyce up on Highway 1. There were originally six gins in this parish, and now I think there's only one. I guess it's still running.... Southern Cotton Oil was running too, and it was very convenient because they ground their own cotton seed—I think it was Snowdrift—and you could buy feed for your cattle—meal and your hulls.

“Up in the field ... Daddy had put a rack around the big gate up there, put a statue up there of St. Isadore (Figure 38), patron saint of farmers” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).



**Figure 38: St. Isadore Statue watches over fields at Magnolia Plantation, ca. 1960s
(H. F. Gregory Collection)**

Livestock was always a part of the plantation economy, but gained greater importance after mechanization took place. Bad weather affected crops and livestock and impacted both agricultural production and living conditions.

“I guess all together, counting the younger ones, we had about 75 head of [mules for plowing, pre-mechanization], at least, and every year you'd gentle several, get them going.... To plow, pull a wagon, usually had a four-mule wagon ... and that's where you break the young mules. Somebody would ride this one, and the wild one would be on this side, then you had a team in front, and they usually did it with a wagon.... We used to have about 300 head of cattle, and of course Daddy got to where he would save heifers and he'd buy better bulls.

“We had a tornado in 1939. It hit the gin, and the seed house and the quarters, and it hit the back of the Big House, but it didn't tear the roof off, but [damaged] a lot of these big buildings down here [and the Quarters]. They had to move out of them until they fixed them and the Red Cross brought some tents down here.

“[The flood in] 1945 was really bad... We had to move all the cattle and put them up in Kisatchie, and moved all the mules and horses and put them across the river on that place over there.... Lester Gallien and a couple of others went up and camped out up there for a while until they could bring them back We ... stayed in Natchitoches and went to school. The water came up halfway in the front yard. We kept a boat tied to the back steps in the back yard, and a lot of the people on the place that had chickens brought them and put them in that chicken coop that sits up on pilings.... They had to move out of the quarters; it came all around the quarters” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

“In 1973, I was up here, and we had high water that year and we had to drive ‘em, ‘cause ... the pasture in the back went under water. We drove up toward the front, and the front didn’t go under water, and we had cattle across the river. We had to get cattle trailers and drove up in the pen there and brought ‘em back on this side, and I remember James Scarborough and I went around different places, helped out these other farmers—J. H. Williams across the river—and drive out of that low land before it went under water” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

Tenants and Sharecroppers

“We had about 25 families on the place. Most of the people that lived in the houses up there [along Hwy. 119], they had so many acres of cotton, so many acres of corn; and then you had these people [in the Quarters], most of these people were day labor, and they’d fill in. Most of your tenants had so much acres of cotton and so much acres of corn, and they would pick the corn and shell the good part. We have a mill over at the Big House. One Saturday they would grind meal and the next Saturday they would grind the grits, and you got the whole kernel. What you get now, you don’t have oil in it, but this had the oil in it so it had more flavor to it.

“If you had a tenant who had his own livestock, his own teams, he usually worked on a fourth.... They’d get three-quarters, like Atwood Moran had his own mules and everything and he got three-fourths; but, see, he had to feed his own teams, took care of his own animals and everything.... If you had to supply them with a team and a house and finance them, they worked on half” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

“Back then, they ... each had their own one-row planters. They had a certain plot that they farmed, the tenants did. Some of them were fourth-hands, and some of them were half-hands. It stands to reason, that if the plantation furnished three-fourths, they got a fourth” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

“[There were] about fifteen or twenty [sharecropping families].... Sharecroppers usually lived close to where they were farming.... Back then, too, ... if they were sick, you’d have to pay the doctor bill and the light bills and everything, and then you charged it to them in some of the books.... You settled up after you sold the cotton and everything.... You settled up with money. Daddy got ... a booklet, ... and you’d charge them so much and you’d give it them, and when they’d come in the store, they’d just tear out a coupon.

“In the late ‘40s or early ‘50s, I remember all the people on the place. Every house along the road was full of people; they had a whole family in it. Quarters were full; and you’d come in the store here, all these people coming in and out—it was open full time then.

“It was the tail end of the sharecropping.... I think, most of them, when I was little, that lived in the houses up the road were workers, day hands, too. They had a few sharecroppers, but most of them were day hands, because machinery was starting in, and back in the mule days and all, that, when they had mules, they had a lot of sharecroppers, but when machinery took over,

that was when they started having more day workers and less sharecroppers” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

Until he was about nine years old, Leslie Vercher lived at Magnolia Plantation where both his father and grandfather worked for the Hertzog family. He recalled his father had a good relationship with Mr. Hertzog, which Leslie felt was unusual for that day and time. A mutual respect existed between Mr. Vercher and Mr. Hertzog and Leslie recalled that if his father’s car broke down on a Saturday, Mr. Hertzog would get him a new car by Monday. Although they had already left Magnolia to pursue other opportunities, the Vercher family was greatly saddened by Mr. Hertzog’s death (Leslie Vercher, interviewed January 28, 2015).

The Magnolia Store

“This was my office starting off 1977.... They started paying ‘em [with tokens] at different stores—had A. J. Hertzog written on ours [Figure 39].... They said during Franklin Roosevelt’s time, they outlawed those because they were competing with U.S. money.



Figure 39: Magnolia Tokens, Various Denominations (CARI-31617-31619)

“Especially on Saturdays [there were] ... people coming in and out all day long. Dad took those movies in the 1940s.... We were up in Minnesota then, and he’d come back here and have all the films developed, and they’d set up a screen by the door there. They’d cut the lights off ... and he had the projector over there, and he’d show those movies and they were all excited to see themselves in the movies.... They had a Christmas party out here, Yuke and Duma on the front porch. Yuke, Duma, Sheck, he played the bull fiddle.... I don’t know which one had the Dobro guitar [Figure 40].

“We closed the store in 1973 when Uncle Matt died. We still kept it open for a while just to help out the people on the place. I used to go with old Jack Williams to the wholesale place in Natchitoches, L. H. Johnson or Kelly Webber, kinda keep it stocked up in here; but we weren’t making any money. It was just going to help out the people. We still had some people on the place then and to help out the people working, we had cold drinks and stuff in here, and cigarettes” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).



**Figure 40: The LaCour Brothers Band: Yuke, Duma, Sheck and Eveck LaCour
(Ambrose J. Hertzog III Collection, CARI-150)**

The Magnolia Quarters

The Community

“Henry Gallien and his son, Lester Gallien ... [were] overseers. Lester was a fine fella.... After they left, Mr. Ehrlich lived here; he lived in the overseer’s house for a while.

“Most of the houses in the quarters had gardens, and ... they’ve taken them down, but each one of those houses had a kitchen added on it on the back of it, and most of them had gardens in front of it, and some them raised pigs; they had pigpens, chickens and everything.

“Most of the people who lived in the quarters worked by the day. They didn’t have a crop.... Jack Williams—he was the cowboy—and John Vercher lived over there and he fed the mules and everything.... John Vercher ... and Walter Telphy lived over there. He was kind of a jack-of-all-trades, and Buddy Randolph. There were two Randolphs who lived over there.... We had a yardman and we had Lena, we had Rosa. We also had Mary Jane Cheatam, she lived in the quarters.... We had Odelia, I think she lived in the quarters (Figure 42).

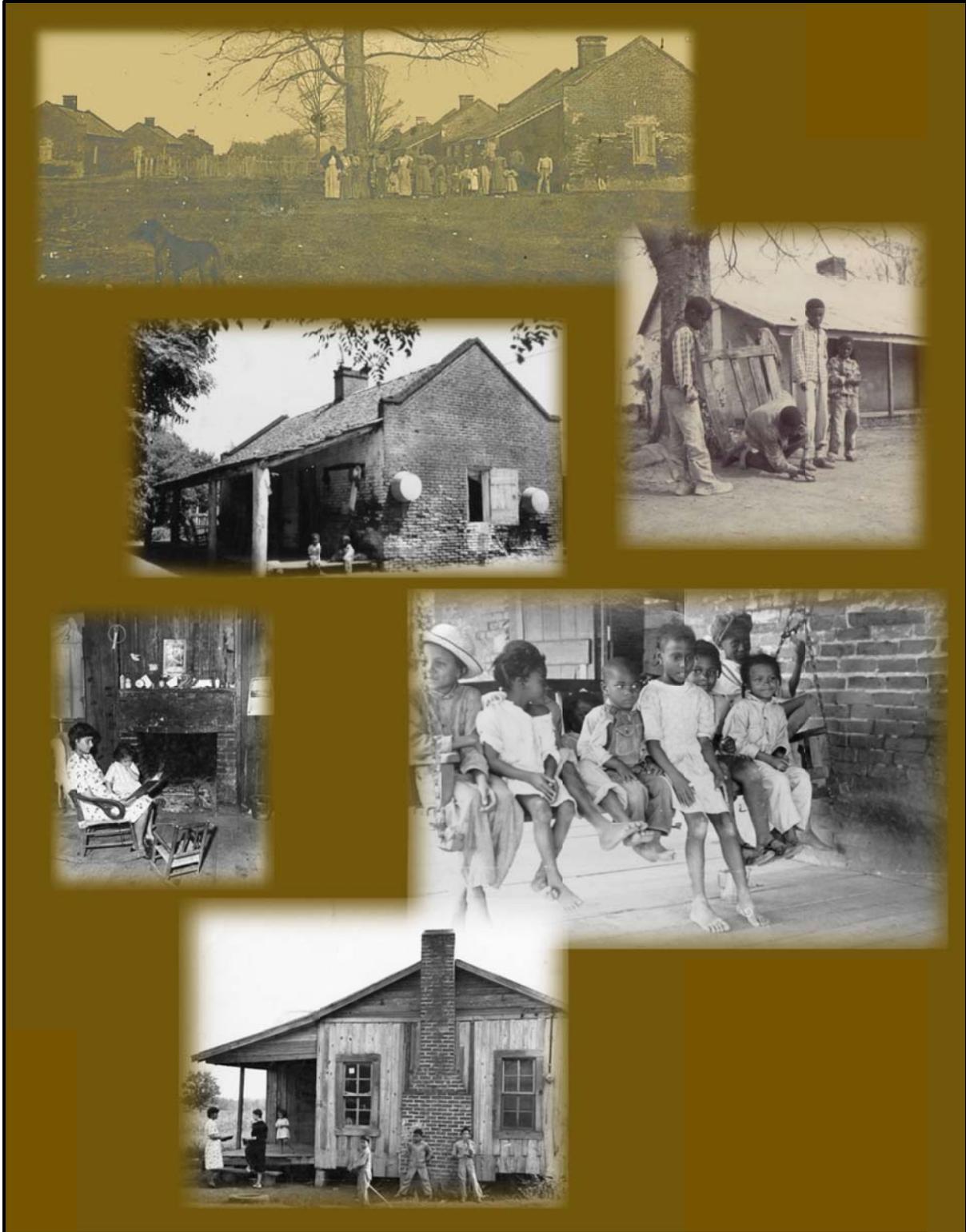


Figure 41: Magnolia Sharecroppers and Tenants: Quarters 1904, CARI-176; Quarters House, ca. 1940, LA State Library Collection; Boys with Marbles and Children on Porch, CARI-150; Desidier Family Receiving and Reading Books from Book Mobile, LA State Library Collection-LOUIS)

“Dr. Knipmeyer was public health, and he came from Natchitoches, and he had a little clinic up above Melrose somewhere. He came every Thursday to that little clinic, so he came every Thursday to our house and had lunch. In the summertime back then, you took typhoid shots. Thursdays ... everybody on the place had to come and take typhoid shots, and he’d bring his nurse who was really good, and if they had any babies—most of the babies were born at home—she would do all the paperwork for the babies that were born, and they’d bring them in and she’d fill out everything, get the birth certificates” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

“They had that one-room house that Gus Randolph stayed in, sitting there by itself... Buddy Randolph stayed in the second one from the other end. He took care of the yard and everything at the Big House over there, and he had a little garden out there. I think some of those wild things, flowers, still come up by themselves, and every other house had a family in it, and they all had old cars. They used to come here, in the store here, cars would be parked there ... they were all 1940s style cars.

“I remember hog pens, and Jack Williams had a flock of geese—they would roam around out there—and they all had chickens.... I liked to hear in the evenings or early in the morning, everybody along the road had chickens and they’d start crowing in the quarters. And the cook’s house, Rosa, had chickens, they’d crow there, then they’d crow at the Big House, and they’d crow in order up and down the road, and then you’d hear ‘em way up the road. The roosters would crow, then the next house would crow, and then the next house.... Pierce Rachal lived on the corner, and his chickens would crow, and the ones at the Big House would crow, and Rosa’s house, and then in the quarters. It just sounded like every time a group of roosters, chickens, heard the ones next door crow, they’d crow and then it would go on up the road like that” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).



Figure 42: Members of the Magnolia Plantation Workforce: Matthew Johnson & Walter Blackman; John Vercher & Family; Odelia Randolph; Walter Telphy; Cliff Lemelle and Mary Gunn Johnston (Betty Hertzog Collection, CARI-149); Gallien Family at Overseer's House (Stanley Gallien Collection, CARI-182)

Religion & Education

Most Magnolia workers attended either St. James A.M.E. Church on the plantation (Figure 43) or St. Andrew Baptist Church across the river (see Derry/Cat Island below).

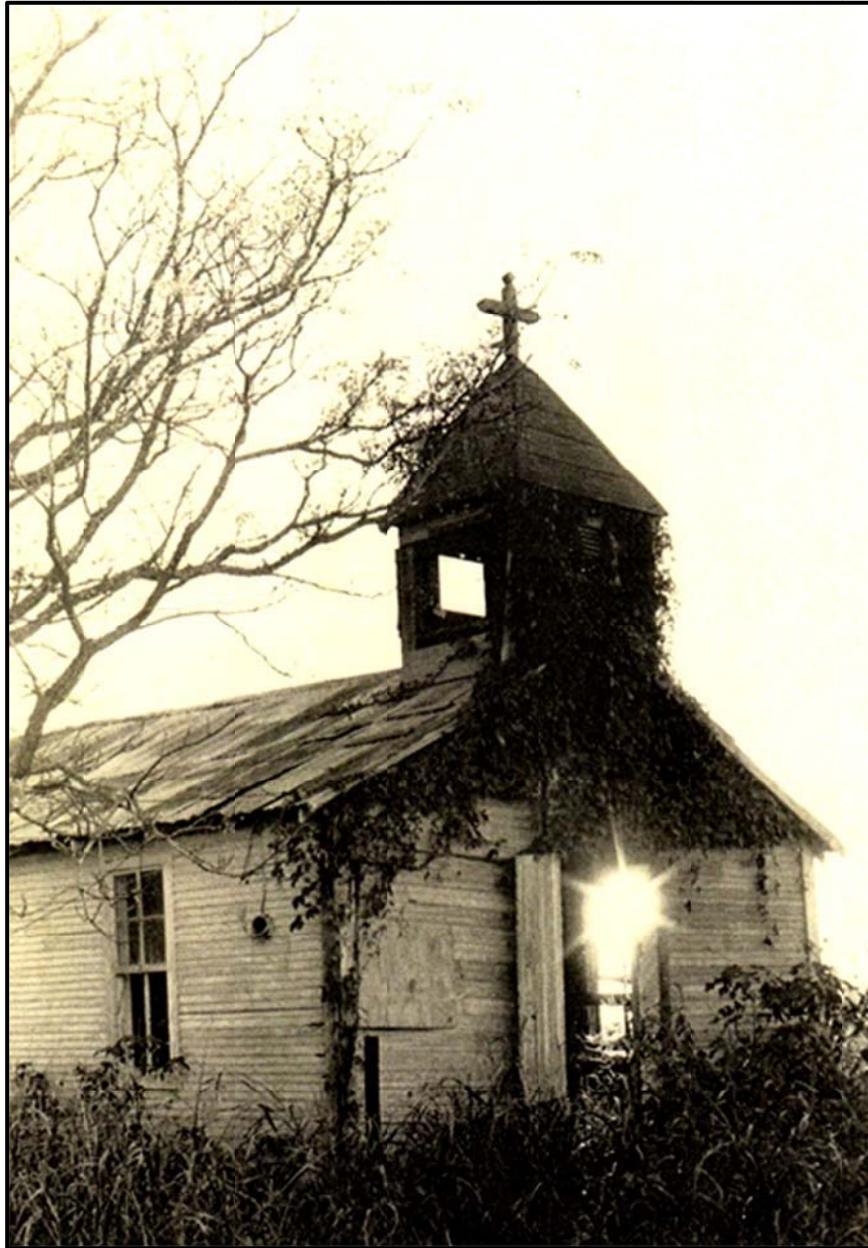


Figure 43: St. James A.M.E. Church (n.d., B. A. Cohen, courtesy of Allison Peña)

“Cliff Lemelle worked in the blacksmith shop and he was also a lay preacher for the church here on the place [St. James A.M.E.]. He talked with a stutter, and I remember Mary telling me that when he’d give a sermon, he wouldn’t.... When he gave a sermon, he would talk regular, talk plain” (Ambrose Hertzog, interviewed July 25, 2015).

“They had a school across the river [at St. Andrew Baptist Church] and some of those kids would cross the river in a boat and go to school over there.... There was [also] a foot bridge” (Betty Hertzog, interviewed August 14, 2015).

Magnolia Plantation 1971-2015

With Mr. Matt’s declining health in 1971, Betty Hertzog hired James Scarborough to manage the farm including crops, cattle, and horses. Mr. Scarborough was already a respected manager, having worked in that capacity for several large concerns including J. D. Henry’s Melrose Plantation for many years.

“A veterinarian, Dr. Ray Hargis, he and I grew up when we were kids, we knew one another. He was our veterinarian at Horseshoe Lake for years and Betty was working at the bank, and she asked him one day if he knew anybody that she could get to come.”

“It’s 2,460 acres in Magnolia, mostly cotton, then they had a few beans, soybeans, probably 900 acres ... in row crops... It was four-row, then I went to six, and then I went to ... some eight-row later. We had six- and eight-row planters that we plant six to eight rows at one time. Then you had cultivators that would cultivator six and eight rows” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).



Figure 44: James Scarborough Overseeing Cotton Harvest before Hurricane Isaac (D. Fuqua 2012)

Matt Hertzog was still living when Mr. Scarborough signed on, but was in very poor health.

“He had about 600 head of cattle [and] ... about six or seven [hands]. It was Raymond Metoyer, Lloyd Rachal, Ollie Gallien, Charles Metoyer, Henry Anderson.... Isaac [Dupree]

came later.... We had picked up two or three different places. I had some cattle on Horseshoe Lake, and some up at Cypress, and I had Masson property leased at Cloutierville. We had about 800 head of mama cows ... [and] one [bull] for about every 25 cows. That's what we usually ran, but we always had some extras.

Matt Hertzog's wife, Lydia, affectionately called Ms. Dee, survived her husband by many years but took no role in running the plantation. She was known for her gentility and hospitality, which she extended Mr. Scarborough soon after he started working at Magnolia.



Figure 45: James Scarborough Working Colts at Magnolia Plantation (D. Fuqua 2008)

“I brought a lunch, and she sent the boy who was taking care of Mr. Matt at the house over to the store one day, and told me she wanted to see me. I couldn't figure what Ms. Dee would want to see me for. I never had met her. I went over there, and she told me, ‘There's lunch on the table everyday over here. You be here.’ She would come and sit with me, she wouldn't eat, but she would come and sit with me. I think that table could seat 16 people” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

In 1991, the decision was made to lease out the land used for row crops to Bayou Camitte Plantation, a large commercial plantation near Derry. With the exception of the Big House and modern residence, the National Park Service now owns and maintains the standing structures associated with Magnolia Plantation including the store, overseer's house, and former slave cabins. Magnolia's cattle was sold off in 2001.

Derry/Cat Island

The nearby settlement of Derry was named for the Londonderry or Derry Plantation. According to E. E. Gentry, the plantation was established by Irish immigrants who settled in the lower Cane River region (Gentry 1974:4). Works Progress Administration workers in the late 1930s described Derry Plantation as a 6,000-acre plantation with a “large, ornate 50-year-old

frame structure ornamented with gables, turrets, and balconies typical of the time” (WPA 1941:623). A sawmill was established at Derry at the end of the nineteenth century; and between 1905 and 1910, Clark & Morse Lumber Co. established a band mill to cut hardwoods, with pine becoming the dominant wood processed at the plant thereafter. The Derry Southwestern Railroad, the company’s logging railroad, joined the Texas & Pacific mainline at Derry so the timber could be shipped. The Clark & Morse plant at Derry burned to the ground in 1928 and was not rebuilt. Most of the workers relocated and the town of Derry declined significantly (Gentry 1975:1). Absentee-owned farms like Bayou Camitte Plantation were established in the area by the mid-twentieth century (Nardini 1961:153). Bayou Camitte is the only surviving large agricultural operation in the area today.

St. Andrew Baptist Church (Figure 46)

Across the river from the old St. James A.M.E. Church and Magnolia Plantation is the St. Andrew Baptist Church, which was attended by many workers from Magnolia Plantation and at which the workers’ children were educated. Dr. Herbert and Mrs. Pearline Baptiste are members of the church and Mrs. Baptiste grew up on Cat Island. Dr. Baptiste was interviewed for this project, and both contributed to the 1996 NPS REAP study (Crespi 2004), as did members of the St. Andrew congregation. In addition to Mr. Baptiste’s present interview, information from those interviews is included herein.



Figure 46: St. Andrew Baptist Church, Cat Island (Lee 2004)

St. Andrew Baptist Church was established in 1875 on the Hypolite Hertzog Plantation, now known as Melrose Plantation. The church remained at Melrose for a number of years before it was destroyed during a storm. The salvaged lumber was floated down Cane River and the church was rebuilt at its present location on Cat Island. It is likely the congregation followed the Hertzog family back downriver after Melrose was sold in 1881.

St. Andrew was an important religious, educational, and social center for the workers at Magnolia Plantation.

Almost from St. Andrew's Church's very inception, it became a staunch pillar of the community. It not only served a primary function as a place of worship, but as a schoolhouse and a general social gathering place for small groups. People living on the Hertzog Plantation would come across Cane River by boat or by footbridge to attend services at the St. Andrew's Baptist Church. In fact, most of the people ... received their formal education by attending St. Andrew's Church School. Students either walked, were brought by wagons, or forded Cane River to be in attendance. The teachers were generally paid by the state for three months, and the parent would pay 75 cents a month for their children....

Social gathering at the church was a commonplace occurrence. These gatherings included gumbo suppers, box suppers and fish fries on the weekend. For most of the people living in this area, this was probably the only time they had to really visit with each other and renew old friendships and acquaintances. Travel for many of them was limited, at best. St. Andrew's has also been the meeting place for civic gatherings for the betterment of the community [St. Andrew's Baptist Church History, n.d.; read by Herbert Baptiste, September 19, 1996].

Several members of St. Andrew Baptist Church are descendants of Magnolia workers' families and even those who were not related included Magnolia in their social and economic sphere. Mrs. Baptiste recalled the footbridge connecting St. James to St. Andrew's, the cemetery of which was utilized by members of both congregations (St. Andrew's Church, interview conducted November 3, 1996).

Community

Mrs. Baptiste recalled the town of Derry as a once vibrant community, even boasting a Prince Hall Lodge, a masonic lodge for African Americans. Mrs. Baptiste's family had their own approximately 100-acre farm on Cat Island, where they grew "cotton and corn, peas, cows, hogs, ducks, geese—everything" (Pearline Baptiste, interviewed September 19, 1996).

"Now the people on Cat Island Rd., their mode of being with other people was not strange but it was like a togetherness. They was not, 'You own this and I own that.' They shared what they had.... All along Cat Island Rd. there were different homes, different properties people had. They respected all of that; but then [World War II] came and things got bad, and all of the homes that were there disappeared. In fact, I was told that [houses were] all along Cat Island Rd. They have Cane River that flows in it. If you would see the river bank in Natchitoches, it's exactly the way it looked at that time. The river was clear but because of neglect and all of that, it's grown up. It's highly recognizable now but it used to be a good fishing area—big cats and big gar, all of that was there. So the people got along well. They had a lot of things in common.

"Some folks were known to move to different areas. Some people moved from here to Chicago where they were accepted in a different culture which was common. We always said, 'If you've got it, use it.' But that was their thing. We didn't care too much about that but we got along together.

“Other than that, in the schooling, there were two different schools that was there. Springhill was the school that blacks or African American children attended.¹¹ It was first in a field, in a cotton field, and for some reason ... it burned. And so it was moved from where it was over into Cloutierville down in a little field” (Herbert Baptiste, interviewed February 18, 2015).

As happened throughout southern communities, the population at Derry and Cat Island diminished after the advent of mechanized cotton farming. Mr. Baptiste described the many changes that took place in the Derry/Cat Island community and how life has changed in the area.

“You’ll find a lot of houses on Cat Island Road that are empty. If you can’t find work you go to where you can find it, the few jobs that they had. They had jobs on the railroad and a lot of our people worked on the railroads.... My wife’s aunt’s husband lived in Natchez. He was a foreman. In the year that they had high water, he made a ramp, put his new car up on the ramp while the water was [under] it and he and his wife got in a boat and paddled from Natchez to Derry following the railroad. It was enough water underneath the boat for him to do that!

“It has since changed. There used to be a lot of hunting, a lot of game. But with the coming of I-49, of course that’s gone. They did a lot of farming there in that area where I-49 is.... They had a thriving area, mercantile there, and post office there. That’s gone. So, it has changed dramatically. You had to have known what was there to see how things have changed.

“The things that were there, from what my wife tells me, it was a thriving community. Didn’t really have to come to Natchitoches to buy anything because the stores were there. People generally got along well because they were basically in the same.... The things that they had, they shared.... If they killed a hog, it went around to the community. If you had a horse and you needed to do something, or a mule, ... you were able to borrow. That has changed. We are afraid of each other now. It used to be when coming down that road if we saw somebody on that road, we’d stop, pick them up, carry them wherever they were going. And when I came down here that basically was still going on until some incidences happened and we just stopped doing that” (Herbert Baptiste, interviewed February 18, 2015).

By the time the Tobin family moved to Cloutierville in 1969, the town of Derry had all but disappeared.

“The sawmill was already gone, and the houses were gone, and there was nothing.... The railroad didn’t go through there anymore like it did. They didn’t have a station or anything anymore.... They had the big store there, and they had the people down on Cat Island, which they still have over there, but Derry was pretty much over.... A lot of these little towns lost their railroads, their section houses, and their people who were working. They lost a lot of that, a lot of those little towns, like Marthaville did, Robeline did, Derry—of course Cloutierville didn’t have a depot—but all those little towns, there was nothing there then” (Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 6, 2014).

Cloutierville

Associated Interviews: Ginny Tobin, Clyde Masson, Charles Roge, Doris Delouche Roge, James Cannon

Alexis Cloutier, a native of Pointe Coupée, received a Spanish land grant and established a large plantation on Rivière aux Cannes by 1787. The following year he married Marie Françoise LeComte, daughter of Jean Baptiste and Marguerite LeRoy LeComte, and with the support of his wealthy in-laws became one of the most successful planters in the region (Mills

¹¹ Mr. Baptiste served as principal of Springhill School which was located south of Cloutierville.

1977:1546; 1981:56). Much of Cloutier's success can be attributed to his large enslaved labor force; in 1810, Cloutier was enumerated with 23 slaves, a number that more than tripled by 1820 (U.S. Census 1810-1820). Cloutier had both personal and political ambitions, and pushed for formation of a new parish to be called Rivière aux Cannes, politically independent from its parent Natchitoches Parish. Toward that end, in 1816 Cloutier donated land for a village and provided funding for a chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist. In 1822, the eponymous town of Cloutierville was chartered by the state (Mills and Mills 1978:55-56).

In order to effect the division of old Natchitoches Parish, Cloutier pushed for formation of Rivière aux Cannes Parish with Cloutierville to serve as the seat of government. The plan was vehemently opposed by the plantation owners at both Isle Brevelle and Rivière aux Cannes, with Creoles of color and white Creoles united in opposition to successfully quash the proposal of division before the state legislature. So bitter was Cloutier in his defeat that he sold his property in the town that bore his name and retreated downriver to establish a new plantation at the edge of the Kisatchie Hills (Mills and Mills 1978:55-58).

Like Natchitoches, Cloutierville was largely Catholic and Creole, but a significant part of the population was made up of French and other Catholic European immigrants who arrived in the nineteenth century. Close social interaction between Cane River Creoles and their white relatives was less common in this planter community, which developed during the American period and was more socially stratified than outlying settlements like Campti, Isle Brevelle, and Monette's Ferry. Besides the French families who settled Rivière aux Cannes in the eighteenth century, an influx of French immigrants came to the Cloutierville area in the early nineteenth century, some after the Napoleonic wars. By the end of the nineteenth century, Irish and Croatian immigrants along with Western European Jews had also settled in the region where they established businesses and became planters (Lee 2006:99-100).

Cloutierville served as a center of commerce for local planters until the advent of mechanized cotton farming in the 1960s. At least two cotton gins, banks, medical services, and mercantile businesses were located there. Cloutierville reached its economic and population apogee during the first half of the twentieth century, when local plantations, small farms, and the burgeoning timber industry made the town a center for services and society south of Natchitoches, and it remained a vibrant community into the 1970s (Lee 2006:99-100).

French Village to Commercial Center

Doris Delouche Roge and Clyde Masson are natives of Cloutierville. Charles Roge moved from the Melrose area as a child and grew up in Cloutierville. All three are descended from French families. Ginny Tobin moved to the community in 1969.

“My grandpa was from France, and he got shanghaied on a boat.... The best we can check up on him, [he] ended up in New Orleans, and, what was that lady's name? Anyhow, she found him down there, and brought him up here on the plantation and he kept the books for Magnolia. There was Bayou Camitte and there was one up at Melrose and he was bookkeeper. Mr. Matt used to show me in the book where he would sign for a jug of whiskey. He had a beautiful handwriting, and his name was Ernest Masson, but he was the bookkeeper, and that's how he ended up in Cloutierville” (Clyde Masson, interviewed February 11, 2015).

In 1894, Kate Chopin described Cloutierville as “this little French village was simply two long rows of very old frame houses, facing each other closely across a dusty roadway” (Chopin 1894:212). French language survived in Cloutierville much later than in Natchitoches.

“My father spoke French very well, [and] my aunt. We had a dear friend [Felix Monette] who passed away last year who loved to speak French.... I remember when my daddy and my

grandmother on my mother's side—he called her the Old Lady—he and the Old Lady used to speak French a lot. Now, my grandpa didn't very much, but my grandpa Delouche, who died when I was fifteen, he spoke French. When my daddy would go out there, that's all they would speak unless we were there" (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

By the early part of the twentieth century, the rural settlement began to claim a place in regional commerce.

"The paved road did quite a lot for Cloutierville. I understand the old priest we had at that time, Father Becker, was very politically connected and he supposedly, through the Longs—Huey, Earl, the older Longs—got the road paved through Cloutierville ... and even got sidewalks. Cloutierville is only one a few of the little villages that have sidewalks on each side, concrete sidewalks.... Then, Cloutierville was on the main road from Natchitoches to Alexandria. It was known first as Hwy. 20 and until 1949 all the traffic went through Cloutierville.... During the time that Cloutierville was the main thoroughfare ... from Natchitoches to Alexandria, the town kind of built up, people built houses, and I suppose some of the fallen-down houses [described by Chopin were replaced]. In 1949, they opened the place from where the traffic light is [Hwy. 1], the caution light, to the south bridge, which is about a mile and a half. They went through the woods and cut this loop off ... and I guess the business places kind of dwindled. At one time, you could buy anything you wanted ... at the LaCaze store—or the McCoy's store, as we called it—and the Carnahan store, and the Masson store" (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

"There was a lot of people lived here. You turn right up the road up here and go on the river, there was just one house after the other.... I bet there were eleven businesses in Cloutierville at that time.... We sold everything but cars and airplanes at that [Masson] store. We sold wagons, wagon wheels, horse harnesses. We sold all that at that store....

"The gin belonged to Father Becker, the priest, and ... to the estate of Mr. Sam LaCaze..... Mr. LaCaze is my daddy's uncle, and my daddy worked for him. He was the guy that got out and sold cotton and bought pecans and stuff. And my oldest uncle, he run the store—he was like the bookkeeper—and my other uncle, he was the man that took care of the farm, and then one day they decided—sometime in the '40s, I guess it was—to go in business for their-selves, and they bought the commissary that was there at Montrose, and they tore that down and moved it to Cloutierville; that's what they built the store with.... That's my father right there, and that was his youngest brother [Figure 47]. They're sitting on the bread box in front of the store" (Clyde Masson, interviewed February 11, 2015).

At least two cotton gins operated in Cloutierville: J. C. Carnahan below town on Cane River and the LaCaze/Becker gin which continued to operate until ca. 1960. Several general stores were located along the main avenue through town. These stores supplied everything from clothing to shoes to hardware to medicines. Those remembered by community consultants included in the J. C. Carnahan General Store (originally H. C. Cohen Store), Livingston Store (aka Babby's), Charleville Store, Sam LaCaze Store (later McCoy Store), Luddie's (Lavespere), and Masson Brothers (Clyde Masson, interviewed February 11, 2015; Charles Roge and Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015). The all-cypress Carnahan Store (Figure 48) closed in the 1980s but stood until 2004 when it was destroyed by fire. Only the small Livingston Store remains standing (Figure 49).

The coming of Highway 1 coupled with the advent of mechanized cotton farming drained the lifeblood out of the town.

"The mechanization of the farming came in, the tenant families who used to live there [on] the big places like the Carnahans and the LaCazes [where] there used to be ten or twelve

families that made a living sharecropping, well, with the advent of the tractors and the cotton picker, ... the place just went down” (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

“People had to leave to make a living. Most of ‘em went to Pineville and went to work for Central State Hospital. They transferred from Cloutierville to Pineville, and we just lost population here, and kids that did grow up here, there was nothing to keep ‘em here. They had to leave to find employment somewhere else” (Charles Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).



Figure 47: Clyde Masson Sr. with his brother at Masson Store, ca. 1950s (Courtesy, Clyde Masson Jr.)

As the local population declined after 1960, competition between the general stores became fierce. “We would run a transfer truck. On Fridays, we’d go to Gorum; on Saturdays, we’d run up Cane River, and we went almost up to St. Matthews school, and we would pick up people, or pick up their order—what they want—and come back, and we’d go back and bring ‘em back, bring the orders, and that was every Saturday, and when I got old enough to drive, I did that; I run that truck” (Clyde Masson, interviewed February 11, 2015).

Population declined slowly but steadily to the present time when population in the unincorporated community stands at about 1,000 people. “Enough of us came back and raised

our families here that when my kids were here, there were enough kids—they enjoyed a social thing—but there’s no more” (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).



Figure 48: Carnahan Store, Cloutierville (Lee 2003)



Figure 49: Livingston Store, Cloutierville (Lee 2015)

“Even after we moved back here, there were enough young people, kids and stuff around here, to have a little league ball club and stuff like that. When our kids grew up and got older, they left, and the population was ... more or less ... the elderly people. There’s hardly any young kids around here anymore; no recreation type of program.... Very few young people have come back” (Charles Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

Ted and Ginny Tobin fell in love with the rural community and chose to relocate to Cloutierville in 1969 when population was still stable but declining. “Cloutierville was a real nice little village then. There was a lot of kids there, mostly teenagers actually. We had a really good club for the kids at church, and we had a little league park. We built it—the community did, and the men played softball there, the kids played there. It was just really great. A lot of activities for the kids; not like now. It’s mostly retired people, or older people, hardly any kids there anymore” (Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 6, 2014).

Religion and Education

St. John the Baptist Church was attended by both whites and people of color. Until after the old church burned and the new one was built in 1985, however, the internal space in the church was segregated. “It’s not anymore, but it used to be about ninety percent Catholic, and the Creoles and the Caucasians all went to the same church” (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015). “But they were segregated” (Charles Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

The church also maintained segregated schools. “When we grew up, we had a good many children around here. The school was just basically a community school, and we had three or four hundred kids in school, and then when enough of us came back and raised our families here, the Tobins, the Verchers, and us—enough came back that had ties here, farms or whatever, you know, and enough of us raised our children here that when my children grew up, they still had enough kids to socialize with. None of that generation came back, none of ‘em, except for Charles Brossette and a few like that, but none of those people came back because there’s nothing to do here.

“There were two Catholic schools.... The big church hall was once the gymnasium and cafeteria for the colored school.... Father Becker started running the movie theater, which is not there anymore, [in the] old Catholic hall [that] had been like an auditorium for the school.... Our school closed in ‘65, the white St. Mary’s, at the end of ‘65.... St. Joseph’s [for children of color] closed a couple of years after that, probably ‘67.... Then there was the big high school, ... public school as we called it, to separate it from the Catholic school” (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

“[Father Becker] would have movies on Saturday night for the colored and on Sunday night for the whites. Then he’d have a serial, a continued thing, every week, and you’d always wonder what happened all week!” (Charles Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015)

“When Father Lyons first came here ... to replace Father Becker, he had to live up at Magnolia ... at Miss Sally [Hertzog] Gunn’s home for several months to have a place to live because Father wouldn’t let him in the rectory” (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

Rural Life and Agriculture

As with most of Natchitoches Parish in 2015, family farms and plantations have all but disappeared. Cotton, once the primary cash crop, has given way to soybeans and less intensive corps.

“My father[‘s] ...oldest brother ... decided to sell out and [run the farm].... I was old enough ... so I kinda took care of the farm.... My uncle, he’d get up every morning before daylight, and he and guy [who] run the place would go out there and walk through the pasture, about starting before daylight, walk two or three miles every day, and one day he tried to walk and his legs just gave out, and he had to give it up.

“I took care of the cattle, made the hay.... We always had a couple of guys that worked for us on the farm. Then my dad died, I really took over.... We had cattle, we did oats, we did pecans. The oats, we used that to feed out the cattle. We had barns out here that had feeders and things under ‘em. We’d buy cattle and feed ‘em.... My daddy and them never raised cotton. Thank God, I didn’t have to fool with that, but we did oats. Oats was a big deal for us. We made a lot of hay, we’d feed a hundred bales a day, so it was a lot.

“The type of little bitty farmer’s gone. When we finally went out of the cattle business, ... I had cut out 1,200 acres of what we had. I had 265 mama cows. At one time I had a thousand mama cows, but in a year, I didn’t make a nickel by the time you pay the feed, pay the labor. We had a guy, every day he rode part of the pasture, and every one of my cows had a number branded. It was a freeze brand; and this day, he went out there and number 300 cow had the foot rot. Well, he’d come back and tell us, and we’d go out there and catch that cow and doctor her, but that’s all he did was ride those pastures and it got expensive. Those two guys that worked for us, must’ve worked for us 35 years.

“Last year they got eighty cents for cotton if you booked it, which is a good price. Cotton’s down to 55 to sixty cents right now.... I fool with a few pecans and some hay, and all the rest of the place is hunting, and believe it or not, we don’t make nothin’ out of that ‘cause it’s nothin’ but friends, and kinfolks. He’s [Henry Maggio Jr.] taken over the crawfish. If you want some, he’ll be the crawfish man” (Clyde Masson, interviewed February 11, 2015).

After ca. 1980, population declined severely and cotton began to diminish in price and popularity. The resulting exodus of young people in search of jobs affected mostly the small farmers. “The farmers were concerned. They gave up the farming, and went to cattle. Most of them did, anyway; ... but all the young people left because they had nowhere, you know, no jobs, they had to go somewhere and make a living so they left” (Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 6, 2014).

Mr. Masson’s nephew by marriage, Henry Maggio Jr., commented about agricultural production in the parish.

“One year they’ll have more soybeans, one year they’ll have more corn. They’ll probably never have as much cotton as they used to have, because prices haven’t been as good.... It may not even be a third [of what is planted] every year; it’ll never be the major crop that it used to be” (Henry Maggio Jr., personal communication, February 11, 2015).

In addition to row crops and crawfish, pecans remain an important crop in the area and at least one commercial fisherman remains in business. Mr. James Cannon combines both fishing and pecans in his business on Highway 1 (Figure 50).

“I fish Cane River here, and the fish comes up out of Red and becomes the spawn out of Kisatchie. When they come by, I catch my share while they’re going up.... I’m the last one.... My grandson talks like he’s gonna to, but I doubt it. You can’t make enough money and you can’t make a living. It’s a hobby with me. I just like to do it, and this fish market has been here since ‘49 and it ain’t never been out of fish but twice since ‘49.... I was out of fish the other day, and that was the second time since we had it. If my daddy’d be alive, we wouldn’t be out. He’d go somewhere, if we had to go to Texas, south Louisiana, somewhere, we’d go catch some fish. We used to sell a thousand pounds a week here; don’t sell a thousand pounds a year any more.... That’s all we did was fish, so we sold a lot of ‘em wholesale. One time, we caught 5,000 pounds in one haul up here in the lake and we hauled them to Memphis and sold them. We’d sell those big, big catches in Jonesville or Memphis. There’s no more docks in Jonesville [LA]. Champlin Net Company, well, they don’t even have a dock anymore. They don’t fool with fishing anymore.

“My daddy was doing this since 1945, after the flood ... they had a flood here that’s why we’re out here. We was back in the country there in the house we had there, but the water went six feet up in the house.... When we moved out here, we never did go back. He said he wasn’t going to have nothing that couldn’t live in the water, so we lost all the cows, the goats, and all that stuff, and the chickens was in the trees. I remember when I was ten and them landin’ craft came in and put on the front end of that there Beach Craft on the front porch. The water was getting over the porch and told us we had to leave, and my daddy was out driving the cows out and all that stuff, trying to get them up here on the highway, and mama told ‘em she wasn’t going. That Lieutenant on that boat told us, said his orders [were] we had to go, he didn’t have no choice, so they hauled us out.

“I started [in pecans] about 10 to 15 years ago, but I’ve got me a picker. I picked for other people too.... I go out and pick places, big places, for other people on a 60-40.... I don’t shell ‘em. I just buy ‘em, sack ‘em, and ... ship out (James Cannon, interviewed January 28, 2015).



Figure 50: Cannon Fish Market, Cloutierville (Lee 2007)

***The Kisatchie Hills: Good Hope/Cypress/Horseshoe Lake
Associated Interviews: James Scarborough, Glennie Scarborough***

The hills and upland areas were developed and occupied largely by Anglo-Americans during the nineteenth century. Communities developed around the settlements of small yeoman farming families and, later, timber companies and commercial cattle ranches. Almost every small community had a Protestant church built by community members to nurture their families through faith.

Good Hope

The Good Hope community developed in the late nineteenth century around the homesteads of four families: Dowden, McLaren, Beasley, and Russell; and the Good Hope Baptist Church served the settlement (Figure 51). The families of Good Hope were self-sufficient Anglo-American yeoman farmers (Glennie Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).



Figure 51: James and Glennie Scarborough, Good Hope Baptist Church (Lee 2015)

“My daddy was Bryant Dowden, Sr. ... and my mother was Ollie Moss Bowden.... I grew up in Good Hope community, which is about six miles southeast of Cypress.... In our parents’ young life, there were four families that had homesteaded in that area. My grandfather was Willis Dowden, and there was a family of McLarens, ... the Beasleys ... and Russell family.... My mother’s father, Benjamin Moss [sharecropped at Melrose Plantation but] they did not live there very long. They moved to the Good Hope community. My mother’s older half-sister—her father’s first wife had died—had married ... Willis Dowden’s son, who was my dad’s older brother. They moved out there, and he was a tenant of my other grandfather, and then my mother married my father, who was Bryant Dowden, in 1927.

“Good Hope Church ... was established by members of those four pioneer families, and the materials were garnered from the area from people who lived in the community.... The long sills that are underneath the church were hand-hewn with a broad-axe by Mr. Adam McLaren.... My dad and Mr. O’Bannon, who was a father-in-law of the Beasleys, went out to the logging camp and got some pine stumps that are the blocks under the church, and they’re still there, and ... hauled the lumber from Frost Johnson mill in Montrose in a wagon to build the church. My grandfather, whose name was Benjamin Moss, brought some Spanish moss from down in the swamp, put in those trees, and they’re still there.... I’m not sure who the main carpenter was. I think it may have been Barney Booty because he did a considerable amount of carpentry work in the area. He was not one of the pioneer families, but was related to them on my grandmother’s side. I think that’s how it really got started. This was somewhere in the mid-twenties, 1924 or 1925.

“We had little oil lamps that were hung on the wall with little metal reflectors behind them, and there was a hanging oil lamp in the sort of the center of the church, and on the piano, and one on the pulpit.... It was a one-room church. We had some homemade pews at that time.... When we had Sunday school, one of the back pews would be turned backward, and the children would have their Sunday school lesson back there or go outside under the trees. Then several years ago, the two small areas in the back were partitioned for some very tiny Sunday school rooms.

“[On the] side of the pulpit, there were two pews originally and the older men sat there. Usually their wives sat right along here [in front], and when the children were small, they sat with their parents. The other couples sat at random, wherever they wanted to.... The younger people sat toward the back. It was not really gender separated, but it was just a custom.

“When the church was first built, it was not painted.... I have some pictures of Mama and Daddy standing here and the church is not painted. When I was a very little girl, only six or seven years old, was the first time it was painted, and then they painted it before my wedding and that was special. They painted those homemade pews; they were not painted the first time, [but] they painted them the second time, and my grandson, who was married here also, had one of those pews from this church.

“Mrs. Martha Greer ... and her husband—she was a Russell—and Denise O’Bannion and her son, Austin, do a lot on special occasions, usually in the fall around Thanksgiving. We always have a special occasion at Easter time, when we have our Homecoming at Easter, and we rival the other families to see who can have the most descendants here, and everybody freshens up the cemetery” (Glennie Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015 and September 17, 2015).

Cypress/Horseshoe Lake

The Cypress settlement was an outgrowth of the Victoria Lumber Mill which began operation in 1882. Victoria was one of the Louisiana Long Leaf Lumber Company mills owned by O. W. Fisher, who also owned the Long Leaf mill at Fisher, Louisiana. Cypress was one of five sawmills within about a twenty-mile stretch in operation at the same time including those at Galbraith, Derry, Montrose, and Flora.

“[There was] a lot of cypress in ... these little swampy areas.... Well, you figure they had to hand saw it, they had to drag it out, float it out, and so there wouldn’t have been as big a volume as there is now, when they can go in and cut truck loads at one time. But they couldn’t do that back then. They had to haul it out by oxen, ... float it down the river” (Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 6, 2015).

Later the timber was transported along company trunk lines to connect with the Texas Pacific railroad for transportation throughout the country.

Mr. James Scarborough grew up in Powhatan and later in western Natchitoches. In 1942, the family moved to Horseshoe Lake near the Montrose sawmill where his father raised cattle. Mr. Scarborough grew up working cattle with his father.

“My dad’s name was Samuel Scarborough, and my mother’s name was Nettie Ola Wagley.... He ... farmed [but] he didn’t do any row cropping, just hay and cattle.... [In 1942] he worked for James W. Gerard in New York [who] owned the ranch ... at Horseshoe Lake. It was eleven hundred and twenty acres.... He bought 150 Hereford cows from the B. F. Goodrich Ranch in Lampasas, Texas. They came on railroad cars to Derry” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

The Cypress High School and Baptist Church were located on Old River. The 1945 Red River flood inundated the school at Cypress which was also attended by students from surrounding communities including Good Hope. Students from the Kisatchie communities finished the year at Bellwood, while those at Horseshoe Lake attended school at Natchitoches. James Scarborough helped his father move the cattle during the flood.

“[In the 1945 flood, we drove ‘em, ... moved them out close to Provencal. We went right up Hwy. 1 to Natchitoches, out across College Avenue, out on Hwy. 6.... I was still in high school. The principal and I got the books we needed out of Cypress school, and took ‘em to Natchitoches High School, and they gave us four rooms, I believe, and we had our school in those four rooms” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

In 1953, James and Glennie Scarborough, a young couple with a small child living at Horseshoe Lake, experienced severe flooding again. Both times, the cattle on the ranch had to be moved to higher ground. “We ended up with about 450 [head of cattle] in ‘52, ‘53. We had high water in ‘53, and we had to move the cattle to out in Red Dirt reservation.... The water was too deep going up Hwy. 1 North. We had to go south, and we hit 119 at Derry and went out 119 to Vista, out into Red Dirt” (James Scarborough, interviewed February 25, 2015).

Mr. Scarborough continued to work on the Gerard ranch until 1963, when he went to work for J. D. Henry at Melrose Plantation. He would end his working life at the Hertzog’s Magnolia Plantation.

Throughout their lives, Mr. and Mrs. Scarborough have been sustained by family and faith. Mr. Scarborough has attended Cypress Baptist Church (Figure 52) from the time his family moved from Natchitoches to Horseshoe Lake and Mrs. Scarborough began to attend when they married in 1948. The couple reared their children in the church and have continued to attend and teach Sunday School at Cypress during their sixty-seven years of marriage.

“The church is about a hundred years old this coming year, 2016. It used to be over on the riverbank by the school The school was over ... about a half a mile past the church.... When they built the new school building, they gave the old school to the church and ... we tore it down and used the material to build this church. [The old church] stayed there for years, from about 1922 until we moved over here in ‘48. And we had church in the old building from ‘48 to ‘52.... We tore the old building down and built the new Sunday school rooms back there ... and had the first service in it on August 3, 1952.... We built it from scratch. Then later, we took the old building down and built the education rooms back behind it and joined it.



Figure 52: Cypress Baptist Church, Cypress (Lee 2015)

“Since I was fourteen years old, I’ve been a member of this church.... It started out we had two sermons a month, then we had Sunday school the other two Sundays. My wife and I both taught Sunday school during those years after we married.... My wife teaches the smaller ones at children’s church.... I was helping my wife, and I got used to those kids, and when they moved up, I just kept doing it [keeping the nursery]; been doing it quite a few years.... I tell ‘em, they put me back here in my age group! Well, I try to teach ‘em, read ‘em Bible stories, the ones that’s big enough to understand. I think it helps. A lot of ‘em never had Bible stories read to ‘em. I just enjoy it.

“Easter, Christmas—we have a Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner at the same time, mid-November, December.... We usually have a revival, most of the time that is in June, and we have quite a few visitors come in.

“I love this church. I sure do” (James Scarborough, interviewed September 17, 2015).

City of Natchitoches and Environs

Associated Interviews: Barbara Bailey, Shirley Small-Rougeau, Arthur Welch, Bertha Lee Wardworth, Rev. Ardonul Brinson, Rev. Otis Corley, Sadie Maggio Dark, Henry “Buddy” Maggio

The town of Natchitoches grew from the French fort established in 1714, and descendants of founding French families represent a significant sector of the contemporary population. Waves of immigrant American Indians, African Americans, and later European immigrants added to and enhanced the multicultural population of Natchitoches, and a large influx of Anglo-Americans immigrated into the area beginning in 1803 after the Louisiana

Purchase. Small satellite communities like Oak Grove and St. Maurice grew up outside of Natchitoches, centered around family settlements, churches, and schools.

Founding French Families

Barbara Bailey descends from one of the first French colonials to settle at Natchitoches and his Chitimacha wife. She grew up in the Oak Grove community during World War II.

“My mother’s maiden name is LaCour but my grandmother was a Lestage and if you go three generations back, both my great-grandmother and great-grandfather were Lestage. And, if you go back just two or three more generations you find that Narcisse Lestage married Appeline or Pauline Derbanne.... François Dion Dupre Derbanne [came] through Natchitoches in the early 1700s and I know that by 1716, he was here at the fort.... He was appointed and became the first storekeeper and paymaster for the Canadian Marines at the very first fort with St. Denis and the date I have is 1716.... So my ninth generation great-grandfather was the first Derbanne.... He didn’t leave any land for us or money—it didn’t stretch this far to nine generations—but he did leave us some history which I’m very pleased to be able to have.... Jean de la Grande Terre, who was the wife of François ... would have been Native American [Chitimacha].

“My great-grandmother ... spoke only French.... She spoke only to me in French because ... that was her language. She didn’t speak English. None of that generation spoke English and this was in the 1930s. My grandmother—my mother’s mother—my grandmother Docia Lestage LaCour is the first English-speaking generation in our family. Nobody spoke English before then. She spoke French at home, but when she went to school ... in the early 1900s, ... she and her siblings and other French-speaking children ... were criticized and looked down upon and even punished in school when they would speak French in class.

“When I was a child, we were very poor. We had a garden and we had pork and hogs that we would share with the neighbors and they would share with us.... I was born in what we now call Oak Grove in Natchitoches. I don’t remember it being called Oak Grove then, but it may have been. I was born right along the time of the Second World War.

“I went to St. Mary’s School and ... Oak Grove was five miles out of town, ... a long way for people who didn’t have a car. When I first started to school in what was called “primer” at St. Mary’s, ... I went to school on the school bus [but] I wouldn’t get on the school bus without my grandma.... She would ride the school bus with me. She would take me to my classroom and leave me there to cry with the nuns ... and then she would go to my aunt’s house who lived in town. [She would] walk back to the school, ... get on the bus with me, and we would go home.

“One of my first memories of the early childhood is sitting on the porch of our little three-room shotgun house out at Oak Grove ... in my grandpa’s lap.... I would sit on the porch and he would sing to me ... until we got a breeze and then we’d go to bed. We couldn’t go to bed while it was still hot.... We were having a black-out [during World War II] and the convoys were going by with no lights and it was in the woods, ... those convoys ... going and it would be for long periods of time. It seemed to me like it was hours.

“My grandmother, Docia, took in everybody. She raised her children; she raised somebody else’s children who needed somebody to raise them. And my Grandpa LaCour was just the most generous-hearted person. He would invite people in to eat when they hardly had enough for themselves. So I grew-up with a strong example of generosity.... I don’t know how it is now other than in our own family; [but] when I look around, I do see Cane River people

tight. They still maintain their families together. They have reunions. They go to church. They educate their children. They're always family and that's how I grew-up. I grew-up in the house [with] my aunts, uncles, and whoever needed a place to live came.... All of us went into one bedroom and they took the other one. Whatever needed to be done was done; and I hope that I, as well as my children and grandchildren, will be wise enough to keep that as a family trait” (Barbara Bailey, interviewed November 20, 2014).

African Americans

Africans came into Natchitoches as slaves of the early French colonials. Despite their bondage, African traditions remained strong in enslaved communities and were carried forward into freedom. Beginning in the eighteenth century, emancipated slaves began to acquire land from their white relatives or through purchase and gravitated together to form independent communities.

Community and Family

Shirley Small-Rougeau grew up in the Winn and Natchitoches Parish border community of St. Maurice. Although she left the area after high school, she came back often to visit thus maintaining close ties with her Natchitoches Parish relatives. Mrs. Small-Rougeau retired and relocated to Natchitoches in 2004.

“My father purchased a large plot of land and sold out parcels to different relatives and friends. They called it Smallville, but it was part of what is known now as St. Maurice, Louisiana, which was a part of Natchitoches Parish on the Rigolets de Bon Dieu side of the Red River.... The area that's called Trichel and Bayou Bourbeau which we commonly called 'Bayouboubie,' ... was a plantation and people were sharecroppers.... This was after slavery.... Bayou Bourbeau and Bayouboubie” were places where there were many sharecroppers and prior to that, slaves.

“My great-great grandmother, Lucy Strong, an African American woman, owned property, 80 acres right there on Bayou Bourbeau, and there were other families that did as well. No one knows this history.... Lucy was from North Carolina [as were] a lot of those persons who came here to work on those plantations.... Some of them were slaves, and after the Emancipation Proclamation some acquired land grants on their own and some were given land by their relatives who were the slave owners. Others earned enough money to purchase small plots of land.

“I cannot put my finger on any person in my family going back that was a slave. Now my Guin connection which was my grandmother's family was brought to Louisiana by a gentleman whose name was John Gwyn Burr. That was his middle name, so I suspect that they took that name.... He was one of the owners of the St. Maurice Plantation which most people here know about because it was in Natchitoches Parish when it existed. When they established Winn Parish in 1851 or '52 ... it was the oldest plantation on the Red River. It was a very elegant place and that is where my grandfather, Mr. Thomas Small, grew up. He was twelve when he went to work there as a carriage driver and all the products that came to the stores that were located in that area came by riverboat. So he would drive the carriage to the river and bring things back to the Tedsley Store. He worked for the Tedsley Store.

“St. Maurice Lane was the connection from that side of [Red] River to this side of the river, Rigolets de Bon Dieu to Natchitoches. St. Maurice Lane was the dirt road that led from the ferry or boat or steamship that brought them across the river. When it became Winn Parish, that kind of died down and [residents] did their own trade back and forth from New Orleans or wherever the boats came from. That's how a lot of the folk settled in that area because they

came from New Orleans slave markets, I guess, up the river to St. Maurice. My Gwyn connection came up on a riverboat called the *James Madison*. That's how they got from New Orleans to St. Maurice but they came from North Carolina to New Orleans.

“They say there were about 20 people on the boat of us. Of course that made a very extended family of relatives. They married and met some other people from the other island, Choctaw Island, [and] Gilgal segment where the Strongs had a plantation. That kind of extended the community. Now they still exist, the Nashes and the Guins and so on, but we were all related.

“One of the things that always puzzled me about my grandfather is that he clearly was somehow part Indian and I found that out by doing my DNA.... So they found this in my DNA having traced it all the way back to Siberia.... I would ask my grandfather was it in the family that he knew we were part Indian and he would say that his mother was. I have no idea what my great-grandmother's maiden name was. I just know that she was a Purvis by marriage. She came from Mississippi and everybody talked about her, ... how she looked like an Indian. She taught her sons and her daughters those practices. My grandfather was a basket weaver. He could skin and preserve animal hides and make chair bottoms—all the things that he learned from his mother which she said she learned from her people” (Shirley Small-Rougeau, interviewed August 27, 2015).

Mrs. Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth grew up in lower Natchitoches Parish near Cloutierville and Marco, where her family worked as sharecroppers. “I was born down on Little River behind Cloutierville, Louisiana [but] ... we moved to Marco and that's where I grew up.... We sharecropped.... That was the deal back then. We was staying on somebody else's property and in their house and what you sharecrop, you pick cotton, pick pecans and all this stuff—sorghum—from when we were real young.... My husband ... was born and raised up there at Bermuda, Louisiana” (Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth, interviewed April 14, 2015).

Arthur Welch grew up near and in the town of Natchitoches. “I grew up in Natchitoches—actually grew up on my dad's farm which is about two and a half miles west of the city.... I'm American. I am what the melting pot turns out to be.... I found out that my grandfather was born white;... but I found later on in the census he was classified as black. He married a half-black, half-Indian woman—half Choctaw—my grandmother. So I've got, from what I understand, the Welches was Irish descent, so I've got Irish, Indian, and African mixed up in me. I classify of course as African American, but I say I am American” (Arthur Welch, interviewed February 10, 2015).

Business and Entrepreneurship

Mrs. Shirley Small-Rougeau recalled her father's business acumen and negotiating skills. Mr. Small was approached by directors of T. L. James Co. to furnish materials necessary to build the railroad. “My dad and his brother probably were looked upon as the first African American businessmen in the area. They called my dad Bubba. ‘Well Bubba, I need you to help me with these roads and railroads.’ They hauled cross-ties and hauled pulp wood and so on. So my dad said, ‘Oh sure. It sounds like a good idea, but where's my contract?’ [The company man] was amazed. ‘What contract?’ ‘No, I don't work without a contract.’ So he was the first African American contractor with the T. L. James Co. and then he brought in his brother and so on” (Shirley Small-Rougeau, interviewed August 27, 2015).

Mrs. Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth has owned and run her own business, Wardworth Grocery, in Natchitoches, Louisiana, since 1968. Mrs. Wardworth's store has a meat market as well as general groceries and she sees small businesses like hers as vital to the community.

“The first store, my husband opened it. He graduated from high school in 1954 so he opened the first store [in Natchez]... in 1955.... We called it Pan Am.... He built the first store because then you could build it on your property; ... on the end of his property, he built it there.... After we got married, I was helping his mom with that store [but] then [acquired] this ... building [on] the little lot right ... there where the cars are parked.... We stayed there for ... three or four years ... and then that’s when this came for sale. So, we bought this spot right here and, that’s where we started. We opened this store in ‘68. It was the Monday before Thanksgiving in 1968.

“It wasn’t hard because he knew about business.... I had the children here; ... the children would come in ... and they would help me. Some of them were so short they would have to get up on a milk carton to look at the scale. So, I would teach them how to read the scale. Taught them how to do the cash register and we went from there.”

If not for Wardworth Grocery, local residents would have no place within walking distance of their homes to shop for groceries.

“They would have to go to Brookshire’s. That’s the closest one. So you see, they glad as hell. ‘Thank God, it’s here,’ they say. Just come right here; they can walk. A lot of them right here in the community, they can walk.... We open from 8:00 to 8:00. That’s Monday to Saturday. On Wednesday nights I close at 7:00 so I can get a chance to go to Bible Study.... Now my grandson and another guy that works here, they wanted to open two days, two times a month ... on Sundays from 9-12, so they do that.

“A lot of the people that were here when I came, they’re gone now so sometime I just be sitting down thinking about how many that was here when I first came here. Now they gone but their children are here, so I know their children and sometimes their grandchildren.... A lot of them weren’t even born when I came here. They still come and they’ll tell me about when they was small [and came in] with a note from their mom and all this. So, I just enjoy them.

“My grandson, Darryl Gasaway, he came down one night and I was here at the store. I was thinking maybe I had to lease it out after my husband had died. He say, ‘Give me a key.... I come to stay.’ Just like that. I didn’t ask him and he been right here ever since. I don’t want to ever sell it because I got the grandchildren, a grandson, so just keep it. Let it go on, just keep it in the family.... That’s what I want to do. Cause people ask about buying it but I didn’t want to sell it and I said I might have to lease it but [did not] after he came down” (Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth, interviewed April 14, 2015).

Mr. Arthur Welch is also a successful business person and entrepreneur who grew up in Natchitoches but settled in Los Angeles after serving in the Korean War. He had a highly successful career as an engineer in the aviation industry before returning to Natchitoches in 1990.

“Close to 1990, I think it was, my wife mentioned to me that our sons beginning to act-up, slamming doors and talking back; we had two kids then, always in trouble. Didn’t want to raise them in Chicago or take them back to Los Angeles so I decided to move here to raise them.... So I took a job with the Natchitoches Parish Police Jury as the planning director. Quite a few things I was able to accomplish, ordinances that are currently in operation,... the geographical information system in place, I did that; and this building [Old Courthouse] was one of the projects I had—the feasibility of converting this from a courthouse to a museum, successfully, I might add.... Went back into consulting for 10 years, [and] in 2002 I retired for the third time; this time it stuck.

“Before I came back I had been working on a design for a house for about five years. I don’t know quite what prompted me to build a round house, but it was intriguing to me.... I did build a round house. It’s two stories. The upper story is larger in diameter than the lower story. Half of the lower story, of course it was built on the ground, but I needed some backfill, so I had a fish pond dug and got the dirt out of the fish pond as backfill around that lower portion. The walls lean out on the upper story at eight degrees. There’s 32 windows in the house and most of them are four-by-fives. I can sit in my bedroom and look out across the rose bushes.

“My engineering, I think my gift of that type of career, stemmed from when I was a very small boy. Curiosity was embedded in me. My momma would leave the house, go to town shopping or something and I would get one of her appliances and I’d take the thing apart just to see how it would work. My challenge was to make sure I got it back together exactly as it was supposed to be, because if I had messed up something she had worked for, I know I would have really got it! I had an old motor scooter I used to hop up. I had that thing where it’s run 65 miles an hour with little bitty wheels.

“My foundation came from when I was in high school taking woodwork. I had a professor by the name of Cross who taught mechanical drafting. Professor Emmanuel taught woodwork. I learned to blueprint and I learned how to make things although it was in wood. When I got into aerospace industry as a machinist, converting from wood to metal was not that difficult and I did know how to read blueprints so I was well ahead. But I would look at the engineers—they were guys would come downstairs with their white shirts on and ties. I said ‘That’s really what I should do; I shouldn’t be working on a machine all the time.’ I did have the GI Bill and the company paid a great portion of my tuition, so I started school and finally became a mechanical engineer; but by that time I was a supervisor in the machine shop so, really, management was the direction that I went.... I had a technical career and a management career that paralleled throughout my life and I’ve been involved in managing technical people, but I’ve been the technical resource.

“The thing that I tell young people all the time, find your purpose; and knowing your purpose is many times as difficult. Not everybody knows exactly what they could or should be doing, but I tell them to find their purpose in paying attention to what you like to do—somewhere in there is your purpose” (Arthur Welch, interviewed February 10, 2015).

Education

“There were African American families that owned and still own lots of land and one of those persons was Augustus Bolden who was married to a relative of mine and he had a huge tract of land. He gave four and a half acres to build a school which became a Rosenthal School after they got it started. Prior to that there were three small African American schools in the three churches. Mt. Pilgrim had a school, Choctaw Island had a school, and Gilgal was going to start a school, so what they wanted to do was make one large school for the children from each of those areas: Erma, Luella, and Bayou Bourbeau. Augustus put this together and he worked with ... Julius Rosenthal to make a three-room school. So, people [may] look upon that area as just sharecroppers and workers or what have you but there were some very prominent people in the area” (Shirley Small-Rougeau, interviewed August 27, 2015).

Mrs. Wardworth attended school downriver. “I graduated from St. Matthews ... and when I finished high school, one of my teachers wanted me to come and live with her to take care of her children. That’s when I come on up there on Melrose [Plantation] and lived with one of my teachers, Ms. Jones” (Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth, interviewed April 14, 2015).

Mr. Arthur Welch graduated from high school in Natchitoches where he was a member of the renowned Serenaders music group. “I stayed with my uncle and his family when I went to first grade; but by second grade, I started walking to school and I’d walk to school every day, two and a half miles.... We moved to town when I was 13. I started high school, Mom and Dad bought a place in town and they moved. It was good I didn’t have to do all that walking, at least not as far.... Back at that time it was Natchitoches Parish Training School.”

“I’m one of the original Serenaders (Figure 53).... John L. Lewis ... was our lead trumpet player for the Serenaders while we were in high school. John L. went on to have a lifetime in music. He ran a band in the Seattle area for a good number of years [and] the State Department tapped him once to go to China to help spread jazz in China.... The Serenaders was a result of Professor L. C. Vaughn’s doing. Across the street from where Ben Johnson’s funeral home is, where Head Start Center is, there used to be a building that he used for a recreation building. L. C.’s kids would have an old record player and some scratched-up records we’d play. The kids would be trying to dance to it. They had a piano in there, kind of beat up. But one day the kids were up there playing and Professor L. C. came in and it was after he had come back from the Second World War; ... he had come back to get his Master’s at Columbia. He saw the kids trying to dance, so he got on the old piano and started playing, and that sounded pretty good. He did that again and one of the young fellows that had been in his band prior to going to the Second World War, his name was Richard Blount. Richard was a trumpet player [and] ... had an old beat-up trumpet so he played trumpet and L. C. on piano and the kids really had a good time. So I think from that, L. C. thought it would be worthwhile to try to get a dance band together and he did and we played from the Arkansas border all the way down deep into the southern part of the state.



Figure 53: The Serenaders, ca. 1960s (Urbach Collection, Cammie Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches)

“He started that band and pulled the best students he had out of the high school marching band. At that time we were youngsters, teenagers. We played at dances for night clubs; we played for white, black, whatever; we played for school proms; we played for about everything, and my mother and my dad didn’t have to pay money in my last few years in high school because I made money playing in the band.... A few of the original band members went on to have a career in music. Emile Dixon ran a band in Houston for some 45-50 years. Spiller went to the University of Kansas to the school of music and he was the music teacher there in Kansas City.... Overton had a fairly lengthy career in music, ‘Dr. Drip Drop.’ Overton would sing so hard, he’d get to perspiring, water would be dripping off him, that’s why they started calling him ‘Dr. Drip Drop.’”

After graduating from high school, Mr. Welch left Natchitoches to attend college at Texas Southern University in Houston, one of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. While waiting to enroll, he was drafted and entered service during the Korean War.

Spirituality and Religion

“Choctaw Island Baptist Church ... was organized in 1862.... Slavery was still going on,... but African Americans have worshipped in brush arbors and hidden cribs and barns and whatever forever. So Choctaw Island wasn’t built or constructed in 1862,... [but] was *organized*.... Those people formerly got together and worshipped in their own way. They were not one of the congregations that the slave owner allowed to worship and have a white minister lead the congregation. They did it on their own and ... I was told that their worship was a mixture of African and African American traditions. They had their homemade drums and they did the rituals that they knew from their own land and then what they had learned from the westerners.... I also knew that almost everyone that grew-up in my time, believed in Voodoo. They believed that a Voodoo doll could control things that happened to you. You know if someone wanted to put a ‘haints’ as we use to call it, on you. Then they could do so by putting pins or whatever into these dolls. They also had Voodoo dust. They also had ... you know about the rabbit’s foot?... It’s for good luck.... Usually people used those things to get to their enemies or to do something to them. I knew personally of two who lived right here in Natchitoches, but we are not going to name names....

“My grandmother was an herbalist and a midwife. Some people looked upon her as a Voodoo lady.... Everyone knew her as a sweet woman, but, ‘Oh you can go to this lady and get cured.’ Cause she did have cures but they were natural, herbalist formulas that she put together herself--her teas and so forth” (Shirley Small-Rougeau, interviewed August 27, 2015).

St. Mary Baptist Church on Cane River (Figure 54)

St. Mary Church is one of the few churches to maintain the tradition of the Mourners’ or Mourning Bench associated with the ceremony of baptism. The Mourners’ Bench plays an important part in the annual revival at St. Mary on the Cane. Its history and tradition is discussed by Rev. Ardonul Brinson and visiting minister, Otis Corley Sr. of Choctaw Island Baptist Church.

“The idea of baptism started back from many years ago when the Catholic Church was the dominant church in the civilized world. The Catholics believed in sprinkling and there were some members in the church who [believed in] submersion, carrying the candidate for baptism under the water. And, they used as a background for their belief ... what happened when ... John the Baptist was baptized in the River Jordan. Jesus came down to the baptism and John saw and he felt that he not baptize Jesus but he wanted Jesus to baptize him. But, Jesus said this unto John: ‘Suffer it to be so, to fulfill all righteousness.’ And, John did indeed baptize Jesus in

the river. From that standpoint of scripture, there was a group in the Catholic Church. They were called anti-Baptist and they broke away from the Catholic Church.... Another thing that Catholics believe was ... when a child was but a baby, they believe in baptizing that child by just sprinkling water on his head. So, this group opposed and they separated. They broke away from the Catholic Church. They were later called Baptists. And, so this tradition has been passed down through the years.... I believe that much of what we do in the Baptist Church is based upon tradition.

“The idea of the Mourners’ Bench, the mercy seeker, goes back to Old Testament scripture. What we do, we believe mostly what is found in the scripture. Now, in the third chapter of John, we find where it is written that there was a man by the name of Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night asking what must they do to be saved. And, Jesus knowing his thoughts, he told him that unless you be born again they say you cannot see the Kingdom of God. And, Nicodemus asked Jesus this question. He said, ‘Can a man be born when he’s old? Can a man enter into his mother’s womb for a second time?’ And, Jesus replied to him, ‘That which is born of flesh is flesh. And that which is born of spirit is spirit’ (Rev. Ardonul Brinson, interviewed August 27, 2015).

“It’s a tradition that’s been carried out over generations and generations and this purpose was to get those who were lost to the front where they could more better hear the word. And, in that process is whereby it had been said that they were being saved.... The Mourners’ Bench is a part of the service. It plays a great part of the service. It serves a great purpose.... The Mourners’ Bench does not save you but even if you are at the back of the church and you wanted to come forward and join the church and be part of the church, then do so. Because that would be a greater experience as well. Furthermore, the Mourners’ Bench is a great experience.



Figure 54: St. Mary Baptist Church on Cane River, Natchitoches (Sheila Richmond, 2011, Creole Heritage Center, Northwestern State University of LA, Natchitoches, LA)

“I went by the ritual that the old folks had set before us. There was a day set aside. When you felt like you were ready to join, when the preacher would reach forth his outstretched hands and say, ‘Come on and join us.’ That’s when I made my move because I knew exactly when the Lord had stepped into my life and made me.... I didn’t move on my own. He made me move.... The next step is the baptism.... If they joined the Mourners’ Bench tonight, most likely they would be baptized on Sunday morning.

“The Mourners’ Bench has been a great asset to the churches over the years, and that process in most churches now has been cut away.... As from the days of old, it became a part of us as ministers my age. Therefore, when we put folks on the Mourners’ Bench then we know where and who has not been saved or baptized. And so, therefore we know how to work and where to work.... In some churches it’s a dying tradition but in most of our older churches, it’s still a great tradition and we still carry it on” (Rev. Otis Corley Sr., interviewed June 24, 2015).

“Celebrate the History”

Mrs. Shirley Small-Rougeau is the president of the Natchitoches Parish Genealogical Association. She understands that genealogical research by African American families is complicated by a lack of records and has made accessibility of resources for African American family and cultural history two of the society’s goals. She is fortunate to possess a deep knowledge and understanding of her own family and community history through her family’s oral traditions as well as her own research. Mrs. Small-Rougeau emphasizes the lack of recognition and understanding of African American contributions to Natchitoches Parish, using as example the *bousillage* cottage known as Roque House (Figure 53) which was relocated from Isle Brevelle to the Natchitoches riverbank in 1967. The house was built ca. 1803 by Pacalé, a former slave whose carpentry skills allowed him to earn enough money to purchase his freedom and a tract of land on Cane (Red) River where he built the house that sits on the downtown riverbank today.

“We talk about some of the African-oriented buildings that exist here—this man, as far as I know, was an African American and he built that house. The black/African American community ought to be up in arms to claim that house for its rightful place in the community. Yes, it’s owned by whomever it’s owned by now and Mr. Roque did own it at some point; but when we go back to Prud’homme-Roquier or the Lemee [houses], other people owned it after them but it kept the names of the original owners or builders. Why not this house?...

“I like the location on the riverbank. I want it to be there where everybody can see it; but, the real story needs to be told. It’s on the plaque [on the building identifying its builder], but it’s not as significant as if the house was called after its original builder, who was Pacalé. So, we have not begun to look at that deeply, but I think that’s one of the things we do need to look at ... because we do have a significant history here, but no one knows our story—*our story*—his story, her story, *our story*. We need to somehow get people to recognize and celebrate the history of the African Americans in *this* community, *this* parish, because it’s parish-wide. There’s stories all over the parish that have never been told, so we need to tell *our story*” (Shirley Small-Rougeau, interviewed August 27, 2015).



**Figure 55: Pacalé/Roque House in its Original Location on Isle Brevelle, ca. 1960s
(Gregory Collection)**

Italians

Italians began to settle in Natchitoches in the colonial period. Among the first Italian immigrants to Natchitoches were architect, John Baptiste Trezzini, and his foreman, Joseph Soldini, who oversaw eleven brick masons and artisans who came with the builders from Italy in the early nineteenth century (Maggio n.d.). By 1850, twenty Italian-born settlers resided in the parish where they worked as merchants, masons, farmers, as well as a hotelkeeper, blacksmith, laborer, shoemaker, carpenter, and painter (Magnaghi 1986).

Sicilians began to migrate to the United States in waves in the latter half of the nineteenth century following agricultural failures and political problems. Among those who immigrated to Natchitoches was Sam Maggio from Cefalu, Sicily. Sadie Maggio Dark and Henry “Buddy” Maggio (Figure 56) are the children of Sam and Carmelite Maggio and help maintain and preserve the history and traditions of the Italian community and the Maggio family in Natchitoches.

“My mother [Carmelite] was born in Louisiana, and my father came from Sicily. When she was about four years old, they moved back to Sicily and she didn’t come back again until ... she and my father married. She was fifteen years old at that time. My father’s brother ... was the oldest one in the family, and he was married, and he and his family came here. Their first home was the Steel Magnolia house [Herman Cook Taylor house]. At that time it was on the sidewalk.

“It was a grocery store, and they lived in the living quarters ... behind the grocery store; and later on, of course, the house was moved back where it is now. My father came to see him when he was 16 years old, it was in 1895, and he stayed with them for four years. At that time,

Italy had compulsory military duty, and when he became twenty he had to go back for military service, so he went in the navy. He stayed there for four years, came back for another year, then went back and married my mother.

“When Pappa first came,... he came by way of New York, and New Orleans, and then to come up here to see his brother. He walked the railroad track to Natchitoches, stopping along the way to work in the cane fields. He worked for fifty cents a day in the cane fields, and today, we still have his machete that he cut the cane with.

“He did peddling, most of them started out with peddling.... The Jews started out peddling, the Italians, too.... They had vegetables, they had flour,... it was bulk stuff, they sold all that” (Sadie Maggio Dark, interviewed November 11, 2014).

“Whenever he was peddling, he had a horse and wagon, and he’d start out early in the morning. Mama had told him go all down Cane River and ... told him if he’d go to church first and start out later, he’d sell more. Sure enough, he caught more people home, and his business really increased” (Henry “Buddy” Maggio, interview November 11, 2014).



Figure 56: Henry “Buddy” Maggio and Sadie Maggio Dark (Lee 2014)

“About during the Depression time ... he had a grocery store, and his sister in ... Bayou Natchez, ... lost everything. They had money in the bank, and the Depression really hit ‘em hard. So Pappa just walked out of his grocery store and gave it to ‘em, and they moved to Natchitoches, and he went on into cobbler, to shoe repair business” (Sadie Maggio Dark, interviewed November 11, 2014).

“He went into the shoe cobbler business and he raised eleven kids out of that business. The war helped a whole lot, World War II. He was in debt like everybody else was.... Northwestern had a naval school here, and I worked with him in the shoe shop. I was in school, but every afternoon I’d have to work. I worked in the shoe shop to kind of keep the shoes

straight, and everybody [wore] about a nine and they all had black shoes—all about nine and nine and half. That was a hard, hard, hard job to do, keep the shoes straight!” (Henry “Buddy” Maggio, interview November 11, 2014).

“The shoes were rationed too, so everybody had to have their shoes fixed. He had a lot of property. A friend of his who had a Coca-Cola company and an ice company told my father, he said, ‘Put your money in property,’ so he did. That’s how he got into debt, really, he would put his money into property!” (Sadie Maggio Dark, interviewed November 11, 2014).

“But he didn’t buy farm land. He bought city lots—on corners, especially on the corners—and he built a house, had a house built on it rather, and then he rented the house out. Of course, he had more than one store, too, that he rented out” (Henry “Buddy” Maggio, interview November 11, 2014).

“It was on Second Street, then he had a cafe down there, a restaurant on Second Street, too, near the college; everything was near the college. The students could not have ... a car on the campus, and ... they had classes on the weekends, so they were here all weekend too—so that part of town was very active.

“The Depression didn’t hurt us so much because my father did have a huge garden. He just had a half a block of garden, and so we had plenty to eat, and the Italians from New Orleans would come up and they’d peddle spaghetti and hard cheeses and things, so we lived on spaghetti and tomato sauce. That came from Italy, you see, it always came in big boxes, so I never knew we didn’t have any food” (Sadie Maggio Dark, interviewed November 11, 2014).

“And the second oldest boy in the family, Charlie, he raised chickens and everything. It was during the Depression. We always had chickens to eat, and he had milk cows so we always had milk, and we really ... never had to go hungry, and Poppa had every fruit tree that you could think of in his place. I mean grape, orange, apple, persimmon—it just goes on and on—and all kinds of vegetables. He gardened; it wasn’t easy, but he really had a good garden.

“St. Joseph Altar, that was big, and just about every family had a private St. Joseph altar. I can remember when I was a little boy, I mean, Poppa had one, it was in the dining room. There was all kinds of food and everything, and how it got started, Cefalu had a famine way back, and they prayed to the saint that if they would have rain for the crops and everything, that they would do this, and they did it, and it’s still carrying on today. Natchitoches has it, it’s at the Knights of Columbus hall, and it was really, really big last year. More people came, a lot of people brought in, it’s no meat, everything is, it’s no meat, because it’s always during Lent on St. Joseph’s Day. So, you’d be surprised at how at the number of dishes you can have, you’d have some vegetables, fish, and sweets and everything they’d have down there” (Henry “Buddy” Maggio, interview November 11, 2014).

“Talking about the church, they’d have midnight Mass at the church, and after midnight Mass, we would have open house at the big house on Second Street there. We had ham, and all kind of things to eat. The people of the town, after Mass, would come out; because in those days, you couldn’t eat the day before Christmas, and at midnight Mass you could eat but you couldn’t have but one full meal, and you couldn’t have meat, it was just a day of fast. So before midnight Mass, of course, everybody was hungry, and for years—years and years—we had this open house after midnight Mass at that house.

“Every Christmas, Pappa’s Italian friends would come by to wish him a Merry Christmas. This would be in the big house.... Pappa would go to the sidebar, take out a bottle of bourbon, and fill tiny glasses with the liquor, each taking one, and a toast of ‘Merry Christmas’ was

proposed and with one gulp, down the train! I don't know how they drank that stuff. Through the years, his friends grew fewer and fewer. Finally, they were all gone, and now Pappa would toast Christmas with his sons and sons-in-law. Then one Christmas, he, too, was gone, but my brother, Ned, filling the small glasses, passed them to the other men in the family. He raised his glass, and wished a 'Merry Christmas', not to those present, but to the family members who had died. Each year thereafter, before we sat down to Christmas dinner, Ned gave the same toast, and each year, the list grew longer. Alas, the Christmas of '92, Ned was among those being toasted. Ned was the third son. That year, the women and children holding glasses of eggnog, cokes, or just plain water, joined the men. No family name was forgotten; someone would be sure to remember a dear one, and whisper his or her name. Then with raised glasses, 'Merry Christmas' would ring out. Some little one will always ask, 'Who was Mary; who was Uncle Johnny, who was this person?,' and an amusing antidote of each is told to them. There are no tears; we are not sad. We know our family will always remain together by this simple Christmas tradition" (Sadie Maggio Dark, interviewed November 11, 2014).

Northeastern Natchitoches Parish: Campti/Clarence
Associated Interviews: Amard Babers, Cheryl Rushing

Campti developed shortly after 1763 when Fort St. Louis near present Texarkana was closed by the Spanish. Displaced soldiers, traders, and their families associated with the small French fort at the upper Caddo villages officially drew back towards Natchitoches. Like the Brevels who settled below the town, these largely *métis* families sought remote and unclaimed tracts of land on which to establish habitations. One group crossed Red River and settled in family groupings near present Campti and Clarence. Campti was long a center for lumbering activities, and a Frost Johnson-owned sawmill was located there in the early twentieth century. The settlement of Clarence developed near the juncture where the old Harrisonburg Road connected to the El Camino Real. Once largely occupied by French Creoles and later Anglo-Americans, Campti and Clarence are now populated by predominantly African American families with long histories in the area. Horse culture remains strong among these families and many participate in riding clubs or work with horses in some capacity.

Amard Babers works with horses every day. He is a horseshoer and he is involved with local riding clubs.

"I've been [horseshoeing] ever since I was in junior high school. I may have been about fourteen years old, I'm 36 now, so, and hangin' around a lot of folks that I learned from, Mr. Ocie Charles, and Carl Hudson, and Mr. Willie Davis, Bernard Martin.... I got started with horses when I was about five or six. My dad, when I was a little kid, he would always go get my grandfather's horses and bring 'em to town to go ridin'. I used to get excited watchin' him ride the horse, and I would want to ride. Maybe a year or so later after that, he ended up buyin' his own horse, and it wasn't too long after that he bought me a little pony called Sam, and we would trail ride a lot, and that's how I got started. We would go to different trail rides we started back in the '80s, and we would go anywhere from Opelousas, Louisiana, up to Shreveport, Bossier City area, to areas in Natchitoches Parish, Campti, Clarence. We were just trail ridin', good family fun, family-oriented fun, and I've been ridin' ever since. It relaxes me when I ride and I just enjoy it. I mean, horses are my passion.

"When I got started, I would always come home, and get excited, and when dad bought my first horse, I would come home and, 'Dad, we goin' on a trail ride Saturday?' 'Well son, I've to work.' I would always want to find a way to the ride, and as I got older and got to be a teenager, we formed a club, a ridin' club, and when daddy worked, me and Mama and some of our other friends, we would go. We would didn't do nothin' but ride and visit with the other

folks and go to trail rides. But once my daddy had his off days, he would sacrifice and we would load up and go to a trail ride and ride the trails, and come back, eat, and go home.

“My daddy got up on the horses, and showed me how to ride, him and a couple of others, older friends. It may have been back in ‘87, somewhere along in there, a guy used to always throw me on the horse, and he told me I had better not jump off. I would get scared, and sometime I would jump off, and he would tell me, ‘You better not jump off the horse no more; jump off, I’m goin’ to whoop ya!’ So that pushed me to ride more. As I got older and got my own horses, I started ridin’, spendin’ more time, and learnin’ and figurin’ horses out—studyin’ ‘em, and figurin’ what this horse like and what I’ve got to use, because everything’s not comfortable for the horse, just like people. A certain set of shoes not comfortable to us; a bit may not be that comfortable for a horse, so we have to try a new bit.

“As far as the horseshoein’, I got started, I was at home one day, me and ... my daddy say, ‘Did the guy show up to shoe the horse?’ I say, ‘No.’ I got frustrated and say, ‘I’m going to shoe my own horse.’ One day, had some shoes layin’ around somewhere, and a friend of mine let me borrow some of his tools. I was nervous, and said, ‘I’m just going to take a chance,’ and I nailed my first shoe on my first horse and I’ve been doin’ it ever since then. I may have started back in ‘92, ‘93, when I first got started. As the years went on, I learned from different other people. Some things I did know, but you don’t know everything, and you never get too old to learn. I’ve gotten more advanced with a lot of things, and I’m thankful for a lot of people that I mentioned earlier, Mr. Carl Hudson and Ocie Charles, Bernard D. Martin, and Mr. Willie Davis” (Amard Babers, interviewed November 3, 2015).

Cheryl Rushing formed the Sweet Riders Club with her daughter, Shitaka Waldrup. When her daughter passed, Ms. Rushing carried on the club in her memory. The club’s membership includes men, women, and children of all ages who look forward to the scheduled trail rides. Most of the riding events begin on Friday and end either Saturday night or early Sunday morning; and since attendees are often provided with camping spots as part of the event, they will sometimes travel from various part of the state as well as from neighboring states.

“This club formed eight years ago, which would be 2008. My daughter, Shitaka Waldrup, she come up with an idea we needed our own club so we come up with the Sweet Riders.... It was so many clubs that we just couldn’t pick the right one so we decided to have one of our own. And my daughter is deceased, but we still keep it going.

“I had a son come in from Dallas. I had plenty of family from Shreveport; and they come from Houston. They come for our trail ride every year.... It’s important because I have so many grandkids and I try to keep them together and it brings other young people around and just keeps them in an orderly manner. And, we just have a good time with it. It’s very family oriented—my kids and grandkids, my daughter and a couple of outsiders and my husband.... The youngest member we have is 6 years old. The eldest member is myself. I am 54 and proud of it.

“Everything we do is in honor of my daughter, Shitaka Waldrup.... We have a scholarship. We give it out Central Louisiana, give a scholarship out once a year and all the clubs donate to the scholarship. We give it out every graduation year.... The most important thing for them to know is education. If it’s no education, they’re gonna be in a world of trouble. Because even my grandkids know if they don’t get the right education, you’re gonna have a bad life. Education is a lot. I have a granddaughter who is 17. She go to Northwestern [State University] and she work at the prison. I know the prison is not gone last forever, but the education ought to last til she die. So, that’s my big thing to let them know—education” (Cheryl Rushing, interviewed April 14, 2015).

Juke Joints, Dance Halls, and Music in the Cane River Region

Associated Interviews: John Oswald Colson, Lynell “Doc” Couty, Charles Roge, Doris Delouche Roge, Ginny Tobin

All up and down Cane River and in the region, juke joints and dance halls provided entertainment to white, African American, and Creole patrons alike (Figure 57). Some places were exclusive to one race or culture, while others were, in time, open to all. Clubs up and down the river maintained their own racetracks and ballfields where high-stakes gambling went on.

“I guess when I was young, the oldest one would’ve been across the river over there—Kirkland—Ashley Kirkland—Mrs. Virginia Kirkland and her husband.... They would have ballgames over there, and that was a really big thing when I was a small kid and I couldn’t go.... He had—it was a tremendous hall he had, dance hall—and behind there, he had a baseball field, because that was very popular. And he had a lot of people would come there all the time, and that would be the oldest one, I guess. And like the Metoyer brothers over here, Bubbá’s (Figure 58)—I didn’t go there because that was built in ‘42, so I was only four years old at that time. Most of [Bubbá’s clientele] were from your plantations, like from Melrose on that side and ... Matt Hertzog’s place and Melrose, that’s mostly the people that would go there on Friday and Saturday nights.

“[Kirk’s Hall was for Creoles] when he first built it. That was the intention, because I remember older people would go there. They would cross the river in a boat and go over there. Then they had the other one up there but it didn’t last very long—the Balthazars, Sammy Balthazar’s place. They had one later on; he had ... a store then he started selling alcohol.

“Just before I left from here, the Roque brothers opened up the Blue Moon. And, of course, Sonny Jones, but that was a grocery store down here by the bridge, and they had others. I hear ‘em talk about the Green Derby and the Brown Derby, that was around, one of ‘em was down around like Magnolia, and the other was, I think, around Derry.

“I think [Wood Antee] built the first hall in maybe ‘47 ... and then that one burned and he built the other one (Figure 59). But he had a good business there—a lot of people—and that lasted a long time, a very long time. It was still going when I left from here in ‘56.... It was exclusively for Creoles. It was funny, when I think about it today, people would come there and he’d say, ‘Well, you can’t come in,’ and they’d say ‘Well, why?’ ‘It’s for Creoles,’ he’d say. ‘What’s Creole?’ He’d say, ‘Now, I *know* you’re not going in!’... Then later on it changed. Then he started ... getting Yuke and Duma, I think. He got in touch with Al Ferrier up there to play at that time. So, he would let some of them come in, so that was okay” (John Oswald Colson, interviewed September 11, 2015).



Figure 57: Dancehalls and Juke Joints on Cane River, ca. 1920-2000 (Cloutierville Quadrangle 1937)



Figure 58: Metoyer Brothers, aka Bubbá's, established 1942 (Lee 2002)



Figure 59: Wood's Hall, aka The Friendly Place, Isle Breville (Lee 2002)

“Frenchie’s [Figure 60] was there in the ‘50s and that was a gravel road then too. We got married in ‘50, and long about then we’d go visit Sam down at Typo. We went by there one time and Ted said, ‘That’s Frenchie’s; that’s where Sam goes all the time,’ so I’m sure it was still open then, too, ‘51, ‘52, along in that time” (Ginny Tobin, interviewed November 6, 2014).

“There was a store, Compton Place, which we lived right next to by Melrose on the west side of the bridge. I got introduced to music because, [it was] my love, I guess. I was lonely; I wasn’t with my twin. I’d always just ... go and play the jukebox in the Big Band Era—Glenn Miller, Ernie Shaw, Flip Flop and Fly, even before.... Really, the gentleman that got me into music, and a lot of things have not been said about this gentleman on the river, his name was Ian Jones. I believe the name Ian was in French but I think his name was Allen Jones. He had two sons that played with him, Boobie and Toddie. That was one of my first times listening to people play. He played at all the homes and different other places.

“That’s before the time of Kirkland Hall.... I’m trying to define this from where St. Augustine Church is. If you would cross and go to Melrose, ... the last place on the end was called Sammy Balthazar Place. And, that was one of the hangouts. Everybody hung out and most of the places were really jukeboxes back then too. It wasn’t very many bands. And, a lot of people think there was a lot of bands, but there wasn’t. There were house bands and these bands that played over there. I’m not quite sure, Ian Jones, Yuke and Duma use to play at that place, but the name of it was Sammy Balthazar.

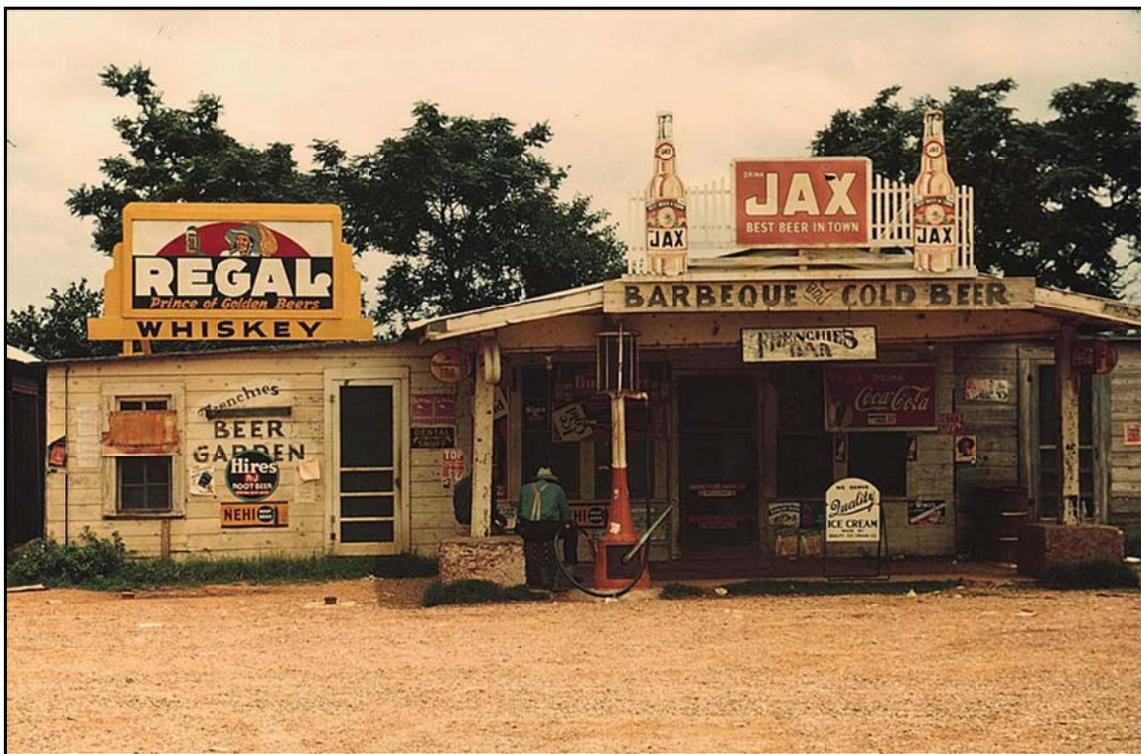


Figure 60: Frenchie’s Beer Garden, Bermuda (Marion Post Wolcott 1940c. Farm Security Administration, Library of Congress [LOC]; see full citation in References Cited)

“Kirkland,... now that was the big, big show.... I was too young to go to the dances but he would have name bands there. I remember Fats Domino playing there.... They would do the dance on Sunday night for some reason. You know, people worked all weekend, but they would

party Sunday evening and had to go back work in the fields ... on Monday morning. And, it was a big, big thing.... The blacks could go there [but] when the dance started, they couldn't go in the hall which I could never understand.... They could stay outside, [but] they couldn't go in.

“Duncan's Hall, I really don't know too much about that. I've heard talk of it, who played there, and I think I know where that place sat—that's between Melrose and ... Hyman Cohen's plantation.... I vaguely remember that place.... I was too young.... About the Green Derby, I don't know too much about that. In fact, the building stayed there for some time and the building was actually green.

“[The Jungle Bar] was a real striving place at one time. If I'm not mistaken, Little Richard played there, B. B. King, a lot of the people that. You got to remember a lot of these people played in dives like every other band. A lot of people don't understand that when you talk about musicians. They didn't just come up being a name. They had to work for it, so there was a lot of bands that played there” (Lynell “Doc” Couty, interviewed August 14, 2015).

Although Wood's Hall and Kirk's Hall drew Creoles from up and down Cane River, few Creoles ever entered Bubbá's which served almost exclusively African American plantation workers.

“We did household parties, clubs, card clubs, and then, of course, we always went to church for activities. We always had little dances of whatever. We had organizations that we would have parties for the holidays and stuff.... I was never in Bubbá's, I was never in Wood's.... I did go to Kirkland's. My mother let me go a couple of times. Of course, she went too, and even after I was dating Sonny, the only time I got to go was the time she went with me.... Fats Domino played there and ... it was wonderful, the first time I ever went, and another time or two, but I don't remember the bands. All my friends were going, and ... I was dating Sonny and we went” (Gloria Sers Jones, interviewed January 8, 2015).

“Now that was a jumping place.... AI got older and moved back here, I got to know Bubbá and his brother. It wasn't a really nice place to go to but it was a good place to go to if you want to have fun. And, he had blues bands from Alexandria, different types of bands that he had. I don't know if Mr. Ian Jones or Yuke and Duma played there.... I don't think they would have played there anyway because it was a place where the plantation owner furnished for people to go and party” (Lynell “Doc” Couty, interviewed August 14, 2015).

In addition to those on Cane River, there were a number of clubs in the town of Cloutierville and in eastern Natchitoches Parish.

“Red, White, and Blue--the old Charleville store—became a honkytonk.... When I was a kid, it was a very popular place to go on Saturday night, except for me—my mother didn't let me go, and I don't imagine his mother would have approved either.... That was before you could not go in and drink until you were 21. You could go in when you were thirteen!

“There was a place on the riverside called the Brown Derby.... Really it was La Carnadelle ... from Carnahan and Delouche... They had a nightclub there, and a bar, dancehall. People would go on Saturday nights with their families, and on one end of the Brown Derby, as we called it—it had changed its name by then—on one end there was a bunch of chairs, and that's where the ladies and the children sat, and on this end was the band that played and the bar, and that's where the men sat and drank. When the band would play a good number for dancing, they'd go get their lady and dance and then bring her back and go back to the other end, and it was a family type thing with open drinking, and nobody thought too much of it. Every once and awhile there'd be a fight, and finally with the fights, the women got to where they didn't want to go” (Doris Delouche Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

“One night they had a big fight at the Brown Derby there, and Yuke and Duma was playin’, and they got scared, and the one playin’ the bass fiddle, threw it out the back window; jumped out the window and jumped right on his bass fiddle and busted it up! Of course, the building was built right on kind of a bluff bank.

“Dewey [Browder] and his wife used to have an outdoor movie, had Poor Boy’s saloon.... Then come down to Derry, they had the club there, right on Cat Island Road and Hwy. 1, that little building used to be a nightclub. Then you come into Cloutierville, we had what is the Southern Bar now.... It was the White Elephant, and in downtown Cloutierville, we had the Red, White, and Blue, before it burned, and we had Boo’s Place.

“Back then at that time, I would say we had close to twelve nightclubs in the parish. Had the Lake Club out on Clear Lake, Black Lake; had what we used to call the Old Folks Home.... I can’t think of the name of it now, but it was a nightclub where elderly people, no kids, very, very few young people, but they had their own kind of club. We had the Lake Club, right out of Campti, out there, and then we had the Black Lake Club, the black club behind the Lake Club.... The Cherokee was opened after that time. Then they had ... a club out on [Hwy.] 480, up toward the paper mill, and then came down to Clarence, they had a club just north of Clarence, then they had a black club just south of Clarence, and then you get on this side of the river, they had ... Williams Club on Old River Road ... and then you came down Cane River, you had Bubbá’s on one side, and you had the French, ... the Friendly Place across the river” (Charles Roge, interviewed January 7, 2015).

“We in the music field, we never had no prejudice that I can recall. We were all one musician, one family; and even right now, if you look at the music, we all look at one another as musicians not the color of your skin—Creole or what you are—which is a blessing. Music brought people together. That’s why I love music so much” (Lynell “Doc” Couty, interviewed August 14, 2015).



Figure 61: The LaCour Brothers crossing Cane River on the way to play at a dance, c. 1940 (Ida Conde Collection, Creole Heritage Center, Northwestern State University of LA, Natchitoches, LA)

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**ORAL HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS WITH TRADITIONALLY
ASSOCIATED PEOPLE OF CANE RIVER CREOLE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

**Oral History and Ethnographic Interviews with Traditionally Associated People of
Cane River Creole National Historical Park**

**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

**Interviewee: Amard Babers (Campti)
Interviewed November 3, 2015**

**Time of interview: 00:36:13
Transcribed 11/21/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

Farrier Demonstration and Gaited Horses Information

36:13

00:00

AB: What I'm fixin' to do, I'm preparin' to tie his tail to keep it out of the way. I'm goin' to keep it out of the way while I'm shoddin' so he won't be swattin' me with his tail as I get ready to shoe. 'Easy son' [addressing the horse]. Alright, got the tail tied. I'm preparin' to shoe him, he's what you call an American Saddlebred, crossed with Tennessee Walker, and he had to be shod a certain way. What we do, we put a weighted shoe on the front of him and a regular shoe on the back. Weighted shoe keeps him level, and gives him a little bit more lift, keeps him solid in his gait. So what I'm preparing to do now is take the old shoes off, and clean his feet up, and get the new shoes ready for him. Usually, most of the time, us farriers keep the old brass, and knock the old shoes out to keep from building up [inaudible]. [filing noise] I'm just knockin' the old [inaudible] loose. 'Easy son.'

01:37

These are what I call my pullers. We pull the old shoe off. 'Easy son.' Most time their feet be full of dirt and stuff, so what I usually do is take, this is what we call a hoof knife, and what we do is just kinda clean that out, get all that out of there. This is an old shoe on, and this is what we call a toe-weight shoe, and ninety percent of your gaited horses, we put on 'em, keep 'em at a level gait, keep 'em from skippin' out of their gait, and some of 'em use 'em to kinda get a horse a more high lift when they travel. So I'm going to go ahead and pull this one off.

02:24

Now what I'm doing, I'm getting' the foot ready, fixing it up for the new shoe. It's not painful, just as long as I don't dig too deep and get in the wrong spots, and they have a certain surface they call a wall, where you have to [inaudible] in it, and they have an area they call a quick. You don't want to get in that quick, and I'm going to get to that in a minute. What I'm doing, I'm cuttin' this horse's foot out to get it at a certain angle.

03:13

One other thing with the gaited horses is once we show 'em, some of 'em have to be shod at a certain angle to keep 'em from back on their ankles so it won't be so painful and so much pressure, want to kinda keep 'em up or either level. So, on this horse here, what we're goin' to do, I'm goin' to take some of his heel down, and we're goin' to kinda get him stood up just a little bit and not too far back or level, but standin' up on his ankle a little bit. This here is what you call your hoof clipper, like your toenail clipper or fingernail clip. 'Easy son.'

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RT: You're clipping where the old shoe was?

AB: Exactly, and I'm clipping out his old excess, like you might want to say like your fingernails just grow and you want to cut 'em back some. See, I'm cuttin' all that off and so I take my knife and just kinda go around there a little bit and get it level. Now, I keep my new rasp sharper, and what I'm doin' is takin' that toe out. 'Easy son, easy.' See how I'm gettin' the foot all pretty there and dress up, make it all even so that shoe can fit flush to the hoof.

05:15

What we're goin' to use here is what you call a plantation pleasure shoe. It's a weighted shoe and it serves the same purpose as my old shoe as what I had, the toe weight, not much difference, just has a heel on it, which gives the horse more incline. Ok, what happens here usually, the shoe is a little bit bigger. You know, we go to the shoe store and buy shoes, we know our shoe size. Well, this is what we call sizing the shoe for a horse, so I'm about to work on that. This is my anvil. This shoe is a little bit wide, so I'm goin' to close it in just a little bit.

06:13

So, now what I'm doing, I'm going back over here, makin' sure that I've got a close fit. I've got a little bit of over it, so, I'm goin' to go in just a tad bit more. 'Easy son.' [inaudible] a special shoe we use, it takes a certain size nail. As we use tennis shoe strings to tie our shoes up, or boots we slip 'em off. This here shoe takes anywhere from a No. 6 to a No. 7 nail, which is a bigger nail, got my magnet for my nails here. Now, I've got my shoe fit, now once I go to nailin', goin' to take and aim your nail a little bit.

RT: You're aiming at the outside?

AB: To the outside

08:19

And when you're nailin', you want to make sure that you're lookin' on the outside of your hoof and makin' sure your nail's coming out the way it's supposed to be, because in some cases they can turn, and go in what they call the quick, which a horse will let you know that, they're goin' to snatch their foot once they feel that pain. And on some shoe, you use anywhere from eight to six nails. If you've got a horse that's got a pretty strong hoof, you pretty much want to use just six holes, and as you can see, I've got all my nails lined up.

09:09

This is what you call your clinch block. I put it over the top of the nail to tighten the shoe down. 'Come on son, easy.' What I do is start from one side. Now what I'm doing is pull that nail down and tighten that shoe, tighten up the pressure on that shoe to lock it in place. Take all my nails, I'm goin' to cut 'em, goin' all the way around. Then I've got my finishin' rasp, and what I do is bring that hoof to the shoe. They call this dressin' it up.

RT: You've done this how long?

10:31

AB: I've been doing this ever since I was in junior high school. I may have been about fourteen years old, I'm 36 now, so, and know, hangin' around a lot of folks that I learned from, Mr. Ocie.

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Charles, and Carl Hudson, and Mr. Willie Davis, Bernard D Martin, and different others.

RT: The old ones were coming out of Natchitoches or Campti?

AB: All of 'em were from Natchitoches except Mr. Willie Davis, he's from Haughton, which is Bossier City.

RT: When you're getting ready for a ride, they come to you, not just for shoeing, but you were talking about some training.

11:11

AB: Yeah, in some cases a lot of time, people call me, 'Well, I'm goin' to a ride, I need shoein',' and then I have some people that will call and want their horses shod, I mean ridden out, they say, 'Man, I need you to put some time on my horse. I want it ready by a certain month, I'm goin' here, I'm goin' there.' So, with that being said, I take on that little responsibility as well as trainin' horses.

11:45

Now, this is what I call my nail clincher, which it pulls the nail down. Then what I do is take this and just kinda go over my nails a little bit, knock the little rough edges off, and now I'm finished with that foot.

RT: If they cooperate?

AB: If they cooperate like this one here, I mean, he's been shod a number of times. Now, here, what I'm doing different on the back, like I say, some of 'em are shod different, it just depend on where the horse need the weight at, and where the horse needs more help at, if it's in his back or if it's in his front, and we have started some with the weight on the back, and this horse here, he's more naturally gaited, and we just put a weight on the front just to keep him level. He knows his job, but he only needs just a regular shoe on the back.

12:58

Saddlebreds, once training 'em, it may take a couple of years before they really reach their completion stage. As to showing, they still show them but some of them don't reach their full potential until they get five or six. Some may be fast learners, but they shoe the horses with what's best for them. Some may not need as much weight on the front. They may put a weighted shoe, and it may be a light shod shoe, which is some weight to it, but it's not as heavy, and then they use what they call a hind shoe. It kinda turns the horse out in the back.

RT: Do people tell you what shoe they want, or do they ask you to pick for them?

13:39

AB: Well, the trainer, it depends upon the trainer and what he has goin' on with the horse at the time, 'cause he's the only one ridin' and feelin' the horse, and he may say, 'my horse is weak in the back end,' he may say, 'I need a little weight in the back end,' as to he may need a little lift in the front end. Sometime they may make shoes, I have seen homemade shoes, and like I say, a lot of times they're watchin' the horse, watchin' their movement, and they'll see that the horse has some potential, and they may be just have a little bit weak as to a point. They have some lift in their front end, they're coming up high, but not quite as high, and they may say, well, they're riding their horse, and they feel their horse's attitude and feel like, 'well, ok, this horse can do it, I know he can, let's try to go a little more to his shoe,' and that's what they'll do, and they'll work 'em about thirty days, forty-five days, maybe some

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ninety days, but that still doesn't mean that they can't show. They have qualifying stages that they have to go through.

14:47

As for me dealing with the Saddlebreds, I like ridin' 'em for pleasure. I like trainin' 'em, gaitin' 'em, takin' 'em on trail rides, and goin' to the small shows, which the small shows just consider puttin' 'em in a gait, a slow rack, or a fast rack, and it really consists of them being consistent. They can't be off their gait, they can't be skippin', they can't be rearin' up, hoppin', none of that. So, those are the things they look for, they have judges in the show, but for the most part, the showing part can be a little difficult at times. You might have a horse with a bad hoof, a piece of foot's broken out, you try to correct it, you can't get it in a certain hold. They make supplements that you can use to heal that hoof in, and stuff that you can feed 'em, different things like that.

15:42

Now, to my other speed horses, I use those at speed events at what we're competing at what they call grudge matches. Some of those need weight on their feet, some of 'em don't. The main thing of it is, you want to make sure they're in the gait, they don't skip out of their gait when you're racin' 'em, and it's like little small races as we call 'em, we go to races. I have certain friends, they put on a trail ride, and they may have a track or a field, and they have what you call a straight away, and we'll start from one end, finish at the other end, but the key to it is, your horse have to be gaited. For the most part, I love my speed horses 'cause I can keep up. The Saddlebreds are kinda more like your Cadillacs, and you find some 'em, they do have speed, but a lot of times, you run into some of 'em now, is more a lot of 'em ride for style.

16:42

So, what they do now, they cross 'em up with what you call a pacin' horse, which you asked about early, and by that happenin', the pacin' horse gives a little more speed, and when you havin a Saddlebred or walking horse, you have speed and style with it. Well, when you get ready to kiss at that horse, and smooch at him, or touch him with your rein, gets him a little faster for you, that away, you can keep up, but it's really relaxing.

17:12

The Saddlebreds, I'm not goin' to lie, their temperament, sometime they can be a little high nature. They may get freaky, get nervous and may jump from side to side, but when you cross 'em up sometime, you can kinda calm it down and take it out of the horse in the baby. The baby may not be as nervous as the mama or the daddy was. Not all Saddlebreds are bad, mostof 'em are real gentle. You might find some, depending on the parents, and what parents they come from, they may take that hotness, and what I mean by the hotness is, for example, you may find a child that's real hyper, that can happen in horses. They can get a little hyper at times, and you find some people that don't know much about horses, 'ooh, I'm scared,' scared of their horses, so you have to be careful with 'em sometime.

RT: Now, you mentioned that this is an American saddle.

AB: American Saddlebred.

RT: Saddlebred, and that one to your rear...

18:16

AB: She's an American Saddlebred with Pacer.

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RT: With Pacer, that's the mix you're talking about?

AB: Yeah.

RT: So that means she's going to be a little bit faster.

AB: She's going to be a little bit faster, but she's more calm, and he's a Tennessee Walker crossed with Trotter. The Trotter is something like the Pacer, they pull a buggy as well, but one trot and one pace, but with him being crossed, he's going to be more of a gaited horse like I was saying about the walkin' horse and the Saddlebred. Now, back to the Saddlebreds, for example, if you find one that we can't get to rack or gait, what they'll do, they'll put 'em in what they call a three-gaited class, and they have what they call a trot, and the trot is really a high lift, and what they do, they show them, and they look for the uniqueness in their trot, and that's how a lot of 'em qualify, and they have to have the right confirmation and the size, the right body structure. I have seen 'em even move some of the Saddlebreds to the sales because of their confirmation is off. They'll get rid of 'em if their toe turn the wrong way, if their feet grow out. I have seen 'em get rid of 'em for narrow, if their chest are narrow, they're not wide-framed horses. You know, and what we'll do, like me, I pleasure ride, we'll buy those types of horses in [inaudible] around here, and they may look good to us country folks around here, to where they didn't make the show, or they didn't qualify, and they may turn out to be some nice animals. Now, not all of 'em are bad. Y'all have any more questions?

RT: You were talking about earlier how you got started.

20:16

AB: Okay, I got started with horses when I was about five or six. My dad, when I was a little kid, he would always go get my grandfather's horses and bring 'em to town to go ridin'. I used to get excited watchin' him ride the horse, and I would want to ride, and maybe a year or so later after that, he ended up buyin' his own horse, and it wasn't too long after that he bought me a little pony called Sam, and we would trail ride a lot, and that's how I got started. We would go to different trail rides, we started back in the '80s, and we would go anywhere from Opelousas, Louisiana, up to Shreveport, Bossier City area, to areas in Natchitoches Parish, Campti, Clarence. We were just trail ridin', good family fun, family-oriented fun, and I've been ridin' ever since. It relaxes me when I ride, and I just enjoy it, I mean, horses are my passion.

When I got started, I would always come home, and get excited, and when dad bought my first horse, I would come home and 'dad, we goin' on trail ride Saturday?', 'well son, I've to work.' I would always want to find a way to the ride, and as I got older, and got to be a teenagers, we formed a club, a ridin' club, and when daddy worked, me and mama, and some of our other friends, we would go, and we would didn't do nothin' but ride and visit with the other folks, and go to trail rides, but once my daddy had his off days, he would sacrifice, and we would load up and go to a trail ride, and ride the trails, and come back, eat, and go home, and my daddy got up on the horses, and showed me how to ride, and him and a couple of others, older friends. It may have been back in '87, somewhere along in there, a guy used to always throw me on the horse, and he told me I had better not jump off, and I would get scared, and sometime, I would jump off, and he would tell me, 'you better not jump off the horse no more, jump off, I'm goin' to whoop ya.' So that pushed me to ride more, and as I got older, and got my own horses, I started ridin', spendin' more time and learnin', and figurin' horses out, and studyin' 'em, and figurin' what this horse like, and what I've got to use, because everything's not comfortable for the horse, just like people. A certain set of shoes not comfortable to us, a bit may not be that comfortable for a horse, so we have to try a new bit.

22:46

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As far as the horse shoein', I got started, I was at home one day, me and my daddy, my daddy say, 'did the guy show up to shoe the horse?' I say, 'no.' I got frustrated and 'I'm going to shoe my own horse.' One day, had some shoes laying around somewhere, and a friend of mine let me borrow some of his tools, and I was nervous, and said I'm just going to take a chance and I nailed my first shoe on my first horse and I've been doin' it ever since then. I may have started back in '92, '93 when I first got started, as the years went on, I learned from different other people. Some things I did know, but you don't know everything, you know, and you never get too old to learn, and I've gotten more advanced with a lot of things, and I'm thankful for a lot of people that I mentioned earlier, Mr. Carl Hudson, and Ocie Charles, Bernard D. Martin, and Mr. Willie Davis.

I went to a seminar before and seen some things I did learn, and now, I've become, some people say I make it look easy, it's easy to me. I'm not goin' to sit here and say that everything I do is easy, I run into some cracks sometimes, and I don't know, and I have to pick up the phone and call one of my old horseshoein' buddies, and say, 'hey, you know, I've got a problem here. This horse's hoof here is high on one side, and low on the other side,' or 'what can I do to get this horse even?' Or I may have a horse, he's buckling his legs, you know, corrective shoein' is what we call it, tryin' to correct him, make sure he's comfortable, make sure he's not scraping his feet, and different things like that in that area.

RT: You mentioned you started a club?

AB: LA High Steppers.

RT: They still exist.

24:30

AB: Yeah, we still exist now, 28 years, and we're getting' ready for our annual trail ride here, October 9th and 10th, and what really made me get more into my horses after losin' my mom, that day after that, I knew that she would've want me to stay positive and stuff, and after the funeral, I took off with it and I say I'm goin' to go ahead and continue to ride, and continue to get more into my horses, and stuff. I seen a lot of stuff work in my favor, and it's been an excitin' adventure, and I've traveled many different places, from Arkansas to Mississippi to Texas. I've even, back in '99, I even got a chance to go to Ohio to, we went up by the Little Brown Jug, that's a race track up in Ohio, before we got there, we stopped in Kentucky at the Red Mile, and I asked the guy a chance to ride a horse, under the buggy, on the Red Mile, tried out to see if I wanted to buy, it was an adventure. As a matter of fact, it was Mother's Day of 1999, and it was a real excitin' adventure up in Kentucky, got to pass by and see different things, and see the old time barns, and stuff like that, and the stands where everybody's sittin', the announcin' booth, and stuff like that.

RT: Will you go over, when someone comes in with their horse to have that done.

25:59

AB: Well, usually on a regular shoe job, you're looking at \$65. Some people are doing it for a livin', they go \$85, and we have different type of shoe, *shoeings* that have to be done. I have seen 'em run up to maybe \$125, it just depends on, now they have what you call a draft horse, and they have what you call a very large foot, and the shoes for those is costly. I mean, a pair of those shoes, I think, range from about twenty something dollars just for two, so doin' one of those, you're lookin' at \$125, \$150, it just *varize*. Some people in the city charge more, we down here in the country, you know, prices *varize* from time to time. You may have, you know, people that do it for a livin' and they have these prices, you know, and with that bein' said, a lot of time what people do when we charge, we look at our material. Sometime it may go up, you know, we may buy a box of nails, today they may be \$13, couple of weeks, they may jump up to \$15, you never know, so the shoes, when I was a kid, the shoes used to be about four or five dollars, but now you go in the store, they're nine, ten, some places even

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\$15, just for a set of regular shoes. Now, a pair of weighted shoes used for the Saddlebred and the walkin' horse, just for a pair, \$16, somewhere in that range, thirteen, sixteen dollars.

RT: So, this is not something you do every day for a livin'?

27:47

AB: No, I work for the city of Natchitoches, utilities. I do that for eight hours a day, and when I get off, I have customers sometime. They schedule appointments to get shod, and I get off work, and I go and maybe do two or three a day, I have done seven, and I have had days where I'm off work, and I've done thirteen. I have shod some, and trimmed some, all of them were not just shoe jobs, but I have done fifteen horses. It's some back-breakin' work, I mean, I hurt some days. You know, once you try to keep your back in shape, it ain't so bad, but sometime, you could sit there later, and you might not shoe no horses in two or three months, and your back, you go to shoe horses again, you're goin' to be a little bit stiff and sore, tryin' to get back in shape. Like, I've been doin' a little bit of trimming and shoeing this week, that horse I'm workin' on now, and when shoeing gaited horses, we leave a little bit of toe on there so they'll have more reach.

RT: Can you say your name, spell it for me?

AB: Amard Babers.

RT: We're here at the home of Mr. Babers, here in Campti, Louisiana, and he's going to be talking to us about the different types of horses. What makes one different from another, and anything else he wants to tell us.

29:32

AB: Okay, this is American Saddlebred. They're known to be an universal horse. They're known to be three-gaited or five-gaited. You have what you call your walk trot, your fast rack, your slow rack, and your canter, and a lot of people use 'em for pleasure, they use 'em for shows, for trail riding. They're even used in dressage events. It's just to whatever to your liking and what you're looking for in a horse. Some of 'em don't turn out to be five-gaited, and they use 'em in three-gaited shows, which you have your walk trot and your canter. This mare here, she is what you could consider as a five-gaited horse. What I do is, I train all my horses for rack and gait, I enjoy the smooth four-beat lateral gait. I have different breed of horses. I have what you call a cross Standardbred and Saddlebred, which they could be used for speed or style, or you could use for trail riding or pleasure as well.

30:41

Training 'em, some can be easy, some can be hard, it's just like tryin' to train a child up, you know, some respond well and some don't. This mare here's been an awesome horse, I don't have any complaints with her. When I first started trainin' her, I threw two-year, three-year old babies in, led 'em around, and I mean, within two weeks, she was ready to go, some respond easy you know. When trainin' these horses, it's a lot of different steps you have to take, if you train 'em to show, like the professional shows, they prep 'em up, sometime. Once they start 'em, they'll start 'em out get 'em walkin', makin' sure that the confirmation is right, and getting' 'em goin' straight, and turn right to left, and once they get ready to gait them, they don't worry about no shoes for a long time, until they see how the horse is goin' to turn out. As to this horse here, she has a weighted shoe on the front

31:47 to 32:13, recording skips

32:14

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AB: Probably won't take me long to finish him, I probably can stand it, but as long as they're not snatchin' on you, kickin' on you and throwin' you all over the place, it's not too bad, you can kinda position yourself.

RT: What's the worse experience you've had?

AB: I had a horse snatch his foot out of my hand before I could bend the nail down, and cut my hand wide open, and I had to have like twelve stitches and one other experience I had, I was shoeing a horse, and he was standing still, he was lettin' me shoe him, and all of a sudden, he snatched his foot, and he just, I was standing up under him, and he jumped, he was tied to a horse trailer, and he jumped clean over me, and when, he was tied up, but he had a little slack in his rope where he could move, and he jumped over me, and I jumped back from up under him, and that was the first experience, and the next one I had was when the horse snatched his foot from me and cut my hand open.

RT: So over all, it goes pretty smooth?

AB: It's pretty smooth. If I have customers, they've never been shoed before I get there, and I have been kicked, that's another scenario. I've had horses that kicked me, had 'em laid on me, put their weight on me, so it's a lot that come with it, but now, not to say I'm older, but I'm getting wiser, and a lot of my customers, I let 'em know now, *'hey, make sure you're horse is gentle, I'm not going to be shoeing no wild horses, you know.'*

RT: And the last thing, is there anyone you're training now to pick up what you're doing?

33:47

AB: Well, I have one friend sometime, but he's playing basketball, and his name is C. J. Small, and sometimes, he helps me from time to time, but right now, it's just me right now. I don't have no extra help right now, every now and then, I have a friend come and help me, but right now, it's just me by myself takin' it on.

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Interviewee: Barbara Bailey

Interviewed November 7, 2014 at the home of Barbara and Doyle Bailey by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:45:53

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Verbal consent recorded]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is November 7, 2014. I am in the home of Mrs. Barbara Bailey and Mr. Doyle Bailey. We are working in conjunction with the Cane River Oral History Project and I'm asking Ms. Doyle now if she will give us permission to use this information today as a part of our interpretive program and things with the park service? So, do we have your permission to use this video?

BB: Yes, you do have ... you do have.

RT: Okay. The reason that we're speaking with Ms. Barbara this morning is because of her connection with the Derbanne family and so today she is just going to share with us whatever she wants to share about that family. Maybe if we could just start with how you are a part of that family.

BB: Okay, I'll be glad to do that. My mother's maiden name is Lestage. (BB shakes her head as though that information is incorrect). My mother's maiden name is LaCour but my grandmother was a Lestage and if you go three generations back, both my great-grandmother and great-grandfather were Lestage. And, if you go back just two or three more generations you find that Narcisse Lestage married Appeline or Pauline Derbanne. Sometimes they called it Derbane, sometimes they called it Derbone, but that's the connection so it's just a few generations back from me and then if you follow that, if you keep going with the Derbannes, it takes you all the way back to the first one who was Francois Dion Dupre Derbanne. He was, as I understand it from what I've read, he was Canadian-born but he was an explorer and I don't think he was part of the Canadian Marines as St. Denis was but I do know that he was an explorer and an adventurer. So, we find him first of all along the Gulf coast. In Dauphin Island, in Mobile [AL], those places his name comes up.

So, as I understand from... in my little collection of documents, is that he was assigned to Natchitoches from there. And, there is a record of him coming through Natchitoches in the early 1700s and I know that by 1716, he was here at the fort (Ft. St. Jean Baptiste). In the meantime, he took several other men, Frenchmen of course, everything was French. So, he took several men with him and they went to an expedition from Natchitoches all the way to the Rio Grande and their mission was to go to Mexico City., I don't have all of the information about that but I do have a copy of his journal that he made and he talks about crossing the Trinity River. He talks about the mules and how some of the Indians, and I think perhaps Apache, I don't know whether he knew at the time which tribe they were but, they stole all their mules and their horses so he had quite an adventure going from Natchitoches to Mexico City or at least to the Rio Grande.

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Then, another bit of information that we have is that he was assigned then. And you know back then, there were assignments made or ... I guess assignments, I'll just call it that. Appointments maybe that might have been that were made by the king. So, at the time of this Derbanne, King Louis the 14th and 15th were kings in France. So I don't know whether he was on an appointment by the king, who would have been Louie the 14th or whether it was one of those companies that came over here. Remember the companies who would come to make money? They would hire people to do things so it could have been with one of those. I don't really know exactly how he got going in Natchitoches and who supported him at that time. But, I do know that he was appointed and became the first storekeeper and paymaster for the Canadian Marines at the very first fort with St. Denis and the date I have is 1716. So, that means that my Lestage family on my mother's side goes all the way back and that would be nine generations from myself. So you count back nine generations and so my 9th generation great-grandfather was the first Derbanne that we were talking about that came to the fort that early. So, he didn't leave any land for us or money. It didn't stretch this far to nine generations, but he did leave us some history which I'm very pleased to be able to have and to ,, We're still finding out information about him and what he did here, where he went and what he did.

RT: Very good. That's the kind of information we're looking for. Now, I understand that you were born here in Natchitoches?

BB: Yes, yes. I was born in Natchitoches. My family has been here since that time, the early 1700s. Not just the Lestages but some of the other French names as well. So, on my mother's side, there is nothing but French as far back as you can go with a little sprinkling of other... maybe like Jean de la Grand Terre, who was the wife of Francois that were talking about , [she] would have been Native American. Then, I think there may have been a Spanish influence somewhere along the way but I don't have all of those records. But, I was born here so when my grandparents ... I remember a couple of generations back. I remember my great-grandmother who was the granddaughter of the Derbanne marriage way back then. I remember her and she spoke only French. She didn't speak... She spoke only to me in French because she always spoke French. That was her language. She didn't speak English. None of that generation spoke English and this was in the 1930s. So, my grandmother then, my mother's mother, my grandmother Docia Lestage LaCour is the first English-speaking generation in our family. Nobody spoke English before then. She spoke French at home but when she went to school, back in that day, in the early 1900s when she went to school; she and her siblings and other French speaking children by the time they went to school, they were criticized and looked down upon and even punished in school when they would speak French in class. So, my great-grandmother then, who called me "mon petite". She, she would switch their legs, my grandmother, her siblings, when they would speak French at home. She would take a little peach tree switch. If you've ever seen one of those?

RT: Yeah

BB: If you've ever had one shaken at you?

RT: (Agrees)

BB: Okay, and she would switch their ankles, their legs if they spoke French at home. So, that's how we lost our French speakers in our family. So, my grandmother then was the first English-speaking generation and then French was lost right there because she could not speak French she did not ... and because it was looked down upon, they made no effort then to teach my mother French because it wasn't helpful. It wasn't meaningful to then. And so, we lost our French right there.

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I can't remember where I was in this. (Laughter).

RT: But no, you're fine. You're right where you need to be because I was asking about being born here and all and then you, at some point your family moved away.

BB: Right. So, then after I was born, my grandfather died, my great-grandfather died the year I was born – the Lestage.

RT: What was his name?

BB: It was Mitchell Fredrick and everybody called him Mr. Fed. And, so he was married to Lavinia Lestage who was my great-grandmother so that's ... then Dosier came along and then my mother and then myself.

Anyway, I'm sort of getting a little bit off track (waves hands in the air in a random manner).

RT: No, no that's good.

BB: But, what I was going to say is that when I was a child, we were very poor. We had a garden and we had pork and hogs that we would share with the neighbors and they would share with us. And so we lived ... when I was born in what we now call Oak Grove in Natchitoches. I don't remember it being called Oak Grove then. (BB shakes her head to indicate no). But it may have been. But I was born right along the time of the Second World War.

So my earliest memories of Natchitoches are... First of all I went to St. Mary's School and we lived out in the country. Oak Grove was five miles out of town and that was a long way for people who didn't have a car. (Laughs). SO, when I first started to school in what was called "primer" at St. Mary's ... the school bus... I went to school on the school bus. It came out and I wouldn't get on the school bus without my grandma (Laughs). So, my grandmother Docia, that I've been talking about would ride the school bus with me into town. Now are we talking spoiled or what here?

RT: (Laughs).

BB: She would ride the school bus with me. Get off the bus, take me to my classroom and that's when I'd start crying. And so, she finally got to where she could leave me. You know I was five-years-old. Had not had a lot of social interaction except with my family. We were poor. We lived in the country. We had family and our close neighbors but to come into town was a big scary deal.

So, she would take me to my classroom and leave me there to cry with the nuns, the sisters who took care of me and then she would go to my aunt's house who lived in town. Spend the whole day now, until time for school and walk back to the school – St. Mary's - get on the bus with me and we would go home.

Now I also remember one time when I was that same age and I started first grade here at St. Mary's as well. But, I remember... and it could have been in what we called primer which would have been kindergarten or it could have been in, when I was starting first grade there. But I remember being sooooo shy and so under socialized. (Laughs). I suppose we would call it today, but we just called it timid and shy. And so I was riding the school bus all by myself and

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coming home and the bus driver was passing up my stop. And I was too shy and too frozen in my little seat in the school bus to say anything. And I started crying. I guess I cried a lot when I was a child (Laughter). It sounds like anytime my grandma left me I was crying (Laughs).

But anyway, so some of the big kids in the bus said, “Hey, hey this is where this little girl gets off.” And so the bus driver then backed up. Let me off and I went across the road to my house. And the thing that I remember that my grandma... we didn’t do cookies (Laughs). We didn’t do cakes and cookies but what my grandmother would have for me was a hot sweet potato when I got home – right out of the oven. That was my snack when I got home was a hot baked sweet potato and I thought I was eating good. (Laughs).

RT: You were. That’s good eating. (Laughs).

BB: Better than now right?

RT: Yes, certainly, certainly.

BB: That’s kind of my background and what I remember about the family that comes down from that Derbanne family.

RT: Okay, and now when you, once you moved and was coming back ...

BB: Well, what happened was that my mother was a single mom for many years. She and my father were not married much longer after I was born. And so she was the... sort of the sole bread winner for my grandfather who was disabled, my grandmother, two younger sisters and myself. So, she worked really hard. And so that means, that meant that when the war started...

Oh, I was gonna say one of my first memories of the early childhood is sitting on the porch of our little three-room shotgun house out at Oak Grove. And we had black-outs during World War II. So, I remember sitting in my grandpa’s lap and he had only one leg. He had one leg amputated when he was a teenager so I never knew him with both legs. I just knew that one that I sat on all the time.

RT: (Laughs).

BB: And so he and I would sit on the porch and he would sing to me because he played the fiddle and sang. And so he would sing to me on the porch and we sat on the porch until we got a breeze and then we’d go to bed. We couldn’t go to bed while it was still hot.

RT: Um huh.

BB: You had to wait for a breeze to go to bed in the hot summertime and we’d sit on the porch and he’d sing to me but we had black-outs, I was gonna tell you during the war, and one of my earliest memories is that... just what I said but having the black-out and the convoys going by with no lights and it was in the woods. There were no like neighbors and certainly street lights. And so one of my earliest memories is a little bit of an awesome memory of having those convoys, and one jeep and truck, and whatever was going and it would be for long periods of time. It seemed to me like it was hours and they were maneuvers we called them in the war. So, once the war started there was an ammunition plant. Everybody around here remembers the ammunition plant if you’re old enough and it was close to Minden. Everybody called it the Shell Plant because that’s where shells, bombs, and ammunition was made. So, my mother and her

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friend, all the women who were still here, who wanted to... they had a special bus at one time and they would come on Sunday evening, pick up the women, of course the men were all gone to the war. So, they pick-up the women and take them to Shreveport and ... so five, my mother and four sisters and friends had an apartment in Shreveport and they would go back-and-forth on a bus. They would pick them up, catch the bus and go to the ammunition plant.

My mother assembled artillery shells. Not bombs but artillery shells. So that's what she did so that was our first step away from Natchitoches, during that war time. Then afterwards, they were able to see that things were economically better in Shreveport and so the other two sisters... and actually everybody then... all her sisters and her brother was in the military, of course he wasn't home he was in the Navy, and my grandparents moved to Shreveport and I went to school there after I... well while I was still in first grade. We moved to Shreveport because economically it was better and everybody found jobs.

They were not high-end jobs at all. They were drug stores and pharmacy. You know wherever the sisters could find a job. And they all shared an apartment and they all worked shifts when they worked at what was known as the Shell Plant (Laughter). So, they slept either on a couch or all in the same bed because two could sleep in the bed while the other two were at work. And so that's what they did. (BB moves hands in air to indicate a circular motion). So, my mother complained all the time because she was the oldest that nobody changed the sheets but her (BB and RT laugh). She said all her little sisters left the sheet changing or the sheet washing to her. But, that's how we got to Shreveport.

RT: And when did you officially get back here to Natchitoches?

BB: Well, uh, I came back many years later. We came back to Natchitoches, to the Natchitoches area. We lived down on Cane River in 19... Let me think... 78, 88, 98... Maybe it was when I retired from the hospital. So, it had to be about 98. I retired in 2000. So, we came back to this area in 1998 and we lived on the river for a while and then we have that house up for sale. And so we moved down to this house.

RT: And what brought you back at that time other than retiring? You could have retired anywhere. Why here?

BB: Because, first of all my mother and step-dad had stayed in this area. And they, in the meantime, wanted to come here to retire. They liked Natchitoches. My mom had some great-aunts. I'll have to tell you about all my great-aunts. They were so colorful. But, they loved Natchitoches because he (step-father) was a Louisiana boy as well. So, they bought a little house on the river but it was on the north end of the river from town. And they lived there until my dad passed away and then my mom moved to an apartment and they sold the house. But, that's how they got back to Natchitoches and I wanted to be close to my mom because my brothers were away and I knew that I would be her care-giver eventually and we loved Natchitoches and we have all this history and I... Something drew me back. It was more... It was sort of a spiritual soulful thing. I don't know how to explain it exactly but even if my mom had lived someplace else or had not been living, I think I would have been drawn back to this area. I have such good memories. And some of my memories are... well some of them you just wouldn't want to tell everybody (Laughs). But, I was raised, not only with my aunts, but I was raised with my mother's aunts – my grandmother's sisters. I was raised with ALL those Lestage women and they were all characters. They laughed and loved music, were Roman Catholics, had dances at the house, had, yak know, big family get-togethers. And.... were real devout Catholics. You know I'll always be grateful. I'm not a Catholic now and it's been many years since I was a Catholic, but I can tell you that I will forever and always be grateful for what the priest and the

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nuns and Immaculate Conception Church here in town, because that's where I went to church. We'd go down from school on Wednesdays to Mass. So, I will forever and always, like I said, be grateful for the Christian base, spiritual base that I was given as a child through the Catholic Church and its efforts.

RT: Okay, so you can't share all of the stories but give us a couple about some of the Lestages and the Prudhommes, I mean the Derbannes.

BB: Well, one of the things that my grandmother told all the time was that when she was a child, they were still telling stories about the Civil War. My grandmother was born in the 1890s. So, she remembered her parents then and her grandparents that she knew remembered Civil War stuff and she would tell us stories about how they would hide some of the things that they had. Now they were poor but they had some things that they didn't want to have stolen.

You know how they'd put the silverware in the... well I don't know how silver ours was (BB and RT laugh), but they didn't want anybody stealing it for sure you know. And they would try and protect their goats you know. And there's one story about me that they told that I don't remember and that is that we had a goat when I was a little girl. And, the goat just ran around and ate the grass. You remember back in the day, we didn't mow yards? (BB laughs). We swept the dirt off and we had flowers but we didn't have grass. One of the reasons we didn't was because the animals would eat it so the goat ate the grass and we didn't have to mow it. But, I was on the porch one day and the goat decides to come up on the porch. And, when he did I ran to the edge and he butted me off and so I have this goat story about when I was a little-bitty thing that the goat butted me off the porch. You can tell that we were country people okay. There's no describing us any other way as but country.

And, my mother and her sisters were... well some of their friends were not Catholic and they didn't drink and dance and do those things that my mother and her sisters did. So, they would go to a little place that's close to the Bayou Pierre Bridge. I don't know whether... there was an old, old bridge back in the day...

RT: Um huh.

BB: There's one new now. But anybody who is from Oak Grove knows that there was the Bayou Pierre and ... it's Pierre but we never said Pierre. That was high-fluting. We just said Bayou "Pier" (BB laughs). Anyway, they went dancing there and sometimes they would go with somebody who had a car. They didn't have cars. And sometimes they would walk from where we lived over to the... what did they call it? A honkey-tonk, to the honkey-tonk and dance cause they loved to dance. All my mother and her brother and sisters loved to dance. So, they would sneak off and go sometimes when they were not supposed to and my grandmother, by that time, had a telephone and she would call the place and all she had to say was, "Let me talk to my La Cour girls." (BB laughs). And they would fight to see which one had to go to the phone and talk to their mama. And they'd say, "How did you know we were here?" "How'd you know how to find us?" But they did [find them].

One of my aunts who is still living, Elizabeth, loved to skate and you know we didn't have a way to get to the skating rink. So, anybody who skated back then skated in the middle of the road in what is now Highway 1 but use to be old Highway 20. So, she was skating along one day and she got hot and you know they use to have these little short-suits but they had skirts that would tie over the shorts cause you really weren't supposed to walk around in town with your shorts. So, they had these little skirts that would tie on. Well, she got hot and she took her skirt off and she was swinging it and carrying on down the road just having the best time skating and

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there was a wagon that had come in from farther out of town to come in to buy their groceries and supplies and stuff in Natchitoches. And this was when she was, maybe 16. It was about the time I was born actually, in the late 30s. So, about that time the wagon comes and she doesn't remember the last name but there were two sisters with their dad. What she calls old-maid sisters with their father. They would go in to get supplies all the time. They lived south of us. Well, actually north of us it was... it would have been then. But, anyway when she was doing that she heard the wagon coming and the sister's name were Jean and Umbrazine. Now have you ever heard of that before?

RT: Nooo.

BB: Well anybody that's looking at this (video) and kin to Jean and Umbrazine ... I'm sorry that I may not be pronouncing those names just right but anyway they were coming home and she scared their horses with her flipping and twirling that shirt that she had taken off cause she had got hot. They ran in the ditch, ran the horses in the ditch, ran the wagon in the ditch and she had to go get her dad to go and talk to the people and apologize and get her out of trouble and she didn't think she had done anything. She said she was just skating and twirling her skirt. (Laughter by BB and RT).

RT: Those are some good stories.

BB: I had... my great aunt... Well I don't know if you want me to tell you about people who were institutionalized. You want me to tell you about them?

RT: Sure if you want to share that with us. Sure, we want all sides of the family. (More laughter by BB and RT).

BB: Well, I remember that one of my aunts whose name was Emily and I won't tell you her last name because a lot of people have that last name and I don't mean to point fingers at anybody. But, she was wonderful. She had lost children - two or maybe three children when they were just babies, baby babies. And so she and my uncle lived over on Third St. kind of behind this house almost— where the Events Center is now. She was a character and she would tease and you know...but they were one of the wealthier sisters of all the Lestage girls because they had a car and they had a fruit stand. So, they had money but the thing of it is...all of that is to say that every once in a while, we would go with them, with her and her husband to see our institutionalized relatives. Because, and it's not a laughing matter, it's funny as we talk about it now but at the time we had two great-uncles, one was institutionalized at what is now Pine Crest because he was mentally challenged. So, he was, I guess, educationally challenged, mentally challenged and we had other names for it back then. So, then we had another, his brother, who was at the mental institution for the mentally ill but back then we called it the insane. So, my aunt and her husband would take my grandmother and I had to go where she did if you remember. (BB laughs). She couldn't leave me anywhere without me crying, I guess.

So, anyway we would come to Natchitoches... we were already here. When we lived here in Natchitoches when we started. Then when we moved to Shreveport we would come to Natchitoches on a bus and then we would go with them in the car and we'd take picnic lunches yak know. We would take potato salad and fried chicken and all the good stuff that you take and iced tea in a jug and all of those things. And we would go to visit these brothers and so we would... I'm trying to decide which way we had... We could pick one of them up, the one who was in the one for mentally retarded, we called it back then.

RT: Um huh.

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BB: Not nice to say that now, but we didn't know any better at the time. We would pick him up and take him to the grounds of Central State Hospital where the other brother was because he couldn't leave, but the other one could. So, we would go there and eat our lunch and we took enough for everybody of course. We would eat our lunch with these men who were my great-uncles. And I don't know whether that influenced it, along with my grandmother, but you know I just recently retired [as a] social worker. And I think going to those places and seeing those men and having them treat me with a loving attitude back then probably was a greater influence on me than I realized at the time when I became a social worker.

But, the story I tell is that my grandmother, Docia, took in everybody. You know, she raised her children. She raised somebody else's children who needed somebody to raise them. And my Grandpa LaCour was just the most generous-hearted person. He would invite people in to eat when they hardly had enough for themselves. And so I grew-up with a strong example of generosity. Now, I haven't always followed that same pattern in my own life but it's a goal. It's a goal and a pattern that was set for me early, early on. So, I tell the story that the reason I'm a social worker is because my grandmother... I have her genes. So, she gave me a genetic predisposition to meddle in other peoples' business and I just can't help myself (BB laughs). So, when I found social work that was the way to get paid for meddling in other peoples' business. I figured it out early.

RT: (Laughs). Would you say then that that is the spirit of the Cane River, that sense of looking out for one another, the generosity or do you see a change today from maybe how it was in the past?

BB: Well, I don't know how it is now other than in our own family. You know, when I look around I do see Cane River people tight. They still maintain their families together. They have reunions. They go to church. They educate their children. They're always family and that's how I grew-up. I grew-up in the house, you know, my aunts, uncles, and whoever needed a place to live came. You know we scooted into... all of us went into one bedroom and they took the other one, whatever needed to be done was done. And I hope that I as well as my children and grandchildren will be wise enough to keep that as a family trait. My children have shown those traits as well. My grandchildren are still a little bit self-centered. The oldest one is in their early 20s (BB laughs).

RT: I think that goes with that age.

BB: Yeah. But when I say that I have to think back that maybe I'm speaking a little bit too strongly about that. They are young but they already are sort of showing concern for others and they have picked friends that have a generous heart, generous spirit. It's really important to me that carries on and that I continue you know. I pray for myself to be that kind of person. You know how they say you want to be the kind of person your dog thinks you are? Well, I want to be the kind of person my grandmother wanted me to be (BB laughs).

RT: A good way to say that. Can you tell us a little bit now about the type of work you're doing here in your home and what that means to you being able to be here in this space?

BB: Well, okay. Well, I have wanted to come back to Natchitoches for a long time because, like I said, something in my soul and in my spirit is drawn here. And I think it's because I feel like my base... You know by the time you're six-years-old you core, your inner core is pretty much formed and that... Natchitoches did that for me. This community and the school and the church and my family did that for me. Now, (BB laughs) you know whatever it is they gave it to me. Whether it's mean sometimes or whether it's always nice, which it isn't, but this is where I

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got it. So, coming back has been something, I think, I want to say always in the back of my mind – that one day we would come back to Natchitoches and Doyle, my husband, was very pleased to be able to do that. So, I'm grateful that he came along with the idea and thought it was good for us to come back here. He wanted to fish on Cane River. I wanted to come back for family. He wanted to fish on Cane River but, you know, it's a good combination. So, that's what we did. So, I think it's that underneath, almost like a voice or a calling that brought me back to Natchitoches. And I forgot what the question was... (BB laughs).

RT: Well, basically about you even getting to this space where you are now and what that means to be able to give tours and talk about this city.

BB: Oh, okay. Well, you can tell, I hope, that I have great pride in this community and I have great pride in showing others where I grew-up and telling them about what this town has offered for many, many years in addition to the Christmas Lights (Annual Festival). In addition to Steel Magnolias. (BB laughs). So, one of the ways that we have given back, my husband and I both... First of all before we moved into this house, we were... when we lived on Cane River and we had just retired from that last year. This year has been our first year that we have not worked with the Sherriff's Office. But, we worked with the local Sherriff's Office for, I don't know how many years - 8 or 10, I guess, as resource people because my background in social work and counseling and his background in ministry to people, we volunteered as counselors for the Sherriff's Office employees, for the City of Natchitoches employees. Sometimes we were paid for it and sometimes we weren't. We just did it because it was the right thing to do. And if I learned ANYTHING from my ancestors, it's do the right thing. You know I can just hear that in my voice (BB points to her head), in my head. My children tell me that as well. That they hear my voice saying, "Just do the right thing." Like it's simple but of course it isn't simple. Anyway, so we decided that the river house had gotten too much for us. We got too old to take care of it... all that you have to take care of when you live on the river.

So, two years ago we came into town. So, we have always tried to give back through all kinds of things. Now, one of the things we enjoy doing is now that we live... We live in an 1835 house. An historic home on the Register of Historic Places and... so that gives us a sense of connection and of pride as well. So, one of the things that we do now... Well I have to tell you this first. I'm getting ahead of myself. What I have done since I retired is give tours. So, we have a little, small tour company, my husband and I, and we have some helpers now and then who help us out. But, I give tours of historic downtown Natchitoches and I also take people to Oakland Plantation, the national park, and to Melrose Plantation and give tours to those two places and those are my favorite things to do.

When I first got started doing tours, I didn't do the Steel Magnolia Tour because, you know, it was filmed here and people want to see it but I said that seemed intrusive to me. But, every other call I got was for a Steel Magnolia Tour. They wanted to see all the places. So I talked to Margaret Harding one time and told her, you know, what I was doing and she agreed that it was fine for me to come by and take pictures and tell their story. That's a bit generous. People in Natchitoches are extremely generous, I find. So, anyway, I do that as well.

But one of the things that I most enjoy is doing the downtown historic tour and this house now has become a part of that tour. So, when people come, one of the things I do is bring them to the house, show them the 1835 house. Give them... I have a picture of... just before it was restored in 2008. It was just an old, dilapidated house but all of the major structure was still here. So, the foundation, the historic foundation here bought the house from the owner when everybody says it had been abandoned and they had been smoking crack in here. It was known as the local crack house.

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Well, I laugh with my husband and we said that we would buy this house and try to redeem it from the crack smoking and promised to never smoke crack in here, in this house (BB laughs). So, we have sort of tried to redeem the house and we use it to tell the story, not only of the house, but about families and influences that have brought us (Barbara and Doyle) to where we are today. And, we have artifacts, you know, that people can see that were found in the walls of the house and we have stained-glass windows that allow us to tell a very wonderful story about that being a gift to us. And we have lots of things in here that we've had forever and old. But, we have a lot of stuff that was given to us. You know, pieces that folks just gave to us and we enjoy having in our house (BB looks around the house).

But, we love having people here. And, we were on the Tour of Homes this last month and when we were we had about 230 people come through the house. So, we were happy to do that. Then, we'd have people sign the register when they come in to see the house. So, we've had several hundred in addition to those 200 in the year and a half that we've been living in this house. So, that's very, very important to me and it gives me a chance to share a bit about Natchitoches, about my part in Natchitoches and mostly what the community has done for me. And, so if I'm ever able to give back; I want to do that because I think it's extremely important that giving back to people who come and generations to come. It's a life calling for all of us.

RT: Okay, and I know that you've done a lot of that just in the years that I've known you as well. I'd like to kind of... as I bring things to a close, give a person a chance, and I'm going to actually shut it down and give you a moment to kind of collect yourself.

BB: Okay.

RT: Let me do that now. (Recording is interrupted by RT). Ms. Barbara, I want you to imagine for a moment that maybe your great-great-great-great..., maybe four or five generations from now, were to see this video of you. Is there a message. Something that you would like to say to them about your family, about your philosophy? Anything that you think would be important for them to know or to hear?

BB: Well, the thing that comes to me right away is how we treat each other. So, I think that's a very important thing to consider and the other part that I'm thinking of is our spiritual selves. So, one of the things that I would like to say because I can't say this without saying thank you to those who have given me what I have. So, basing all of that and starting with a thank you, then I would encourage any generation in the future that sees this to manage several things well in your life. And, one of those would be your spiritual life. Religion, churches, those things go and come. They change, but our spirit is always our spirit.

So, one of the things I would encourage you to do is take care of your spiritual self. The other thing that my family has taught me ... I'm giving you what I've been given. This is a (unintelligible) because I've been given it. And, the other thing is how we treat each other – what we say to each other, what we do to each other and not just family... family first of course, but other people as well. So, I think that means doing for others. So, take care of your spiritual self. Find some way to be giving, some way to be generous, ever how it is. Not just with your family but beyond that. And, not just with money but give of yourself in some meaningful way for organizations but especially for people. People who maybe don't have as much as you do or don't understand things or have a spiritual need or need plain ole food and transportation.

Always remember that we are here, I think on this earth, to be able to get along well and to give to others. So, your spiritual self, your generosity, how you get along with others... and I think ... I think to expose yourself to cultures and people who are not like you is very important.

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I think that people who are ... that God made different from you or me, I think people who speak different languages, who live in other countries... I think to enhance your knowledge and go someplace, read. Educate yourself about people who are unlike you. Because I think that as we do that, we become more accepting and we do not need to be harsh or critical but the more we know about a topic, a people, a place, the better understanding we have, the more tolerant and the kinder we feel towards those folks or whatever, those organizations or those people. So, those are the things I would encourage you to do and remember that if you keep up with this family, you're gonna have to laugh. You're gonna have to dance. You're gonna have to play music. You're gonna have to take in people who need a home – don't have any place to live. You're gonna have to tell stories over and over again and you're gonna have to love God and each other.

RT: Thank you.

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Interviewee: Herbert Baptiste

**Interviewed February 18, 2015 at the Cane River Creole NHP Curatorial Building by
Rolonda Teal**

Time of interview: 00:43:14

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is February 18, 2015. I am in the home of Dr. Herbert Baptiste. We're gonna be talking today a little bit about his life, his wife who also was from the area and just some of the changes that have taken place on the landscape here in Natchitoches. So, if we could just start Dr. Baptiste. I would like for you to give me a little background about yourself and your family and this area.

HB: Of course my name is Herbert Baptiste. I was born in Bunkie, Louisiana. My parents moved from Bunkie to Alexandria when I was about 4 or 5 years-old. Uh, there we stayed and my father came and got us. He was able to have several businesses. He was a barber but he owned his business. Uh, it's a basic thing about that. When we lived in Bunkie, my father had three jobs a week.

RT: Wow.

HB: And he brought in a grand total of 8-12 dollars. (Laughs).

RT: Working three jobs.

HB: We lived on that. There were four of us boys with my parents... with my mother. Then we moved to Alexandria. And there again. In the home we were living in... He paid a fabulous price a month for that house. Between \$25 and \$35 a month. And when we look back on that now... I wish that were now.

And from that... when I graduated from high school I went to Xavier University in New Orleans. And then, after graduation, I came back to Alexandria and got a job here in Natchitoches Parish as an itinerate music teacher. And upon meeting my wife... cause I met her in Campti. She was a librarian. I didn't have anywhere to go because itinerate teachers didn't have a room. So, I did most of my planning in the library during the hours that I had off. And, I met her, and... (HB shrugs his shoulders) we talked. And, uh, then we saw that maybe there was some interest in each one of us. And then, I met her in [19]60. In 61 we were married. Interestingly enough, (HB laughs) on Easter.

RT: Oh.

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HB: So, that was a good day. And from our marriage, we had two sons. One is a minister, the oldest one, a minister in Alexandria. He's a pastor at Nazareth Baptist Church. And, my youngest son ... he's in Corona, California. He's a member of Second Baptist Church, pastored by Pastor Gant. And, also interestingly enough, he didn't know anybody there. But, having gone to the church and all of that... he is now Chairman of the Deacon Ministry. So, that makes me real proud to know that my sons are doing things in the church and for mankind.

Now, when my wife and I were married, when we first got married, we were in Derry and we lived on Cat Island Road. Lived there for about 4-5 months. Neither one of us wanted to stay in "the dark" (HB laughs) because after the sun went down, it was really dark. Of course you had a porch light. A light on the street but ... and that was very rare. And so there was a field between our home and her mother's home. And we had to go down the "turn row" to her house. We eventually moved from there to Natchitoches.

RT: And you said her family was from?

HB: Well, her family was from Derry. She was originally born in Rapides Parish. Her father and mother were married in Rapides Parish. Then her mother moved to Derry because she became ill. Her dad went down to get her and brought the children back. There was a split between her mother and her father. Well then most of her growing-up years, training, was done right here in Natchitoches. She went to Central High School. She and her sister both. She was voted one of the most beautiful girls at Central. (HB has a look of pride on his face). I was fortunate (HB laughs).

RT: Yes.

5:56

HB: And I tease her ... I say because when I graduated from St. James, I was voted as one of the most handsome fellas there too (HB laughs). So we got together. Beautiful children (HB and RT laugh). But, through all of that... she was a history teacher. And, she would often tell me about the things that were happening around Cat Island Road, especially the people there. Of course when her mother grew-up there, they were born there. They were originally Catholics because that is what was there. But having moved from, like Iberville or in that area, uh. The grandfather brought them and the step-mother. Not step-mother, her step-grandmother. They all became Baptist people. (HB's voice lowers as he talks about this). That's where the split came. Now, she mentions that, not just Cat Island Rd. but in that area, it was a booming area because there was a lot of homes. There were some businesses. In Cloutierville, they had banks and all of that which... now they have one on the highway [Highway 1] which is a branch from the one up here, but, it was a thriving little town. A whole lot of folk who were there... and they got along rather well I do believe. It was the only place that I knew that there was a whole lot of mixing and mingling of people.

Of course, as usual, when they went to the movies, they sat on one side and the others sat on the other side. But they all were there together.

RT: And when you say "they", what group are you referring to?

HB: I'm talking about black and white.

RT: Blacks and whites, okay.

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HB: And interestingly enough, I won't say a whole lot of those people, but a good many of them married each other. And, that was strange to me because where I was from in Alexandria, that was not ... however, we find that that's just a common occurrence right now. Now, back to the people on Cat Island Rd.

RT: I'm sorry cause I just wanted to... You talked about your wife. Can we get her name and her maiden name please?

HB: Okay, my wife's name was Pearline Williams. Uh, her mother's name was Phelosee Williams-Emmanuel. Her father's name was "Nathan" Nathaniel Williams. She had two siblings with her. Her sister Johnnie and her brother, Joe Louis. Of course he was named after the boxer. (HB motions his hands in a fist like a boxer) and he lived up to his name (HB and RT laugh). In school, I think he lived up to his name til he got knocked out. But, other than that he did live up to his name.

10:10

Her step-father was a teacher at Central. He was in Industrial Arts and because he was interested in the church, he and Joe and one or two others tore St. Andrew's down because it was leaning. And the two of them basically with his cousin ... They rebuilt that church plank by plank. And, so that's what his history is there. And, ugh, Mr. Emmanuel, who later became Reverend Emmanuel, became pastor of that church. He was a fine man. He was a fine man. I really appreciated him and loved him. Not that I didn't love her father, but her father lived in a different area and we went to see him occasionally.

Now the people on Cat Island Rd., their mode of being with other people was not strange but it was like a togetherness. They was not, "you own this and I own that". They shared what they had. We talked about all along Cat Island Rd. there were different homes. Different properties people had. They respected all of that. But then the war [World War II] came and things got bad. And all of the homes that were there disappeared. In fact, I was told that all along Cat Island Rd., They have Cane River that flows in it. Is was... if you would see the river bank in Natchitoches, It's exactly the way it looked at that time. The river was clear but because of neglect and all of that, it's grown up. It's highly recognizable now but it used to be a good fishing area. Big cats [catfish] and big Gar. All of that was there. So the people got along well. They had a lot of things in common.

RT: You said that the houses disappeared after the war due to neglect and people were moving away?

HB: Yes, they moved away (Laughs). Some folks were known to move to different areas. Some people moved from here to Chicago where they were accepted in a different culture which was common. We always said, "If you've got it, use it". But that was their thing you know. We didn't care too much about that but we got along together.

Other than that, in the schooling ... Of course there were two different schools that was there. Springhill was the school that blacks or African American children attended. It was first in a field. In a cotton field and for some reason, unknown to me, it burned. And so it was moved from where it was over into Cloutierville down in a little field.

14:28

RT: Springhill?

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HB: Springhill. Springhill Elementary. And the principal of that school use to live with my mother-in-law. And, he knew that I had gone to Northwestern State University (in Louisiana) and that I had gotten a Master's degree in administration and I had a leaning towards being a principal. He was getting ready to leave and so he said, "You'd better put your application in" and so I did. And, ugh, a board member from down that way came to visit here and he asked me that question. "Do you want to be principal at school?" I said yes, but my neighbor whose living up here now but was born down there he's interested. I mean I won't get in his way. And he came back, "I didn't ask you about your neighbor. I asked you about you" I said, "Well yea". And, of course, I became Principal of Springhill School.

RT: Wow!

HB: From there I went to the 9th Grade Center and from the 9th Grade Center I went to the Special Ed School. The Career Center where we were getting jobs for students with limited abilities. Doing quite well I thought, but then again... money came into the picture and so they eventually closed that school. I then went to Natchitoches Central over that particular program. And from that, I stayed one year, I moved back to Cloutierville as Principal over there, of the elementary school.

RT: That's there currently. The school?

HB: That's still there currently. It went from kindergarten to 8th grade. We did quite well there. Academic scores went up. There was a lot of togetherness there that they probably had not had before. Interestingly enough too... I don't know if I defied the courts or whichever but whenever we use to have assemblies, I either prayed or I'd ask somebody else to do it. But mostly, I did that because if anything was gonna come back; I would rather it to be me than someone else. And that was a community that was religious in that it was surrounded by Baptist and Catholic. A lot of the children, they were going to the Catholic Church that was right down the road from there. And there was a good relationship with the children and with the school because when the church needed some assistance so far as space and all of that, we gave over to them and when we needed something, they would do the same. And eventually I moved up here. I still maintain my contacts with the people in Cloutierville. But, before I became principal, I have to go back in time.

RT: Okay, that's fine.

HB: Being an itinerate teacher, when integration came here, they moved me from the city to a school outside of the area called Gorum. You've heard of Gorum?

RT: Yes sir.

18:58

HB: (Kind of chuckles) An all-white area. And, they were not use to black folks in there. But once we got there, there were about four of us that left. That went down there. We found that the children, well excepting. And I'll have to say this, it's a truism. That prior to our going up there – that is the black teachers- they hardly ever went past 12th grade. That was a community that stayed right there. And because we went down there and we introduced a lot of things in that school. From that time until they had to come together with Cloutierville [school]. They started going to college. They had never been on a Senior Trip or anything else like that. And my neighbor, who went down there with us, Ms. Polk, took them to Florida. Imagine that. A school that had never had any black people. The children went to Florida with a black woman. And they did well.

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RT: How was she able to make that happen?

HB: Well, she had that kind of a personality. They had, let's say, they had gotten use to us and because of that, they trusted us. And, once you get to know some people... You got to get to know them or to be able to understand and to see that hey. You made in the image of God and so am I. Why should not we be ... together? At least work together, worship together, and whatever you want to do. But, I think they found that out. In fact, my being a musician during that time. I was asked to play for Midnight Mass, which I refused.

RT: Why?

HB: I refused because Midnight Mass is at midnight. They wouldn't have known me when I went there and the reputation that they had. I declined that offer. But, it was offered genuinely. In fact I played for several of the funerals that they had here at the funeral home and then at their churches in Gorum. [I] was well accepted and respected.

RT: What instrument did you play?

HB: It was piano. Piano, which I don't do any more.

RT: Oh, okay.

HB: My major in college was voice.

RT: Voice, okay. So you got your undergraduate [degree] from Xavier.

HB: Yes.

RT: Your master's at Northwestern.

HB: Yes.

RT: And your doctorate?

HB: From Oklahoma. But now in between, I was taking some classes from the seminary in Monroe, United Theological Seminary. A friend of mine was one of the teachers up there was teaching an extension here. Got a bachelor's degree in Christian Education from the seminary. Went on to get a master's degree and then from that I went to Oklahoma to get a doctorate. Incidentally, the dissertation was Christian Education in the Black Church (HB beams with pride).

RT: Wow!

HB: Of course I was asked a lot of questions about that. Why do y'all stay so long (he laughs)... Why do black preachers stay so long in church? I say well, because basically they become father figures. And, because of that, they stay longer. And then their identity with the community and basically some other things which I won't go into. And from that, I became the only one since then, the academic Dean for the seminary. Stayed there for about three years. Dr. Martin was the president – B. F. Martin. And then we went to another president which was from his church.

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We had established an extension here and for one time, I think, during that period of time, we had basically the largest extension among extensions which was close to about 50 people we had here. It has, since then, dwindled down. And this past year, because of finances and things – we closed it down for a while. Other than that... that's my life. My wife passed about... well to be honest with you. Today is the 18th. My wife passed six year ago on the 17th which was Tuesday. We buried her on the 21st which was a Saturday, my son who was then an ordained minister preached Sunday on the 22nd. Six years ago.

25:43

RT: Wow (inaudible). I'm so sorry to hear about that.

HB: Well, it's a marriage and a lot of folks said it was made in heaven but I never believed that. That's when I was in high school believe it or not. All through high school I prayed for God to give me a wife, finish high school, there wasn't the one. Went to college, that wasn't the one. Came here, that was the one (HB and RT laugh). And because of that, we had a joyful 48 years together. Oh I miss her. I miss her.

RT: I'm sure. I'm so sure. (HB visibly emotionally affected). So I just want to talk a bit, you know, about some of the changes that have taken place here in town on the landscape.

HB: To begin with, let's go back to Front St. and then we'll work back that way. Front St. and most of that area there was owned by black people. But because of one thing or the other, swindling and charging them for things that they couldn't pay for, whatever. They eventually moved from Front St. and back and back and back. Still owning some land, but not as prominently as they had at first. In fact, one of the churches here, First Baptist Church on Amulet St., as I can remember it and I may be wrong. It was either on Front St. or on Second St. It was the first Baptist Church in Natchitoches. Of course now they had Catholics here but...

RT: This was a Baptist Church.

HB: Then, after a while, it burned down (He chuckles). So, then they moved back. And we were talking about Wal-Mart and then the theatre over here. Especially where the theatre is. Most of that land was owned by black folks. In fact, where the theatre is ... my aunt's husband owned that land.

RT: What was his name?

HB: Jones (HB acted as if he didn't want to give the man's full name).

RT: Jones, okay.

HB: Jones. In fact the area we live in here (Indicating his neighborhood) right now was owned by the Jones. They use to have a baseball diamond here in this area. They had a black baseball team and of course all around they had cotton, but this was a baseball field. When that went away... we had one house just two doors over from here that was left here from one of the streets there - Third St. back was nothing but dirt road. In fact when my wife and I came to look at that house, it had rained and we almost got stuck but we backed out of it and we walked out to see that. And when we built over here, there were about 3-4 houses in this area. But, during the Christmas Festival my wife and I could sit in our living room, open the curtain and watch all of the fireworks. Cause there was no houses there.

30:18

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RT: Nothing.

HB: Or anything likes it. Eventually that went away. But, we have grown up. We had, in this area, some businesses that came that we really didn't want, but it was zoned for that. [Inaudible]. Eventually, they went out of business and the hospital bought that land. They put a nursing home there. A cancer center here that we didn't really want but it was zoned for commercial ...

RT: So, if you had to kind of put a figure on it, based on what you know, how much black folks had, in terms of land, today. What would say percentage wise, maybe, that they still own?

HB: I say now, percentage wise, they own now... it's between 20-25 percent. During that time, they had approximately 75-80 percent of that land. It belonged to them. They were working it. All down that area (HB points in the general direction of Walmart) that was field area – cotton. And that area, the road coming into Natchitoches was a gravel road (HB chuckles).

RT: You say from the other side of the Walmart where you are coming in? Yes, it was gravel?

HB: Oh yes on Highway 1.

RT: Yes sir.

HB: In fact, my mother and I and my uncle would always come up here to see my dad's sister. And, we'd leave the highway from Alexandria, which was paved, and the closer we would get to Natchitoches, gravel roads. Highway 1 was gravel. Then later they... use to have buses.

RT: Along Highway 1?

HB: Oh yes.

RT: Really?

HB: Trailway.

RT: Oh yeah, okay.

HB: You know Trailway started in Alexandria. Alexandria-Pineville. But basically, a lot of that was owned by black people and it's not now. And during my lifetime, Natchez... A friend of mine whose now a minister, was the first Mayor of Natchez. It has developed but it's not the same. It's not the same.

RT: What's changed about Natchez from...

HB: Well, ugh. There used to be a school there and where there's school a community thrives. Because of whatever happened in the school board, I guess it had to do with money and all of that, they closed that school. Integration came through. They closed that school and sent it out in Provencal. And they had St. Matthew School in that area back there. And so, the whole area changed and eventually St. Matthews was closed. Kids either went to Cloutierville or to Natchitoches. And, when all of this happens, of course when people can't find jobs, they leave

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the area. And therefore, you'll find a lot of houses like in Cat Island Rd that are empty. If you can't find work you go to where you can find it.

34:57

The few jobs that they had. They had jobs on the railroad and a lot of our people worked on the railroads. Interesting story about that too. My wife's aunt's husband lived in Natchez. He was a foreman. In the year that they had high water, he made a ramp, put his new car up on the ramp while the water was [under] it. And he and his wife got in a boat and paddled from Natchez to Derry following the railroad. It was enough water underneath the boat for him to do that.

RT: Wow!

HB: It has since changed. There used to be a lot of hunting. A lot of game. But with the coming of I49, of course that's gone. They did a lot of farming there in that area where I49 is. They paid not to use it. Some on this side (east side of Cane River) Highway 1 and Interstate 49 came. Well, basically the oil people came. Course they drilled for oil. They didn't find any, so they say. (HB's voice becomes softer) And naturally that [inaudible]. They had a thriving area, mercantile there, and post office there. That's gone. So, it has changed dramatically. You had to have known what was there – to see how things have changed.

RT: I know but you're painting us a nice picture of what we should have seen if we had been there.

HB: Well, the things that were there, from what my wife tells me, it was a thriving community. Didn't really have to come to Natchitoches to buy anything because the stores were there. People generally got along well because they were basically in the same kind of [inaudible]. The things that they had, they shared. Let me just put it that way. One thing about it. If they killed a hog, it went around to the community. If you had a horse and you needed to do something or a mule. If you wasn't able ... you were able to borrow. That has changed. We are afraid of each other now. It used to be when coming down that road if we saw somebody on that road, we'd stop. Pick them up, carry them wherever they were going. And when I came down here that basically still going on until some incidences happened and we just stopped doing that.

RT: It became too dangerous?

HB: Oh, by all means. You can't do that anymore even though you would like to do that. We look back at that portion of the scripture when the lawyer asked Jesus who was his neighbor. And I think a lot of the poor people in that area exemplified what neighbors were because they didn't meet a stranger. They took me in (HB smiles). And so it was like that. I know when we got ready to move from Derry, my wife asked one of the neighbors that she knew ... Without hesitation, he came and he moved us. Not asking for a penny. In fact, when we got ready to move back over into this area, he came not asking for a penny. That was the kind of closeness that they had. They just got along better than they are now.

40:21

RT: Does your wife have family still there now?

HB: Oh God, her brother is there. Both her parents are dead. Her parents are dead, mine. I have two brothers who have passed. In her family, her brother is the only one living.

RT: Still here on Cane River, Cat Island I mean.

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HB: No, he lives on Highway 1.

RT: Oh.

HB: He lives in their family home.

RT: Okay. So yea there have been many changes then I know through the area. I wanna ask you because we know the area down there now is kind of being known more so for the Creole of Color and the population that lives down there. Since you were at some of the earlier educational places like there in Cloutierville and all. What were those relationships like? Was there a distinct difference at that time? People just kinda, you know, we all in this same boat together or could you tell that there were groups that were trying to separate and self-identify as anything other than African American?

HB: Not really. Not really. The only time that you saw that division really, was at church. And it wasn't in our churches (black churches) because in the Baptist Churches ... of course they had theirs and we had ours. But, at that point in time, the Pope had declared through his insignias and all of that – there should be no more separation.

(Doorbell rings)

Tape 2

00:00

HB: I'm not sure or not whether this is absolutely correct but, how Cat Island supposedly got its name... I spoke with one of the ladies who had lived on Cat Island as a youngster and her father told them that Cane River comes down by Cat Island. It made a little island just before it got to their home. And folk who were bothered with cats and all of that, would get in their boats, take them (cats) to this little place and dump them. They became wild. And, whenever I wanted to go down that road and they didn't know exactly which road they were talking about... They would always mention, "You know that road with all the cats on it. Cat Island Road." And, that's how Cat Island, as far as I've been able to understand, got its name.

RT: Okay.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Rev. Ardonul Brinson (Natchitoches)

Interviewed August 27, 2015 at St. Mary on the Cane by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview:

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is August 27, 2015. I am here to interview Rev. Brinsley.

AB: Brinson.

RT: I know that. I already know that.

AB: B-R-I-N-S-O-N

RT: Sorry, Brinson.

AB: Okay, the idea of baptism started back from many years ago when the Catholic Church was the dominant church in the civilized world. And, the Catholics believed in sprinkling and there were some members in the church who was convinced that submersion, carrying the candidate for baptism under the water. And, they used as a background for their belief was... what happened when Jesus came down, now this if found in Matthew, the third chapter where John the Baptist was baptized as in the River Jordan. And, Jesus came down to the baptism and John saw and he felt that he not baptize Jesus but he wanted Jesus to baptize him. But, Jesus said this unto John (AB reads from the Bible) He said, Suffer it to be so, to fulfill all righteousness.” And, John did indeed baptize Jesus in the river. From that standpoint of scripture. There was a group in the Catholic Church. They were called anti-Baptist and they broke away from the Catholic Church. And, their belief was ... and another thing that Catholics believe was enfant. When a child was but a baby, they believe in baptizing that child by just sprinkling water on his head. So, this group opposed and they separated. They broke away from the Catholic Church. They were later called Baptists. And, so this tradition has been passed down through the years.

2:56

I believe that much of what we do in the Baptist Church is based upon tradition. I taught a class on church history and what I found was that of all of the denominations – be they Pentecostal, they are Jehovah Witness, Church of God in Christ, the Methodists. All of these churches started by some individual. But, we believe, as Baptists that our faith, our denomination started from Christ.

Using the New Testament scripture, information found in the book of Acts, which gives the history of the early church that was started on the day of Pentecost when Peter stood up and preached the gospel and 3,000 souls were added to the church. And, so we have here our belief.

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Now, the idea, as I said much of what we believe, things we have done in the Baptist Church comes mostly from tradition that has been passed down through the generations. The idea of the mourner's bench, the mercy seeker goes back to Old Testament scripture. What we do, we believe mostly what is found in the scripture (AB references the Bible). Now, in the third chapter of John we find where it is written that there was a man by the name of Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night asking what must they do to be saved. And, Jesus knowing his thoughts, he told him that unless you be born again. Now, they say you cannot see the Kingdom of God. And, Nicodemus asked Jesus this question. He said can a man be born when he's old? Can a man enter into his mother's womb for a second time? And, Jesus replied to him that which is born of flesh is flesh. And that which is born of spirit is spirit. (Phone rings and recording is paused)

Part Two of Interview

0:12

AB: And he told him, I said to thee you must be born again. And he went on, he said to him that the idea of the new birth, that which is born. And, he said unless a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot be saved. So, the idea taken from these scriptures that a person... Then we find in the 10th chapter of Romans where the Apostle Paul wrote that a person that hears the gospel preached and he believes in his heart and confess with his mind... He said Thou shalt be saved.

So, we take those scriptures and we apply them to the time of revival. And, the revival that we hold once a year, in the month of June, where we... not only did we focus on the unsaved but we focus on those in the church – the members of the church whose souls need to be revived. One week we set aside in the year that we... Many times the pastor, he does the sermons that week. Sometimes we invite guests. And, the intent, the purpose of it is to... And, you find in the Book of Palms where the right of the Palms asked the Lord to revive him. And, that means, in plain English, to regenerate. To give us a renewed desire to know God.

So, we use the term revival, having an unsaved individual to sit on a special seat having heard the gospel preached. And, then after the sermon is preached, the pastor goes down and an invitation is given to the unsaved. And, using also scripture based upon the sermon and the fact that the word of God said if you could believe in your heart that Jesus is the son of God, if you can believe that God raised him from the dead – you are saved.

And, once that person come forth and he confess that he believes those two important statements, by which our faith is based, then that person becomes a candidate for baptism. So, on an assigned date, that person comes with his family. And, we take him up to the water and we baptize them. And we use that 3rd chapter of Matthew as a background for the ceremony.

Now what does baptism mean? Baptism is an outward expression of an inward change. When a person is submerged in the water, what he's saying to the world, the outside world is a form of death. When you carry the candidate under the water, that's a form of dying to the sins of the world. When you bring them up – that is the new birth. And, I heard... I think it was Paul wrote in the book of Galatians around the 3rd chapter, he says, if a person has been... if we have died with pride then we come back alive. We put away the old body and we have a new body. A new way of living.

5:13

So, basically, we in the Baptist Church... Now I need to put on record that with the idea of Full Gospel Baptist Church based upon the traditional Baptists. There was Paul martin, the

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gentleman out of New Orleans, came up with this concept of the Full Gospel Church. But, I have issues with that concept. Many of us, my age, came up in the traditional Baptist Church. And, we believe in the Holy Ghost. We believe in all the sprit. And, for those reasons, I don't understand how we can call ourselves Full Gospel.... compared to half gospel or no gospel. So, we have all this but the whole idea of the mourner's bench, the ideal of baptism can be traced back to the Bible.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Rev. Otis Corley Sr., Rev. Ardonul Brinson, and congregants at St. Mary Baptist Church on Cane River) (Natchitoches)

Recorded June 24, 2015 at St. Mary on Cane River, Rolonda Teal

**Time of interview: 00:15:56 (total)
Transcribed [R. D. Teal and D.K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

OC: My name is Otis Corley Sr.

RT: Today is June 24, 2015 and I'm here at St. Mary's Baptist Church in Natchitoches, LA. Today we are going to be speaking with Rev, Otis Corley. He's actually the pastor at Choctaw Island Baptist Church in Clarence, LA. He's here today as part of the revival that's happening for the week. And, Rev. Corley, part of the reason that we're here, the primary reason is to understand and document the process of the mourning bench and I was wondering if you would talk a little bit about what that means and why it's important in the church.

OC: Well, it's a tradition that's been carried out over generations and generations. And, this purpose was to get those who were lost, to the front where they could more better hear the word. And, in that process is whereby it had been said that they were being saved.

RT: So, when a person... during revival, the ceremony is going on, the service is going on, at what point does the mourning bench become a part of the ceremony?

OC: Well, it becomes a part at the beginning of the service.

RT: (It was explained to Rev. Corley that he should repeat the question and answer with a full sentence).

OC: Oh, the mourner's bench is a part of the service. It plays a great part of the service. It serves a great purpose.

RT: So, if I was sitting in the congregation and I decided that yes, I want to join the church. I want to become a part of it. What do I do?

OC: Well, you would either come to the mourner's bench or come the way you are. The mourner's bench does not save you per say. If you at the back of the church and want to come up and join the church, then that's well and good also. That's even better.

OC: The mourner's bench does not save you but even if you are at the back of the church and you wanted to come forward and join the church and be part of the church, then do so. Because that would be a greater experience as well, furthermore. The mourner's bench is a great experience.

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3:01

RT: (Question is inaudible) It was probably something about his mourning bench experience.

OC: Well, I went by the ritual that the old folks had set before us. There was a day set aside. When you felt like you were ready to join. When the preacher would reach for his outstretched hands and say, "Come on and join us." Then that's when I made my move because I knew exactly when the Lord had stepped into my life and made me.... I didn't move on my own. He made me move.

(Cameraman talked to OC about providing good information)

RT: So, they sat on the mourner's bench and decided I am ready. Is the next step the baptism?

OC: Yes, the next step is the baptism.

RT: And so in terms of this revival, if someone were to sit on the mourner's bench like tonight, when would they be baptized?

OC: If they joined the mourner's bench tonight, most likely they would be baptized on Sunday morning.

(Some conversation among film crew)

OC: You wanting to know about the mourner's bench?

RT: Yes sir.

OC: The mourner's bench has been a great asset to the churches over the years. And, that process in most churches now has been cut away. But, back then it was a great important part of the church ceremony and in the mourner's bench then you know who in the house saved and who's not saved. So, by this we know where to preach to.

(Some more conversation among film crew)

OC: (Repeats part of what was said in above comment) As from the days of old, it [mourner's bench] became a part of us as ministers my age. Therefore, when we put folks on the mourner's bench then we know where and who has not been saved or baptized. And so, therefore we know how to work and where to work. Well, in some churches it's a dying tradition but in most of our older churches, it's still a great tradition and we still carry it on.

Part 2 Mourning Bench with children and Rev. Brinson

AB: I want to ask you, all [unintelligible] to stand up here. You heard the Gospel preached. Jesus said if you would ashamed to own on me.

Audience: Yes He did.

AB: I will be ashamed to own you before [unintelligible]. I'm gonna ask you son, if you believe that Jesus is the son of God... Yes Lord Jesus. And, if you believe that He died for your sins. And, if you're not ashamed, then tonight, tell us. [unintelligible] I want you to move from where you are and I want you to go over there and have a seat. (AB points to the front pew).

If you've been touched tonight go ahead. (AB instructs candidate to come forward).

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Congregation: Amen (clapping from congregation). Thank you Jesus.

AB: I know. He's alright.

Audience: Yes He alright.

AB: Some of you didn't feel it but I felt it. Cause you ought to be shouting just right about now.

(Congregation begins shouting Hallelujah and Praise the Lord)

AB: [Inaudible] When they got up and moved from here. Oh Jesus, I'll be satisfied.

(Congregation continues to encourage the pastor)

AB: But I, I know what the Word say and He say, "Suffer little children who come unto me."

[Inaudible] not such [inaudible] the Kingdom of heaven". Will y'all stand please?

(Congregation says Amen).

(Rev. Brinson approaches one of the candidates) Would you tell us what you [unintelligible].

Congregant: Go ahead, Say it.

Candidate 1: I believe that the Lord, while Jesus was dead and [unintelligible]. I know that He died for my sins.

2:40

Congregation: Alright, alright (Clapping and applause).

AB: (Goes to the next candidate) Open your mouth and speak. What do you believe? Come on. I know Mama done talked to you. Come on.

Unidentified man: She told me earlier. Tell them what you told me earlier. Tell'em.

Congregant: Alright, alright.

AB: Byron, you can't talk good tonight? Huh, we got time now.

Congregant: Alright, alright. (AB moves to the next candidate)

AB: You talk to me son.

Candidate 2: I believe that God, Jesus died for me.

Congregation: Alright, alright. (Clapping and applause).

AB: What's your name baby?

Candidate 3: Jaysha.

AB: Huh?

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Unidentified man: Jaysha.

AB: What happened to Susan and Mary?

(Congregation laughs)

AB: What's your name?

Candidate: Janard.

AB: Janard, now I can remember that. You heard the statement coming from our beloved sister. She believes that Jesus died for her sins.

Unidentified man: {unintelligible} that Jaysha and Janard be received and they become candidates for baptism.

AB: Moved by Deacon Mitchell, seconded by Deacon Mitchell and I assume to be [inaudible]. We have a motion to second. Ready to vote?

Congregation: Ready.

AB: All in favor let me know by [saying] the word I.

Congregation: (responds by saying Aye)

AB: Those opposed nay. The I's have it. Now so honored. God bless you. Now you know what happened ...[unintelligible] you move up in the choir stand. Okay, come on. Let's follow him up in the choir stand. Now, mother, mother, mother, you gone bring your baby back tomorrow? The Holy Spirit is gonna release [unintelligible].

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: James Cannon (Cloutierville)

**Interviewed at Cannon's Fish House, 14829 Highway 1 Cloutierville, LA, January 28, 2015
by Dayna Bowker Lee**

**Time of interview: 00:41:10
Transcribed 4/21/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form & photos]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

Lee: Mr. James Cannon, it is January 28, 2015, and is it okay for the Park Service to use the information you give me today for their interpretation?

JC: Yeah.

Lee: I've got a map I want to show you. First of all, I want to talk to you about the fishing. This is from I believe this is from 1937.

JC: That's before my time.

Lee: Well, it's definitely before mine, but I like it because it's got the way things were before the highway came through.

JC: Hwy. 49, and all that.

Lee: Right, and here's Cloutierville. So, where are you fishing? Are you fishing the old Cane River, or the Cane River Lake area?

JC: Old, down below the dam.

Lee: How long have you been doing that?

JC: Since 1945.

[Interview interrupted by a customer.]

Lee: What about these areas like Bayou Camitte and Bayou Derbanne?

JC: Bayou Derbanne's right up the road there [points at map].

Lee: Right. Do you fish there at all?

01:50

JC: Nah, they don't have no fish or nothing in it no more. It's all shallow; and Bayou

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Camitte, it can't go in there, that plantation over there, Bayou Camitte Plantation, they won't let you go through there no more, and Bayou Derbanne, it's really just a drainage ditch, is all it is; ain't no fish in there. I fish Cane River here, and the fish comes up out of Red, and becomes the spawn out of Kisatchie. When they come by, I catch my share while they're going up.

Lee: So, how long have you been doing this?

JC: My daddy was doing this since 1945, after the flood ... then had a flood here that's why we're out here. We was back in the country there in the house we had there, but the water went six feet up in the house.

02:50

Lee: Where was that?

JC: It's on Little River, and so when we moved out here, we never did go back. He said he wasn't going to have nothing that couldn't live in the water, so we lost all the cows, the goats and all that stuff, and the chickens was in the trees. I remember when I was ten, and them landin' craft came in, and put on the front end of that there Beach Craft on the front porch, and the water was getting over the porch, and told us we had to leave, and my daddy was out driving the cows out and all that stuff, trying to get them up here on the highway, and mama told 'em she wasn't going, and that Lieutenant on that boat told us, said his orders, we had to go, he didn't have no choice, so they hauled us out.

Lee: That was in 1945?

JC: '45.

Lee: And you were born in 1935?

JC: '35.

03:55

Lee: What was your dad's name?

JC: James Cannon.

Lee: What was your mom's name, her maiden name?

JC: Lonie Vercher.

Lee: Oh, she was a Vercher?

JC: Uh-huh.

Lee: So, you're from way back from down here?

JC: Yeah, we've been here all our lives. That place I've got out there was my grandfather's and his brother's and all. They lost all theirs; they didn't pay the taxes on it. The only place we've got left is the place I've got.

Lee: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

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JC: One brother, one sister.

Lee: Did either one of them go into the fishing business?

JC: My sister got killed a few years ago in a car wreck. My brother lives in Natchitoches.

Lee: Not interested, huh? So you took it up?

JC: I'm the last one.

Lee: Well, I believe you are the last one.

JC: My grandson talks like he's gonna to, but I doubt it. He's never, you can't make enough money and you can't make a living. It's a hobby with me. I just like to do it, and this fish market has been here since '49, and it ain't never been out of fish but twice since '49.

Lee: Is that right? And why did you run out of fish...?

[speaks to Mrs. Cannon]

JC: This is the other half.

Lee: I'm glad to meet you. I'm Dayna, I talked to you on the phone the other day.

05:33

JC: Yeah, and like I say, I was out of fish the other day, and that was the second time since we had it. If my daddy be alive, we wouldn't be out. He'd go somewhere, if we had to go to Texas, south Louisiana, somewhere, we'd go catch some fish. We used to sell a thousand pounds a week here; don't sell a thousand pounds a year any more.

Lee: Were you selling them to individuals, or were you selling them to companies?

JC: Individuals and companies.

Lee: Where were they coming from to buy? I mean, not the individuals, but the companies?

06:08

JC: All around here. They'd, these people were all Catholics and back then, you didn't eat meat on Fridays, then the Church changed the rules, and I-49 took the rest of 'em away. I used to send a lot of fish to California on trucks, but they ain't gonna get off of I-49 to come here to get fish, so that hurt, and then like I say, the Church changed the rules, you know, you don't have to eat fish on Friday no more, so that make a difference, so we don't sell anymore. Certain people that, certain old people that's still alive that don't mind cooking, those young ones are too lazy to cook, they rather eat a fast burger.

Lee: So, you actually supported yourself though?

JC: Oh, yeah, that's all we did was fish, so we sold a lot of 'em wholesale. I had one time, we caught 5,000 pounds in one haul up here in the lake and we hauled them to Memphis and sold them. We'd sell those big, big catches in Jonesville or Memphis. There's no more docks in

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Jonesville [LA]. Champlin Net Company, well they don't even have a dock anymore. They don't fool with fishing anymore.

Lee: When did the interstate come through? I-49? In the '80s?

JC: I guess so, something like that.

Lee: So, that basically cut Cloutierville off from the main traffic?

JC: Off from all that traffic.

Lee: So, that's when you fish business kind of went down.

JC: Uh-huh, it really dropped.

08:10

Lee: What kind of fish do you fish for?

JC: Catfish, buffalo, gar, goo.

Lee: Gaspergou?

JC: Yeah, gaspergou, that's mostly what I catch.

Lee: Do you process it or do you just sell them whole?

JC: I process, I cut 'em up and put 'em in packs, and they're ready to fry when they leave out of here. I got 'em all packed up and ready.

Lee: They put the dam in, what, in the '30s, more or less?

JC: Up there on Cane River? Yeah.

Lee: Right. Did that change the way the river was at all? The part of Cane River you fish or not?

08:54

JC: Oh, yeah, well, no, it didn't change the one I fish because all that comes around it, comes from Kisatchie, and the Old River up there, and it comes in, and then it follows in below the spillway, and it all flows in Red River at Colfax. So, that's all still the same, but they have changed the pattern of the fish a lot, 'cause they built a, they blocked the river off down there below this side of the mouth ...

Lee: Did they do like a lock and dam?

JC: Well, it's not the lock and dam, they did it way before that. They dammed it off, and they built a diversion canal, and they supposed to help the flooding, but it didn't do nothing with the flooding. That was another one of them government bureaucracy myths that just messed it up, and instead of ... the fish used to pour in that, you know, fish has been coming down million a years up this one channel. They messed that up. They come up there and they got a dam, they can't come up, so now, just lately spawning fish probably started coming up, but they didn't ...

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they don't come up like they used to, and we used to fish nets, we'd catch three to five thousand pounds [and raise them up?] but, shoot, you can't catch that at all anymore.

Lee: You said that they go to Kisatchie to spawn?

10:33

JC: Yep, you see the water gets up there and it jumps the banks and goes all out in the woods, and the fish's got to have fresh ground to lay on. So, they lay their eggs, and then, they ain't gonna lay 'em in no less than 70 degrees, and they got at least 72 hours. They've got to hatch and then the little fish go out with the parents.

Lee: I didn't realize they went all the way up to Kisatchie. So, they stay in Cane River to get...?

11:11

JC: They probably come from Mississippi, Black [River] and Red [River] and all that, but I catch some fish sometimes, come from the Missouri River. They come down, get in the Mississippi, and finally come up the Red. They call it a Missouri River sucker. It's a type of buffalo, it's got a head look like an armadillo head, and he suck from the bottom, and he's round. That's a different type of buffalo than we have, and he lives mostly in the Missouri River. Every once in a while, you'll catch one of them, and you'll catch one of them sturgeons there too.

Lee: They [sturgeons] had gotten real rare for a while.

JC: Yeah.

Lee: Do you ever go out into Red River to fish?

JC: Well, yeah, well, not any more now, not much, except sport fishing, but, no, we don't fish in there no more. I don't fish nowhere much but in that river right here, because ... well, I fish Little River some, I've got some trout in there. I need to fish up there in the summer, go make a set and catch some, but other than that, I fish ... I'm gonna probably catch two or three thousand pounds out here that I cut up and put 'em in packs, and fill this freezer up, and that'll last me most of the whole summer.

Lee: You're talking about the spawning season. When does that take place? In the spring?

JC: Spring—April, May.

Lee: So you do most of your fishing for storing April?

JC: And May.

Lee: Do you fish at all during the late summer?

JC: Only if I have to have some, if I run out, or somebody calls, needs some specially, I'll go.

Lee: So basically, you fill up this freezer and you sell out of it until you run out, and then you go fish again?

JC: I go fish again. So, that's the way I do it now.

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13:31

Lee: What kind of nets do you use?

JC: Hoop net, trammel net, and gill nets.

Lee: Gill nets aren't illegal up here? They are in the Gulf, or certain types of them are.

JC: Maybe so. No, they're ain't illegal. You can fish any of them in Red River, some places like that, or lakes.

Lee: Do you make your nets, or do you buy them from somewhere?

JC: I make part of 'em. I tie 'em on the lines, and fix 'em—that trammel net there, I build 'em. If I was to buy 'em, I'd probably buy 'em from Jonesville around there, but I net all the hoop nets. The hoop nets that I'm fishin' with, me and my daddy and my mama built 'em in the '50s—in the '40s, in the '40s. That house right there, and every door frame and every window frame had a net hangin' on it, and whoever got a chance, knitted on it. We knitted a whole net, but there you can buy a knitted webbin' and you can put it together. All you gotta do is knit the flues, and put 'em in there. So, I'll make a catfish net, I'll knit the flues, I don't knit the webbing, that's too much knittin' for me.

Lee: Well, sure. What are the hoops made out of, wood?

JC: Fiberglass, used to be wood, but we went to fiber glass. They don't wear out.

15:15

Lee: When you started fishing with your dad, were y'all using wooden boats?

JC: Wooden boat, wooden hoops, yeah. The wooden boat we used, my daddy built right out there.

Lee: I was wondering if he was a boat maker too.

JC: Yeah, he built the boat. It was a 22-foot long flat-bottom, I called it a barge.

Lee: You call it what?

JC: Like a barge. It was, I don't know, 50-something inches in the bottom, and it had a deck on it where we could pull them hoop nets up, and it hauled, it would haul two or three thousand pounds of fish

Lee: My goodness!

JC: And it was big. It was made out of heart cypress. So, he planed them sides in, and, 'cause that thing came up, and it came up to where it raised up, he had to do all that hisself with a hand-plane. I watched him out there, he built it out there with some [calipers?]

Lee: Did he cut those cypress out in the bottom back there?

16:24

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JC: Oh, he got somebody to cut it. Yeah, I don't know where he found the cypress, but there were some pretty boards, 'bout that wide [10-12"], and that dang boat ... he made it where they flared out so we could haul a load, that sucker would ... shoot, we'd haul that big boat, we had a three-quarter ton Ford, we put it in the back—that thing'd be stickin' out way out there, and tied down and we'd come to south Louisiana and fish them big lakes with that barge.

Lee: Is that right?

JC: Sure did, and I pulled that barge with a set of nine-foot oars when I was 15 years old, too.

Lee: Oh my goodness! That had to be heavy!

JC: I pulled it out there in them big lakes, like Pontchartrain and Maurepas, I pulled it and put that net out. We put three No. 3 wash tubs of gill net out every day. We'd pick it up the next morning, and I had to push out that net a straight line. I pulled it, with that wind blowin', and I pulled with that 9-foot oars, and I pulled that big boat, and daddy wanted it in a straight line, and sometimes, I'd have to be pulling cross-ways of that wind, and have to work that boat. I did that.

Lee: Oh, my goodness. How long did you fish on that boat? When did you quit using that?

JC: Oh, I don't know, he finally, probably in the '70s, '60s, '70s probably, we got them fiber glass boats, and that big boat was too hard to haul around and trail and all, and he gave to a fella down there he used to hoop net with, and he fooled around and left it left it on the bank, and I believe part of it still rotten' down on the bank. I wished I had kept it but I didn't know nothin' about that stuff then.

18:35

Lee: Yeah, you never know ... back in the day, they were so common. Were there other people making boats around here at that time?

JC: Nah.

Lee: Was anyone commercial fishing besides your dad?

JC: Oh, yeah, there was a bunch of 'em back then. Everett East [Istre?] had a market and Cleave Brown had a market. Most of the time there, we supplied all those markets in Natchitoches too, and this one. We sold a thousand [pounds] here a week, but we'd go to south Louisiana and stay four nights and catch a truckload and come back.

Lee: What were you fishing for down there?

JC: Buffalo, catfish.

Lee: Same thing? You get that out of Lake Pontchartrain?

JC: Oh, yeah, piles of catfish in there, and they got piles of tugboats too! They sucked up parts of our net one night. You get in those tugboat roads, you're going to lose everything, and the crabs are hell! They eat the nets. They don't eat it, they cut 'em, those little things they got, they cut, pull, cut, pull. Next morning you get there, you got a wad of nylon all cut and raveled .

Lee: Are they trying to get in it to the fish?

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JC: No, they get hung in it, get trapped on the bottom, and they get on the hung end and they start pulling. By the time next morning come, they'll be up at the top line, have to bust 'em out of that thing! We'd always brought us a mallet, we'd bust 'em to pieces and take 'em out.

Lee: Did you eat them?

JC: Most of the time, they're so hard in that net, you had to bust 'em to get 'em out. Sometimes we'd get some few there, we'd bring back home. Some people eat 'em, I didn't. I'm allergic to seafood, so I don't eat 'em.

20:45

[Mr. Cannon's helper]: My nephew used to go down south and catch some. A lot of people fish in the ocean.

JC: A lot of people fish here—I mean used to fish here, but they got, some of them people still fish around here, but that government made it so hard, that you've got to fill out all that paperwork. They don't let nobody know, I'm pretty sure they ain't filling out all them forms like I was doin'. Man, you've got to make all them monthly reports, I'm probably behind about two or three months, and I ain't catchin' no fish, you still got to send the damn report down there to Baton Rouge, and you ain't fishin' for three or four months.

Lee: You've got to fill them out monthly?

JC: Yeah. All your sale stuff, you've got to send, get all them sheets, and accumulate, then send a cover sheet with them and all that and send it to Baton Rouge.

Lee: That sounds like a lot of work.

JC: Shoo! It's a mess.

Lee: What, they're measuring what you're catching or selling, or both?

JC: What you're catchin, what kind of fish you catch. When you catch that fish, you've got to fill out this sheet, telling what it is and everything. You write down the species and everything, and fill that out and then after at the end of the month when you make the report, you've got another type sheet you've gotta fill out and accumulate all of these, and send it to them.

Lee: That's a lot of paperwork.

JC: Shoo, what you talkin'! That caused a lot of people quit fishin'. They don't even fish anymore just because of that. Man hardly have time to do all that stuff, but I've been trying to do it, I think I'm behind now, but I need to be doing it. Heck, I ain't caught no fish all the winter.

[Mr. Cannon's helper]: They ain't doin' good at'all.

Lee: The fish are not?

JC: Well, it's too cold, but I've been with pecans. I don't have time to fish and do them pecans too.

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23:23

Lee: When did you start doing pecans?

JC: Oh, I don't know.

Lee: Have you always done that as a kind of a side business to the fishing?

JC: Not always, I started about 10 to 15 years ago, but I've got me a picker. I picked for other people too.

Lee: Is it like a mechanical picker?

JC: Yeah, a big pecan picker.

Lee: Does it go in a truck?

JC: Yeah.

Lee: Ok, I'll take a picture of it.

JC: Yeah, I go out and pick places, big places, for other people on a 60-40.

Lee: Oh, okay, they get 60, you get 40, or you get 60 and they get 40?

JC: No, no, I get 60. All that diesel, shoot, it's rough just to make it on 60-40.

Lee: So, what do you get for a pound of pecans?

JC: Oh, that varies between what kind, what type, and all that kind of stuff.

Lee: Do you shell them here?

JC: No, I don't shell 'em. I just buy 'em, sack 'em, and I've got a bunch that I'm gonna ship out after while.

Lee: So, what do you do, grade them out in different sizes, different types?

JC: I've got a grader out back.

Lee: Who do you sell them to?

JC: I sell 'em to a place in Boyce, but I sell 'em to individuals—sellers, and just individuals who want 'em.

Lee: Does that sustain you pretty good when fishing is down? Of course, this is seasonal too.

JC: Yeah, it's all seasonal. I don't know, I try not to make no more than what social security allows me to. So, I don't make all that much. Of course, I'm old enough now I'm not limited no more. When you get 80, I believe they let you make anything.

[discussion about age and Mr. Cannon's health issues]

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26:40

Lee: I heard talk about a man, I think his name was Mr. Wales—did you know him?

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lee: You remember him?

JC: He used to fish with me. Fact, that boat I got down there, me and him bought it together. Yeah, Mr. Wales, when he got old, I used to help him, he had a few nets, he used to come down here, I'd raise 'em for him. He got too old where he couldn't do it no more, still was tryin' to fish.

Lee: Was he from over at Black Lake?

JC: No, he's in Natchitoches. Julian Wales. He fished big time. He even fished South, North Dakota one time, yep, way up there. I didn't know they had buffaloes up there, except bison.

[Mr. Cannon's helper]: Y'all hear about those silver carps?

Lee: Oh, are those the Asian ones?

[Mr. Cannon's helper]: They say they're eating everything.

Lee: Do you get invasive species here? Do you get things like that that come up the Red River?

[Mr. Cannon's helper]: Some of 'em in Red River.

28:37

Lee: I'm going to take picture of the inside of the shop.

[Mr. Cannon's helper]: See that stuff up there? [points to weights hanging on the wall] When he's buying pecans people put that in the sack, get more pounds on it.

Lee: I'm going to take some pictures in here, Mr. Cannon, if that's alright, and then I want you to take me out and show me your nets. He was telling me about people putting these weights in here, in their sacks of pecans?

JC: Oh, yeah. [clattering sounds] This was in the sack the other day.

Lee: Oh my gosh! Well, when you find out that somebody's done that, do you stop buying from them?

JC: Yeah, if I can prove it—I can't catch 'em.

Lee: So, you don't actually empty the pecans?

29:34 [discussion about people involved in cheating scales, redacted]

31:16

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[walked outside to outbuildings in back of business]

JC: They're [nets] all folded up.

Lee: That's ok because I took some when I came down here a long time ago, I took some of you working on them, I think you were repairing them that day. These are all hoop nets?

JC: Yeah, the gill nets are under here.

Lee: These are your gill nets?

JC: Gill nets, trammel nets.

JC: I just got through cullin' them... They lay there until I get ready to put 'em all out.

Lee: Those are all hoop nets?

JC: Yeah.

Lee: These are your gill nets?

JC: Gill nets.

Lee: These are wooden, aren't they?

JC: Fiber glass.

Lee: Oh, fiber glass? They look like wood.

JC: They're replacement—fiber glass.

Lee: That's your pecan picker?

JC: No, that's [illegible].

32:41

Lee: So, you haul it in with your tractor?

JC: Uh, huh. I load the tractor on that trailer there, and I pull it behind the truck. It's got 600 rubber fingers on it, that's what turns on a big drum, and it picks the pecans up.

Lee: Ok, so they go into the drum, what, go up into the trees?

JC: It goes on a conveyor belt, and when it goes out the back, the pecans fall through the openings, and go in an auger and the auger puts them in the hopper.

Lee: This is your last family piece of land, is that right? Is that what you told me?

JC: No, this is just one we bought when we was putting in the fish market. The land is out on Little River, 21 acres.

Lee: Is that where you got flooded out you were telling me about?

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JC: Yeah.

Lee: So you still have land back there?

JC: Yeah, I kept it.

Lee: There's nothing back there?

JC: Nothing but pecan trees. I turned it into a pecan orchard. I grafted all them trees. [points out equipment] This is the cleaner, the sizer, the elevator ...

Lee: So, this is what grades them out in different sizes?

JC: Yeah, they come out on this table right here, put 'em in the [harp?], that thing over her—got to have four or five people picking trash out. See, this trash barrel we put it in, looks like somebody thrown most of it on the floor. This is where all of it comes in and goes in, sorts 'em by three or four sizes, anyway, but a lot of times I'll pick 'em, we grade 'em by what kind of trees. I pick the big ones separate, and the natives separate, then you don't have too much grading to do.

Lee: The natives are really, really sweet but they're hard to pick, aren't they?

JC: Yeah, that machine don't have trouble pickin' 'em though.

Lee: You've got good birds?

JC: Got three turkeys.

Lee: That turkey's pretty. He's displaying.

JC: He is pretty. He thinks he's it.

Lee: He's pretty.

JC: That's what I do a lot of—turkey hunting.

Lee: You do wild turkey hunting?

JC: Oh, yeah. I done killed about 70.

Lee: And you keep guineas too. I love guineas.

JC: Yeah, I do too, but God-dang, they eat a lot and make a racket!

Lee: Well, they do, but they're good watch birds. They're tell you if somebody's coming.

JC: My daughter-in-law brought that here. She thought she was going to help with 'em, but she never brought any feed. I'm going to start ringing necks here before long.

Lee: You've got a bunch of them. Do you sell eggs?

JC: Uh-huh, yeah.

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Lee: How many chickens do you have?

JC: Like 50.

Lee: And you have three turkeys?

JC: Three turkeys—two hens and a gobbler, and twelve guineas.

Lee: You sell guinea eggs too?

JC: They don't lay, I think most are males, I think we got three or five eggs out them, and ain't got nothing since. I don't know how you tell a male from a female.

Lee: I don't either.

37:22

JC: They ain't much operation here. Like I say, when I quit, that's probably gonna be the end of it.

Lee: You don't think your grandson will take it up?

JC: I doubt it. My son and them, they may pick the pecans on the rental place if I keep all of the equipment, but man, that equipment is so high, and that picker's \$25,000. You know, these tractors don't come cheap.

Lee: Do you repair them yourself, or do you have to take them out to have them repaired if something happens?

JC: No, I do the work on 'em myself. If you take care of something, you don't have to repair much. [part of discussion redacted]. The thing there is 12 years old, and I ain't never changed a bearing or nothin'. That's unusual 'cause them other people got them hired hands, there's always somethin' broke.

Lee: I imagine that piece of equipment was pretty pricey too?

JC: That was \$11,000. [inaudible due to background noise] ... 'cause I bought that secondhand, paid \$30,000, I believe, and [inaudible], it was \$1100 [inaudible due to background noise]. If you're really gonna be in the business, I don't worry about [inaudible] except a couple of little, couple of young orchards I pick those smaller trees, but those big trees, the only way you can, you've got to have a 100-horse tractor and one of these shakers. It'd cost you 15 to 20 thousand dollars, that tractor will cost you a 100 thousand, so you're in trouble, hear?

[Mr. Cannon ended interview to attend to customers for pecans.]

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: John Oswald Colson (Isle Brevelle, Cane River Creole Community)

Interviewed September 11, 2015 at Badin Roque House, Hwy. 484, Natchez, LA, by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 52:44
Transcribed 9/28/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

OC: My full name?

DL: Yeah. For the sound check.

OC: Okay, all of it?

DL: The whole thing.

OC: Say my name and then spell each one of 'em? John Oswald Colson [spells].

00:25

DL: Oswald, tell me about this house, the construction, the way that it's built, the way they maintained it, and who lived here.

OC: The house was built between 1770 and 1790, and from what I read and Dr. Gregory told me, there was quite a few of these structures during that time period, and it's made out of what they call *poteaux-en-terre*, post-in-the-ground house.

01:17

DL: Tell me what *poteaux-en-terre* means. Show me by pointing to me where the posts are.

OC: A lot of people didn't understand *poteaux-en-terre*, post-in-the-ground. They stood the post upright in the ground up to two feet I think it was, and they started the *bousillage*, started packing the *bousillage* between the two posts, and in between both of the posts they have what they call *rabbets*; and every spring and every fall, to keep the floor the way it is now, they would put the lime on the floor and wet it and let it dry, so that way it would harden.

DL: So it made a surface on the floor?

OC: Yes, the way it's looking today.

DL: Is that the same process that they used on the outside of the house?

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02:13

OC: Not exactly, because on the outside it would be the *bousillage*, but on the flooring, you'd use just the lime so it would harden the floor. On the *bousillage* part, on the *bousillage*, they used sand and clay, Spanish moss and lime. They used whatever was available, and they made a mixture of that, and that's when they started packing the walls with it; and to build a house this size, you wouldn't use small containers like they do today. They build a hole out in the ground, a big large hole in the ground, and that's where they made the mixture in there and then they hauled it to the site, started building the house.

3:01

DL: Wasn't there something about using clay from a local source?

OC: Right, yes, they would, especially in this area here. The sand was closer to the river, you know, you could find your clay behind the house, further back in the field like that, and you had to mix the two of them together. Because just the sand, it wouldn't hold, so the clay is more of a binder, especially with the Spanish moss in it, and if you used just the clay, it would harden too fast, and it would crack—it would break open. It wouldn't work very well.

DL: Spanish moss, did they treat it in anyway?

03:40

OC: Yes, they ... a really long time ago, they buried the moss. They dug a just a trench in the ground, just like right outside here, and they buried the moss in it for about two months or so, and that's the way they would cure the moss, what they called it, or they would kill it. There's some people I know, they would boil it in the big iron pot, you know. Because when you get the moss green, it's gray, so what they did by boiling it and putting it in the ground like that, it killed it, turned real black. Because if you used it green in the *bousillage*, it would continue to grow because it grows just on air and on moisture; that's why they would do it.

DL: So this house has been occupied all the way from the time it was built, right?

04:28

OC: Right. I think it was about three different people. The first guy that owned it was a François Frederique, and in a land exchange, he exchanged some more land with a François Roubieu in the area. They went back and forth with the land like that, you know, and several people lived here. Then an Italian baker, he lived here at one time, and during that time period that was when Augustine Metoyer bought it, and he gave it to one of his younger sons, Dominique, and Dominique stayed here for a short period of time, and then around 1856, it was, I think, Bishop Martin.

At that time, they didn't have much education in the area for Catholics, and what Bishop Martin did, he had some nuns that came over from France. They stayed in Marksville and three of 'em came up here and they turned this house into a convent. It was a girls' boarding school, and at that time, I think that the tuition was whatever the people had. Sometimes, some of them, I guess you would say the wealthy people, they would pay fifty cents a month for the girls, for their kids to come to school here, or twenty-five, whatever they had; and they taught school here from 1856 to 1860, '59 really, and that's when they built the Catholic school down here.

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06:15

DL: This house has two rooms, two major rooms?

OC: Yes, it was built in the two-room structure. This room and the other room and what they called it ... you had the front gallery and the back gallery, and when the nuns were here, they closed in the back gallery to make two cabinet rooms to have more space for the nuns and the kids, and at that time I think they mostly had, from what the nuns wrote in a book—I have the book where the nuns wrote letters back and forth to their parents in France—and they talk about how the conditions, the living conditions were so bad here. It was wilderness at that time, and they had twelve or fourteen kids here at that time, and that's why they closed in one the rooms, and the priest would come once a week to say mass here, and the kids stayed upstairs.

DL: Is that whole attic open?

OC: Yes, the whole thing is open up there, and at that time they had two nuns here.

07:30

DL: So, say when you were growing up—when you were kid—who lived in the house?

OC: The old couple lived here, Mr. Joe and Ms. Zeline Roque, they lived here at that time, and that was the only ones that I knew that lived here during my time. And I would go back and forth to school—we walked by here, you know. I'd always come in and check on the old people usually. They'd always talk about different things.

DL: They told you about the history?

08:05

OC: Uh-huh, and the way it came that they had it, after the convent closed, when they built the school down here, then this closed and it went unoccupied for a long period of time. And then the way it got into the Antee's family, a guy by the name of Norbert Badin, he dealt in trade up and down the Red River. Cane River out here was the Red River in the 1700s and 1800s, and he came up by boat and he noticed that the taxes had gone unpaid on the place here, so he looked it up and he paid the taxes. They had sixty arpents of land, which would be sixty acres, and he paid the tax on it, and it was \$10.37 for the sixty acres, and that's how it came into the Badin and the Roque family.

DL: So, it was actually passed down to Ms. Zeline?

OC: Yes, because Norbert, that was Ms. Zeline's, that was her dad, and it was passed down to her. She was a Badin and she married the Roque fella, Mr. Joe Roque.

09:20

DL: You told me one time that when they would ask you who made the world ...

OC: [chuckles] I would tell 'em Zeline and Joe Roque because they were the oldest people in the community at that time. And the big pecan tree that's falling down up there, when they got married, he planted that; that's what he give his wife for their wedding present. He planted a pecan tree. That was the story they would always tell me.

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DL: The kitchen building, used to be where?

09:57

OC: Yeah, the kitchen was behind the house, the kitchen was behind the house all the time, and then in the '70s, yeah, that was when the people from Natchitoches, they move it down the river bank, and I think, who I think, Bobby DeBlieux, Lum Ellis, they were instrumental in doing that. Well, they asked Mr. Antee if they could use it, and so it was connected to the back of the house, just like it is on the picture out front. It looks like it's together but it is not. It had about twelve foot between the house and the kitchen, and it had steps on each side, and they called it a *colidor*¹ in French, a breezeway. That's in case the kitchen caught fire, you could move it away from the house. But anyway, they moved the kitchen up to Natchitoches, and they used it as a ticket booth down on the riverbank for a long time, and then when they formed the St. Augustine Historical Society, they asked for it back, and so they brought it back. They didn't have ... the reason [it was placed in the front of the house], they didn't have enough room behind the house, because they only had, when Mr. Antee sold it, it wasn't enough room to put it back behind the house where it should've been.

11:12

DL: Ms. Zeline, did she still use that kitchen?

OC: At first she used it. She told me when she was young, she said she used the kitchen. That's why on the photo you see the two of 'em sitting on the kitchen porch. But then during my time when I would come in here, she was always cooking on the fireplace. The old fireplace had the hangers that they hang their pots on the inside.

DL: So, that fireplace right there's been rebuilt?

OC: Yes, when they restored the house, because the other one was much larger than that one, yes.

11:49

DL: This was their living area, and that was their bedroom?

OC: Yes. Well, actually like you see it on pictures, her bed was over here. This was their bedroom in here, and then the guy came along, Mr. Antee's brother, Tony, he lived here, that was his room over there, but Ms. Zeline, like on the picture out there, her bed was in this corner here, way high off the ground, you know.

DL: Was he the one they called Choucroute?

OC: No, Choucroute, that was his uncle, that was Mr. Antee's and Tony's, that was their uncle.

DL: Did he live here?

OC: I didn't know if he did or not—no, not during my time, when I was coming in here. He would, the one we just said, he'd cut the rain, you know, with the hatchet [chuckles]. This is

¹Corridor; also *colidor* (Valdman 2010:158).

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crazy—when the weather was bad, thunder and lightning, they'd tell me he'd go out with the hatchet to cut the rain.

12:43

DL: Did he put the hatchet in a tree, in a stone?

OC: No, that's when the lightning, he was cutting it, cutting the lightning, he was cutting the weather up in the sky.

DL: Oh, so he was just figuratively cutting it?

OC: Yes, yes; then lightning hit the hatchet, and that broke him of it.

DL: It's a wonder he didn't get electrocuted.

OC: I didn't know the man, they tell me he was a character, and to do something like that, he probably was.

DL: What does Choucroute mean?

OC: I have no idea.

DL: I think it means sauerkraut in French.

OC: Okay. That probably makes sense!

13:28

DL: Let's talk about this side of the river. I've been told by different people I've talked to on the river that when y'all were growing up—your age group was growing up—that everybody stuck to their own part of the river. There wasn't a whole lot of traveling up and down and interacting. Most of your activity area was ... like yours would've been from the church to where?

OC: Up to the Roque Brothers grocery up there. Yeah, you're right. In that area, when I was growing up I guess in your community, or your area, like from the bridge to where I lived, about a mile one way or the other, and hardly ever you'd go on down past the church, hardly ever. You had no business down there and why go down there, you know? And the people farther up, I guess all the way up to the Big House, F. J. and them's house [John Carroll Jones House]. The same with people across the river, you know, like Terrell and his brothers and sisters, they went to Melrose and back to their place over there, used to be more or less confined to your neighborhood.

DL: So, tell me, from the Roque Store to the church, who were the main families that lived on this main of the river?

14:54

OC: Just from the Roques? Okay, well, you had a lot of your tenant people living between where the store is and coming down to the pecan house. But, yeah, the Roques lived there, and the Jones, the Christophes, the Dupres, the Metoyers, the LaCours, the Antees, and the Sarpys,

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and the Roques, and then Joneses again.

DL: What about the Delphins?

OC: Oh, yes, the Delphins.

DL: What was Ms. Belle's maiden name, do you remember?

OC: She was a Sylvie, had to think there for a while.

DL: So your mom was kind of the one who grew stuff and gave it out, sold it, traded it. Tell me about your mom's garden, and also about the *filé*.

15:55

OC: She raised a garden ... she raised a large garden, really. Most people raised gardens at that time. My mom raised a big garden at that time, and then she also had, behind the garden, she had what they called a truck patch. Truck patch, that consisted of, like corn and beans, and bigger stuff like that, and in the front yard, that was like onions, and garlic, and tomatoes and stuff like that, and she raised a lot of it, and people would ... they had a lot of people, like on, I guess on the Roque Brothers' plantation, they'd come in and they'd ask my mom could they have stuff and whatever, and she'd say, "Yeah," and she'd pick whatever they wanted and give it to 'em, you know; and she also, her main thing was, she raised pepper—she raised red pepper.

16:55

OC: Oh my God! I have pictures! I'd sit on the porch and it was hot, and you'd string peppers from 8 o'clock in the morning until the afternoon, just string peppers, and then she'd hang 'em up. She'd hang 'em up to dry in the wash house, and then once they was dry, we'd have to sit there and take a knife, and depending on her customers—some wanted the peppers real hot, and some of 'em wanted mild. So the ones who wanted it hot, she'd grind 'em with the seeds in, and the ones that wanted mild ones, we'd sit there and take all the seeds out, and she would bottle it. It wasn't like today. She'd go to like the Roque Brothers store and down here to Sonny Jones' store, and she would ask 'em to keep some of their beer bottles and the half-pint and pint bottles, and they would, instead of throwing 'em away. They'd save 'em for her, you know, and so that was my job. I had to wash the bottles and everything and pull the labels off, and first of all, she'd put 'em in scalding water first of all to process, and I'd get 'em all clean, and that's what she'd bottle her pepper and the *filé*.

18:10

Then in the summer months, we probably worked in the field—I know we did!—and then you came around the 15th of August. It was a Holy Day of Obligation, like a Sunday; no one worked. And when I first started, I'd go with my dad, we'd go on the horses and we'd go out in Kisatchie to Red Dirt, and we'd go pick sassafras leaves in big burlap sacks—with two horses and a lot of the guys, like Jerry Jones up there and my uncle, Uncle Amédée and Alvin. They'd all go up to Red Dirt, but nobody does that today ... go up there and pick sassafras leaves all day long. And we'd come back and spread it out in my mom's house in the dining room and the living room. The floor's covered with sassafras leaves and every morning you'd have to go ... she cut a sassafras branch. She didn't like to use the broom. She said you had to use something off the tree for some reason or another. She'd turn the leaves every morning. We'd turn the leaves so they would dry faster, and once the leaves were dried, I would start de-stemming,

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pulling the stems out of it. Maybe today I'd work on the sassafras leaves today, and maybe tomorrow, she'd pick another tub full of red pepper, and I'd string red pepper. We'd just go back and forth.

19:41

She would bottle all of this, and then I ... people would call us, see her at Mass really, because back then, it was back in the '50s, '53, '54, I guess, before we got a telephone. It was a hassle then because you were on a party line with about ten other people, you know; but anyway, the people would tell her at Mass what they wanted, and I'd help her. She'd bottle up the *filé*, and I bottled up the red pepper, and I often wondered why would someone want a pint of red pepper? Today, that would last you six months! But anyway, they'd buy it, especially the Jones, Mrs. Lena Jones. Oh my God, she could use it! She would use it in everything. And up and down the river, that's what I would do. I'd go peddle sassafras and red pepper, you know, and if they say, "Tell your mama I don't have the money today," she'd say, "Well, that's alright." But if you don't have it, you'll see her at Mass, you'll see her at church, and you'll pay her then.

20:53

DL: Tell me your mom's name and your dad's name, and what her maiden name was.

OC: Veronica Metoyer, let me see how that goes. Well, she was a Llorens, too, Veronica Metoyer Colson, but her mom was a Llorens.

21:28

OC: My mom's name was Mary Veronica Metoyer and then she married my dad, and my dad was Joseph Ira Milton Colson.

DL: How were they connected to Amédée and Miss Sicoon [Severine Metoyer]?

OC: That was my mom ... my mom was the only girl and she had three brothers. She had Uncle Amédée, Uncle Alvin, and Uncle Joe; she had three brothers, she was the only girl. And where they lived, they had fifty acres of land, and that was her great-grandmother, Madam Amédée Metoyer, that was her property. I don't know, but I guess it was probably part of Augustine's, that seventeen, eighteen thousand acres, you know, because it'd been in my mom's family. I looked in the courthouse and I think I saw 160 years and that was ten or twelve years ago, so it's been in the family for over 160 years.

22:39

DL: So, Ms. Sicoon and Amédée and your mom, their pieces of land were contiguous and they were part of a piece that was shared by four siblings. So the two other brothers also had shares?

OC: Yes, they divided it up the 50 acres back in 1949, '48, because each one, my mom had twelve acres, and each one of her three brothers had twelve acres.

DL: And the land runs back to Bayou Brevelle?

OC: All the way from Cane River, from the river a mile deep, what they call the section line, all the way to the back. Like in the fall, you can see Hwy. 1. It runs a mile deep from the river

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all the way to the back, yes.

DL: Okay, so it almost goes to Hwy. 1?

OC: Yes, yes, almost to Hwy. 1, but it's not like all the people along there; it's not all those land, like Mr. Antee, you know, lives two houses over? Well, you see, theirs run out at the bayou. It's not all of 'em, but our land and the Delphin's land, what goes all the way to the back, and the Christophes, but the Roques and the Antees and the Sarpys, that all runs at the bayou back there.

24:02

DL: Did your dad work at Montrose, the sawmill?

OC: Yes, he worked there a while with his uncle, Uncle Joe Chevalier that lived next door. My dad worked with his uncle, Joe Chevalier. He was ... Uncle Joe Chevalier was the carpenter out at Montrose back in the '20s, whenever that was, and my dad's uncles, Joe Chevalier and Bud Chevalier, both of 'em worked out there. Bud Chevalier was a barber and Uncle Joe Chevalier, he was a carpenter, and my grandmother, my dad's mom, she was the seamstress, and my dad would bring the stuff to the house for her to sew it for the people up there.

DL: Were they living at that time at the back of the property?

24:58

OC: Yes, we were living down on the bayou then, Bayou Brevelle. Of course, they had, I would say, like from the Roque brothers' store about to here, I would say about half the people were living on the bayou then because that was the, that was the busiest part, because there was nothing out here. They had the sawmill out there, and then you had Cypress up there, and that's where the train stopped. It was very busy out there, and people would work there and it would be easier for them to go through the woods to go up there. Yes, because the Delphins, they had a house on the bayou, my parents did, and the Joneses had one, I think, and also Uncle Vercher Chevalier. There was about four or five families I knew during my time that lived back there.

DL: What kind of houses did y'all have on the bayou?

25:52

OC: Just a wood frame. I was only four years old, I was four years old when I moved to the front. On the bayou we had wood frame houses back then. I don't remember it because my uncle, my dad's uncle, he built the house we lived in then, up here, and I was only four years old when we moved from the bayou, because they built the house here in '42, the one up there.

DL: You didn't have a house up on the front at that time?

OC: No, no. They had, my mom's brother that lived next door to her—Alvin? Well, that was the family house. It was, like I told you before, that was the *bousillage* house, yeah, it was a large house. They probably had four bedrooms; yeah, had four bedrooms to that one, and like I say, it was on piers, it was up off the ground.

DL: I think in those pictures when you were a kid, that's the house?

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OC: Yes it is, yeah, I was up on a horse. Yeah, I guess they tore that house down in the ... I left in '56, somewhere in that time period, I guess, '55, '56. They tore it down and they built a wood frame house, my uncle did, yes.

27:31

DL: You went to St. Joseph's school?

OC: Yeah, to the Catholic school down here, my sister and all the kids along here, we'd walk to school every morning. The school was only to the eighth grade. They didn't have high school down here at that time, and then I graduated from grade school to the eighth grade. I didn't go to high school because I had to stay and help my parents, because my mom, her leg was bad at that time, and so I stayed and I would help my dad, and let my sister go to school, you know, and she went there awhile. I didn't go. Later on, I did go back to school while I was away from here, for a short time.

28:26

DL: Let's talk a little bit about the evolution of your interest in music, and what took you away from here. You and Allen started playing music together?

OC: Yeah, we started playing with the older people, the LaCour guys. We started playing ... Al and I would fool around playing and then we started playing with them, we started playing with the LaCour guys because then it was only two of them left. It was just Yuke and Duma still playing at that time, and then Allen and I, we started playing music with them. We played with them until they stopped, and Allen left and he went back east, and I stayed home awhile. And then he asked me if I wanted to come up there and I went up to Chicago, and we started playing music up there with Harvey. And at first I played with two other guys that played with—a couple of hillbilly guys—and we played music the whole time I was up there.

DL: Didn't y'all cut a record?

OC: Yeah, Al and them did. I done forgot—he and your friend [chuckles], Doc, he and Doc did. I don't know. They had too many ... at that time, they had too many people playing music. In the '50s, oh my God! You find two guys in a tavern or a bar, then you find three in this bar, everywhere you went on a Friday, Saturday night, you know; but then we made some money because then we'd give dances. Al and I and Harvey, we'd rent a hall and all these people from Cane River would always go. So, we made money like that.

DL: And that was in Chicago?

OC: Yes, yes, but just playing in a bar, you didn't ... well, nobody made a lot of money then, you know. I was reading about, I forget the guy's name, but he didn't make but ten, fifteen dollars a night, you know.

DL: Going back to when you and Allen started playing with Yuke and Duma, where were you playing, and what were you playing? What type of music and what instrument?

30:46

OC: Well, I was playing the guitar then and Allen was also, and they played country music at that time when we started playing music with them, and of course, they played just country

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music ... they played a waltz and a two-step. I didn't quite understand it until after I started playing with them, but it was easy, you know. And then rock-n-roll came about. Then that was Al's future father-in-law, Duma was, yeah. Al convinced him, and he could play really good, he could play rock-n-roll on the fiddle, trust me, and he was really good at it, and we played music to the Friendly Place—at Wood's Place when it opened. That was the first one. We was young then because, oh my God, that was ... the first one was in '50. That's the second hall [still standing]. The first one burned down, then they built a second one in 1957, something like that, and we played there and different house dances, and whatnot, to the church.

DL: Did they play songs in French?

OC: Yes, they did, Duma did, uh-huh. He knew a lot of 'em, he knew a lot of French songs, especially the waltz.

DL: They were still speaking French pretty regularly on the river when you were growing up?

32:19

OC: Yeah, they did, and back then they had a lot of people speaking French. I guess we would have learned more. When we went to school I knew more, but when we went to school the nuns wouldn't ... they told us, "You come here to speak English, not to speak French." They called it foolishness.

DL: Those nuns that taught you weren't French?

OC: No, no, oh no. All our pastors and nuns, they were from back east. All of them, they were either German, Irish, or Polish. You'd tell by the names, you know—Finborn—they were all from back east, like J. J. Callahan during my time, he was from Pennsylvania, I think it was—yes, that's where he was from.

DL: Talking about the French, and the French customs, tell me about *trinquet*?

OC: We don't have that any longer, for during the Christmas holidays, but people would go to people's houses between Christmas and New Year's. They would go and visit. That was the whole week between Christmas and New Year's. They'd say, "We'll go and *trinquet*," you know, that means you're going to have a drink and eat with somebody. You'd go from one house to other the whole time, that whole week, and they wouldn't work. That's what they would do—up and down the river, everybody would. Anyway, from my time coming up until '56, I guess, and then everything started dying and the people started leaving.

DL: I want you to tell me about some of the clubs that were on the river, but before you do, you mentioned about this week-long interval that nobody was working, so I'm assuming they're not growing anything during that time. Tell me about the agricultural cycle out here. You know, what crops were people growing and what was the cycle? When did it start, when did it end?

34:28

OC: In the spring, as you know, it was king cotton then. Everybody, these small farmers, my parents, they only had ten acres over there, eight or ten acres of cotton, you know, but they had a very good price for it. They would plant that and corn—that would be the spring time, and come fall, you start gathering it, you know. Then after that in the winter months, well, then there was nothing to do. I remember after we gathered our crop, we would then help the neighbors. We'd

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help my uncles on both sides and Mr. Christophe. We'd help them, and after that was all gathered, then my dad, he had a cousin, Robert Chevalier up in Shreveport and he worked at St. Vincent Academy, that's where the two nuns that were here, that's where they retired—it's a retirement home today—and my dad, he would go meet his cousin up there, and work at the St. Vincent Academy in Shreveport. He'd work up there the whole of winter. He'd stay up there until springtime again, then he'd come home. He'd do that every year.

DL: In the fall, when they had the church fair. Tell me how they funded the church fair.

35:50

OC: People would just give donations, yeah, and all the food, all the food, because everyone up and down the river here, they raised chickens and ducks and hogs and cows and everything. So the food was actually free. You didn't have to buy anything. Each household gave something, whatever they had.

DL: Didn't they also contribute to a bale of cotton?

OC: Oh yes, yes, uh-huh. They would ... several people would, you know, they'd give the church a bale of cotton. Some people, they would ... some people would donate so many hundred pounds, this one would and that one would, and then they would gin it and give the proceeds to the church.

DL: Who was ginning? Where was the gin?

36:39

OC: They had several near here but the closest one was right here at Melrose, you know. The seed house still stands there now. That was the closest one, and then when I left from here, the Jones, Bill Jones, he built one up there. When I left from here, they had four gins. They had one on Melrose, the Joneses had one, and of course, cross the river over there, it still stands, the Typo gin.

DL: You never went to Cloutierville? You didn't have a reason to go to Cloutierville?

OC: Yes, because we had dances down there. We would have one up here at the Friendly Place and the church ... the church would have a dance ... then the church down there would have one. Yes, we'd go to Cloutierville quite often, when we were teenagers, you know.

DL: Tell me, there used to be a lot of dance halls and places on the river, and then they kind of compressed down to Wood's Hall, about the last one. Start with the oldest one you remember even if you didn't go there, that you knew about. What were the oldest clubs, and where were they, and then all the way to Wood's Hall.

38:05

OC: I guess when I was young, the oldest one would've been across the river over there—Kirkland—Ashley Kirkland, yes, Mrs. Virginia Kirkland and her husband. He always did because he was like at the plantation. It wasn't a plantation, but they would have ballgames over there, and that was a really big thing when I was a small kid and I couldn't go. They played ball behind—he had, it was a tremendous hall he had, dance hall—and behind there, he had a baseball field, because that was very popular. And he had a lot of people would come there all

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the time, and that would be the oldest one, I guess. And like the Metoyer brothers over here, Bubbá's, you know, which I didn't go there because that was built in '42, so I was only four years old at that time.

DL: Bubbá's, wasn't the clientele from Bubbá's ... that was more the workers from the plantations?

OC: Yes, yes, uh-huh. Most of 'em were from your plantations, like from Melrose on that side and Hertzogs down in there, Matt Hertzog's place and Melrose, that's mostly the people that would go there on Friday and Saturday nights.

DL: Was Kirk's Hall more for Creole people?

OC: Yes, when he first built it. Yes, that was the intention, yes, because I remember older people would go there because they would cross the river in a boat and go over there, you know? Then they had the other one up there but it didn't last very long—the Balthazars, Sammy Balthazar's place. They had one later on; he had ... it was a store, you know, then he started selling alcohol.

DL: And that was on the other side of the river?

OC: Yes. Well, actually, on this side ... we didn't have any on this side until later on. Just before I left from here, the Roque brothers opened up the Blue Moon, I guess. And, of course, Sonny Jones, but that was a grocery store down here by the bridge, and they had others, like the, I hear 'em talk about the Green Derby and the Brown Derby, that was around, one of 'em was down around like Magnolia, and the other was, I think, around Derry.

DL: What about Wood's Hall? When was that built? You said there were two of 'em.

40:35

OC: The first one was built, I think he built the first hall in maybe '47, I want to think, and then that one burned and he built the other one. But he had a good business there—a lot of people—and that lasted a long time, a very long time. It was still going when I left from here in '56.

DL: Didn't they reopen it back in the '80s?

OC: Yes, someone, I heard someone opened it, but they didn't have any business because no one ... everyone had gone, you know, by that time. They didn't have very many people, just the older people were left around here at that time.

DL: Wood's Hall was exclusively Creole, wasn't it?

OC: It was exclusively for Creole. It was funny, when I think about it today, people would come there and he'd say, "Well, you can't come in," and they'd say "Well, why?" "It's for Creoles," he'd say. "What's Creole?" He'd say, "Now, I know you're not going in!" But anyway, it didn't seem to bother 'em too much. Then later on it changed. Then he started ... the guy started getting Yuke and Duma, I think. He got in touch with Al Ferrier up there to play at that time, yeah. So, he would let some of them come in, so that was okay."

DL: When I was interviewing you and Al before, you talked about people jumping out the

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windows—fights and stuff in there.

OC: Well, that happened at all the places. That happened quite often, especially when it got closing time, they weren't ready to go home. It always puzzled me. I never knew why you wanted to give a dance on a Sunday night. You knew you had to go to work on Monday, you know, but that's when you'd give a dance, and the people were already mad because they had ... you had closing at 12 o'clock, you know, and you were just getting high and whatever. And so, what they would do, all the windows, they raised up like this, and they had a prop—they would prop open like that—and you'd move the stick and make a terrible noise. So that's what people would do [chuckles]. That was known to start a fight if you did that. They'd take the stick out the window, the window'd fall, and a fight—oh my God! Everybody'd start fighting, you know. That was the end of the dance then, really, because the man, it was funny, he would stop selling beer, or whatever it was, and he'd say, "Time to go home." They wasn't ready to go home!

DL: So being out all night or late into the evening at Wood's Hall, then you'd have to go out and work in the fields the next day?

OC: Yeah, it was a bad feeling the next day, especially if you drink too much, especially like it is—a hundred degrees—and you had to go in the field. It wasn't a fun thing. I swore many a time that I wouldn't drink again, but I'd do it all over—couldn't wait to do it next weekend, to start over again!

DL: How old were you when you left here?

44:30

OC: Too young—nineteen or twenty maybe. I know I wasn't twenty because I had to go to Jew town to get an ID card so I could go to work.

DL: You had to go where?

OC: [laughs] I had to go ... they got a place in Chicago you could get anything for money. You go to Jew town to get identification so I could find a job. So you'd go down to Jew town, give 'em five dollars, they'd make you out—of course, there was no picture or nothing at that time, you know, not even on driver's license. So you'd go to Jew town and give a guy five dollars, say I need an ID card saying I'm 21, 22 years old—no problem. All they wanted was the money, but it was a legitimate ID card. Yeah, so I had to get a job. I really wasn't old enough and I really wanted one so I could go into the bars. Yeah, we played music up there all through the '50s. Well, I left in '58, and I went to my sister's wedding out in California, and I stayed out there maybe a year, not very long. It was okay. It was a lot different in California than back east. First of all, you had to ride a bus for two hours to get to work, and I didn't like that because back east in Chicago, you catch the bus on the corner where you live, and fifteen, twenty minutes, you to work, you know. Anyway, I left and I went back, I went back and forth probably. I lived out in California three different times, and I would always end up going back east, especially all through the '60s, that was a time to be back east. We played music then, went to Soldier Field, wherever they had a sit-in. Everybody was protesting, you played music, that was really, '60s and music, I guess was in my DNA at the time. It was a fun time, it really was.

DL: Why did you come back here?

46:46

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OC: Well, my dad passed, and then I came back again when it was just my mom, because my sister was out in California and my mom was here by herself. Then I came back home to look after her and I lived with her, but I could have well stayed up there.

DL: What year was that?

OC: '69 I think.

DL: How did you end up with a California girl from Marksville?

OC: She came down here to visit her sister, because her sister had just moved back here. When her sister lived in Germany, yeah, that's what was, she went to visit them in Germany, and she came back, and you see, Alvin was living right next door to my parents' home. That's how I met Janet, and we got married in '71.

DL: And you stayed? You never went back again?

OC: No, now it's time to go back again, she says. [chuckles]

DL: We're close to the end of our hour, is there anything else you want to tell me, anything else you want to get on tape?

OC: I guess that's about it.

DL: I can think of one other thing. When you were growing up and farming, were you using mules to farm, to plant with?

48:35

OC: Yes, yes, horses—we never had mules. A lot of people used mules but my dad had horses; yeah, we sure did. I never understood that, but before they moved here, he told me they lived in Shreveport when they first got married, and then they moved back. They bought a car, and they moved back here, and that's when they built the house on the bayou, and he said—I never understood that until now—he said they sold a car to buy a horse and a wagon. Why would you sell a car to buy a horse and a wagon?! All my life, I never understood that, but he say, "Well, we needed the horse to farm and the wagon for transportation." I said, "You had transportation, what you mean!"

OC: Did y'all do a lot of fishing?

49:36

DL: Al and I, we fished—nothing like some people would have, you know. I fished a little bit. People couldn't understand that. They would tell me, "You been fishing?" "No." "You don't fish in the river? The river's right in front of your house, and you don't fish?" People would find that so strange. Well, city people found a lot of things strange. Our cousin would come down in the summer. We'd take him bird hunting. We'd take him back in the woods—we were familiar with the woods, we knew 'em like the back of our hand. We'd blow the light out and run, tell him about the monsters, just teasing the poor kid. We'd find him thirty minutes later; we'd round him up. It was just something to do, you know.

DL: Did y'all hunt a lot?

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OC: Yeah.

DL: What did you hunt?

OC: We'd hunt birds, whatever, coon, yeah, coon, but then, we'd do ... Like our cousins, they were just so citified. They didn't know nothing about the country. And we went swimming. We could swim, hold his head under until about time when he wasn't breathing, raise him back up—something to do, you'd get bored, you know—and he'd promise never to come back again, then next summer, he was back again [laughs].

DL: One last question. Tell me about the zizi tree.

51:23

OC: Oh my God, everyone had a zizi tree in the hog lot. What would you determine, was that a fruit or what?

DL: Plum?

OC: I guess, but they're very edible, and you'd make brandy with 'em. But everyone along here had one or two zizi trees in the hog pen—in the hog lot. Well, the hogs would eat 'em once they fall, once they get ripe, and they get soft and then fall. Everybody had zizis. Where did they come from? I forgot; Pete talked about it one time.

DL: I think, weren't they Chinese?

OC: Yeah, I think so.

DL: I think they came in with that Chinese population. As a matter of fact, I think that's what they're—called Chinese plums.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Lynell “Doc” Couty

**Interviewed August 14, 2015 at the Cane River Creole NHP Curatorial Building by
Rolonda Teal**

Time of interview: 01:19:29

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker’s pause

00:00

RT: Today is August 14, 2015. I am here in Natchitoches at the Cane River Creole National Historical Park site. I am here with Mr. Doc Couty and we will be discussing some of the music traditions here in this area. A few of the bars, clubs that existed, etc. Okay, Doc if you would just give us a little bit of background on how you are associated with this area, you know, when you moved away, things like that.

DC: Okay, well originally, I was born in Alexandria, it’s a long story, and we won’t go into that because it would take up the whole thing. I had a twin brother. His name was Armel Couty everybody called him by Mickey Couty. Which my real name is Lynell Couty.

RT: Okay.

DC: But, everybody knows me by Doc Couty. And, then there was problems with family etc., etc. World War II stories and I was eventually foster child by my aunt. Her name was Dollie Couty Silvie. She was married to James Silvie. Everybody called him Pap. And, they were kind enough to take us in. One aunt took my brother, her name was Daisy Rachel but she was a Couty. And, they took us in and eventually the state took over and we were foster child. And, I was fortunate enough to be on the river in [19]45 on Cane River which was known as the Isle Brevelle. Everybody say Cane River but it’s really Isles Brevelle.

And, there was a store, Compton Place, which we lived right next to by Melrose on the west side of the bridge. I got introduced to music because ... my love I guess... I was lonely. I wasn’t with my twin. I’d always just [inaudible] little nickels to go and play the jukebox in the Big Band Era. Glen Miller, Ernie Shaw, Flip Flop and Fly, uh, even before... I’m getting ahead of myself. Louis Jordan, Cho-cho ya Boogie. And, I’ll get into that later on people. Really, the gentleman that got me into music and a lot of things have not been said about this gentleman on the river. His name was Ian Jones and I believe the name Ian was in French but I think his name was Allen Jones. He had two sons that played with him, Boobie and Toddie. That was one of my first times listening to people play. He played at all the homes and different other places we’ll name later on where he played at.

RT: Okay.

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DC: And, I'll start from there. And, he played at the house and he'd just stomp his foot [DC begins stomping his foot] and he'd play that old harmonica like that. Then he use to play Shake that Thang [DC begins to sing].

“Was down in Georgia was a gentleman he got a hump in his back from shaking that thang. Oh shake that thang.” That song was really, everybody, I think the guy name was Mr. Jackson, down south, which I've did some study on since I've been here. And, everybody thought it was French but Shake that Thang was really an old Scottish song. And, that's where it comes from and it was brought here by the Irish and the Arcadians.

RT: Umh.

DC: But huh, that's where it really started, down south. And, he use to play, that was the big song back in the 40s, 45, 46, 47 into that area.

So, let's move on to the... that's before the time of Kirkland Hall. [DC holds a piece of paper with a map of Cane River and the locations of several bars and clubs]. I'm gonna start up there. Maybe I should start a little further up across the river from the church. I'm trying to define this from where St. Augustine Church is. If you would cross and go to Melrose you would go... it would be the last place on the end was called Sammy Balthazar Place. And, that was one of the hangouts. Everybody hung out and most of the places were really jukeboxes back then too. It wasn't very many bands. And, a lot of people think there was a lot of bands but there wasn't. There were house bands and these bands that played over there. I'm not quite sure, Ian Jones, Yuke, and Duma use to play at that place but the name of it was Sammy Balthazar.

5:00

RT: What else do you remember about that place?

DC: Oh, they liked to drink [DC and RT laugh]. And, they would just sit out and people had a good time. There wasn't ... you got to remember people didn't have that many cars back then and if they did play they would go on a wagon and horseback. And, I remember those days.

RT: Arriving with your instruments and all on horseback?

DC: Well, the people would walk. They had cars. There wasn't much instruments. Remember there was no amplified stuff back then. Everything was placed with acoustics, a violin, and harmonica. Boobie and Todd played two guitars, his dad played the harmonica, and that was the music. And, they partied and drank and partied and drank and you know everything was about drinking on the weekend cause that's when the party time was on the weekend.

RT: Typically, how late would these places stay open?

DC: Uh, 12:00 because everybody had to go to church on Sunday [DC laughs].

RT: So, this was basically a Saturday event, not even on a Friday night?

DC: Oh yeah, honky-tonks, the places were Saturday and Sunday. Now, Sunday afternoon after church everybody would hang there as I can remember. But, here again, a lot of the parties were without the honky-tonk. A lot of the parties were done at home – in people houses.

RT: Okay.

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DC: And, that's most of what I can remember about Balthazar, Sammy Balthazar and that was open, I think the last time I seen it open was in the early 60s.

RT: So, it would have been open in the 50s for sure and then closing in the 60s?

DC: Yes, I remember it in the 50s. Yeah, yeah. It was open in the 40s too. It was one of the earlier places.

RT: Was Sammy Balthazar's place was it mixed in terms of Creoles and African Americans?

DC: Yes, they were mixed.

RT: Okay. [Referencing the paper in DC's hand] So as we come on down then.

DC: Okay, we come on down to Kirkland. Now that was the big, big show like the, what's its name, the Ed Sullivan the big [unintelligible] show. Now, he would have ... I was too young to go to the dances but he would have name bands there. I remember Fats Domino playing there.

RT: Wow! I didn't know that.

DC: And, that was way before he was really popular.

RT: Okay.

DC: One of his most popular songs that they would play and I fell in love with Fats and he was going to the river (DC begins to sing).

"Well, I'm going to the river, gonna jump overboard and drown." That was one of his most popular songs on the river and everybody ... and the other one was going home tomorrow.

[DC sings again] "Going home tomorrow" That was one of the songs that he played. But then he played a lot of others, faster stuff.

RT: Do you remember anyone else that played there at Kirkland's other than Fats?

DC: If I'm not mistaken, if I can recall, I think B.B. King played there. They did a lot of...

RT: And who was the owner of that place?

DC: His name was, uh [DC tries to recall name {Ashley}]. Everybody knew him as Kirkland and I use to know it but I can't remember right now.

RT: Oh, that's okay. It might come back to you later. All right and then we can continue.

DC: But, that's where they... he used to have a baseball team and they would play baseball there on Sundays.

RT: Okay, at Kirkland's Hall.

DC: On Sundays, really, really big and then they would do the dance on Sunday night. Sunday nights for some reason,... you know people worked all weekend, but they would party Sunday evening and had to go back work in the fields, etc., etc.

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RT: On Monday morning.

DC: On Monday morning. And, it was a big, big thing. And, I do remember this ... when the dance ... the blacks could go there and when the dance started, they couldn't go in the hall which I could never understand.

RT: So, they had to dance outside and listen to music or what?

DC: Well, they could stay outside, they couldn't go in.

RT: Okay.

DC: I hate to talk about that but, which I thought was wrong all along. It was ... we're all God's children and music really bring people together.

RT: It usually does, doesn't it?

DC: And, we in the music field. We never had no prejudice that I can recall. We were all one musician, one family. And, even right now, if you look at the music, we all look at one another as musicians not the color of your skin, Creole or what you are. Which is a blessing. Music brought people together. That's why love music so much.

10:00

Let's go on to Melrose which here is Bubbá's Place [DC refers back to the paper]. Now that was a jumping place. In fact, I got to know a lot of ... as I got older and moved back here... I got to know Bubbá and his brothers. It wasn't a really nice place to go to but it was a good place to go to if you want to have fun. And, he had blues bands from Alexandria of different types of bands that he had. I don't know if Mr. Ian Jones or Yuke and Duma played there. Which at that time, if I can remember, I don't think they would have played there anyway because it was a place where the plantation owner furnished for people to go and party. Which I hate to be talking about that but it need to be known.

RT: So, basically at Bubbá's then were the workers?

DC: Right.

RT: Where they hung out. Which would have been different than Kirkland's in that they; it wasn't necessarily for workers but anyone?

DC: Right, and the man that owned the plantation back then, and I use to hear people say this, that and I'm not trying to get into prejudice.

RT: Oh yeah, I understand.

DC: The owner say, "If you keep yourself out the graveyard, I'll keep you out of jail." And everybody knew that. They also had a racetrack there. I don't know if they have it on here or not [DC refers back to the paper]. Do you?

RT: No, they don't have it on here for Bubbá's.

DC: Oh, it was a big time racetrack place. People from Texas would come. They would race there a lot.

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RT: Okay and I think across the road you have Wood's Hall.

DC: Well, we come on down.

RT: Oh, you want to come down on one side (RT is referring to one side of Cane River). Okay, that's fine.

DC: Now, the Green Derby, remember we're going around [Highway] 119 now.

RT: Okay, okay.

DC: We're going down there to the Green Derby.

RT: Well, there is one right before.

DC: Duncan's Hall

RT: Yeah

DC: Duncan's Hall there. I really don't know too much about that. I've heard talk of it, who played there. And, I think I know where that place sat but that's between Melrose and actually, they had a place called Hyman Cohen's Plantation - C-O-H-E-N. So, I vaguely remember that place. It's really, I was too young to really ... Also about the Green Derby, I don't know too much about that. In fact, the building stayed there for some time and the building was actually green.

RT: Really, okay the Green Derby. I see it also had a track associated with it.

DC: Yeah, yeah, that was a big thing and they gambled a lot there also. In fact all of the places except Kirkland's, that I know of; Sammy Balthazar, they gambled. Bubbá s was a big gambling place in the back. The Green Derby there was a party place and everybody use to go there. I understand there was no separation there that much.

RT: Okay.

DC: Now, at Sammy Duga's Track and Hall. Now let me see where that's at. It across the river from...

RT: It's near 119.

DC: It is 119.

RT: It's near 119. At 119 they have a little sign here and it falls right under Sammy Duga's Track and Hall (RT and DC are both referring to the same paper map).

DC: I don't recall that.

RT: Okay, no problem.

DC: But we'll go all the way in to Derry.

RT: Okay.

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DC: And we gonna take a left and go on Highway 1 and we're gonna go to a place called the Jungle Bar.

RT: It's not on here but could you kind of tell me about where it was?

DC: Okay as you would turn, let's see, 491. I would have to say on 491, on Highway 1 going south past 491 which would be on your left to go to the big city of Cloutierville, it would probably be, I'm gonna say maybe a half a mile. And that was called the Jungle Bar.

That was a real striving place at one time. If I'm not mistaken, Little Richard played there, B. B. King a lot of the people that... You got to remember a lot of these people played in dives like every other band. A lot of people don't understand that when you talk about musicians like that. They didn't just come up being a name. They had to work for it. So, there was a lot of bands that played there which I cannot give you any information on that.

RT: Right.

DC: Okay, we're going to go back north from there and go on up... I'm trying to think of the name of that place (DC is struggling to remember).

RT: Not the Compton Place, we're not that far yet?

DC: Oh no, we're on up toward north... Oh God, what was the name of that place? We'll come back to it, maybe I can remember that. There was a little dance hall there too. In fact, I own the property now.

15:20

RT: Okay, there's nothing there right? No building or anything right?

DC: No, no there's a big cell tower near it right now. But, let's go on up Highway 1 to 493. We're gonna take a right as we're going north on 493 and we get to 484 right at the bridge. The Catholic Church is on your right and you would take ... right before you take a left. There was a place called Compton's Place. In fact, the first store that I remember in 45, we lived next door to it because the water ... the levee busted in 45, Red River. So, we moved there. The place called Compton's Place. It was right by the old bridge. The old camelback bridge and everybody use to party there. But eventually, somehow, I don't know what happened, they moved it right around the corner there and it's called the Compton Place.

RT: Do you know the owner's name?

DC: Yes, Clarence Compton. [Sonny Jones' step-father]

RT: Clarence okay.

DC: Yeah and daughter married this gentleman by the name Joe Dule Sarpy and her name was Louise and they built a store and he opened up the store there and a hall with a juke box. Here again, the original Compton Place was Jukeboxes too. And then again when they moved that and built around 200-300 feet from there, right on the corner there of (DC refers to paper map) Highway 493 and 484.

RT: Okay.

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DC: They build on the left hand side as you're going across the bridge to Melrose. Ian Jones played there a lot. I remember him there. And, Yuke and Duma played there again. Now, as for blues bands, I don't remember them being there. I moved out and I went to Chicago in "52" or "53". Well, my brother moved there before that. I used to go visit.

From there, I can remember the big place on the river was called the Friendly Place, which you guys have, as Woods Hall. It was called the Friendly Place. And, Mr. Wood Antee use to have that.

RT: Okay, so Wood was not the last name, that was the first name? His name was Wood Antee?

DC: Right. And, here again he had bands that I can remember. Here again, Yuke and Duma, Ian Jones and ... Now remember people didn't travel that much and they had the jukebox again. The jukebox was the big thing.

RT: Over the band?

DC: Yes, you had to be dressed up. The thing I remember about that... They used to show movies. In all of these places, they use to show movies.

RT: Really, okay.

DC: Yes, that's how people went to the movies. A good thing I remember that cause ... You see people, they didn't have that much to do so that was the big thing.

RT: And so were the movies... you had a separate section then?

DC: No, no. They used the hall and put up a screen. A gentleman by the name of ... [DC tries to remember]. I'll have to get back with you on that. What was that gentleman's name? I'm sorry, my mind.

RT: That's okay.

DC: I can get back to you maybe we can talk and I'll think about it and I'll give you a call.

RT: Sure, sure.

DC: I'll tell you who they were.

RT: That use to show the movies?

DC: Yeah, yeah.

RT: So, what they just traveled from place to place.

DC: Traveled from... they might go even to the Catholic Church in Cloutierville, St. Johns. They showed it at the St. Augustine Hall, which was a school before they had the hall. There was a school there. In fact, I went to school there at St. Augustine when I was a little boy before I moved on. And, all the halls, Sammy Balthazar that I can remember except Kirkland. Now, I don't remember too much about that, even Bubbá's. I don't remember. But, I'm quite sure they would show movies like that. They had little places on the side sometimes. Even Derry had a

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place that would show movies. I can remember people would But, as far as the Kirk Hall, I mean the Friendly Place; pardon me people that you have on here as Woods Hall. Ian played there, Yuke and Duma, and there was a gentleman by the name, which I did not know when I met my wife. Remember, I really wasn't raised here ...

20:55

RT: Right, right, right.

DC: His name was Al Ferrier. I'll have to get you the proper spelling of that. Now, he played piano and there was a gentleman by the name His name was Roy. His father was... they were a so-called white band, but they called the boy Dr. Roy's son. I don't know his name. They would play all the blues, Fats Domino and stuff of that nature. You know, Little Richard. He played a lot of stuff. Later on he became, he went more into the country scene.

RT: Okay.

DC: My wife knew a bit more about him than I did but he would pack the halls because he played all of the blues, you know, actually Rhythm and Blues is what it was. Cause Fats Domino was really not blues.

RT: Right.

DC: Can I put some insight on Fats Domino? Really, you hear people talking about Swamp Pop, which I didn't really know until I came back here what Swamp pop was. There was a gentleman I got involved with at Northwestern – maybe I'm jumping myself and I'll come back to that. I got in a group called Big Al and the Gators. The Cook and the Cupcakes had this song called Matilda and I'm the one who really made it famous up north. Then I moved here and I played it over here at Northwestern. Got off the stage after the show we did and we really packed the house too. And he says Doc, Dr. Hadley, he's still living and he said, "You play Swamp Pop" and I said, "What are you talking about Swamp Pop?" And I guess they named it Swamp Pop from down south Louisiana. And, here again, when we get into music if I don't really know I'm going to look into it. Well, come to find out, the music they were playing was actually ... and people are going to tell you down south they play Swamp Pop, actually Fats Domino was the first one to play Swamp Pop. Now, that's a fact. They can, you can take it to the bank.

RT: Okay (Both RT and DC laugh).

DC: Cause ...

RT: Fats Domino.

DC: That's right. Fats Domino... we went to Chicago [Telephone rings in the background]. In fact, one of his men got killed right up the street here. Right in the "Y" here, a fourth of a mile maybe. I went to see him. He had lost his guitar player.

RT: What was it, an accident or something?

DC: Yes, yes.

RT: Okay.

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DC: But anyway, he went up north and I knew some people and I went to meet him and I took some of the Creole people from here to meet him. We met maybe 3-4 times and I took some of the Creole people from here because I knew some of the people who was running it, but I won't go into that. And, he was a gentleman that, he didn't eat out. He did all of his cooking. He wanted me to go to Las Vegas to play with him but I had just got married and I had a young daughter. I don't think my son was born yet. Yes he was, Antonio was born. And, he offered me \$300.00 a week to go play, which was a lot of money. I think it was [19]65. I can't recall. Maybe 67, I don't remember. But, we got to know one another very well. I spoke to him since I moved back. It wasn't long before Katrina. I tried to get him to come play here at Northwestern but he didn't want to travel anymore. Now, everybody knows he has dementia. He doesn't know anything. But, he was always one of my idols and a great, great guy. And one of the smoothest artist... in fact he couldn't hardly... in fact he spoke more French that he had the accent of a Frenchman.

25:19

RT: I didn't know that either.

DC: Yes he did.

RT: Okay, so um ... you got exposed to the music here in this area. Got a chance to see a few bands and things like that and then you left.

DC: I went to Chicago.

RT: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about that?

DC: Okay, but let me tell you a little bit more. Mr. Ian Jones, [inaudible] he the one who really got me into music, I mean playing. He gave me one of... he used to give me his old used harmonica, which they called a French harp. They wouldn't say harmonica, they would say a French harp. And, that was one of the first instruments that I played. Then I took up a ukulele, (Phone rings in the background) and played that. And then I went to the trumpet, concert music. Eventually, I taught myself to play the guitar.

And, to get on to Chicago, I got involved with music and I would go ... They had a place called Jew Town, which was [at the corner of] 16th and Huston Austin. Sad that the University of Chicago [unintelligible]. I think, by the way, if you want some good Polish sausage and sauerkraut, it's still there at 16th and Huston. And that little place was called Jew Town. It wasn't any racial thing. It's just that they called it Jew Town. You go buy something; you better watch what you buy. I remember my uncle went and bought some clothes there one time. He said, "Man I got a deal on these clothes." He went to church one Sunday and he came back (DC laughs) the suit had drawn up and had turned purple but it was blue. He really got Jewed but he got a deal.

But, that's where I got to meet Little Walter and all of your good musicians were playing there back then. Muddy Waters played there. Jimmy Reed, which I played with. Sat in, you know you sat in with them, you know.

RT: Right, right.

DC: Going back to when I got to high school, I played trumpet in that also and I started playing trumpet when I was about 12.

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RT: Did you go to high school here?

DC: No.

RT: Okay, in Chicago.

DC: I left here; I think I was in the 6th grade, 5th grade or something like that.

RT: Okay. So, in Chicago, you're really exposed then to the music?

DC: Yes, we got exposed to the music and then in [19]57, Chuck Barry made "Sweet Little 16" and we were in the next studio. And, Johnnie Johnson played on there I think. No I take that back, it was Detroit Jr. He was a piano player. And, the guys that played then ... I had a cousin, Nathaniel Couty was his last name. He recorded [unintelligible] like you see the movie Cadillac, it's true people. They just took our music.

RT: That's a good movie. I've seen it.

DC: It's a fact. They took everything. If it wasn't for the Beatles, Chuck Berry, B. B. King, the Rolling Stones wouldn't be playing here today. Cause I remember all of that. They don't want to talk about it maybe but it was the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton and all those guys that really got the black people, this blues and stuff to where we got it today.

And, I remember those places. I played dives just like all of them did. A lot of country. I played country. Played with Kyle Perkins. In fact, went to school at Wells High School with Curtis Mayfield, Major Lance. People don't know who Major Lance is (DC begins to hum a tune). Well he use to go down the hall just twisting back and forth like that and Curtis Mayfield had his glasses like this (DC pulls his glasses forward on his face) we had no idea he was writing for the Impressions. It's like if you seen him, he was always like a quiet, very intellectual guy. And, we all went to school together.

Curtis and Major Lance, if everybody watched the "Good Times" on TV; the [housing] projects were called Cabrini Green. Before that was there, that's where they were born and raised. And Jerry Butler was from there and Sam Cooke stayed there before he made it big. I never met Sam Cooke.

30:32

RT: So, all of them came out of what is now known as Cabrini Green.

DC: I think it's torn down now too though. But, that's where they all come from.

RT: From the ... sitcom.

DC: They went to Wells High School and amazingly, they had a school right next to them but they went to Wells for some reason. In fact, the movie is called Cooley High.

RT: Yes, I've seen that. It's an old movie.

DC: That's right. That was in their neighborhood but they went to Wells. Wells High School was on the corner of Ashland and Augusta Boulevard. I think it's called Wells Academy right now.

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(Did not transcribe his conversation about Chicago; instead picked back up at 34:38 on the counter)

DC: So, I moved here, right here in Natchitoches. I live about 15 miles from here in a place called Derry, which is right before you get to Cloutierville. And, I moved here in 1984 and I got involved with a guy I played music with in Chicago. And they called him Big Al and the Gators. Big Al was musician for getting the crowd going. And, I played with the Dupre Boys. See that picture you got over there (DC points to an image on the wall behind me) Isaac Dupre. That was his sons. Their name was Patrick Dupre who is deceased this year and his brother was called Bruce Dupre. And, Big Al and myself ... Patrick Dupre, did I say Patrick? And, then the drummer was Tony Arceneaux. That's who I played with when I first came here.

RT: Okay and what happened with the band members?

DC: Well, I would prefer not to talk about that.

RT: Okay, sure, no problem.

DC: But anyway, we broke up and I went on my own and I formed a band myself. Up till last year, I played ... which we named Doc Couty and the Natchitoches All-Stars. And the reason why I quit is because I got arthritis in my finger. I don't say I'm gonna get completely out of it but I start playing the guitar and my fingers ... I get terrible cramps in my fingers and my left arm. The Natchitoches All-Stars were all accomplished musicians that I had playing with me. We never practiced. We went up there and we ... if you're an accomplished musician, you just play. You could play blues, you could play anything. That's what they mean by an accomplished musician. You can go from jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, country. I've never met an accomplished musician that can't get up and play with someone.

37:16

I learned a lot after I moved here. We thought we were everything up North. We knew everything about music until I moved here in 84 people. But, let me say this. I started studying the culture and the music culture of different areas, East Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, all the way up to Chicago, and Motown. All the music that you heard that went to Motown, Chicago, and Memphis – actually came from East Texas. Janis Joplin, George Jones, and all of this music - Louisiana, Little Richard actually he wasn't from here but he played his music in New Orleans. Lloyd Price, I don't know if you ever heard of him DC begins to sing. “Well now Lordy, Lordy, Lordy Miss Claudy.”

RT: Oh yes, okay.

DC: Well, Fats Domino had that song back then, I'm going back to the 50s, early 50s now, “going to the River”, which was one of the top R&B songs. Now you got to remember that these songs were not at the top, I hate to put it – white charts. They were played, you know, it was all played in down south Louisiana. You know, what they call Swamp Pop now. So, Lloyd Price came out with a song, “Lawdy Miss Claudy” and I got it from Fats Domino in which I think it is documented now. He the one played the piano part when it kicks on and in two weeks, Lloyd Price knocked him off the R&B charts.

RT: Ump [RT begins to laugh].

DC: Which I use to love “Lawdy Miss Claudy”. My twin use to love that song. But anyway, getting back to the musicians... Right here in central Louisiana, that's Alexandria all the way up

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to Shreveport, some of the best musicians I've ever heard and most of them never went to school. Just natural, natural musicians. George Jones, you know Janis Joplin she went through... in fact both of those are from Beaumont [Texas]. And, then you get George Strait, Ray Price.... They all from right here in East Texas and Logansport. (DC waves his hands in the air in a circle to indicate a region). You get down here to Mississippi, you got Muddy waters, you got, well Elvis was one of the big ones from down there. (DC struggles to remember some names). In fact all of your musicians, the blacks were from Mississippi really. B. B. King from Mississippi. I can go on and on and on and all of this music that we hear originated... It went up North. I don't know.. I guess it was... people had nothing else to do and that was their outlet – playing music and partying amongst themselves. In fact, down south they still do that – house parties. And that's where all your musicians that we know that became popular – B B King, Little Richard, I think Little Richard was from Georgia if I got my memory right. Don't quote me on that.

40:53

RT: Right, right. Well what about some of the artists that are still here in the area that you maybe play with on occasion or at least they go around still playing?

DC: Hardrick Rivers is one of em. He's about the only one left that play the blues. And, there was another gentleman I forgot about. His was B. B. Majors.

RT: He was with the Serenaders right?

DC: Yeah, I had a friend of mine that I played with. His name was Roy Cagle. They play a lot of the same type of music. In fact, he played with Al Ferrin [Ferrier?] and, he told me... He said, "You know why they call him B.B. Majors?" "I said "Why?" He said, "Because he couldn't play any minor chords." [DC and RT laugh]. Which didn't mean he was one of the best blues players I've heard. So to say that you went to school, you know how to read music. No, these people didn't know. They didn't read no music. It came from the heart. They played from what they felt inside. And, that's what music is about. An expression of your feelings and how you were raised and everything. Music is what, as a young boy, of not being raised with my twin, that's what made me feel good. [DC seems somewhat emotional].

RT: Yes, music can be a very powerful tool.

DC: Yes, it is.

RT: It's a powerful tool.

DC: That's why people enjoy themselves. It makes them forget their hard times. And, if you listen to the lyrics, that's what it's about. I'm a DJ now and I knew the end of bands. I was fortunate enough to see ahead back in the 90s that bands as we know bands playing clubs and houses and a lot of different places – it's gone. There's no place to go play. And, sad to say, our society has got into the thing that if you have a drink, you're an alcoholic, you're a drunk. So, people don't go to bars no more and this is a fact people. You get in your car and an officer pulls you over, you get a DWI and it costs you thousands of dollars to get out of trouble. That's why the music as we know back then when I was coming up, even up to right now, people don't go out. They don't party and I'm quite sure you know that.

RT: Yes sir.

DC: I tell the people wake up and stop letting the government tell them what they can do and what they cannot do. Now, don't get me wrong, I don't drink so if people like that I have nothing against that. (Telephone rings in background). There's a gluttony in everything. But the music

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that I was explaining to you about...it's just something that you feel. By the way, Chuck Berry too. We got together a few times. I played with Jerry Lee Lewis, which is a character.

RT: Do you have any photographs, images from those days?

DC: No. They got, Northwestern got a recording I think and stuff from me when I played with Big Al. Now I want to go back. I forgot to tell you about that. I got involved with a group called, which my nephew was, called The Young Salvages. See my mind is coming back to me. I hate to keep jumping like this people.

RT: No that's fine.

DC: I'm 74 years-old. I recorded, which a song called "Bow-Wow" is on I-Tunes right now,. In fact, you can listen to it on YouTube.

45:30

RT: Okay.

DC: I think I recorded with Aquarius Records, which was a record company. I can't forget, one of the big companies and the song "I love you so much", which was recorded again.

RT: What do you mean; another artist recorded it?

DC: Right, we never made, I never got anything and "Bow-Wow," I never got nothing off of that. I got a call from Europe one time for me to go there and a guy interviewed me on the phone or something like that, but I can't recall. It never made any big thing but it's on I-Tunes if people want to listen to it. It's nothing [DC sounds out lyrics to his song]. "I had a little dog and his name was Bow-Wow. Short, fat, and ugly and had a face like a cow." It was a take-off to "Do the Dog" – Rufus Thomas.

RT: Oh, okay.

DC: And, "I love you so much" was a song that I wrote and it was recorded by a few other artists. And, then the bands that I played with in Chicago. We went from one, from R&B to folk music. I did a lot of folk music back when the Hippies were ... I changed my music as times changed. And that is one of the problems that bands have today. They don't know how to change. Maybe this is one of the reasons why they don't get jobs. I don't know but... you have to change cause music change. From the time in the 40s to what you have now.

RT: Huge change, right?

DC: Right, so I got in the group called "The Young Savages" and there was a guy, the same one who helped me record was Lenny LaCour. He was from here and we recorded up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and we did some songs, "Welcome to my World", what was the other songs now? The big one that's still being played was a song called "The Invaders are Coming". There was a TV show called The Invaders so we did the song from that. I did all the arrangements and stuff like that. And, never made a penny off it. I use to go on Amazon, eBay. They selling our records, this was \$45.00 and \$75.00 apiece and we don't get nothing (RT laughs). But, that's okay. We got the memories.

RT: And the music is out.

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DC: Right and it was an unusual song. When the song come on it sounds like a spaceship. People want to know how you get the spaceship sound like that [DC makes the sound]. Well, the keyboard man, Carlos Santana, same as Santana [a jazz musician] and some Puerto Rican guys. I got in with these young kids you know and the sound like that was just the keyboard ... you cutting it on and off. It's really simple but everybody thought it was ...

RT: Some big, complicated process.

DC: So, those are some of the little things you do when you get into the studio, before you get into the studio. But, we recorded there and come to find out our music was played in Indiana, they made money off of it. Iowa, my song was one of the big songs, "I love you so much" – never got a penny. They took our music and put it out in areas, back then the music wasn't ... and they made money off of that. My nephew is the only one living that recorded off that. All the rest of them are gone.

RT: I think you mentioned somewhere about a gentleman over in Many [Louisiana} that plays?

DC: Roy Cagle. He lives in Marthasville. He plays off and on. He's getting old also. But, I'm involved with the Meat Pie Festival here. I'm involved with the Jazz festival. Once a musician, always a musician and the guys don't want me to quit playing. They say come on Doc. They call me a legend here. I'm not a legend; I'm just one of them. Cause, whoever makes it big in life, I don't care who they are, it's not you. It's those people in back of you, that's playing with you. Without them, you are nothing. In fact, at anything in life. But, music is a family and all the musicians, we are all family. Elvis as great as he was, B. B. King. Great as he was... if it wasn't for those guys behind him, how would he sound?

The last few minutes of this interview were not transcribed because the information had been previously discussed. There are also two other portions to this interview that were not transcribed due to the same reasons. Please refer to tapes to hear the full versions.

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PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Ambrose Hertzog III (Magnolia Pln.)

Interviewed July 25, 2015 at Magnolia Plantation Store, Hwy. 119, Natchez, LA, by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 01:03:24
Transcribed 9/28/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: Just kind of set things up again.

00:03

AH: We used to have what we call horse shows where they had the little kids from the quarters and up and down the road, and each of 'em'd ride a horse and [Mr. Matt Hertzog] said, "Ride like a dead man," and they laid down on the horse, and he said, "Do the twist on the horse," and they could stand up, and the twist was popular back then, in the '60s.

00:30

DL: Okay, Mr. Ambrose, I do want to ask you a little about your personal history, so can you start with your experiences growing up and coming back and forth.

00:41

AH: Well, I was originally born in Minneapolis, Minnesota but I moved to New Orleans with my family. We moved down here in 1947, so I was two years old, so I don't remember anything about Minnesota, 'cause New Orleans is where I really grew up at, and we used to come up here every summer when we were little. My sister and I were little and we'd spend the month of August. Daddy had a month's vacation, and then I started coming up here every chance I could get on my own. Daddy'd bring me up here or I'd come on a bus, come on a train ... that's when they had passenger service. I remember coming up, it was Texas & Pacific, and I remember passing, that was exciting, crossing the Huey P. Long bridge in New Orleans, and came up here, and I remember passing the Derry depot, and I had to go to Natchitoches, and got off next to Northwestern campus, and my cousin Betty picked me up, and I remember, she brought me to the, there was an A&W Root Beer place, and bought me a hamburger and a root beer, and we came on back here.

01:56

DL: What are your earliest memories of coming up here?

AH: I think that was in the late '40s or early '50s, and I remember all the people on the place. Every house along the road was full of people, they had a whole family in it, quarters were full,

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and you come in the store here, all these people coming in and out, it was open full time then.

DL: That was in the late '40s and early '50s, they were still ... that was pre-mechanization?

AH: Well, they had tractors. It was old John Deere Model 8 tractor, two cylinders, and they had a Farmall tractor, and a little Ford tractor, and I remember I used to like to watch them leave in the morning. Those old two cylinder John Deere, they'd start off, putt-putt-putt-putt-putt [slow cadence] and go on up the road real slow, but in the evening when they come back, it'd putt-putt-putt [fast cadence], they'd have 'em wide open. It was at the end of the day, and they'd go out slow and come back fast [laughs].

03:00

DL: Well, you saw kind of the end of that large work force, people all over, the place populated, the quarters were full, you talked about. Can you tell me about what do you remember about how many houses were down in other places, and occupied, and how many people were in the quarters about that time?

AH: Well, I think they had that one-room [quarters'] house that Gus Randolph stayed in, sitting there by itself, but every one of those other houses they had, except for Buddy Randolph, he stayed in the second one from the other end. He took care of the yard and everything at the Big House over there, and he had a little garden out there. I think some of those wild things, flowers, still come up by themselves, and every other house had a family in it, and they all had old cars. They used to come here, in the store here, cars would be parked there ... they were all 1940s style cars.

DL: They were full [the quarters]; were there as many as there are now, or were there more?

AH: No, there were eight houses over there; one of them was just a half house.

04:14

DL: Can you kind of describe what one of those family houses looked like? You were talking about the gardens, did they keep chickens?

AH: Yeah, they had, well, I remember hog pens, and Jack Williams had a flock of geese—they would roam around out there—and they all had chickens, and I remember when I liked to hear in the evenings or early in the morning, everybody along the road had chickens and they'd start crowing in the quarters. And the cook's house, Rosa, had chickens, they'd crow there, then they'd crow at the Big House, and they'd crow in order up and down the road, and then you'd hear 'em way up the road. The roosters would crow, then the next house would crow, and then the next house, and then ... Pierce Rachel lived on the corner, and his chickens would crow, and the ones at the Big House would crow, and Rosa's house, and then in the quarters. It just sounded like every time a group of roosters, chickens heard the ones next door crow, they'd crow and then it would go on up the road like that.

05:24

DL: The people that lived in the quarters, I believe you told me the last time, that they were the day workers; they were the people that got paid for working for the plantation as opposed to being sharecroppers?

AH: It was the tail end of the sharecropping thing because, I think, most of them, when I was

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little, that lived in the houses up the road were workers, day hands, too I think. They had a few sharecroppers, but most of them were day hands, because machinery was starting in, and back in the mule days and all, that, when they had mules, they had a lot of sharecroppers, but when machinery took over, that was when they started having more day workers and less sharecroppers.

DL: And some of the folks that worked in the quarters, were they charged with taking care of Mr. Matt's horses?

AH: Yeah, John Vercher, and Jack Williams was a cowboy, and they used to keep the cow horses over here. They had a barn over there, and I remember it used to impress me with Jack because he fixed up a pulley when he'd get off his horse, he'd pull it to it, and pull the saddle up, and then in the morning his horse was trained where he'd just lead him down and stop under the pulley. He'd lower the saddle on it and fix it back up, and then undo the rope, and he never had to throw the saddle up like the others did.

DL: What about Mr. Matt's horses? Who took care of those?

AH: It was John Vercher and...

DL: Wasn't one named Shine Johnson?

AH: Yeah, well Shine, when I was little, he was kinda retired. He came up and down the road, I remember, in an old car, they said 1950 ... he was a sharecropper, in 1953 they had a real big crop, they made a lot of money, he made enough money to go to town and buy a brand new Chevrolet, and I think he was kinda retired when I was little.

DL: Were they still living out here?

AH: I think Shine lived up the road.

DL: Okay, because I know Ms. Lizzie talked about ...

AH: They had lived here one time, but when I was little, I think they had moved up the road.

07:40

DL: Well, when you used to come up here, and Mr. Matt was still really involved in the farming until what, was that the '70s sometime?

AH: Well, probably around 1970 because he got in bad health, and he died in 1973, so the last few years he was kinda like an invalid. He hurt his back and he had a bad heart, so he didn't get around.

DL: Up until that time, he was real involved?

AH: Yeah, he'd come down here every morning. This was his office right back here, and he'd ride around in his truck and look at the cattle and watch all the field work, and do everything.

08:25

DL: Talking about the horses, I know it was before your time, but there was a brush track that was on the border line between...?

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AH: They had several of them here. I think they had one between our place and the Cohen's and they had some others down by Cloutierville, and I don't know where they all were, but they said that was a real big thing, and they had these match races, and all kind of people. I remember those old films Daddy had, he's got the horse races, running to the end. One guy does like that, turn around and walk off, and the other one's running down smiling, waving his hands, he must've won and the other one lost.

DL: I know they're before your time, but seeing your dad's films, can you talk a little bit about how they're set up? You were telling me earlier about how they began the races and why they began the races that way?

AH: Yeah, they didn't have a starting gate like they have in races today. They had, Daddy said, it was mutual consent where they'd, I don't know how, lower a flag or something, and they'd both start off, but if one would jump the gun right then, they'd call 'em back, and he said if somebody had a real frisky, nervous horse, the other one would try and do it on purpose. So they'd have to call 'em back and let that other horse out before they'd start off.

09:50

DL: And those horse races were attended by everyone, all classes, all races?

AH: Yeah, on Sundays I guess, they had 'em, you can see everybody's dressed up. They had black people, and had Creoles, white people, everybody'd go to 'em.

DL: Talking about the work force, was it John Vercher who trained your [uncle's] horses?

AH: I'm not sure, 'cause these quarter horses, I mean the show horses he'd have, they already looked like they were trained. I don't know where he got 'em, but John would practice, I'd see him out on the riding range, walking and going around, and doing different gaits, and all that, give 'em exercise, so he knew. I remember one time, I think it was John Vercher, a professor from Northwestern came down, it was in the summertime, and he wanted to add some horse riding class at Northwestern, and the professor wanted to show the students the different gaits, and he'd say, "John, just walk around in a fox trot," and he'd go around there in a canter, and he'd go around. And Uncle Matt asked the professor, said, "Would you like to ride?" and I've forgot what that doctor's name was, he says "No, sir, Mr. Matt. I'm not as proficient as you yourself are," and all the students started chuckling, and what he meant was, he couldn't ride a horse! [laughs]

11:32

DL: Well, you were telling me a minute ago about the little boys that would come and ride the horses?

AH: Yeah, he had a bunch, a lot of those old horses were just gentle horses anybody could ride, and Uncle Matt, he had a bunch of ribbons that he won at horse shows, and Uncle Matt just wanted to keep the blue ribbons, first place, and red ribbons, second place. And all these yellow and white ribbons and all, he wasn't interested in; he had a bunch of those. So they had a horse show in the riding ring, and he had a bull horn, he'd say, "Ride like a dead man," and they would lie down on the horses, and go around there, then he'd say, "Do the twist on the horse," and they'd stand up on the back—and those old plugs were gentle, they wouldn't do anything, and they'd have, "Ride backwards," and then they'd turn around and ride around backwards, and then at the end, he'd say, he'd give away the ribbons, "First place, riding like a dead man!" He'd

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give it to one of 'em, and "First place, riding backwards!" and he'd give it to another one, and they had little girls from the quarters and they'd go give the ribbons to them.

DL: Did Mr. Matt bring the horses out to show 'em at any time? Like his horses, the ones you were talking about?

AH: Yeah, he went to horse shows all over. Let's see, I went to one in Benton, I think, someplace up by Shreveport, and then different places. He had the horse trailer and truck, and had all the horses up there, and John Vercher and I think he had another fella that acted more like a chauffeur, Mig [?] Rachel, and then Uncle Matt would go with someone else in his station wagon, and they'd go to different horse shows. I think he'd gone to Mississippi, places in Texas, and everywhere.

13:27

DL: Talking about the personnel, and then I want you to talk a little bit about the farming techniques, but talk a little bit about the people who were here. Can you name as many folks as you can remember and what their jobs were ... what their roles were on a plantation of this size?

AH: Well, Walter Blackman lived in one of the houses up there [in the quarters or down the road?]. He was kind of a foreman. He'd drive around in a pickup truck and kinda watch; they had an overseer that lived over here.

DL: Who was that?

AH: When I was little it was the Galliens—Henry Gallien and his son, Lester Gallien, and then after the Galliens, they had a fellow that worked one year, Tollice Rachel from Cloutierville, I think, and later years, there was George Lind, he was from around—I don't know where he was from, toward Alec [Alexandria] somewhere, across the river—then Floyd Thompson, his wife, Sarah—Floyd and Sarah stayed in the overseer's house—and then his son, Keith Wayne Thompson became chief of police in Natchitoches after that; but Sarah was a store clerk here and Floyd was an overseer.

DL: You were talking about the Randolphs. What did they do?

AH: Oh, that was a family on the place. Buddy Randolph worked over at the house as yard man and everything. There's Abraham Randolph and they stayed in the quarters—his wife's named Odelia, but she had a nickname, Tookie, something like that. They had a daughter and about four or five sons, and I remember there were other Randolphs here, too. Those are the ones I remember mostly of the Randolphs.

DL: Who else lived in the quarters besides the Randolphs?

AH: They had Willie Middleton—he was a cowboy—and then there was a guy named Simon Metoyer, Jr., but they called him Junior Metoyer, or his nickname was Squirrel, and he stayed in one of the houses over there. I remember old Abe Randolph and Squirrel, and then there was Doris Randolph. I forgot what her husband's name was, but her husband left and went to Houston and left her and she and her children stayed over there.

DL: Where did she work?

AH: She worked over at the Big House in the kitchen.

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DL: How many people worked at the Big House?

16:25

AH: Well, they had the cook was Rosa, and before Rosa, that was before my time, but before Rosa, her mother lived in that house over there, and Rosa stayed over there. They called her Aunt Martha, and then Rosa's husband was named Mig [?] Rachel. He was the one that acted as a chauffeur, and he also drove a tractor; he raked hay out in the hay field. Then they had Victoria Blackman, she stayed up the road with her son. She was kind of a maid at the Big House, then they had a lady took care of my grandmother. Then later on, they had another fellow, John Rachel; when Buddy Randolph got too old to work, John Rachel kinda took his job. He lived up the road; he was kind of a yardman. I remember Betty said one time she bought some plants, rubber plants to plant in the garden, and she told him to plant the rubber plants, showed him where. When she came there, plastic flowers were stuck in the yard [laughs]. He thought those were rubber plants!

17:45

DL: Let's talk a little about the farm. That's a full complement of workers, I mean that's a lot of people working out here. So talk a little bit about the size of the plantation, and talk a little bit about the crops, but let's talk first about acreage.

AH: I think the whole place is about 2400 acres but most of the land in the back is stiff land and it's used for pasture and hay field, where the front is the good sandy land, and it's used for cotton. And they had corn, but most of the corn in those days was planted to feed the cattle; but the cotton was the main crop, and soybeans came later.

DL: But most of your acreage was planted in cotton?

AH: It's about, uh, I think's there's a little more, I think; there's more acreage in back that's pasture land, because good cotton land is next to the river up here.

DL: But cotton was your primary crop during that time, and you've got a picture behind you, and you were telling me about the significance of that picture. Can you talk a little bit about it?

18:55

AH: Yeah, that's Atrice Anthony, I took that picture when I came up here one summer, and I was, in the fall, I came up here on a weekend I think, 'cause this was probably September or October, and I had an old Brownie Bullseye camera, and I took that picture of 'em and it looks like they were picking cotton. It's starting to open, but the leaves hadn't been defoliated and it's not ready for the machines to go in, so we went out there and picked what was already open by hand.

DL: And they would come behind with the machine?

AH: And then they would defoliate, spray stuff on it and knock the leaves off, and when most of the bolls were open, then they would come through with a machine, and still all the bolls weren't open, and then when the rest of the bolls would open, they'd call that scrapping cotton. They'd come in and run a picker at a higher speed and get what's left.

DL: And what about the end of the rows?

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AH: Yeah, the ends, they call that pickin' the ends, because then we planted cotton almost right up to the road and you'd have to pick up the drums and make a turn to go back and start off, and it would miss pickin', so before they would run the machine through there, when it was all open, they'd pick, I don't know, about ten feet are so from the end, they'd pick all that clean so when they picked up the drums, they wouldn't miss that. They picked those ends by hand.

DL: Okay. So how many people at that time, because this was past sharecropping pretty much, how many people were actually doing that type of in-the-field work?

AH: I don't know. We had, actually those older people would come and ask could they pick the ends because they wanted, they liked making that extra, they paid so much a pound. They'd ... you'd see them all out there, gossiping and talking, especially the women liked to gossip and talk, and they'd be talking right along picking the cotton.

DL: Those were women, people who lived...?

AH: On the place.

DL: On the place, and the bulk of your cash crop was cotton; and were the horses kind of a sideline for Mr. Matt or were they money makers?

21:28

AH: No, he was really, just for pleasure mostly.

21:31

DL: What about cattle?

AH: Yeah, cattle was a big thing here, 'cause he had about 1600 head of cattle 'cause most of that in the back was pasture land. I remember this road, we used to drive the cattle up the lane coming from the back, and then we'd drive 'em down the road and have to stop traffic and all. The cattle pen was in the back of the store, and then we'd go back there and work the cattle—worm 'em, or brand 'em, whatever we had to do, pick out the ones they wanted to sell—and I remember when we used to drive the cattle up, if the first ones were coming in the pen back here and you still had a whole bunch of 'em all the way down the road, all the way down the lane, and cowboys behind, and were just in the back when they were already coming in, somebody was always standing in the road, you know, turning them where they come on in the lot here.

DL: How many cowboys?

AH: I remember he had three full-time ones that stayed out there every day. It was Jack Williams, Tony Moran, and Willie Middleton, and later on, they had a guy named Matthew Cohen. His nickname was Coon Sam, and Jack and Coon Sam, and I think, Tony left in 19..., early 60s and went to Chicago, and Coon Sam came here about the same time when Tony left.

23:09

DL: Were there floods? I mean what happen when you got high water here? Did the cattle have to be moved?

AH: Yeah, in 1973, I was up here, and we had high water that year and we had to drive 'em, 'cause back of the pasture, in the back, it went under water. We drove up toward the front, and

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the front didn't go under water, and we had cattle across the river. We had to get cattle trailers and drove up in the pen there and brought 'em back on this side, and I remember James Scarborough and I went around different places, helped out these other farmers—J. H. Williams across the river—and drive out of that low land before it went under water.

DL: But you didn't have to actually move your cattle off your property?

AH: No. Now, they said back in 1945 and all that, they had to bring 'em out in the hills because this, all of this was under water. Red River levee had broken, but that was before my time though.

24:14

DL: Getting back to your family, when you were coming as a child, who all was living in the Big House?

AH: My grandmother, Uncle Matt and Aunt Dee, my cousin Betty, and Mary—Norman had gone off to school—that's Mary's brother. He was at LSU then; then he went into the army for a while.

[discussion with videographer re: introducing new topics]

AH: My grandmother, and Uncle Matt and Aunt Dee, and Betty, and my other aunt, T-Sal, that was my daddy's sister, and her two children, Mary and Norman, and Norman was away at school when I was there, or he went into the army, I forget which, but he had already left, and then we'd all come up. We'd all stay in one room there, my dad and my mother, and me and my sister. We'd stay in the back, what they called the back room.

DL: So y'all came up for major events, holidays, and you'd come up during the summer?

AH: Yeah, we used to when we lived in New Orleans; though when I was little, Daddy used to get a whole month's vacation. He was a doctor at Touro, a pathologist at Touro Infirmary in New Orleans, and we'd come up practically the whole month of August. And then later on, I started coming up here and spending the summers, and then any chance, Christmas holidays ... that time I came up on the train, I think that was for the Christmas holidays, and he came up a little later and picked me up, spent a weekend and picked me up and went back.

DL: What did you do when you were here? What did you guys do during the summer?

AH: First thing we'd do was catch the horses, and that was our transportation, me and a little black kid named Andrew Rachel. They lived in the first house up the road, and we'd spend all day long riding up and down on the place on the horses, go out in the hay field, and watch 'em bale hay, and then go on up the road, and Daddy had bought me a BB gun and bought one for my sister, an old Daisy pump. My sister stayed here a little while and left and then Andrew used her BB gun. We'd go around, we'd carry those BB guns on the horses, we'd try to shoot things and I remember Andrew saying, we'd shoot at something and he'd miss, and I'd say, "You missed," and he'd say and look at it, "Nothin' ain't come outta here," and then he'd shoot again and he'd say "Ain't nothin' comin' outta here." Well, he was missing but he didn't want to admit to it! [laughs]

DL: Didn't he shoot somebody that worked on the plantation, or a horse or something?

AH: Oh, I remember, yeah. We were out in the hay field when the whole ... they had a crew

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out there and one of ‘em said, “Let me see that BB gun,” and he shot one in the arm— another fella was picking up a bale of hay, and he shot him in the arm with the BB gun. He threw it down and guy said, “What’s wrong with him?” “A bee stung me,” and saw the other fella standing there with a BB gun and they all started laughing. [laughter]

27:48

DL: What about the baseball games? Because I know that was a big deal out here.

AH: Yeah, and, that was before my time, but Norman used to have a baseball team they called the Black Magnolias, ‘cause he was the only white one, and all the rest ‘em were black kids that lived on the place, and they played in the front yard over there. And Pat Henry—the Henrys owned Melrose—he had a baseball team they called the Melrose Pecans. They would bring ‘em down here and they’d play out there; and those old movies, they showed Norman striking out. And then Daddy said when he was young, they used to play ball, too. He’d, at the beginning of every inning, he’d be the first one at bat because it was his ball and his bat.

DL: They had, from what I understand, a lot of these different plantations sponsored a team and they played each other.

AH: Well, now they had, I think the grown people had baseball teams too. They had Cane River Dodgers, I remember fella, Raymond Pantallion played on that team, and I guess they went around and played different places.

DL: I know that old Mr. Listache later played professional ball in the Negro League. I think he played briefly for the Magnolia team.

AH: They had a team here, and when Uncle Matt was young, they had different teams from places around here. Uncle Matt was a pitcher, said they used to play in the front yard over there, and they’d go over and play at different places. Sawmill towns would all have baseball teams, and they’d go play them and all.

DL: Didn’t Father Becker play?

AH: Father Becker was the catcher, and they said the umpire would have a bad call, a strike that should’ve been a ball, a ball that should’ve been a strike, and Father Becker would go tell Uncle Matt, “You go cuss him out! I can’t,” ‘cause he was a priest; he wasn’t supposed to cuss.

29:51

DL: They still had the chapel at that time, right?

AH: Yeah, they had a chapel down there at the end of the Derry bridge. They had an old metal bridge there, and it was a single lane bridge that originally had a wooden floor, and they said Uncle Matt had ... it was rotten wood on the back of it and on the floor and they never could get the highway department or anything to fix it. Earl Long was governor then and Uncle Matt had to pull a rotten plank off, he tied a cotton ticket to it, one of the tickets they put on at the cotton mills, he wrote down on it, “Governor Long, this came off the Derry bridge. Please fix it. Matt Hertzog” and mailed it down to Baton Rouge. He said it wasn’t two weeks later, a week later, they had, the highway department, had a whole crew fixing the floor on the bridge.

DL: You told me a story about one night Mr. Matt said, what? “Flip on the lights. We’re going to have a baseball game”?

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AH: Oh, that's when we used to play softball in the riding ring, and he had lights for the riding ring. We were playing and he had horses in yard there, and I guess all that commotion here—people from the quarters all came up and down the road there, parked in the yard watching the ball game—and the horses were running around. One of 'em hit the post and I guess those wires hit together and started sparkin' and flashin' and everything went out, and he told me to go cut the lights back on. And what it did is blew the circuit breaker, and I turned it back on and cut the lights back on, and when the lights came on, all the people were gone.

DL: They had no idea what happened.

AH: Rosa the cook and another lady named Rosetta, she stayed up the road, they were up on the store porch and she said when all the lights started sparkin' and flashin' and everything, they took off running around, up on the porch. Up at the Big House, they didn't know what was going on, but that ended the ballgame!

32:00

DL: That must've been magical, as a kid, coming up here.

AH: Yeah, I remember the summer, I spent the summer of 1956 was the first summer I spent the whole summer by myself up here without Daddy. My sister and those came later on at the end of the summer and brought me back. Uncle Matt had gone to the army surplus store in Alexandria and bought a pup tent. Andrew and I were going to spend the night in the front yard under the pecan tree and Walter Telphy—they had a fella on the place, this black guy, used to tell stories and—he told us there was a witch down on Cane River, and he said, “Y'all better watch out for that witch.” He said that people had gone down the river bank and never come back up, and he was trying to scare us and we wouldn't paying any attention to him, and we were lying down in that pup tent, and Uncle Matt had even bought a flashlight for me, too, at army surplus store. I remember it was a funny shape, it came up and it curved and the light shined forward so you'd hold it like this instead like that, but we were talkin' in there, and all of sudden something made a screech howl noise and cackling. We thought it was—it was an owl—we thought it was the Cane River witch, and Andrew wanted to go home right away.

So, I was the only one that had a light, so I had to walk with him down to Pierce Rachel's house. We knocked on the door, Pierce said, “I thought y'all were going to spend the night out there,” and Andrew told him, “Well, I wanted to spend the night but Brother,”—that's what they called me—“Brother got scared.” So he went in and I had to walk across the yard, and I went in the back door, and went on upstairs, and Uncle Matt was sitting on the side of the bed watching TV, turned, “I thought you were going to spend the night,” and I told him, “Well, we were going to spend the night but Andrew got scared.” I think we were both scared!

DL: How old were you?

AH: Nine, or ten.

34:10

DL: I imagine! [laughs] You had lots of cousins that were here during the summer?

AH: Well, that was the summer that Mary and Bennett got married and I remember Uncle Matt wanted ... they needed a bad rain, it needed to rain real bad, it was dry and all, and finally it started raining. Bennett was up here and it started raining, and Bennett and Mary got all excited,

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“It's finally raining!” and went and put their bathing suits on and went out right under the trees, and Uncle Matt said, “They're going to make it stop!” They had a fella hosing the yard, and he started pulling in the hose, and Uncle Matt said, “Keep on hosing the yard. If you pull the hose in, it'll stop.” We got a good rain. Well, it started lightning and thundering, well they came in then and I went inside and my grandmother was in there, and her sister, Aunt Mary—we called her Auntie—she was in there and she had said, “If you a light a candle in front of the Sacred Heart picture—there was a picture of Jesus—“light a candle in front of it and say the last gospel”—that's the beginning of the gospel according to St. John—she said the storm would stop, and that she wanted me to read the gospel, and I didn't know what to do. Uncle Matt wanted a rain and my grandmother wanted it to stop so I started reading, “In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was with God,” and all, and I got toward the end and I lost my place on there, and they both started saying it, they do it my heart. Well, eventually it quit raining, and they said that prayer would stop the rain, but it put me in a mind, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I wanted to do what my grandmother told me, but I knew Uncle Matt wanted the rain and I guess it would have quit anyway.

36:15

DL: So that was the summer that Mary and Bennett got married. I bet that was a big to-do.

AH: They had the wedding in the Immaculate Conception Church and we all drove back and had a reception in the front yard—all the relatives and everything, all Bennett's relatives, all Mary's relatives. We had relatives from New Orleans come up here; it was all exciting.

DL: Did you use the chapel at all?

AH: Yeah, I remember when my grandmother was there, we used to have the priest from Isle Brevelle up there. They had three priests up there then; they would come and say Mass. They'd have a big meal; she'd give 'em a free dinner, a big meal. I always wondered what the ... why at the Cloutierville Mass, they had one priest, we had little bitty small chapel and they had three priests come there.

DL: They came at the same time?

AH: Three priests would come, well they came for the meal. Well, one of 'em would say Mass, and all three 'em would come and eat the meal.

37:24

DL: But the Derry Chapel, when was it closed?

AH: I don't know when they tore that down, but I remember going there for Mass when I was little, and that was when they said Mass in Latin, and Father Becker would say Mass in fifteen minutes, and then we would be out in no time.

DL: Your mother said he coughed all the time.

AH: He was an old man when I knew him there, and then they sent the priest, Father Lyons, to replace him, he wouldn't let him stay in the rectory at Cloutierville, because he didn't want to leave. He was ready to retire but he'd been in Cloutierville so long that the bishop was ready for him to retire, but he didn't want to go, so Father Lyons, his replacement, stayed over at the Big House. Grandmother let him stay over there.

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38:21

DL: One other person I wanted to ask you about was Raymond Metoyer. Did he work here for a while.

AH: He worked here in the 1970s. When I came up in 1971, he was already working here, and he and his brother ran that honkytonk up at Melrose.

DL: Bubbá's.

AH: Bubbá's.

Videographer: Can you say that again but put the guy's name with who it is?

AH: Raymond Metoyer, Raymond and his brother, his brother's name was Alphonse Metoyer but they called him Bubbá. The French pronunciation of Bubba is Bubbá and they ran a honkytonk up there at Melrose as Bubbá's.

DL: Didn't their mother start that place?

AH: I don't know how it started, used to have a sign, "Bubbá's, Established 1947."

DL: I always heard she was the brains behind it.

AH: There's a story they said one time they had a shootout there and she was inside working, and Raymond talked real slow, and he said, pow, pow, pow, you could hear over all the commotion, "Stoop low, Maaa-ma. They're shootin' waist high!" A lot of those people that used to go up there still talk about that.

DL: I think they called him "the enforcer."

AH: Yeah, he was the bouncer.

DL: I always heard that Bubbá carried a knife, and Raymond carried a gun, and Raymond was the one that enforced.

AH: Yeah, if there was any trouble, Raymond would straighten it out.

DL: So, he was working here the same time they were running Bubbá's?

AH: Yeah, he would work here in the daytime and then he would go out and help there on the weekends. He'd help his brother out.

DL: Is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't talked about?

40:20

AH: This was my office starting off 1977. It got to be we couldn't run it as a family partnership deal. Every time anybody would die, there would be a whole bunch more partners in it. We'd have to send power of attorney for Betty to borrow the money all over the country, and it got to be too ... it's too complicated, and somebody, sometimes they couldn't find somebody and all that. So, we worked out an agreement where what Betty farmed was equal to her and her mother's share, and she leased out the rest of it, and I farmed what was equal to me and my dad's

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share of the place, and it was down here. And they got bigger equipment, so they outgrew this thing and built the bigger tractor shed up the road, and I started using this. This is my office back here, and this is kinda like a warehouse.

We closed the store in 1973 when Uncle Matt died. We still kept it open for a while just to help out the people on the place, and I used to go with old Jack Williams to the wholesale place in Natchitoches, L. H. Johnson or Kelly Webber, kinda keep it stocked up in here; but we weren't making any money. It was just going to help out the people. We still had some people on the place then and to help out the people working, we had cold drinks and stuff in here, and cigarettes.

DL: Before Mr. Matt died, this was a hub of activity wasn't it? This seemed like it was full of people all the time.

AH: Yeah, especially on Saturdays. It had people coming in and out all day long. I remember this, all the canned goods were up here, and in the early '50s, that was the earliest part I can remember, they still had clothes and jeans in the box right there, and they had some things up here; but this was canned goods and I remember one guy came in here and he wanted some Clorox, and I looked around and I said, "We don't have any." No, he wanted "P-rex"—Purex—"P-rex" as he called it. He said he wanted some P-rex, and I said, "We don't have Purex, we have Clorox." He said, "Well, Clorox, P-rex, it's alright." He thought all bleach was Purex.

DL: So this was all the canned goods, and this was all the dry goods?

AH: Yeah, had some blue jeans and things, and they still have this up there, it goes back to the mule days. They had harnesses and things hanging from the rafters.

DL: And that behind you?

43:12

AH: That was, used to sell rope, thick rope, the big rope would be down here, and go up to a smaller diameter, and it stretched out. I think it used to be in the ware room. I don't know where they measured, probably in there, but they would stretch it out and sell it by the foot.

DL: Did they sell nails and hardware, that type of thing?

AH: I don't remember. I think we used to have. I know we had some in here because I think he would buy it somewhere else and keep enough for what they needed on the place. I don't remember. I guess originally they did but later years we didn't.

DL: What else went on here? I remember seeing in your dad's films ...

AH: Well, dad took those movies in the 1940s and then he was living, we were up in Minnesota then, and he'd come back here and have all the films developed, and they'd set up a screen by the door there, and they'd cut the lights off, and I think they set up the screen over here, and he had the projector over there, and he'd show those movies and they were all excited to see themselves in the movies.

DL: Did Yuke and Duma play out here?

AH: Yeah, they ... that was around Christmas time, they had a Christmas party out here and Yuke and Duma played on the front porch. Yuke, Duma, Sheck, he played the bull fiddle, and

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Yuke, I don't know which one, one had Dobro guitar, and the other one played the fiddle.

44:57

DL: Before we end this, I want to ask you about the buildings across the road. There was a church, and wasn't there like a little club, a little honkytonk.

AH: They called that the Shack. It was a house, a little old adobe house or something, looked like mud walls, next to the church. The church they say was originally down on the riverbank and they moved it up there, but somebody came around the curve, ran off the road and ran into the church, and when they found, when they saw, it was so eaten up by termites, it couldn't be fixed back, so they just tore it down. But that house, Uncle Matt told 'em, they kept walking up the road to those places and getting in trouble, so he told 'em they could have a place. I don't know who ran it, sold liquor and that, but they said one time they got in a squabble or something so he shut it down. He didn't want all that trouble on the place.

DL: I heard at one time, this is probably way before your time, but I heard that somebody was making moonshine on that small lake back there?

46:12

AH: On that lake back there and it was in the '70s. I had a pair of wading boots and this small boat and hunted ducks back there, and I was pushing in the boat, and I came across some pipes and everything, and it looked too flimsy to be a duck stand, and I came back next Monday morning and told ... Raymond Metoyer was working here ... and I told him I saw that back there with some pipes put together and I couldn't figure out what that was. He said, "That's a whiskey still." He said moonshiners still had those back there during the prohibition. Any time you had a little hill, or mound that was a dry spot in the middle of the lake, they set 'em up a whiskey still.

DL: So that was actually left over from prohibition, it wasn't functional then.

AH: Yeah, when I found it, it wasn't all intact, it was leftover. It's probably still out there. I haven't been out there for years.

DL: So, today what is it that y'all grow? What does Betty grow, what do you grow? Lease out?

AH: We lease it all out, and they've got cotton and soybeans, and last year they had a lot of corn and cotton, and kinda rotate it.

DL: Is there a big production of cotton still?

47:43

AH: It's not as big as it used to be 'cause we don't have a gin in the parish anymore. Used to be gins up and down the road. When they closed down our gin when a tornado or something blew it down in 1939, Hyman Cohen had built a gin up there, so Uncle Matt worked out of an agreement where they'd gin cotton at the Cohen's. I remember Cohen's had a gin and Lambre's had a gin. They had a gin at Melrose, a bunch of small gins, and J. H. Williams built a big gin, and they had one in town. The Alma gin was a big gin, and all of those are gone now. And I think with the cotton now, they make these modules now, where the truck comes and picks them up. There's a Red River gin in Armistead, and there's another gin in Boyce down there. They're probably the closest ones.

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48:33

DL: Was your Uncle still using the St. Isadore statue?

AH: Yeah, St. Isadore was still there after he died, somebody came there and looked like they shot the statue down. I've still got the box that it was in, but I think the statue was shot all to pieces. I remember Raymond saying that something, that's a sacrilege, and they think whoever did that is going to burn in hell 'cause it's a religious statue.

DL: Wasn't there a particular purpose for the St. Isadore statue? Was it just for good crops, or was it for rain?

AH: He was the patron saint of farmers.

DL: That was just overall?

AH: Yeah, overall, pray for good crops, it says St. Isadore pray for us.

DL: I have a picture of it that Pete Gregory took when he first came down here. It's really nice. I also heard that Mr. Cohen used to send people down to look and see how Mr. Matt's crop was doing because he was using the St. Isadore statue. There was a lot of competition way back.

49:57

DL: Mr. Ambrose, talk about the people who worked in the plantation store, and the method of payment.

AH: Okay, well, I remember the store clerks. The earliest one I remember was 1956, well Joe Scruggs worked here before then; but I remember ... 1956, they had Willie, I think his name was Vercher from Cloutierville, Mr. Willie we called him, and then after that we had another one, Mr. Babbie—I forget what his last name was, he was from Cloutierville. He worked here for a couple of years, and then Floyd and Sarah Thompson—when Floyd was the overseer, his wife, Sarah, was the store clerk—and then they had a black guy on the place, named Cliff Lemelle that worked in the blacksmith shop and he was also a lay preacher for the church here on the place. He talked with a stutter, and I remember Mary telling me that when he'd give a sermon, he wouldn't—was just like Mel Tillis, the country singer used to stutter, but when he sang, he sang perfect. Well, he would stutter but when he gave a sermon, he would talk regular, and talk plain, and he helped out for a while, and then there was a Miss Janíce, a young girl named Janíce Rogé, and then there was Lucille Livingston from Cloutierville, and then there was her sister, Frances Livingston, and I think Frances Livingston was the last one that clerked when we had it full time.

DL: What about Sophie Scruggs?

AH: She was the bookkeeper. I think she might ... when I said Joe Scruggs was here, she was probably helping. I don't know if she was. Chris we called her. I don't know if she was clerk or not but she was always a bookkeeper, did the bookkeeping for the place.

52:05

DL: We were talking a little bit about payment, and I asked you about the tokens, and you were telling me how they had transitioned from that.

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AH: I think, they had tokens in every store up and down the road, because they'd pay 'em—they'd want credit in here, and you'd write their names down, and if they get too far behind, and when they'd get the money, they'd go and pay cash at some store up the road and they wouldn't pay their money back. So they started paying 'em at different stores—had A. J. Hertzog written on ours, the tokens, and they had different places up and down the river. They said during Franklin Roosevelt's time, they outlawed those because they were competing with U.S. money, but we had these coupon books where they'd come in, give you five dollars and say want five dollars of coupons, and give 'em that book, and this guy named Pops asked him, "Well, why do you want a coupon book when you've got cash?" He said, "I want to make sure I've got enough to buy cigarettes with." Evidently, he had trouble keeping money, but he knew as long as he had his coupons, he could come in here and get cigarettes.

DL: There was a lot of gambling between the workers from what I understand.

53:19

AH: Yeah, in those old pictures, they're playing out there by the shed—had steps over the fence going to quarters, they had, used to shoot dice, and I remember when I was little, they were playing Pittypat, playing cards, and they had money in their hands, playing cards. They used to do that after they got paid.

DL: So there was a lot of loss of money. Did you keep account books? They would come in and do accounts?

AH: Yeah, we have a book up here when somebody ... had a page or each of 'em. They'd come in and buy stuff, and you'd add it up on the machine here, and they'd want to put it on their account, and you'd write it down, all what they bought, and add it up. Then on Saturdays when they get paid, you'd add it up and take that out of their check.

DL: I bet Saturday was a big day.

AH: Uh-huh, people coming in and out, the store was full, and they're all sitting out on the front porch. I remember Andrew, that little black guy I was telling you about, they had a big ol' fat guy out there, named, it was Jack's son, I think, forgot what they called him, he had a nickname, Bubba I think it was, and Andrew would come up and goose him, and he cussed, then he said, "Don't make me say that around them women!" and he'd goose him again and he'd cuss. Andrew would do that on purpose.

54:46

DL: Tell me a little bit about, you were saying that piece right there was here, and it had a function.

AH: Yeah, it was over here, and they had a big clip, I don't know where that clip is. Anyway, I'd go pick up the mail, or whoever picked up the mail at Derry would bring that back, and for the people on the place, they'd put their mail here. That's before they had a rural route, and they'd come in and ask for their mail, and you'd go through it and find all the mail for that person and put the clip back up here with the rest of the mail on it. I remember that summer of 1956, Stanley Gallien—he used to live in the overseer's house--and Andrew and I were playing outside, Uncle Matt came out with some saddlebags. We had our horses tied out here. He said, "Y'all want to do something important? Put these saddlebags on your horses and go get the mail at Derry." So we rode down there and went across that bridge. The horses ... it kinda started rattling, but the horses were just walking. Went and got the mail and put it in the saddlebags.

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When we were coming back, those horses knew we were coming back, started trotting real fast, and we got on that bridge with the horses trotting like that, the whole bridge started rattling, and we thought it was going to fall in, so we took off—ran off all the way back here, and when we got back, the saddlebag wasn't fastened good and had some mail sticking out. Uncle Matt told Walter Blackmon to take his car, his station wagon. He had an ol' green and white Chevrolet station wagon, he said, "Drive down the road and see if you can see any mail on the side of the road." That was the last time we picked up any mail!

56:40 [The remaining time on the interview is a re-loop of interview beginning at 49:57].

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Betty Hertzog (Magnolia Pln.)

**Interviewed August 14, 2015 at Magnolia Plantation Store Office, Hwy. 119, Natchez, LA,
by Dayna Bowker Lee**

**Time of interview: 01:09:32
Transcribed 9/28/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: Ms. Betty, I'd like for you to talk a little bit about your personal history, growing up here on the plantation, a little bit about the big house. So just give me an idea, let's start with your parents, who your parents were.

00:47

BH: My parents were Matt and Lydia Compton Hertzog and she was from Cheneyville, and they used to, all these little towns used to have ballgames, and that's where they met, I think at Lecompte at a ballgame.

DL: When did they marry?

01:30

BH: They were married, say, in 1927, I think it was.

DL: They came to live on the plantation?

BH: Right, came up here and lived at Magnolia, the big house.

DL: You were the only child?

BH: Yes.

DL: You grew up basically in the big house, with whom?

BH: I grew up with my grandmother, Sarah, and Daddy's sister lived there and her two children. It was just like a big family.

DL: How many children did your grandparents have? How many siblings did your dad have?

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BH: There were five of them all together, and there was only one that was younger than he was, and that was Ambrose.

02::25

DL: So, when you were growing up, was the house electrified and plumbed yet?

BH: No.

DL: When did that happen?

BH: Well, I can't remember the exact date, but I remember when they did it. The men who did it came on weekends. They had another job and they'd come on weekends and wire the house for electricity, and we didn't have, well, we had a water well and a big water tank, but you didn't have running water until we got Waterworks #2, and that was later.

DL: When was Waterworks #2, when was that, 1970s?

BH: Oh my goodness, it was '70s, I think. They had a big tank up there on the other side of Melrose.

03:21

DL: How was the house—you had kind of multiple families—how was the house's interior space divided? Who lived where?

BH: Well, we lived upstairs. My parents and myself lived upstairs. My aunt and her two children lived downstairs. My grandmother lived downstairs.

DL: You had a chapel?

BH: We had a chapel.

DL: Were services held in the chapel regularly?

03:51

BH: Well, the last person that said Mass there was Wilbur Cloutier, I think Wilbur's dead now. It originally was a bedroom. It was Mr. Matthew Hertzog's [first Matthew Hertzog, 1829-1903] bedroom, and I think he died around 1910. So, I'm not sure when they did the chapel.

DL: That was your great-grandfather?

BH: Uh-huh.

DL: Were there family ... there were family services?

BH: Right, family services and she'd get friends come by; she'd always feed everybody.

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DL: It was sort of your grandmother's domain?

BH: Right.

DL: I imagine without electricity ... how old were you when they got electricity?

BH: I can't remember exactly, but I remember we had a lot of Aladdin lamps, and I think when we got electricity, daddy gave them to different people on the place, because we don't have any of them left.

DL: You obviously didn't have air conditioning.

BH: No [laughs].

DL: How did you accommodate during the summer? Did you have sleeping porches?

05:16

BH: We had sleeping porches. The back porch was screened, part of it, and you slept outthere in the summertime, and then we had an upstairs sleeping porch, and it was still hot, but better than inside.

DL: The whole family would sleep out on the porch?

BH: Right. I don't think my grandmother ever slept out there. It wasn't bad; it was screened, you didn't have mosquitoes.

DL: I understand that there was also an elevator in the house?

BH: Yes, that was later; that was after daddy had his heart attack. We put that elevator in on the end of the back porch out there, and it hooks with a counter weight. So, we had to adjust the counter weight, and you had a rope you pulled when you got on, it started the counter weight also. It still works, and I have a cat that can climb it.

06:30

DL: I know you had a lot of workers on the plantation.

BH: Right, we had a lot of people on the place.

DL: Did you have someone who kind of took care of you, like a maid?

BH: Right, her name was Lena, Lena Parker, and we also had Rosa who lived next door, and her mother was the cook, and then when her mother got older, she was the cook.

DL: How many people worked in the house?

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BH: Let's see ... we had a yardman, and we had Lena, we had Rosa. We also had Mary Jane Cheatham, she lived in the quarters. Then we'd get someone to clean up; we had Odelia, I think she lived in the quarters.

DL: Your grandmother had somebody that cooked?

BH: Right.

DL: And you had people that worked on specific tasks?

BH: Right.

07:42

DL: Going back a little bit to talk about your family. This is a huge legacy and you live in a legacy home with a family history that goes back several hundred years, but can you tell me about the LeComtes? The LeComtes came first, is that correct, from France?

BH: Yes, I think the LeComtes, well, a couple of them came with the French army, when the French army came. Ambroise LeComte was a large landholder and I think he probably built the first house, and the house that's over there now is built on the same foundation. It had a two-story basement, I was reading, and so it sat up higher than it does now.

DL: There are no pictures?

BH: I've never been able to find a picture. Guess the pictures burned when the house burned.

DL: Did he get a grant from the French government for his land?

BH: He had some land grants, and then they bought land too.

DL: I've seen old maps. He had quite extensive holdings, seemed like it went all the way down around where Cloutierville is.

9:20

BH: See, this place went all the way to Cloutierville down there, and my grandfather had one sister. So, when they divided it, she got the lower part down there, because it used to go all the way to the river.

DL: The old Cane River.

BH: Right,

DL: And the Hertzogs came toward the end of the eighteenth century?

BH: I think so, yes.

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DL: And then they intermarried, and that's how they all came down here?

BH: Yes.

DL: So your family's been here about 250 years?

BH: For 200 years anyway.

DL: That's amazing, on the same piece of land. Are there any buildings that survived?

10:14

BH: There was another big house, it's not there anymore, but it was in the curve as you go up the river, before you turned to go to the dam. There was a big house there, and they said that was Matthew Hertzog's house, and that he owned the upper portion of this place at one time.

DL: Were there two Hertzog brothers that came at first?

BH: Yes.

DL: Was he one of the brothers?

BH: Right.

DL: I guess the other one married into the family too?

BH: Yes. We took the house down because they were vandalizing it, stealing lumber and parts off of it, so we took it down.

DL: So, the other house that burned, that was probably built, what? Do you have any idea when it was built?

BH: I wish I had a picture of it.

DL: So, it was probably, I would assume, dated from the late eighteenth century?

BH: Right.

11:18

DL: So, in terms of the landscape here, the house and landscape, when you were growing up, were there buildings that were surrounding the house that are no longer there?

BH: Yes, there was a barn that was out in the front yard, and there's still a cistern there. It was, they called it a carriage house. It had stables and a place for the buggy and living quarters upstairs, and I think it was a bousillage building, but there's still a cistern under that tree, sometimes you can't see it, there's so much debris around it, but it's still there.

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DL: Were there any other buildings that were there, or was that the only one?

BH: Well, we had a dairy barn, at one time, I'm not sure of the date, we had a dairy—sold milk—and it had a concrete floor. It was behind the big house, and I can't remember when they took it down. I just think the wind just got it, and they went ahead and took it down. It had a concrete floor and places for all the cows.

12:41

DL: When you were growing up, you were, I'm assuming, well-versed in the family history, and probably learned it over and over and over again, and the connection of your mother's family to Bayou Boeuf, was there a lot of cultural exchange and visiting that went on back and forth?

BH: Yes, there was, and all these towns used to have ball teams, like Derry had a lumber company over there, and they had a team, and every weekend they'd play some town, and that's how they met. LeCompte had a, I think, they had a lumber company down there, too.

DL: They had a team from Magnolia too, didn't they, at one time, a ball team?

BH: Well, this was later. They had the young ones play, and sometimes they would play Melrose.

DL: I talked to Mr. Nora Listache a few years ago before he passed, and he talked about playing on one of the plantation teams.

BH: Yeah, Pat Henry was at Melrose. He'd bring a team down, and they'd play in the front yard.

DL: In front of the big house, that's where the ball field was?

BH: Right, and people would come and sit under the trees and watch them, and usually come on a Saturday morning.

14:17

DL: I understand, speaking of entertainment and gatherings, I understand that your dad was a big horse person. Did he, someone told me that he paraded his horses?

BH: He used to go to Alexandria when they had the rodeo parade, and he had a covered wagon, and they'd go down there, and they'd take all the kids from Cloutierville, take them down there and ride in the parade.

DL: But he also had horse races out here.

BH: Yes, up in the field, and they had horse races at Melrose too. So, he always had a horse that you were taking around, you know.

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DL: I saw Mr. Ambrose's films and the horse races ...

BH: That was at Melrose, I think.

DL: It looked like, from what I understand, that the horse track was right at kind of at your property line with the Cohen's, was it right around there somewhere?

BH: I think we had one there with Cohen's and then another one further on.

DL: And your dad raced horses?

15:34

BH: Yes, well, they weren't purebred, but they'd get a crowd every Sunday afternoon, and at one time up there they had a ball park, and this was across from the ball park, so you got a crowd.

DL: So, you had double entertainment?

BH: Right.

DL: What else did y'all do? I know you have an island; I assume you still have that island.

BH: Well, we did. The big boats kind of washed it away; it's not as big as it used to be.

DL: And what went on out there?

16:08

BH: Daddy used to like it. He'd go over there and we slept over there one week, just to see how it was, you know. It had a camp on it, and the building's still there, and we used to have picnics over there, the Fourth of July.

DL: How nice, it sounds like a great family place.

BH: He had a flatboat, he capped it out of a Field & Stream magazine, I think. It could haul eight or nine people. So, you get a crowd, you could always get them over there.

16:50

DL: So, as the only child, you were groomed early on to kind of take over the plantation?

BH: Well, not really, you know; it just kind of happened that way.

DL: Where did you go to school?

BH: Well, I went to Cloutierville 'till the fourth grade, and then we went to St. Mary's in Natchitoches. My aunt worked at Northwestern, so we'd ride, we'd go with her every morning,

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and I graduated from St. Mary's.

DL: And did you go to college?

BH: Yes, I went to Northwestern, and I went to LSU later.

DL: What were you training for?

BH: Well, I ended up in General Business, and I started out in little more complicated stuff. We didn't really have the background from up here, so I ended in General Business.

DL: Did you actually work outside the home, before the plantation?

BH: Oh, yes. I worked in Natchitoches several years, worked at the cotton office, then I worked at the People's Bank.

18:06

DL: What was the impetus for you to get really involved with the plantation, in the running of the plantation?

BH: Well, when Daddy got sick, and we had a real good overseer, and so, I started doing the book work and everything, and you had this labor you had, you know, we worked them. They all worked on a share, so had a lot of bookkeeping.

DL: We talked about the landscape around the house, but what about the landscape around the store and the quarters. How has this part of it changed, the plantation part?

19:00

BH: Most of the houses in the quarters, they had gardens, and each one . . . they've taken them down, but each one of those houses had a kitchen added on it on the back of it, and most of them had gardens in front of it, and some them raised pigs; they had pigpens, chickens and everything.

DL: How did you determine who lived in the quarters and who lived in the sharecroppers' houses?

BH: Well, most of the people who lived in the quarters worked by the day. They didn't have a crop; and sharecroppers usually lived close to where they were farming.

DL: So, the quarter people were more of support staff for your house?

BH: Right, and then when they made, like a hay field, most of them came from over here.

DL: Do you remember some of the people that lived in the houses over there?

BH: Well, we had Jack Williams—he was the cowboy—and John Vercher lived over there and he fed the mules and everything. He lived over there, and Walter Telphy lived over there. He

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was kind of a jack-of-all-trades; and Buddy Randolph, there were two Randolphs who lived over there, and I've forgotten how many, originally, they had of those houses because they tore down a few of them.

DL: How about Lizzie Johnson and her husband, what was his name, Shine?

BH: Shine, his name was Matthew Johnson. They lived up the river on Highway 119, and everybody called him Shine.

21:15

DL: Who took care of your dad's horse?

BH: John did most of it, John Vercher, and we had two stables out here, on the side of the store over there, and we had a ring in the front yard where you worked them out, and Daddy kept his, well, had his bridles hanging up there.

DL: He came from a long line of horsemen, didn't he? Seems like I read that the first Ambrose LeCompte had horses too, didn't he?

BH: He had racehorses, yes.

DL: Wasn't there a famous...?

BH: Yes, we have a picture of a race horse, LeCompte, and they say that the town of LeCompte supposedly was named after that horse. That's the tale anyway [laughs].

22:13

DL: About how many people were working on the farm when you were growing up, and then when you started working here yourself? What was the farm community ... the plantation community?

BH: We had about 25 families on the place. Most of the people that lived in the houses up there; they had so many acres of cotton, so many acres of corn; and then you had these people, most of these people were day labor, and they'd fill in, and they had a school across the river, and some of those kids would cross the river in a boat and go to school over there. I can't remember the name of it.

DL: That's where the kids whose parents worked here, they went there?

BH: Yes.

DL: I also understand, it maybe before your time, but a foot bridge went over from St. James to St. Andrew?

23:16

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BH: There was a foot bridge, I remember. Well, there was a post office across the river, and they had a grocery store, and the post office was in the grocery store, and there was a little foot bridge that ran across and you could cross over and get your mail and come back over the foot bridge. I don't know what they did when the water came up [laughs].

DL: So, that's where the kids went to school. What about medical services, did somebody come out and treat the kids that worked on the farm?

BH: Yeah, we had Dr. Sampite, he was in Cloutierville, and then we had Dr. Wink later, and he lived in the Kate Chopin house, and he had married Cammie Henry, and there was another doctor that came later but I can't remember.

DL: Dr. Knipmeyer?

BH: Well, Dr. Knipmeyer was the public health, and he came from Natchitoches, and ... he had a little clinic up above Melrose somewhere, and he came every Thursday to that little clinic, so he came every Thursday to our house and had lunch, and then in the summertime back then, you took typhoid shots. So, three Thursdays we had, everybody on the place had to come and take typhoid shots, and he'd bring his nurse who was really good, and if they had any babies—most of the babies were born at home—and she would do all the paperwork for the babies that were born, and they'd bring them in and she'd fill out everything get the birth certificates and all that good stuff.

DL: You mentioned Cloutierville, was that kind of your commercial center at the time?

25:30

BH: Yes, they had several stores in Cloutierville, good stores, and they had meat markets in them, too. Even the little store in Derry had a meat market back then and, of course, several of those buildings burned, but that old Carnahan store had beautiful wood in it, but it all burned down.

DL: I saw, when I was working down here a long time ago, when Carnahan's store was still standing, and Hyman Cohen had taken his diamond and carved his name into the window. Seems like there was a lot of competition between the stores. Was that like kind of like “going to town”?

BH: Yeah, well you didn't go ... well, the roads were gravel, and they didn't have any pavement, and to go to town was ... it took half a day, seemed like.

26:37

DL: Did y'all go to church at St. John the Baptist or did you use the Derry chapel?

BH: We used the Derry chapel a lot, and I think when Father Lyons came to Cloutierville, they did away with the Derry chapel. They said it took too much to keep up two buildings. I don't know what they did with it; they tore it down though.

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DL: Well, the altar pieces that had your family's names on them, are they at St. John the Baptist now; the two nice carvings with the angels?

BH: The angels are in that, what do they call that building? You go through Cloutierville and go down toward Little River, and they were in that building at one time; that church that burned in Cloutierville had a magnificent altar in it. Father Lyons had gotten it from a convent in south Louisiana. It was beautiful and it had some beautiful statues in it.

27:47

DL: Let's come back to the plantation. So, people worked on shares. What was the share system like? What was their portion, what was y'all's portion?

BH: Okay, if you had a tenant who had his own livestock, his own teams and everything, he usually worked on a fourth, and if you had to supply them with a team and a house and finance them, they worked on half.

DL: So, they would get half of the output or the profit, and the other people that had the livestock would get three-quarters?

BH: They'd get three-quarters, like Acklen Moran had his own mules and everything and he got three-fourths; but, see, he had to feed his own teams, took care of his own animals and everything.

DL: So you said there were about 25 families. About how many were in the quarters and about how many were sharecroppers, about how many sharecropper families?

BH: Oh, I can't remember, I'd have to look in one of those books.

DL: What do you think, about maybe fifteen or twenty?

BH: About fifteen or twenty; and, see, back then, too, if you had ... if they were sick, you'd have to pay the doctor bill, and the light bills, and everything, and then you charged it to them in some of the books.

DL: So, basically, they had their year's worth of expenses kept in a book, and at the end of the year you settled up?

BH: You settled up after you sold the cotton and everything.

29:45

DL: Where did y'all gin the cotton?

BH: Well, Cohen's had a gin and then Murray Lambre had a gin, and if Cohen's got backed up, you'd take some up to Murray Lambre's, and then, later years, when you raised cotton, you'd have to sell it to Boyce, up on Highway 1. There were originally six gins in this parish, and now I think there's only one. I guess it's still running.

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DL: I don't know. I know when I moved here, there were three running, but not anymore.

BH: Not anymore; and, see, Southern Cotton Oil was running too, and it was very convenient because they ground their own cotton seed—I think it was Snowdrift—and you could buy feed for your cattle—meal and your hulls. Now, I think the only place where you can get it is up around Bossier City somewhere, and it used to smell so good, too.

31:26

DL: So, you had the store. How did you pay people? Did you pay them with scrip, or did you pay with tokens, or did you, at the end of the year, settle up with money? How did that work?

BH: Well, you settled up with money. Daddy got some tokens, there may be some around. It's in a booklet kind of deal, and you'd charged them so much and you'd give it them, and when they come in the store, they'd just tear out a coupon. There may be some them left.

DL: So, changes in the plantation landscape, the way that it was set up when you were growing up, and then when mechanized cotton came in, how dramatic was that change? I mean, how quick did that take place, the exodus of people?

32:26

BH: Well, it was pretty quick at one time, when you got, like, the mechanized cotton picker. It's nothing like they have now, though. So you didn't need all that field labor, and we used to have hoe hands who would come and hoe the cotton and thin it out, but when they got to a planter, what they called hill-drop, you didn't have to thin it out, so you didn't need to hoe it a lot like they used to do.

DL: So, that happened almost overnight.

BH: Yeah, sometime; but equipment was expensive ... but it's not as expensive as it is now.

DL: So, your dad was still running the farm when that transition took place?

BH: Oh, yes.

DL: What was the first equipment that he got that saw an automatic decrease in the number of people that were working on the farm?

BH: I guess the cotton picker. Of course, I think they had to pick some of it, kind of make way for the cotton picker to come through, and then you'd haul it to the gin in wagons. Now they roll it in a bale; but Cohen's gin was running, and you'd haul it up there, and they'd gin it, and then they would have to haul to town to the compress.

DL: Did people just start leaving by families, or did individuals leave and send back for folks? Seems like a lot of them left this area.

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BH: Right. Well, you didn't need as much labor and a lot of them moved to Natchitoches, and got a job up there; but when we had to hoe the cotton, and you didn't have all your labor, we used to have a fella in Natchitoches that would get a crew together and bring a truckload down. They'd hoe the cotton and pick cotton and everything.

DL: So, you had kind of day laborers, as well.

BH: Right.

DL: That came in just during harvest season.

BH: Right.

DK: You grew cotton and...

35:17

BH: Cotton and corn. Most of your tenants, you had so much acres of cotton and so much acres of corn, and they would pick the corn and shell the good part, and we have a mill over at the Big House. One Saturday they would grind meal and the next Saturday they would grind the grits, and you got the whole kernel. What you get now, you don't have oil in it, but this had the oil in it so it had more flavor to it.

DL: Was it distributed or was it kept specifically for y'all's use, or was it distributed among the families?

BH: Yes, they would bring their own corn, and they picked their corn in the fall, and they'd get the best part and shell it and all. Cliff Lemelle, who worked here, he would set the gauge on the thing, I guess, and they would bring their shelled corn down there and he would grind it in grits, and the next Saturday he'd grind it in meal.

DL: They were bringing their own products.

BH: Their own products. They ran it with a tractor.

DL: You said they had gardens around their houses. Were they growing vegetables or flowers or both?

BH: A lot of them did, had vegetables.

DL: Did y'all have a big garden?

BH: We used to have a garden in the back, too. Of course, we had a yardman. We had Brindle Gallien, he was the yardman and he kept a garden.

DL: Who was the overseer?

BH: Well, we had Henry Gallien and his son, Lester Gallien. Lester was a fine fella, and then

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after they left, Mr. Ehrlich lived here; he lived in the overseer's house for a while.

DL: Was the overseer's house occupied most of the time?

BH: Most of the time, yes.

DL: Did I hear in the history somewhere that your family lived in the overseer's house while the Big House was being rebuilt?

BH: That's what I was told, and when they rebuilt the house, they lived in the overseer's house until they had it rebuilt.

38:01

DL: What were the circumstances when the house was burned? I know it was during the Civil War, but what was the impetus for burning the house? Who burned it?

BH: Well, the Yankee army burned it. They burned, they said, about half of downtown Cloutierville; hardly anything was left of Cloutierville, I think, and in reading one report, it looked like that every chicken house and corn crib was burning, you know.

DL: Between Cloutierville and here?

BH: Yes, and Natchitoches.

DL: How many more houses did they burn, or was it just y'all's?

BH: I'm not sure.

DL: How long did it take to rebuild that house?

BH: They rebuilt it in the 1880s, I think.

DL: On the same footprint?

BH: Yes, more or less. In reading a description, somebody said something like a two-floor basement, and I'm not sure what they meant by that, but it has the same floor plan, same walls, and the ell on the back and everything. Now, there was a kitchen building in the back that's not there anymore.

DL: Was it detached?

BH: It was detached from the house. There's a brick walkway around where it used to be, but that was before my time. A lot of brick bats out there.

DL: What's a brick bat?

BH: It's broken bricks under the ground everywhere.

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39:50

DL: I've heard that expression all my life but I didn't know exactly what it was. So, you became involved in running the farm. How old were you when you took on that responsibility?

BH: Well, let's say I was out of college, and I had worked in People's Bank for several years, worked in the cotton office one year; that was interesting. I'm not sure.

DL: When you took over ... when you came out here to work, you were taking over more of the business responsibilities?

BH: Right, did more of the book work and Daddy had Chris Scruggs who worked too, and she did a lot of the book work too, and they lived in Cloutierville at that time.

DL: It must have changed the trajectory of your life when all of the sudden you became a plantation person opposed to being a business person.

BH: Yeah, it kind of tied you down too, kind of.

DL: As your life altered, what did your interests develop? I know you were really involved in preservation, in the early preservation effort, how did that come about?

BH: I don't know, just got interested in buying, there was not a whole lot furniture in the house, and so, mother and I would, after my grandmother died, mother and I would and go look for certain pieces we needed; that was fun.

DL: And you got involved in the preservation effort in Natchitoches, too, didn't you?

41:46

BH: Right, Natchitoches Historic Foundation and we were restoring the old Cunningham law office, I don't know what street it's on, and it was a nice little building. Of course you had Bobby DeBlieux who was interested in all that, and he had all sorts of book work—I don't know what all he had—and he could get people to give things, and I got interested in furniture and mother and I would get pieces here and there, and refinish them on the back porch.

DL: Seems like the whole idea of preservation started around here in the '50s maybe? It kind of took off with APHN and the Historic Foundation, people just got interested in, what, just trying to keep things that were starting to fade away?

43:00

BH: Yes, that was one of the things. APHN was mostly interested in Melrose, and they spent most of their time and money taking care of Melrose.

DL: Who was involved in Historic Preservation?

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BH: Let's see, we had the Donahoes and Bobby DeBlieux; well, we had a whole crowd.

DL: I understand Ann Brittain was real involved.

BH: Yes, Ann Brittain was a big promoter for that.

DL: You got involved in that not only through your own home, but in an attempt to help preserve things that were starting to disappear?

BH: Right, oh, yes.

DL: What other activities were you involved in? I know running a plantation is a full time job, so what were your entertainments? What were your pleasures, what did you do for fun?

44:00

BH: Well, we used to go to New Orleans, and go to the races, and that kind of stuff, because my uncle lived down there; he belonged down there. He belonged to the Jockey Club—that was fun, go eat ... and we had relatives in Baton Rouge, and we used to go and see them all the time, and they'd come up here.

DL: Tell me how the Hunters and Gunns are related. Are they your father's sister's families?

BH: Yes, Daddy's sister was Sally Gunn, and Mary Gunn and Norman Gunn were her children, and Mary and Norman grew up here. So, it was like being one family. She worked at Northwestern, and she'd go to Natchitoches every day, so we went to St. Mary's; and then Daddy had some cousins that lived in Shreveport, and they'd come down and spend four or five days, and we'd go horseback riding and swimming up at the camp—the island—that kind of stuff.

DL: When you were growing up, there were probably several legacy families that still had their plantations that had passed through the family lineages a couple of generations, or several generations, but to my knowledge, Magnolia is the last family-run plantation?

BH: Probably is. The Oakland's been sold to the park system. Let's see, the Cloutiers, most of them or dead, so I don't know.

46:20 [interruption to reset equipment]

46:23

BH: [speaking about Bobby DeBlieux] ... he had all of this information, all his books, and when he would order, he would order an extra copy for Northwestern, that's how Northwestern got a lot of that stuff.

DL: Are his daughters redoing his house?

BH: Somebody told me that but I don't see anybody there. Now, there's somebody in the outbuilding out there, and I don't think I would recognize his girls if I saw them, it's been so

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long.

47:10 [Interview interrupted to reset equipment]

47:24

DL: [speaking about Shallow Lake] That house and cemetery, I know that was a property that belonged to your family.

BH: I don't know too much about Shallow Lake. Now, recently I've seen pictures of some of the headstones, and when the people bought that property over there, they changed the name of everything, you know. They call it Bayou Camitte and Bayou Camitte is about as wide as that thing right there [about 3 feet]. It had that much water in it.

DL: Was it more of bayou when you were growing up, or was it always like that?

BH: I didn't know anything about it when I was growing up. I never heard of it until these people from Shreveport bought it and changed the name of it.

DL: So that wasn't part of the natural landscape?

BH: It's just a little shallow creek that runs and I've seen it once.

DL: The Shallow Lake plantation house wasn't still there when you were growing up?

48:33

BH: If you go up the highway, on the right hand side where that big oak tree is? That's where the house burned, and that's the one the two girls burned in.

DL: When was that?

BH: What year was that, do you know?

[D.Fuqua]: I think she was asking about the house at Shallow Lake.

DL: Yeah, Shallow Lake.

BH: I don't remember a house at Shallow Lake.

[D.F.] The one the Rogers took down?

BH: Now, we went somewhere ... where did we go? It wasn't over here. Where was it? I went with Henley and somebody else, and we went, I don't know, I'll have to ask him.

DL: So you don't remember a house being over there?

BH: I don't remember a house over there.

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DL: And the cemetery was not used anymore during that time?

49:29

BH: No, and they had a few iron crosses over there, and we had a few iron crosses at the house, and I think Bobby took them. Bobby DeBlieux took them and put them in the Roque house in Natchitoches, but I don't think they had names on them, did they?

DF: Some of them did.

DL: Some of them did, and I think they ended up, didn't he give that collection to the park, where they're preserved now?

BH: Yes.

50:07

DL: Okay. Did the river ever flood? Cane River?

BH: Well, when we had high water, mostly it came from back Red River. That was before you had a levee on Red River and the levee that was back behind the house and all around, up in the field, behind the house, and behind the quarters and kept Red River water from coming in. I don't remember Cane River flooding because it runs out down. I remember going down there years ago. You can't get there anymore, but you could drive down where Cane River ran into Red River, and you could see Colfax over there.

DL: There were a couple of major floods weren't there in the '30s and '40s maybe?

BH: 1945 was really bad.

DL: That was from Red River backing up? Did that flood all your property too?

51:10

BH: Yes, we had to move all the cattle and put them up in Kisatchie, and moved all the mules and horses and put them across the river, on that place over there. We went and stayed in Natchitoches and went to school, and the water came up half way the front yard. We kept a boat tied to the back steps in the back yard, and a lot of the people on the place that had chickens brought them and put them in that chicken coop that sits up on pilings.

DL: So, the people that lived in the quarters?

BH: They had to move out of the quarters, it came all around the quarters.

DL: And there's a lake back there too, isn't there? Hertzog Lake?

BH: Yes.

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DL: Does it keep water all the time?

BH: Most of the time, yes.

DL: How big is it?

BH: We used to say 55 acres, and I'm not sure that's accurate, and there's a dump, I guess it's still there, there was a dump that ran across it, too, where you could walk through it, and I remember—I don't know what year it was, the Galliens were still here—we had such a drought that it dried up. It had cracks in the ground, and somebody went hunting back there, I think, and dropped a cigarette, and you'd look down in the cracks and see the coals still in it.

DL: You had a bad flood in '45. What about tornadoes? Did you have tornadoes out here?

53:01

BH: We had a tornado in 1939. It hit the gin, and the seed house and the quarters, and it hit the back of the Big House, but it didn't tear the roof off, but a lot of these big buildings down here. They had to move out of them until they fixed them, and the Red Cross brought some tents down here. I don't know how that worked out.

DL: For the people who lived in the quarters?

BH: Yes.

DL: You just mentioned the seed house. So there was a seed house, where was that?

53:48

BH: Okay, let's see ... the gin would be here, the seed house was here, what we called a seed house, and it opened on the blacktop road, and they used it during my time for a hay barn, but they always called it the seed house.

DL: When the gin was working, do you think that's where they kept the seed?

BH: Could be.

DL: But the gin wasn't working when you were running the farm?

BH: No, no.

DL: Was it in disrepair or was it usable? I mean could you go in the building?

54:29

BH: Well, you could go in, 1939, see, when we had that tornado, the works ran with a steam engine, and it took the steam engine, and that's why that big cistern is there, high water for the

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steam engine and all, and I don't remember running after that. I remember it, going in there once when I was little when it was running.

DL: It ran on steam engine, not mules?

BH: Not in my time, no.

DL: But y'all still farmed with mules?

BH: Yes, oh yes, you used teams all the time, and you always had to have extras, you know. So, everybody that had a crop, had a pen.

55:26

DL: Well, you talked about the crops you grew, but you didn't really talk about the animals you had out here, about the livestock that you had.

BH: Okay, we had mules and horses to plow and everything, and Daddy raised mules, and every year he would gentle some of the young ones, and he had cattle.

DL: Did you raise cattle to eat or to sell?

55:58

BH: Well, we did both, and the way he got that was during the Depression, and the way he got the cattle done was that we used to have two butchers, local butchers on the river, and if they would get a heifer, they'd bring it down here, and he would trade them a bull calf for it, which they were glad to do because it weighed more, and we had every color, and every kind you can imagine.

DL: How many head of cattle did you typically keep?

BH: I don't know what he had way back there. We used to have about 300 head of cattle, and of course, he got to where he would save heifers and he'd buy better bulls.

DL: When it flooded and you ran the cattle up, did you lose any cattle?

BH: We lost some, yes.

DL: Taking them up into the hills?

57:13

BH: Took them up to Kisatchie, and then the Galliens went up, Lester Gallien and a couple of others went up and camped out up there, for a while, until they could bring them back and that was an ordeal too.

DL: I bet, because the roads weren't all that developed, were they?

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BH: No, and then you had to round them up, separate them. You had everybody's cattle mixed up together. I remember when they drove them back, it was interesting.

DL: Where did you keep the cattle? Were they on the back part of the property?

BH: Yes.

DL: And then you had stables, you said for the ... stables right around here?

57:57

BH: We had some stables right out here, and beyond that, we had a big lot with a great big barn. It was a corn crib, and then it had stables all around it and everything, and that's where they fed the horses and mules, out there.

DL: How many mules and horses for working did you keep? Do you remember?

BH: We had a bunch. I guess all together, counting the younger ones, we had about 75 head, at least, and every year you'd gentle several, get them going.

DL: You gentle them for working?

BH: Yes, working.

DL: What does that mean?

BH: To plow, pull a wagon, usually had a four-mule wagon, okay, and that's where you break the young mules, and somebody would ride this one, and the wild one would be on this side, then you had a team in front, and they usually did it with a wagon.

DL: So basically you were training them to work with a team?

BH: Right, had to gentle them to be able to plow.

DL: So, all of a sudden in the '50s, early '60s, you didn't have the need for all these animals?

BH: No. Daddy used to have a ... he kept his mares out behind the lake back there, and we had two jacks, and I can't remember who he sold them to.

DL: It must've been sad, I mean the whole change in the landscape, especially for you who'd grown up here, and all these people who were your friends, grown up and shared memories with, it must have been poignant.

BH: Yes, to see it all change, you know, I hated to see those animals leave, that kind of stuff.

DL: And all the folks. I had one lady, told me it was like losing your whole community. All of sudden she was there by herself.

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01:00:33

BH: And they had the church up here, you know, and I remember one day one of them came and told Daddy that somebody had stolen the bell. So, I don't think they ever found out who stole the bell.

DL: That was St. James church?

BH: Yes, it just vanished.

DL: Was the church still in operation?

BH: They still could use it. Now it got where they didn't use it all the time, but occasionally they would come back and have something, and it had a kitchen in a building next to it, and they would have something there. What happened to it was, they had a bunch of drunks ran off the road and ran into the corner of it, and knocked it off the pillars, and it was so full of termites, they just tore it down.

01:01:38

DL: Tell me about the St. Isadore statue?

BH: Well, up in the field ... they used to call it the Isadore [deck? rack?] ... St. Isadore's patron saint of farmers, and Daddy had put a rack around the big gate up there, put a statue up there, and somebody shot it up, came up one day and shot it all to pieces, and I think it was one of the Churchman boys found that street sign in Natchitoches that they were throwing away, and they brought it and put it up out there.

DL: Somebody told me that Mr. Cohen used to send his people down to see if Mr. Matt had his statue up.

BH: Yeah, he was patron saint of farmers, supposedly.

DL: Was there a lot of competition between the plantations, friendly competition, between your dad and Mr. Cohen?

BH: Yes, they'd come look at each other's crops all the time.

DL: Just checking out the competition?

BH: Right, and everybody knew what everybody was doing too. I remember Mr. Hyman's cowboy, he'd always check in and see what was, and everybody had their cow dogs.

DL: I bet you had a lot of pets.

BH: Oh, we did. Daddy always had, he looked like a German shepherd, he wasn't full, and he rode in the truck with him all the time, and he barked constantly, and he called him Hoss, like

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Hoss Cartwright. I think I have a picture of it somewhere. We used to have, well you didn't have coyotes like we do now and we had some white peacocks, and one of them hatched out under the overseer's house. She had seven little white peacocks but you can't have that now because the coyotes would get them, get your cats too.

DL: What brought the coyotes out of the hills? Do you know?

BH: I don't know when they began to show up, but that was something new. We didn't have that when I was growing up, and we didn't have wolves either, not that I remember, but I remember seeing the coyotes in the back yard.

DL: All of a sudden.

BH: Yeah, all of a sudden, from Texas, I guess.

DL: Well, Ms. Betty I appreciate you sharing your history and legacy with us.

BH: I've enjoyed it a lot. The only thing that disturbs me sometimes is not being able to get help and do things like we used to, like around the house, and the yard. The fella ... I got a guy to come and do the yard for me but now he's had a stroke, and I've got to find somebody else, and these young ones don't know the difference between a flower and a cockle burr!

DL: It's a lot different than having people you can call out to and say "I need this done."

BH: We used to have people like old Buddy Randolph and they lived in the quarters, he and his brother, and he would come early in the morning, and you never locked your house ... you locked the front door, and left the back door open ... and he would come in and make coffee, every morning, and he used to go, up at Melrose's place—they had Bubbá's place, you know—he'd come with his little ticket and he hid it, he was an old gentleman, you don't find any more very often, and then we had Rosa, and they were all good company.

We had a log house and it was in the winter time it was really cold, and this guy we had living in it, he wasn't too sharp and he was supposed to move and go live with his family somewhere. He had an old rusted out wood stove and a lawnmower in the same room, and the bottom fell out of the stove and burnt the house down. That was the last log house we had out there. It was big old square logs. I think that was our last log house.

DL: They went up quick.

BH: Well, LaCaze had a big store, and it's gone. Masson's had a store, and Livingston had a store, and they all had meat markets, and now you can't, there's the Mini-Mart, that's about it.

DL: They had meat markets, they had ...

BH: Work clothes and all kinds of stuff. I remember that old building, it burned down too, it had beautiful wood in it, and it had a tall ceiling and you had one of these ladders that you rolled down, I remember that store.

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DL: Was that the Carnahan's store?

BH: Might've been the Carnahan's store, it had beautiful wood in it.

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Interviewee: Mrs. Gloria Jones (Isle Brevelle, Cane River)

Interviewed January 8, 2015 at Mrs. Jones' home 2170 Hwy. 484, Natchez, LA (Cane River), by Dayna Bowker Lee; H. F. Pete Gregory also present

**Time of interview: 01:03:35
Transcribed 2/28/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: Okay, this is January 8, 2015, and we're talking to Mrs. Gloria Sers Jones. First of all Mrs. Jones, can you tell me a little bit about your family? I know who your mom was, but what was your dad's name?

GJ: James Sers.

DL: What was your mother's maiden name?

GJ: Monette.

DL: Where did she grow up?

GJ: Right here on Cane River.

DL: I mean what part of Cane River?

00:34

GJ: At Bermuda area, where the St. Matthews old school is. Her home was just across the road from there.

DL: Where Joe and Judy's house is now?

GJ: No, where Joe and Judy's home is now; my parents bought the land from my grandfather who lived across the river. That's where my mom was raised, across the river.

DL: So, she was raised on the Melrose side.

00:59

GJ: Yes, I think it was called Bermuda at that time. She was a life-long resident. My father was born and raised on what we now call Red Dirt. We always called it Bayou Derbanne, but now it's called Red Dirt. That's where he was born and reared.

DL: So, that's sort of going toward Kisatchie?

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GJ: Yes, on the west side.

DL: Bayou Derbanne, that was an extension of the Creole community?

GJ: Not necessarily, it was a sawmill town.

DL: Oh, okay, so it was over by Montrose?

GJ: Yes, at Montrose. The sawmill, from my understanding, was right along what is now Hwy. 1, and my dad and some of the family still lived there. Did you know Norah Sers? The Sers?

DL: Yes.

GJ: Well, that was the homestead in that area. Both of them were farmers.

DL: Both of them came from farming families?

GJ: Yes.

DL: What were they growing? Cotton?

GJ: Yes, cotton and corn, back then, when I was a kid, that's what was always grown, cotton and corn. After I was born, they moved to Bermuda, where the waterworks is.

DL: Waterworks #2?

02:40

GJ: Yes, Waterworks #2. There was a gin there, and a house right behind where the waterworks sits now, and we lived in that house, and my father operated the gin and was the overseer of the Cockfield Plantation.

DL: What was the name of it?

GJ: Cockfield; he was a doctor and they lived right across the road from us.

DL: Is that right next to that, what they call the Typo plantation?

GJ: Yes, now it's called Typo.

DL: It's the same place?

GJ: It's the same place. They got that name from Dr. Cockfield's son-in-law. After Dr. Cockfield died, the place was turned over to his son-in-law who was a Tobin, and it got that name.

DL: Right, I think that was Ginny Tobin's brother-in-law.

GJ: Yes.

DL: She told me the house had a three-sided, wraparound fireplace.

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GJ: Yes.

DL: I've never heard of that before, and somebody told me yesterday that they thought the stairway in there was mahogany veneer.

GJ: I don't remember too much about the house; I didn't go in there too many times. I was in there, but I don't remember. As a child, I wasn't paying attention.

DL: Well, it just sounds like a really interesting house, and that it had a lot of beautiful features.

GJ: Yes, yes, it was a beautiful home.

DL: Now it's falling in. It's just sad. I drove by there the other day and took pictures of it, and I don't think you could go in it now. It looks like it's about to fall in. So, when did you meet Mr. Sonny? Did you always know him?

04:26

GJ: In elementary school.

DL: Y'all went to the same school?

GJ: I probably knew him before school, because my grandfather and his step-father were very good friends, and they'd visit all the time and I would go with my grandfather. So, I probably knew Sonny from childhood, early childhood, I think. Then we went to St. Joseph's school, and then, when we finished the seventh grade, which was the way the schools were at that time, he went off to military high school, and I went to New Orleans. We were not boyfriend-girlfriend, or anything.

DL: You just knew each other.

GJ: And so, in '49 I came—no, in '48—I came home for the summer, and we started dating. It's an interesting way we got together. He had taken one of my first cousins to a dance, and they had double-dated with another first cousin and her boyfriend, and so they were laughing at me, because I had been in California for two years, and they were laughing at me because I had a different brogue, you know. So he said, "Okay, I'm going to go dance with her and see what y'all laughing about, and talking about." So we danced that time, and after while he came and asked me again, and before the night was over, he asked me to the movie on Wednesday. So, I don't think he ever took her out again.

06:09

DL: Where did he go to school, military school?

GJ: In Rock Castle, Virginia.

DL: Okay, and where did you go to school?

GJ: Well, I went to New Orleans when I left here, and then I ended up in California.

DL: Where did you go to school in New Orleans?

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GJ: At the Holy Family Convent.

DL: Okay. Where was that located, do you remember?

GJ: On Orleans Street, in the heart of the town.

DL: I was wondering if that's where they have the school now.

GJ: Well, the school is out on Chef Menteur Highway now. One of the hotels bought the site and is now the Bourbon Orleans. They renovated the building, and converted it to that hotel. It's just around the corner from Chartres, I think, and the Cathedral. I was confirmed in the [St. Louis] Cathedral.

07:20

DL: And then you went to California to work?

GJ: No, to school. Two aunts came back here for a funeral and they asked mother to let me go spend the summer with them. So, I did, and one of my aunts said, "Well, why don't you stay out here?" So they convinced my parents to let me stay, so I did, for two years.

DL: So, when you came back, you and Mr. Sonny got together, did you come back to stay, or were you just visiting?

GJ: I came back to stay because I didn't want to go back. I didn't like the city at all, I didn't like the city, and I got a job. I taught school at St. Anthony's which had a school at that time.

DL: How old were you?

GJ: Nineteen.

DL: And he's about the same age?

GJ: No, he's a year older than me.

DL: So how long was it before y'all got married?

GJ: Two years, about two years.

DL: And you moved to this place, not to this house obviously, but this piece of land?

GJ: Yes, we moved in with his mother and her husband—Pat's house—and we lived with her for about a year. His older sister had built this house for her and her husband. She had a terminal illness and they knew they'd never have children, so they just built this room, and next to it is the one bedroom, and a bath, and a kitchen, and that was all the house, because they knew they didn't need any more room. And after she died, her husband decided he was going back to school, and he went back to school and became a doctor. So he sold out whatever he owned in the place, and Sonny and I moved over here.

09:13

DL: What were Sonny's parent's names?

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GJ: His mother was Sybil, his father was Lewis, but he died when Sonny was nine months, and then she married Clarence Compton.

DL: What was her maiden name?

GJ: Beize. B-e-i-z-e.

DL: Okay, I have come across that name.

GJ: Anyway, from around south Louisiana, Marksville, down there.

DL: When we were doing research on the house, I had come across that name in association with Pat's house. I didn't know what the origin was.

GJ: That was her maiden name.

09:51

DL: So you and Sonny moved over here, and he basically took over running the farm?

GJ: Well, he was already running the farm. My brother-in-law had been raised in the city and he had no clue about the farming, but they did have a little store, and so he took care of the store and Sonny did the farm, because his step-father had gotten killed just before he finished high school. He had planned to be a dentist but his mother was broken up badly in the accident that killed her husband, and he came back home, and stayed to take care of the farm. Then came war time, and you could get out of the draft if you were a farmer, if you were taking care of your farming family. So, he never went away to the war.

DL: How many acres did y'all farm?

GJ: Around 800 I think.

10:58

DL: And you're still doing cotton and corn?

GJ: No, not for the last four or five years, about six years now. After Sonny died, me and Emery continued to work, and then Emery saw the writing on the wall, that the cotton, and beans, and corn was not making it; cows were doing much better. So, he discontinued all of the row cropping, and we only raise cattle now.

DL: So, y'all are not growing anything anymore?

GJ: Well, he grows a little corn to have for feed, and make hay to feed the cows.

11:43

DL: So, when you and Sonny first got married, what was your role in working with the farm? Did you do the books?

[Interview interrupted by telephone call.]

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12:01

GJ: I took care of the store. I ran the store. I raised five children in the store. You'd see me walking back and forth with the babies. I had help at the house sometimes, and when I didn't have help, I'd have them over there with me. He would take care of the farm, and I was the bookkeeper at all times. I was a runner, if something broke, I had to go to town for parts. I usually did that, so that's the way we did, and when the sixth one came along, I said to him one day—and we had a full country store, including alcohol, so that was the biggest thing—I said, "If you're going to buy another license, you be sure you know whose going to run it, because I'm not with this sixth child." So that was the end of the store, we closed the store, and we didn't buy the license, and we closed down, I think it was, in '66 or '67.

13:16

DL: Was it like kind of a plantation store, where you paid your workers out of that store too? Did you use tokens or did you pay the workers?

GJ: No, we didn't use tokens, but back when we had people on the place, they would get their groceries and whatever they needed. A ledger was kept, then at the end of the year—that was when they were sharecropping—you settled up. Then you would get your money from what they had borrowed and ordered out of the store for that year.

DL: In sharecropping, weren't there different types of shares, like a half-share, a quarter-share?

GJ: I think it was a quarter-share.

DL: A quarter-share. So basically you, you guys who owned the farm got a quarter of their output, of their product?

GJ: No, they got a quarter, because you had the cost of the animals. First of all it was the animals, then it was tractors, and then also you had the cost of the fertilizer and the insecticide. So you got all of that, I think I'm right about that.

DL: You're probably are.

Gregory: Y'all buy the seed?

GJ: Yes.

14:40

DL: So you supplied everything but the labor?

GJ: Yes, everything but the labor. It was their labor that they were working for. So many people had large families, and the kids did the work, so that was their way of making a living.

DL: Was there a set number of acres they worked?

GJ: Yes. I don't remember, but I think it was like ten acres, depending upon the size of the family.

DL: And how many sharecroppers did you have?

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GJ: When we married, there were seventeen.

DL: So you had housing for all those people?

GJ: Yes, that was the other thing, we provided the housing. When the window broke, we fixed it; roof came off, we had to fix it.

15:27

DL: So where were your cabins, your houses located, the sharecropper houses? Were they along the roads?

GJ: Yes, along the roads. Two on the riverbank over here, and a house right over here where the barn is now, there was a house; and there was one little house right past the store, down this lane, and then when you pass the church, there were houses all along there, all the way down past Pat's house. There were two, three past Pat's house, and it went on to the riverbank, and then where the catch pen is now, where you can go up into that field, there were three or four in there. So, they were scattered. Our boundary is to the north here, what is that, about a half a mile, by that Badin Roque house, right in there. Then to the south, is another half a mile past that.

DL: So almost to Ms. Lair's old house?

GJ: Past Lair's

Gregory: Almost down to B. A.'s, down to the point.

GJ: Well, B. A. is on the riverbank and we had up on top. Right about by B. A.'s.

DL: So, after you guys moved down here, who stayed in Pat's house?

GJ: His mother. She had three other children that was still at home at that time. She had a son and then he went away to the army, and two girls, and they were still in school.

17:18

DL: So, when you started having your kids, was St. Joseph's still in operation?

GJ: Yes.

DL: So they went there?

GJ: They went there. The oldest finished there. Gwen went to Lafayette to boarding school, and that's when we found out that the next year was going to be integration, so Judy went to St. Matthews. Then the next year they went to St. Mary's, and the boys went to St. Mary's also. I think Janet was at St. Joseph school for a couple of years.

18:20

DL: Do you remember about what year that closed?

GJ: '67, somewhere in there.

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DL: So that's when they integrated down here, Natchitoches Parish?

GJ: Yes.

DL: It was '70 in Shreveport where I grew up.

GJ: Well, I'm not sure about if that was the time of the integration. Yes, we had a reduced school, the nuns had pulled out to one or two, and then laypeople came in and filled in the spots.

19:14

DL: When did they tear down the building? How long after the school closed?

GJ: The Parish got together to build that building that we have for ...

DL: Oh, the Hall?

GJ: Yes, but it was early '70s.

DL: Was the building in bad shape? I've seen pictures of it.

GJ: Oh, yeah, I mean, it was an old regular, square frame building with two stories. It was in bad shape, and, of course, as population declined, the need to, the means to keep it up had also declined.

DL: Did the population decline have to do with the mechanization of cotton?

GJ: Right.

[Interview was interrupted by phone call]

21:21

DL: How many farms were on this side of the river when y'all were farming? Who had the next farm down?

GJ: The Antees.

DL: Which Antee?

GJ: Edward Antee.

DL: Did he have about the same amount of land as y'all did, or less?

GJ: No, less.

DL: Then after that?

GJ: Chevalier, and they had a small place, Joseph Chevalier.

21:49

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DL: And how far down was Randolph Jones? The little store that they concreted up, wasn't that Randolph Jones' store? Isn't that what they called it?

GJ: Oh, you're talking about where Foster Campbell's place is now? No, that was his brother's, Bill Jones. Now, they had a large farm.

DL: That's what I had heard, and he was kin to Sonny?

GJ: Yes, they were first cousins, Randolph, and Bill, and Nolan.

DL: So, in terms of the big farms, that was y'all, and ... ?

GJ: And the Roques.

DL: Roque, yeah, that would make sense.

Gregory: I was going to say you skipped one.

DL: Yeah, I did, I went right past them. At the time you were growing up, the Roque House was still there, right? The one they moved downtown?

GJ: Yes.

22:47

DL: Was anyone living in it?

GJ: Yes, early on. There was no one living in it when they moved it, though?

DL: I don't think so.

GJ: I don't know, I don't remember when it became vacant.

DL: Who was living in it when you knew somebody living in it?

GJ: Somebody who was Charles Roque's grandma.

DL: Oh, okay, Charles Roque's grandma.

GJ: But I don't remember now.

DL: Okay, but someone was living in there? Yeah, I was interested, I've seen pictures of when they came down and moved it, and the whole process of putting it on the riverfront. It seems like it's kind of out of place down there, and it's not being used. Are they even using it at all?

GJ: No, nothing's going on now.

DL: That's what I thought. The last time I was in there, it wasn't being used.

Gregory: It'd been nice if they hadn't changed it up.

DL: Well, if they hadn't concreted part of it.

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Gregory: If they'd put the porch back. They had a porch that wrapped around the side. It wasn't built like it is now. The roof was different, and I remember the house, but I only remember the house empty, the first time I ever saw it, it was empty, must've been the late '60s.

DL: So they changed the roof line?

Gregory: Oh, yeah.

DL: I had never noticed, 'cause I never saw it in place.

Gregory: Bobby told them the posts were in the ground, and the roof covered the whole building, but they didn't do that. The posts were on sills, and it was up off the ground.

DL: And it had a porch?

Gregory: It had a porch that went around the sides. The roof kind of broke a little bit, but it wasn't a solid roof like it is now. He changed it a lot. I don't know why they did that. It was a neat house, a beautiful house.

24:37

DL: And who was living in Badin Roque?

GJ: Joe, Joseph...

Gregory: I can't remember Joe's name, Joe ...

DL: Was he the one ...?

GJ: He wasn't an Antee, Joe Roque. Joe and Zeline?

DL: The picture show two older ladies and him.

GJ: And him. I'll think about it after a while.

DL: Oswald told me that when he was growing up, and he used to go by that house, that he would look at them, and he thought they were the oldest people he'd ever seen.

GJ: And he had a brother that lived there too.

Gregory: Yeah, that's who I'm trying to think about, and I can't remember his name.

DL: Is that the one they called Choucroute?

GJ: Uh-uh. What was his name?

Gregory: I'm thinking they called Joe, Choucroute.

DL: I don't know. I know there was one who they called Choucroute. What is that, like sauerkraut, cabbage?

Gregory: Yeah, cabbage [sauerkraut; cabbage=chou].

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GJ: What, the one that lived at that house?

DL: At some point.

GJ: Well, I've always heard about Choucroute, but I never knew where it came from?

Gregory: It means cabbage, in French.

26:15

DL: After you had your kids, and you closed the store, then you kept on keeping the books for the farm?

GJ: I sure did.

DL: So, basically, that was your role.

GJ: Yes, and then even after my husband died and Emery took over, I still worked with him as long as he did row cropping, but he didn't really need me with just the cattle, because he knew those cows backwards. He can look at them, "That's Mary, that's Joe, and..." That's the way Sonny was. He could drive out there and tell you exactly how old that cow out there was, and where he got it from, and all that. I wasn't into all that, so I lost my job once they quit row cropping.

DL: So, your granddaughter took over your role, in a way.

GJ: Well, she took over her dad's role too after he got sick, but he's coming back pretty good now.

DL: I'm glad to hear it.

GJ: But she's done a marvelous job, and in addition to the acreage here she worked, he had just made arrangements to take Melrose, and so she honored the contract and for five years worked the whole pecan orchard, and then put cattle in there, too. That's why they rented it, to raise cattle. They didn't do any row cropping over there.

DL: Do they harvest the pecans?

GJ: Uh-huh, yeah. They did, I helped too, but very little; but they did that, yeah.

27:59

DL: Do you remember when Melrose went from a general plantation with, like cotton and corn to doing the pecans? Do you remember when they started?

GJ: Well, they always, it was always a pecan orchard. At one point, they were supposed to be the largest pecan orchard in the United States.

DL: Is that when the Henrys still had it?

GJ: Yes, it was Henrys in the '60s. That's the way they were advertised anyway.

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DL: I didn't realize that. In terms of the pecans, though, did y'all grow pecans over here, as a cash crop?

GJ: No; well, we sold a few, but we never did have the equipment to spray 'em and fertilize 'em, and all that. So, we, like, what good nature and the good Lord provided, and the people would pick 'em and sell 'em, and sometimes they'd give you some, and you'd sell your part.

DL: Are the Roques growing pecans now, or do they just process them for people?

GJ: They must have some trees. I've never really known, but they must have some back there, somewhere, and they process, and they pick.

29:39

DL: So, what did people do for entertainment? I know they had Wood's Hall. What did you guys do for entertainment?

GJ: We did household parties, clubs, card clubs, and then, of course, we always went to church for activities. We always had little dances of whatever. We had organizations that we would have parties for the holidays and stuff.

DL: How many halls do you remember besides Wood's Hall? Was there anymore on this side of the river?

GJ: No, I mean, when we had the store at one point, there was a room side of it that you'd had a jukebox, and pool table. People would gather in there, like on the weekend and stuff, but it was never like Wood's, no.

DL: I had heard that, I'm trying to think who told me that, the Roques had one called something like Blue Moon.

GJ: There was something called the Blue Moon. Where was that? It was on the Roque's place, yeah, I believe you're right.

DL: I just remember that name and I was wondering if the clientele, obviously Wood's Hall was kind of like restricted for Creole, but I was wondering if Blue Moon was, or if it was more for the people who worked on the farm.

GJ: I believe it was for the farmers, the plantation people, I believe now, don't quote me on that.

31:18

DL: I know that Bubbá's was more for the plantation people.

GJ: Bubbá's was for Melrose, period, and in the beginning, all the people that did not live on Melrose hardly went there; but later on, more people started going there.

DL: Well, Bubbá's, his mother, from what I understand, I was talking to Mr. Roge yesterday, and I think she, from what everybody tells me, she was the driving force, the brains behind that.

GJ: The whole operation.

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DL: That whole operation. Mr. Roge was funny; he said, "She was the only one with any sense."

GJ: Yeah, and then the daughter-in-law, Raymond's wife, was pretty good after the old lady died. She sort of kept them in line, a little bit. She was, I'm told that she was always in the place when they were shootin' and cuttin', and goin' on, she was always there.

DL: That's what I heard too, that she was in the thick of it, and that Raymond was the one with the gun, and Bubbá was the one with the knife.

Gregory: Lots of stories about them.

DL: I saw your picture over there, your Bubbá's picture over there.

GJ: I think she gave Sonny that one, and then he bought the other one.

DL: She's buried in the

GJ: In the mausoleum, yeah. She was a Catholic.

DL: Did she go to church there?

GJ: Occasionally.

DL: [laughs] When she went.

GJ: Ms. Kittie Roque, Charles' and Dan's mother, got her back into the church. Supposedly she'd been Catholic all the time, but she didn't go. So, in later years, Ms. Kittie got her to go back, and she came occasionally.

DL: She's quite the character. I actually got to meet her before she passed, just briefly, I mean, it was just before she passed.

GJ: She was a character alright, and she loved her bourbon. See that picture up there? I could've had mountains of 'em, because she wanted to trade her work for whatever she was buying off the shelf by charging. Never had any money. "Charge 'til I get my check," but when they'd get the check, they'd go to town, and don't come back here 'til they want some more credit. So, Sonny and I had the biggest argument we ever had in our married life. I said, "If you keep giving these people credit, I'm going to quit working in this store, because when the salesman comes to pick up their money, I don't have any money, and I can't give 'em this trash!" And that is what I would call it, so I blame myself for not having a lot more of her work.

24:42

DL: So, everybody when you were growing up, every big farm had a store, and entertainment, some sort of entertainment, like you were talking about the little room, a gathering place, I guess what I'm trying to say, and when you had parties, who played the music?

GJ: Just a jukebox.

DL: Just a jukebox? There wasn't anybody playing music? I mean, I know Yuke and Dumah were down ...

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GJ: Oh, yeah, they played for our private parties, but not in the store. As much as I can remember, it was just a jukebox.

DL: Wood's and the places you would go to, they'd have music?

GJ: I never was in Wood's.

DL: You were never in Wood's?

GJ: I was never in Bubbá's, I was never in Wood's.

DL: I can't imagine you in Bubbá's, I wouldn't put you in Bubbá's!

Gregory: What about the one across the river, the big one next to Ms. Bernie—the other dance hall?

DL: Was it Kirkland's?

Gregory: Kirkland's.

GJ: Oh, Kirkland's, I did go to Kirkland's. My mother let me go a couple of times. Of course she went too, and even after I was dating Sonny, the only time I got to go was the time she went with me.

DL: So, she actually went with you to chaperone?

GJ: Yes.

DL: Why did she let you go, was it a special event, or she was just in the mood?

GJ: I think when Fats Domino played. Fats Domino played there and we all knew about it, and everything. It was wonderful, the first time I ever went, and another time or two, but I don't remember the bands, but all my friends were going, and I guess, like I said, I was dating Sonny, and we went.

DL: Wow, Fats Domino, I had no idea he came up here to play.

GJ: Yes he did, and more than once, too.

Gregory: That was a huge dance hall, it was big.

DL: I remember seeing it before it fell down.

Gregory: I wish I had taken more pictures.

DL: I never took a picture of it either. It was just a place on the river, and all of a sudden it fell down; just kind of imploded.

37:10

DL: I'm interested, in the other side over by Ms. Bernadine's, there's two or three little bitty, like, cabin houses that are still standing, and there's still one person living in at least one, and they're old.

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GJ: Two ladies.

DL: I've only seen men, like two old black men, but there may be two old ladies in there.

GJ: There's two ladies in the one that's sitting near the road, and the one in the curve that is absolutely fallin' down, that's their brother, and he refuses to come out of there. He refuses to have any kind of help. People have brought bedding and mattress and stuff to him, and he says, "Take that away, I don't want it," and if you may pass there right now, he's sitting on that front porch. Now the one coming, the next house coming this way, is his two sisters. Sister Ida Marie began a mission here we still have. We fixed the house and it's quite comfortable inside.

DL: Is that the one that has the old mangle on the front porch? One of them has an old mangle, like a washer, wringer washer.

GJ: No, you're further down. You're on this side of what was the hall; this is still on the other side.

DL: Who has those two little houses, the ones that sit back? The one that has the mangle, and the one next to it? They're teeny tiny, they look like they may be one room.

Gregory: One of those belongs to Thomas, but he bought it off, it's one of the tenant houses from Melrose. I don't know if he moved it there, or it was already there. He started rebuilding it, working on it.

GJ: Y'all have lost me. I'm not picturing it.

DL: It's to, if you're looking at Ms. Bernie's house, it'd be to the left, and kind of set back

GJ: On the riverbank?

DL: No, on her side.

Gregory: It's on the right of her house, it's just behind her house, kind of back in that field.

GJ: Yes.

Gregory: Thomas was working on it for a while, but I don't know if he moved it or it was already back there. He bought it.

GJ: He bought it, I think, and put it back there.

Gregory: Because he worked on for about a couple of years and then he got burnt out. He goes and hammers on it every once in a while.

39:55

DL: Do you remember the old associations that they used to have? They were more black, but Ms. Lair was telling me time, and then I was reading in one of those interviews you did with, I think it was Ms. Myra, about these associations, and they would parade, they would all dress in white, and go along the riverbank, parade from one, like there was an association hall or something like that, over near Badin Roque. You remember that?

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GJ: No, I don't know anything about that.

Gregory: She'd be too young for that. Ms. Myra told me about it. She called it the Mosaic Hall, and they'd do these processions, dress in white, and I never was too clear as to who was doing it.

DL: And where they ended up.

Gregory: And where they went.

DL: Because I know they either started or ended at the hall, which I don't know where the hall was, they just said over by Badin Roque somewhere, but it was on the riverbank.

Gregory: Yeah, I couldn't ever figure out where the hall was.

GJ: Well, I've heard that name, but I don't know anything about it.

Gregory: She was the only one told me about, Ms. Myra got to telling me about it.

DL: Well, I had seen it in your interview with Ms. Myra, but it was Ms. Lair who told me about it, 'cause she said she was at Badin Roque as a child, and saw this procession go by, and I was just wondering ...

GJ: I wonder who was in the procession.

DL: I think it was African Americans. I think it was people who worked on the plantation, and probably, I would assume, a Protestant church.

GJ: Because what I remember about the associations, which the people called it, was they had a yearly gathering, the Baptists did, and they called it an association, and they would gather, and I don't know what exactly they did all the time at the place. I know we didn't go.

42:00

DL: Where did the people go that worked on your farm, where did they go to church? Most of them were Protestant, weren't they?

GJ: All of ours were Catholic. Ours were Catholic Creoles.

DL: So all the people who worked on your farm were Creole people?

GJ: Yes, sure was.

Gregory: Rodney Meziere asked me one time, were Creoles ever sharecroppers. I said you better go home and ask somebody!

GJ: His daddy was a sharecropper.

Gregory: That's right. He was a little chastised for that.

DL: Yeah, I mean, when we were doing that project, when we down and talked to Judy and Mickey Moran at the same time, and Vera Severin—during that project, Mickey Moran was telling me about when he was growing up, his momma said you can go see the people on Cat Island Road, but you can't associate with them because those are the people that don't have

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anything. So, in other words, there was a class distinction.

GJ: A clique. Yes, I really didn't know anybody that lived in Cloutierville or Derry before I came to live here, 'cause I lived—well, you know where my mama lived, and before that we were all the way up the road at Bermuda. Well, we would come to school here, and come down here to Mass every Sunday, but we stayed within our clique, and then it was, I guess after '60s, '70s, the boys started going to Cloutierville and bringing those pretty girls back. Betty Coutee's family lived on our place when I was first married, and her family moved to Cloutierville, and she knows everybody down there, and every once and awhile, we'll get to talking, and "So, you know so and so," and I say um-hmm. [laughter]

44:28

DL: Don't have a clue ... So that was just like a foreign land?

GJ: It was. They had different ideas, and their way of life was different. They always had, from what I can understand, clubs down there, and dances or whatever.

DL: I was talking to Mr. Roge yesterday. He and his wife started naming all these clubs, and dance halls, and places, and I was just kind of astounded, and there was the White Elephant, there was the Red, White, and Blue Club, and there was the, you know, there was a the Brown Derby.

GJ: Yeah, I remember where the Brown Derby was, actually, on the other side of the road, past Vera down there. I remember there was a Green Derby and a Brown Derby.

DL: I knew about the Green Derby, that was kind of close to Magnolia?

GJ: Yes, that's the one I'm thinking about.

Gregory: The Brown Derby was, according to what Terrell told us, was back up towards, back up this way.

DL: No, the Brown Derby, according to Mr. Roge, now there may have been more than one, but the one they were talking about was on Hwy. 1, [495] just outside Cloutierville.

Gregory: No, that's a different one. There was one up here too. There was a Green one and a Brown one, because I remember trying to get them straight on that map, you know, on that thing I did for the Park Service. I'm not sure I ever got it straight.

DL: From what I understand, the Green Derby was over close to that St. James A.M.E. Church that fell off the block; remember, there's a picture of it, I never saw it.

Gregory: Closer to Vera's.

GJ: Green Derby was where that big cabin, camp, in that area.

DL: Yeah, yeah, I know what you're talking about.

GJ: What I can picture, remember hearing about, 'cause again, we didn't go down that way. I didn't know anybody that lived that way.

45:28

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DL: Did you ever go into Natchitoches when you were growing up? Was there a reason to go into town?

GJ: Oh, yes, we would go buy clothes and shoes; I was hard on shoes. My mama always had me dragging Front Street from one end to the other to find clothes and shoes.

DL: So they didn't bring, like, clothes and shoes, and things out to these stores?

GJ: No. We did ... not shoes, but some clothes. I invested in work clothes, more or less, and I had some clothes there for a while till they all started moving away, and then I said it's no use in buying the stuff and putting it in.

DL: Was that a pretty sudden thing?

GJ: It was gradual, one at a time.

DL: Just started moving off.

GJ: Yes.

Gregory: Were the contracts between y'all ... just for ...?

GJ: Yes.

DL: And as you built up your equipment ...

GJ: Well, first of all, the young people started leaving because they didn't want to do the hard work on the farm, and it was, like, if you had five or six children, that wasn't enough to keep five or six adults going, you know, so they would go off. Somebody would have gone already to Houston, or Chicago, or somewhere, and then they would follow on, and so that made the household smaller. So the next step was that they turned to day labor, and the men drove the tractors, and then the women picked the cotton, as long as we did handpicking, and eventually we got the cotton picker.

DL: So you just needed a few people to run the equipment.

GJ: Right.

DL: I bet that was kind of sad in a way.

GJ: It was, it took a while to get adjusted to it, and we went through some very trying times. The economy hit bottom two or three times over our lifetime, and cotton, if you made a good crop, you got a rainy spell before you got it in, and the value of it went down, or it rained in the spring and you didn't get it in until late, you know. There was so many hitches, which is why, when we closed the store, the next year, we had high water, and lost a lot of the cattle, and everything, lost the use of the pastures, so I went to work in town, that was to help, but we always made it through, don't regret a minute of it, but it wasn't easy with a house full of children.

DL: Was flooding a common ... ?

GJ: Flooding was almost a yearly thing for a while. Until they built 49, we were still having

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floods. We had to watch it closely and get the cattle out of there right away, on this side of the river, which is why Emery wanted to have Melrose, so that he would have a place to take the cattle from over here.

DL: So it doesn't flood as bad on that side?

GJ: It doesn't flood over there.

DL: I didn't realize. It must be lower over here.

Gregory: It is, toward the hills it gets lower and lower, then it goes straight up.

DL: Yeah, I was going to say it would seem to be the opposite.

GJ: So, it was like we were sort of a hole, but since they did 49 ...

Gregory: The water stays between the highway and the hills.

DL: Is it because of all those borrow pits they dug that's a big swamp now?

Gregory: Like a big levee.

DL: And also, it seems like if they hauled out all that dirt to build up that road, and yeah, I guess it would go down into those, whatever they are now, those little lake things. I didn't realize flooding was that common since Cane River was not flowing, you know, like it wasn't attached to Red River or anything. I didn't know it flooded that much.

GJ: Actually, Cane River flooded in '45, and since that, Cane River has not flooded, come out of the banks, let's call it.

Gregory: What you're dealing with is back water, coming out of those creeks.

GJ: Yeah, and the Old River. The Old River comes down through here.

Gregory: When they fill up, it fills up all that back swamp area.

DL: Any big tornadoes come through here?

GJ: Yes, we've had minor things gone, barn roofs coming off, and things like that. I can't remember having a home destroyed.

51:50

DL: Oswald was telling me that when they had Montrose running, the sawmill, that there were people living on Bayou Brevelle, do you remember that? Did y'all have people living on your back land, facing Bayou Brevelle?

GJ: Yes, I don't remember, but they were not on our land, but they would have to cross our land to get to it. It must have been somebody, I don't know, the Chevaliers or the Antees, but, yeah, I remember him talking about it, but I was never down there.

DL: Oswald said that, I guess his dad worked down at the sawmill, and they actually had a house that faced Bayou Brevelle, but it was on the back end of their land, you know, the land that

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they have up here, and there were several families that did that, and when Montrose closed, they all moved here.

GJ: I wasn't aware of that, like I said, I was up north.

52:51

DL: Was there cotton gins on the river? Who had gins?

GJ: Oh, yes. Melrose had a gin, Jones' had a gin. There was a gin at Bermuda, and, well, at the one I was talking about previously, and then there was another up by Oakland, all right in there.

DL: Where did y'all take your stuff? Down to Jones'?

GJ: I guess so, I can't remember. Well, I think sometimes it would go up to Melrose, because Melrose did gin for others, not just for themselves. Yeah, I could look in those books and tell you.

DL: Oh, those books are treasures.

GJ: I thought about doing away with them, but I said...

DL: Oh, no, that's your family history and it's a regional history, too.

Gregory: People come to the Creole Center now, and they want to know where they were, especially a lot of these people who were sharecroppers, their children are coming back, looking for where they lived on the river, and it's hard to tell 'em, because if you got, if you get lucky, you've got, like Dustin found a lot of the receipt books where Mr. Matt was paying the lights on the cabins. So he's got names for each family, that's pretty interesting, found them tucked away in the store stuff.

DL: It was from when they electrified the cabins, and the electrician's name was Longino. Charlie Longino.

GJ: Oh, yeah, Charlie Longino.

DL: And all his records were down there, when he came in and hooked them up to the lights, and he had all their names.

54:51

GJ: I remember we were up the road from Bermuda when electricity came in, it was '37; I was seven years old, I remember that, and we were in this big house, and the lights, they wired our house.

DL: I bet that was kind of exciting.

GJ: Oh, yeah. You just had that little lamp going room to room.

DL: When did they get a water service?

GJ: Oh, that was just yesterday! [laughs]

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DL: I know, it seems like someone told me it was almost in the '70s, around the '70s?

GJ: Yes, late '70s too.

DL: And up until then, y'all had to do everything with cistern water and lake water.

GJ: Yes. We had the lake water pumped to the bathroom, and had a tank in the back for drinking and the kitchen. Like I say, that was just yesterday.

DL: I bet that made your life a lot easier.

GJ: Yes, indeed.

DL: And what happened if you had a bad rain year? Were you just out of luck, in terms of your cistern water?

GJ: If there was no rain? Well, when people had the cisterns, a lot of times they would burst. I remember, even when I was here, we were trying to use it, and we had no ice. We put the bottle of milk down there to keep it cool, and busted the jar in there, and that whole cistern had to be drained out. Yeah, I remember that, but, now, when we had the tank we never ran out, after they put that tank in there.

Gregory: Did they ever have wooden cisterns down here, Glo? Or always had the metal ones?

GJ: No, they were brick, cement.

Gregory: The ones in the ground?

GJ: Yes, but a lot of people had the metal tanks, up above.

Gregory: That's what we had when I was a kid.

GJ: Yes, we had a platform, and it sat up on there.

DL: But never like the cypress ones, the wooden ones.

GJ: Not that I know of.

Gregory: they look like big barrels.

DL: They do look like big barrels. My grandmother used to call them rain barrels.

Gregory: They were regular water tanks, built out of cypress with bands around it.

GJ: I know what you're talking about.

Gregory: The first ones I remember seeing was over there at home. We couldn't put a cistern in the ground, because the water table was too high, you couldn't dig a hole in it.

DL: Yeah, in New Orleans too. You see them all above ground.

Gregory: Everything was above the ground, and I remember cleaning them out, cleaning out the

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big tanks, dump ‘em and clean ‘em, and in low water, you just did without.

DL: Well, they were telling me yesterday, that they had somebody in Cloutierville who got real enterprising, and they would go, they had a big water tank on the back of their truck, and when the cisterns went low, or when there was no rain, since the cisterns went out, that this, whoever, would go to Boyce, and fill up his tank, and sell the water.

GJ: Really? I didn’t know that. I knew, and a lot of people still do, go to the hills.

58:18

DL: That Kisatchie water?

Gregory: Don and Sue go out there. They go out there, that spring close to Longleaf, they get their water out of that spring. Yeah, Don goes with his milk jugs.

GJ: Don who?

Gregory: Hatley. Don and Sue go out there and get water all the time. He’s always done it.

DL: Its good water.

GJ: Oh, yes, it’s good, but I just couldn’t handle that going with a whole heap of those jugs or a big thing

DL: And it’s kind of a trek, I mean it’s not just right by the parking lot. You got to go back in there, and hike a little bit to get to that spring.

GJ: Ernest Lemelle used to go too with a truck and fill that whole bed of that truck up with jars and stuff.

DL: Well, I can’t think of anything else to ask you. I think you pretty much answered all my questions. I think that it’s interesting that your granddaughter is now, going to be the one, sounds like to me, going to be the one to take over the farm.

GJ: Well, so far, that’s what has happened. I can’t speak for her, but right now she’s in Texas, learning how to ride. Whatever it is, it’s not riding to herd cattle, she knows how to do that. She told me the name of the thing.

DL: Some competitive?

GJ: Yeah, she’s going to be in competition in April. So she goes over there and learns what she’s supposed to do or whatever.

[general conversation]

01:01

Gregory: I thought Glo was going to tell you about ringing the bell. She told me about ringing the bells.

GJ: My grandkids?

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Gregory: No, you told me about ringing the bell, 'cause I asked you about the bells and you told me you rang the bell sometimes when your daddy had that place up ...

GJ: Oh, yes, to call the hands in. That was a pretty large place—the houses were down that road.

DL: Was that your dad's place?

GJ: That's where he was working [Cockfield Plantation]. And the houses were along 119. There were a lot of houses along there, too. It was a large plantation.

Gregory: They finally found the bell out at Melrose. It was up under the house. Somebody tucked it up there behind the house. I said, "There's gotta be a bell here somewhere."

01:02

GJ: At Melrose? Yes, they had bells over there ...

Gregory: People were scattered out—they were out in the fields and they had to call them. I asked Glo about the bells and she said she remembered ringing the bell when she was a little girl.

GJ: When I was a little girl I remember going with my dad into the fields at night, when they would poison the cotton. They would have to go out after dark because they didn't have a tractor, you know, on the place then. And one would be driving and one would be turning the thing—you know, it was a hand crank ...

DL: You mean, it was like a powder?

GJ: Yeah.

Gregory: The first time I saw them do that, Glo, somebody went down the rows on a mule and they shook it out of sacks.

GJ: Yes.

Gregory: Each side of the mule. It's a wonder everybody didn't die! Maybe a lot of people did die.

GJ: And didn't know what killed them. I have a lung condition now and I do believe that it all stems back to that because they say that's from living in the country.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Henry Kennedy (Cherokee Plantation)

Interviewed November 7, 2014 by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 01:14:30
Transcribed 1/21/2015 [DL]
[Signed consent form & photos]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00:00

DL: Can you tell me a little bit about your personal history? Where were you born?

HK: I was born in Fisher, LA.

DL: Fisher, the sawmill town; that's a nice little town.

HK: Yes, 1930.

DL: Is that right? Did your dad work for the sawmill?

HK: My day, my grandfather, and my uncles did, yeah, yeah, and I stay there til ... 1955, and I left there and went to Houston and worked for the university, Rice University ...

DL: Uh-huh.

00:00:39

HK: ... and I retired from there 1984, and then I came back – I wasn't intending to do anything else but fish when I get [out of] the big city ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: ... and I met Gladys Stephens and she worked for Miss Theodosia Nolan ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: ... the plantation here – and she says, uh, “Miss Theodosia needs someone to take care of her place” ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: ... and she say, “You want to do it?” and I say, “Let me look at it.” And she called Miss Nolan from El Dorado, AR ...

DL: Uh-huh.

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HK: ... and she said, "Let me talk to you." And I talked to her, and she say, "Well, I came, I'll come down, me and my husband, and our friend, on a Wednesday." And I forget what – it had to be in around May – and she looked at me, she told me, she talked to me, she say, "You like planting, flowers, sir?" I say, "Yes." "It's a big place, Henry." I say, "Yeah, I just looking at it." She give me the keys.

00:01:48

DL: Good deal.

HK: And she say, "I want you to work right in this yard ... three days a week." I said, "Alright," and six month later, she say, "Henry, what all you want, many hours you want, the place looking good." And I start all my stuff. We need to go up to the Big House ...

DL: Okay.

HK: ... and I'll show you.

DL: Okay.

00:02:14

HK: It, it's wood all out there, old pecan trees on the fence line, and I got a gentleman named Anania [An-nuh-nay'-uh] Clark, he was the mayor at Natchez then, he started helping me, and we start a-workin', workin', workin' a little bit at a time til we got most of that cleaned off to up there around the barns, and she came back again and say, "Henry, you need some help?," and I think and I say, "Well, Anania helping a little bit," and she say, "No, you need someone else." And a young man, work here, now he was going to high school, up to Central High School, and I asked him. He come here after high, after school and he helped, he helped. When he finished high school, he say, "I need a, a full-time job." And I say, "You got one." [chuckles] And he been with me 20, 25 years.

00:03:18

DL: My goodness.

HK: Yeah. I been here 30. And we clean off a lot, we did lots ... all this out here, ain't nothing but woods off behind this fence line and down here at the camp. We clean all this off – took us two or three year – and we got, ... now you can look out there and see, we got beds, small beds and a big bed back there.

DL: Wow.

HK: Yep, now, what you see now is what we did.

DL: Uh-huh. What, so when you started working, was it kind of overgrown?

HK: Oh, yeah.

DL: It was?

HK: Yeah, she just, uh, she bought it I think, they said she purchased it about 1975, I believe, or '74.

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DL: Uh-huh.

00:04:11

HK: And then she started doing renovating, like this now [indicates the interior camp house], and then she – the four big trees you see up there, they were built [planted] when the plantation was built.

DL: Oh, okay.

HK: But then she planted eight more back in '75 ...

DL: Okay.

HK: And that's where it started.

DL: So, how many acres is the complex altogether?

HK: Well, let's see, ... we talking about that, we had some gentlemen here with the [inaudible] tour, how many, how much land we had with the four houses we got out here ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: I think around, must be round about five, close to five hundred and something acres.

DL: Is that right?

HK: Yeah.

DL: And did she, uh, did she have crops? I mean, did they farm any of that land?

HK: Well, since she own it, no, she, they leased it out.

DL: Leased it out?

HK: To a gentleman named Danny Methvin [?] – he right around ...

DL: Who was that, I'm sorry?

HK: Danny Methvin [?]. He live around, I mean all his farmland around, I mean his farm equipment across Pratt, the bridge there.

DL: Uh-huh, okay.

00:05:32

HK: And they been, she been leasing out to him ever since she been here.

DL: What does he plant?

HK: He plant, ... so far he plant corn, one year, and then on some of the property, he plant soybeans one year.

DL: Uh-huh.

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HK: And he vice-verse it.

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: He used to plant cotton, too, but he say cotton got too expensive.

DL: It's hard, ... you have to put so much poison on it.

HK: Yeah, that's what he said. It's expensive, keep the boll weevil and all that stuff out of it.

DL: Uh-huh, exactly.

HK: I'm glad ... he did ... stop planting cotton, 'cause, you know, when they get on those tractor, they high bar [?] it, they start spring, she always told me, "Henry, you go inside because I don't know what's in there."

DL: That's right.

HK: That's what I would do, but you know, the soybean, the stuff they put on the soybean, it not as bad as the cotton. I guess that's why I'm here so long. [chuckles]

DL: Right, exactly, and it's good – that crop rotation – soybean, corn – is a good rotation.

HK: Right, and it also, uh, you see hummingbird back ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: Butterfly came back; ... before, when they planting cotton out here, it kilt all that.

DL: Yeah.

HK: But now I step on the porch up there, here come a hummingbird; I look outside, I see, uh, you know, pretty, pretty butterflies coming back there.

DL: Uh-huh.

00:07:08

HK: That's real nice.

DL: Yeah, it's kind of brought the wildlife back.

HK: Yeah, it brought it right back.

DL: That's good.

HK: It also, and sometimes, now the birds, the quails and stuff, they be back, but doing all that poison, unhh!

DL: Yeah, it pretty much, ... it's indiscriminate. It takes out everything.

HK: Yep, because, you know, during that time when they was planting cotton, they ... they do all that dusting with the plane, ... and that stuff go everywhere.

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DL: Uh-huh, it broadcasts everywhere ...

HK: Yeah, because her first cousin, she's dead now, down here ... Pratt Bridge, that was, that's, name of, from her daddy, and she, beautiful house down there, she, her husband, he had heart trouble, before he die, and they come that spring and she be hollering at 'em 'cause that stuff, it sit on her pool and he go out there and try to swim, you could see it all in the pool. And she get on the phone and call up to Northwestern and tell 'em, "Stop spraying down here." And I'm glad they did.

DL: Yeah, uh, when I used to live over at Miss Lambre's place, they had cotton all the way up to our house ...

HK: Oh, yeah.

DL: ... and it used to just scare me to death because I had kids, and I'd hear them coming and pull the kids in ...

HK: You had to!

DL: Yeah, that's scary stuff.

HK: Uh-huh, but I had a wonderful time ... I enjoy it. I guess that's why I'm still here, 'cause I like what I do.

00:08:42

HK: And also, ... Miss Theodosia ... I, you know, I told my wife, I said, "I didn't want to come back to Houston," I said, "but you did," I said, "and I kept on debating with myself whether to follow you back or stay in Houston" – and I guess the good Lord told me to come on back, because I met , ... I don't know how I describe Miss Nolan, ... I will say she's ... uh ... a ... a nun or something, because, you know, every time I think about [her] I get tears, ... she just died in June ... and ... I would get sick and she would get up and get on her plane and fly down to the hospital to see me ...

DL: Uh-huh.

00:09:39

HK: ... and I'd get up and ... I'd get sick again, she come down here and bring me soup and stuff, and I never met ... a lady that's ... a person before like her ...

DL: Compassionate ...

HK: Oh, Lord, yes, and I tell my wife, I keep her picture in my purse now, and ... for 30 year I should to talk to her once a week or four time a week ... I miss that now.

DL: Oh, I bet ...

HK: I miss that ... she were, I'd get back to what, and she'd tell me call all of them in, up to the Big House, and we'd gather around in the living room and hold hands and she'd pray just like my grandmother.

DL: Is that right?

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HK: Yeah, to all of us, ... and it's hard, it's really hard ...

DL: Uh-huh. Well, who did the house pass, I mean the property, pass to?

00:10:53

HK: Uh, well, the son, the oldest son now, and her granddaughter, her daughter in New Orleans – well, I told you where she lives – she, Tia, she's a business lady – she got houses everywhere – [inaudible], Florida, down the coast in, past, what you call it?

DL: Pascagoula?

HK: No, where they got that Katrina at, ...

DL: Bay St. Louis?

HK: Yeah, like when you said, Katrina came through, they had a big house, I guess it was 15 rooms down there on the coast, and she had some condos down there that she had bought from some oil company in New Orleans, and all the hurricane that came through there, they had shutters, automatic, come down, and the wind blow that house off of, when Katrina came, it tore all of it, all the way across old 90 ... tore it up.

DL: Yeah, I was interviewing a Choctaw gentleman from over there, from Bay St. Louis, and he told me, ... he was rebuilding his house and it was so high ...

HK: Yeah.

DL: ... it was like 30 feet up before the house started and I said, "Well, Mr. Hugo, that's quite a climb up there, isn't it?" and he said, "Yeah, but when Katrina came, the wave was 22 feet high." And he said it just wiped out his house. His house had 16 foot piers before, and he said it just wiped it out.

HK: They had a, a brother who owned, uh, the old home, owned Murphy Oil Co., her brother had a compound down on the coast around close to that Baptist Convention Center there, ... when you come across the bridge? ... [Pearl River bridge]

DL: Right, right ...

HK: ... all the kids go during the summer time ... you go through that compound back there ... her brother, her two sisters, and niece all had big houses ... it just, it didn't leave nothing but the, just the concrete foundations. And what she did, she told 'em, 'bout four years ago she told 'em, "I'm not going to build here; I'm not going to build back." "Aw, come on." "No, I'm not gonna build. I'm gonna give y'all each part, some land for y'all to do what y'all want with, but the girl [Tia], she built a big house – big as the one that washed away. But, she just visit.

Her granddaughter, she left for her granddaughter to take care of the tour.

00:13:55

DL: Oh, okay.

HK: And she live in Nebraska.

DL: Okay.

HK: And she come down here two or three times a year, and during the tour, just was last month, and she take care of that, but her son take care of the rest of it.

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DL: Where does he live?

HK: He live in El Dorado.

DL: Oh, he's in El Dorado where she was?

HK: Yeah, uh-huh. He take care of all the business. But, uh, she was nice to me.

DL: Uh-huh, sounds like it.

HK: Oh, boy, and I tell my wife, "You know, the Good Lord move me – he move me to come back here and to meet her." Yeah, he really did.

00:14:37

DL: Absolutely. So you said you have, there's four houses on the property? So, there's this one and the camp house and the Big House - and what's the other one?

HK: This the camp house here, and we got the tour house when you first came in the gate ...

DL: Oh, okay, that's the one I used to call the camp house ...

HK: Oh, okay ...

DL: Just because that's what it looks like ...

HK: It was built, I think, when they built the Big House.

DL: Okay.

HK: But this here part, this wasn't here. This [living area], the kitchen, and she added on this [expanded living area] and all that back there [bedrooms] ...

DL: Okay.

HK: Twenty years ago; but then she's got, it's called Gladys' House – Gladys Stephens, the one that told me about Theodosia – she was living in that house over there ...

DL: Okay, so there's another house over here ...

HK: The brick house ...

DL: Oh, okay, I saw that.

HK: And, uh, Gladys, ... we still call it Gladys Stephens' house, but we just ... rent it out to a gentleman.

DL: And then the Big House, and is there, what kind of outbuildings, like the barn ...

HK: We got one, two – we got three barns, and a place we keep the golf cart and stuff, well, like I said, four barns up there, ... and got one slave house back there.

DL: Is that right? There's still one cabin?

HK: Yeah, uh-huh. And, uh, and she had, I think it was around 20-something slaves' houses but they tore all the rest of 'em down. They left one for the people that, the tourists, so they can see how people lived back during the slave times.

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DL: Sure. So, she didn't own it during like sharecropping times, that kind of stuff; ... I'm kind of curious ...

00:16:30

HK: Uh, her auntie on her – I'll show you the picture of him who built the house – she the one did the sharecropping back then.

DL: Okay.

HK: I forgot her name now, but they all buried up there. You been to the funeral, I mean to the graveyard, ... all of 'em ... on Fish Hatchery Road back there?

DL: On Fish Hatchery Road, okay, no.

HK: They got a graveyard back there.

DL: Okay, I know where it is.

HK: Where all those people ... who get this house ... they up there.

DL: Okay.

00:17:00

DL: So this has basically been a working plantation all the way through?

HK: Yes'm, yeah, well, but you know, the young ones, they leased it; but back then, it was a working plantation, 'cause there's some part up there at the barn you can see some people picked so many sack of corn or peas or such, they got it wrote down on the, on it ...

DL: Is that right?

HK: I look up there some time now.

DL: [chuckle] I bet. So they would, uh, tally their production ...

HK: That's right.

DL: Wow.

HK: You know, I think - what the lady's name? – she, ... we had a tree to fall down up there during Katrina and tore up our air condition and when it uproot it and people from the park service, you could see a lot of clay up under there and they want to come look, see if there was artifacts in there or something, but there wasn't. But, every time we dig or something, you can run into some wells and stuff down there.

00:18:24

DL: I bet.

HK: We covered up one up there in the yard with concrete – we scared the kids fall off in it. It's some amazing things went on here.

DL: Uh-huh. Do you know when, about when, the plantation was built?

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HK: I think 1830, I think up to 1836 it says on the sign up there, but we'll go up there and we'll pull some stuff out or something and you can look at it.

DL: Okay.

HK: It'll tell you about when it was built there ...

DL: Okay.

HK: When Miss Nolan bought it ..

DL: Okay.

HK: ... and the house up there, you'll see how the house was when she purchased it, because, you see it was, her cousin had it ...

DL: Okay.

HK: ... had it then, and she sold it to Miss Theodosia. Her cousin live down in Lafayette now, she got a sporting goods store, her son has.

DL: Okay.

HK: She up in age, too, because Miss Nolan passed this year – she was 96.

DL: My goodness.

HK: Yep. I tell you, I, I used to come down here in the morning and her, Miss Nolan, her husband, and her friend – she had two friends that she carried with her all the time. Mr. Harris was her decorator and Miss Theodosia [her other friend, Mrs. Winter], she had hair like your hair but she had it balled up ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: ... and for years and years after they get all this, and one day she called me in there, she say, "Henry, come here." I said, "Okay," and I walked back there and she had took that ball off and her hair was down here [indicates lower waist] – she scared me to death!

DL: [laughs]

00:20:13

HK: I never had seen it all those years – I always see her hair balled up.

DL: Sure, uh-huh.

HK: I tell you, she frightened me then!

DL: [laughs]

HK: And she would go to, uh, her husband was a, she was – her husband was a tennis player...

DL: Oh, okay.

HK: In college – that's when they met, and he played real good – he went to, he played at, every year they would go and he'd be invited to play tennis in New York – what they call it?

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DL: Oh, with the Open - the US Open?

HK: US Open, yeah; and after he passed, she kept going 'cause she had tickets, I mean, for her seat there.

DL: Sure.

HK: Yeah, she had some good friends, yeah, she really did.

DL: And the decorator helped her put it back, kind of together?

HK: Oh, yeah, also in New Orleans – he'd do a lot of work down there.

DL: Uh-huh.

00:21:18

HK: His name's Mr. Harris, yep ...

DL: Okay.

HK: He's a good man. We were down there once on the coastline, [chuckles] it's funny – me, my wife – she still works here, too ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: We went down there – he was gonna do some decorating down there – we went to a place – I can't recall its name – it was right up on old 90 there – to eat and Mr. Harris – I'm sitting here, and Mr. Harris is there, and my wife and Miss Nolan was over here, and Miss, uh, her friend – I recalled her name a while ago -

00:22:01

HK: Mm-hmm ... well, I called her name just a few minutes ago to you ...

DL: Uh, let's see ... not Gladys Stephens?

HK: No. Miss ... I was talking about the lady with the hair ...

DL: Right, right, I didn't write her name down [HK did not name the friend]

HK: Uh, Miss Winter – she was sitting here ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: ... and Mr. Harris kept looking at the people at the next table, well, they got up and Mr. Harris got up [chuckle] and she said, "What are you doing?" and he said, "Get that tomato." Them people didn't eat their tomatoes!

DL: [laughs]

HK: She said, "Aw, Harris, you oughtta be ashamed!" He said, "They're good!"

DL: [laughs]

HK: "They hadn't been cut on or anything!"

00:23:03

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DL: [laughs]

HK: Yeah, yeah, it was funny. I had some good times with those people.

DL: Well, it sounds like, uh, she pretty much treated you like family.

HK: Aw, I was family. I don't care if they have something, I'm included. Down there at Melrose right now, they built a chair down there for her son, Bill, they had a chair for Bill. He died about three or four years ago, the young one, and then they put a , they built a chair for Miss Theodosia, too, and I'm just like one ... I go there, they took pictures of [us] sitting together, yeah, yeah ... the grandkids, I love 'em all. They fine kids, yeah.

DL: Uh-huh, sounds like it.

HK: Yeah.

00:23:55

DL: You and your wife – I met your one son – how many kids did y'all have?

HK: Well, I don't have any kids by my wife I have now, all the kids I have are from my second wife.

DL: Okay.

HK: I have three boys and one girl, and by my wife, I got one girl, she ain't used to ... she went to Rice University because they said if you work there and your daughter got a B, A+ or B, you got a free scholarship.

DL: Good – that's a good school.

HK: And that's what they did, four years, she went there four years.

DL: That is a great deal.

HK: She done great down there.

DL: Good. So your son works here, and is he the only one who works with you?

HK: Yeah. The one I was telling you about – Jerry – has been with me ever since he got out of high school. He's still with us.

DL: Okay, so you have how many on your crew now?

00:24:55

HK: It's just two plus myself, and got one part-time.

DL: Okay.

HK: He live in Many – he come down here every evening after he gets off. He work for the school board, but he like something to do and he's, uh, he just, he's a wonderful gentleman.

DL: So how much, how much area do y'all take care of?

HK: All of it.

DL: Okay, but all, not the leased part.

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HK: Everything you see on the, that need to be mowed. We take care of everything fenced in.

DL: Okay, so everything within the fence.

HK: Yes, the house over there, the Gladys. We do all of it, and sometimes James, he do some work inside if we need it, and he's built, he helped build ... there's enough to go around.

DL: Uh-huh, sounds like it.

00:25:51

DL: Does the family ever come and stay here?

HK: Oh, Miss Nolan ...

DL: She did?

HK: Oh, yes, she'd come at least ... when she could get around, she'd fly down here – she always called me – she come at least twice a month. When she don't feel good, she may call me and come once a month. Then she come stay two or three days and go back.

DL: Did she stay in this house or the Big House?

HK: No, she used to stay in the Big House 'til her husband passed.

DL: Okay.

HK: After he passed, she came down here. She stayed back there. Sometimes the grandson may be up here with her, sometimes she'd stay by herself, but we got the lawn [?] on the big place ... and Jerry live right across the river, I live right in town, and we got the gentleman who rent the house here – he right over there all the time. She confident staying by herself.

DL: Oh, yeah, I'm sure, and this is a pretty safe place

00:26:52

HK: Yes, and uh, like I said, when she, during her, in her 80s, I used to come down here and she said, "Come on, let's walk up to the house, the Big House, Henry." And I said, "Okay" – some things she want to show me. She'd pull, she walk, she liked to walk barefeet.

DL: [chuckles]

HK: And I said, "Miss Nolan," I said, "Slow down!" [she'd say] "Come on! You a young man yet!"

DL: [laughs]

HK: And she'd be walking pretty, nice thing, and she loved to walk barefeet. Sometimes, she'd get here, get out the car, she'd pull her shoes off, walk around ...

DL: How funny. She sounds like quite a lady.

HK: Aw, she's ... I don't think I'm going to see another lady like her.

DL: No, I don't imagine. She sounds like one of the last of her kind.

00:27:43

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HK: Just like you, she would walk in here, she see you, she'd ask you your name, where you work at, what you do, how many kids – like you ask me – and she could see you 10 years from then, she'd still remember what you told her. And down here, she would get out there, we'd sit at the house on the porch, with all the stuff in and out, she'd get that hammer out, she sit up, get up in there – she loved to write – she'd write the grandkids, the kids and all, and at the funeral one of the grandkids got up there and spoke about her, I thought, young lady must have been, um, 17, 18, how good she was to them, and she started, she call all the grandkids and the great-great grandkids, the grandkids, she'd call them all for their birthday – she got it wrote down whose birthday it was – and tell 'em a prayer. All of them had a prayer, and every birthday they would say – they all called her Theodosia – she didn't want them to call her grandmother – all Theodosia. They read that scripture what their grandmother left for them to read.

DL: How lovely.

00:29:20

HK: Yeah.

DL: That's interesting. So she was a very religious person ...

HK: Oh, Lord, she was. There are no more like her – born after like her.

DL: She was Catholic?

HK: Methodist.

DL: Methodist?

HK: Um-hmm. And her friend was Methodist – the lady who took, uh – you probably heard of her. She took care of Melrose for years and years. Miss, uh, ...

DL: Miss Southerland?

HK: Miss Southerland – now, that's another great lady. And her husband ...

DL: Maxine and Tom.

HK: Yeah, Tom would get out there – I'd go up to the house sometimes – I'm up there at least once or twice a month – and he'd need to mow. He's blind! He'd get out there and mow that yard, and I – it's amazing how he would do it, but he'd put that water hose some kind of way, he'd put the little grandkids up in that mower with him and they'd get going.

DL: How funny.

HK: Yeah, Tom ...

00:30:23

DL: Yeah, Mr. Tom Paul – he taught at the university.

HK: The university, right, he did, yeah.

DL: When I was there as a student, and Miss Maxine had something to do with the education department.

HK: Right, yeah, uh-huh.

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DL: She had the little school house, the little old school house, and she would set up during the folk festival and stuff like that.

HK: Yeah, and she was part of everything in Natchitoches – she was part of it.

DL: Oh, heavens, yes. She had her finger in every pie!

HK: Oh, yes, my – I went to her pass over and Tom, he – you know, I would see him at the filling station, get out the car, he hear my voice, he'd know if was me; he'd say, "Henry?" He knew my voice – and the same thing at the pass over, I was talking to someone, one of their daughters, and he said, "Henry, we lost a good person." I say, "Yeah, we did, Tom." Yep. I had some great people in my life.

00:31:27

DL: It sounds like it. Was Miss Theodosia also involved in the historical, in the APHN?

HK: Yeah, she involved in all that. Yep, she was, if she had anything to do with, she would come down for all that – everything – at Northwestern, she was – just like I said, if Melrose, she came in and bought this place, she went to see Melrose and see what kind of shape it's in, and that's when she got busy – they keep Melrose [up] ...

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: And she used to call me before, after she got so she couldn't come down all the time, she want me to go down there and see what kind of dishes they had. Sometimes she'd buy four and five thousand dollars' worth of dishes and she'd give 'em to all her grandkids, great-grandkids, her son, her daughter-in-law, then all her friends in El Dorado, during the Christmas time. She's great, she's a great lady.

00:32:41

DL: Sounds like it.

HK: Yes, she ... [chuckles] and one thing she told me, she say, "Henry, we're going to Arizona." I say, "You are?" She say, "Yeah. I'm gonna carry all my daughter-in-laws to a resort in Arizona." I said, "All you daughter-in-laws?" She say, "Yeah." I say, "Okay." And she say, "All of them got kids for me. They're my grandkids. I'm carrying all my ex-daughter-in-laws and present daughter-in-laws."

DL: [laughs]

HK: And she would do it.

DL: She sounds like a wonderful woman.

HK: I wish you'd met her.

DL: I wish I had, too.

HK: 'Cause she got, she would ask you, "Do you like mint juleps?" Sit up on the porch and rock and talk, drink mint juleps, yeah.

DL: [laugh] A true Southern lady.

HK: Yep, and she always told me, "Henry, you know the house is not open all the time." "Right." "It's only open during the tour, but like someone I know and you know, some of my

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kids know, come and want to look at that house, let ‘em in. Open up everything.” And said, “Now, there’s people come from out of town, they want to come look at the house, then let ‘em in, look at the house.” She said, “But you know, we don’t have any programs that we’re open like Melrose, but they want to see the house and spend money to drive down here, open it up and let ‘em look at it. Walk ‘em through.” She’s a great lady, yeah; and the young lady, well, she’d younger than me but she’s up in her 40s now, I guess, 50, her granddaughter, Donna, she just, we were standing during the tour, I said, “You’re just like your grandmother.” She walk like her, she talk like her, everything.

DL: [laughs]

HK: She’s something else, too.

DL: She lives in Nebraska?

HK: Nebraska, yeah, yeah, but, uh, that’s the way she was. I miss that.

DL: I bet.

HK: Aw, um-hmm. I told her once, coming back on the plane about a year ago, and she always ride up in the front, that’s the station wagon she bought back for me to carry her to the airport, and I told her, “You know one thing Miss Nolan?” She said, “What?” “I say I hope the Lord take me out of this world before you leave.” She say, “Oh, Henry.” I said, “Oh, yes, I do.” Because ... and she told her son, Bob, she said, I come over there to the pass over, he say, “Well, Henry, she told me what you said.” I said, “Yeah.” “But she leave you here and she gone.” Yep. Because it’s a funny thing, they called me – she had had surgery and they called me and she was in the hospital and I told my wife, “We’re going to Arkansas to see her.” And she said, “Okay.” I kept putting it off, and Thursday she said, “Henry, get up. We’re going to Arkansas.” Just like that. She said, “You keep putting it off.” I said, Yeah, but I’m going.” “Let’s go today.” And we went there on Thursday – nope, we went up there on Saturday, no Friday. We get up there about 10 o’clock, we walked in the room, she looked, her daughter said, “Mother!” She always called her Mother, she said, “Look here.” She look around, she said, “Oh, Julie. Look at your hair!” Julie have hair just like yours – white, long – “Her hair’s so pretty.” Julie walked around to the side over there, I said, “Look at those flowers over there, Miss Dosia.” She said, “Henry, take some of those flowers back to the, to the house, Cherokee.” I said, “No, we got too many flowers there already!”

DL: [laughs]

00:37:25

HK: We stayed there about 10, 15 minutes. We left, got back in the car, I said, “Julie, Miss Nolan don’t look good.” She said, “No, she don’t.” And that Saturday morning about 7 o’clock the grandson down in New Orleans, he up there and he told me she had passed. Yep, I got to see her one time before she left us.

DL: She obviously had a good life.

HK: Oh, Lord, yes.

DL: My goodness, she lived a long time.

HK: Yes, she did, and I tell you, it, until, I guess her last breath, she knew who you were. She could tell you things. Yep.

DL: That’s good, though. I mean, that’s a life well-lived.

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HK: Yeah, it is, it is.

DL: It certainly is.

HK: Yeah, 'cause [chuckles] my wife told me about two years ago, that's when her son was living who loved this place, too – Bill – Bill would have taken the, he loved it, him and his wife, and Bill'd come back in the kitchen and he would talk to her, my wife and her sister, all of them working up there, say, "You know one thing?" They say, "What?" "Theodosia in there talking" – that's what they call her – "She's gonna outlive some of us!" And the next year, Bill passed.

DL: Oh my goodness.

HK: Yeah, I think that's what set her back. Bill – he was a Christian man. He had a Christian radio station up there.

DL: Is that right?

HK: Oh yeah, he would come down here with a guitar and he'd sing, "Glory, glory, hallelujah."

DL & HK: [laughter]

HK: Me and him out there singing, stomping our feet, and going on – yeah, Bill was a good man.

DL: He passed early – he passed young.

HK: Yeah, he did. Sure did. Yep. After that, like, you could see it, she started ...

DL: Kind of took her heart out.

HK: Mm-hmm, it did, 'cause he would go there – he lived in El Dorado, too – but he would go like every day or something, have lunch with her. Yeah, she, he, Bill went to the house.

00:39:54

HK: That took something out of her, I think.

DL: I'd imagine. I imagine so.

HK: But, Lord knows best. Yep, he does.

DL: Sure enough.

HK: Well, let's go up to the Big House then.

DL: Sounds like a plan.

00:40:11

[gathering keys, locking doors, chitchat]

[outside, pointing to tour house]

00:41:39

HK: That's the little house you thought was the camp house?

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DL: That one right there? That's the one I thought was, that's the one I used to call the camp house...

HK: Oh, okay.

DL: ... because it was on the river side. I never even, I don't even think I ever noticed this one.

HK: And that pump there – out there – that pump right there?

DL: Uh-huh?

HK: They say when their grandfather built the house - Cherokee up there?

DL: Uh-huh.

HK: He got that pump and had a pipe on this road to pump water all the way up to the Big House.

DL: Oh my goodness!

HK: Yeah, he was a smart man.

DL: Yeah, he was.

00:42:18

[discussion re: driving across the road and where to park at the Big House]

00:45:05 [from this point, the sound is uneven due to distance between Mr. Kennedy and recorder, as well as noise due to walking]

DL: So these are the four original trees?

HK: Those four right there.

DL: Okay, you can tell – wow, their trunks are big, aren't they?

HK: Yeah. Let me call Jerry working back there, he can come open the house up.

DL: Okay.

HK: [inaudible re: trees] Those eight there, she planted those.

DL: Uh-huh – they're almost as big.

HK: You see how the storm, the storm it went through some of it. You see this [inaudible] here? We couldn't get up to the house.

DL: Is that right?

HK: [phone discussion with Jerry to come on cart and open doors to the house]

HK: All this, you can see all this was pretty in here. It just tore 'em up, but they're still there though.

DL: Yeah, they are.

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00:46:07

HK: And those are the barns out there. One of them is the, the one you see closest to the house, I think that's the oldest one.

DL: Okay.

HK: Like a log cabin.

DL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And where is the cabin?

HK: Right back here, around the house.

DL: Okay.

00:46:37

[walking]

00:46:43

DL: This is a nice place to work.

HK: Oh, it is. Like I was telling you, when I first came here [inaudible], you couldn't see that – all that was wooded back there [behind the house where there is now a plowed field]. We had to clean all that off, we planted those red tips there [indicates photinias along fence line in the distance], and uh, they had some pecan trees down that same line but [inaudible] came out to take care of the pecan trees, he killed all of them.

DL: Oh, no [laughter]

HK: Yep, he killed all of them

00:47:27

HK: Yeah, we had five pecan trees here, two here, but the storm tore 'em up and we had to cut 'em down – all but those two there.

DL: My goodness. And that's the last cabin?

HK: That's the last cabin right there. There used to be shakes on it but she decided to put a tin roof on it. [Jerry] is coming up now, I'll get him to unlock that gate and you can go in there.

DL: I can just look over the fence. I don't need to go in.

HK: Okay. We got an old bed in there, some old-time dishes, an old stove ...

DL: My goodness. It's amazing how many people they crammed in these little bitty houses, isn't it?

HK: Uh-huh, I don't know how they stayed in there, holes in the wall how you could see the sun coming through, and the floor cracked like this [indicates several inches between floorboards]. And now the kids now, they got to air condition everything! They don't want to do without anything.

DL: [laughs] Mr. Henry, I grew up without air conditioning, but I've got to tell you, I don't want to do without it!

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00:48:43

HK: I can't either, you know? [laughter] I'd keep the windows open and the mosquitos would bite me ...

00:49:01

[pause while taking photographs]

00:49:19

HK: And they say, right over by that fence line right there, see they had cabins like that all the way up to the woods.

DL: Is that right?

HK: Yep, and they got a picture in there of one of the slaves, he was the master and he – her husband, the one who built this house – he got – that's his bedroom on this side by the elevator there, from the kitchen then – his room on the other side of the kitchen – he had a trap door up under his bed, and he used to drink a lot, and they say if it would be for her husband, or him for his wife, I mean, they would have lost this whole farm. His drinking was ...

DL: He would have drunk it away?

HK: Yeah. Yep, they say she was a strong woman ...

DL: Must have been.

HK: ... and she kept his place going. He'd ring that bell, Uncle Tom, I believe, lived right there [in the cabin], say he'd get up and go up under the cellar and hand that whiskey to him [laughter].

DL: Oh, my goodness.

00:50:49

[discussion about how far away from the house Jerry is working, why it is taking so long for him to arrive with the key]

00:50:10

DL: It's a lot of land.

HK: Yep. They all kin people around here. I think most all of 'em come from El Dorado, from Arkansas, come down here and bought land, 'cause her daddy, her daddy bought all, granddaddy bought land here all the way down to Alexandria.

DL: Is that right?

HK: Yeah, 'cause – what's that plantation named down there? On Highway 71?

DL: Near Alexandria? Kent House? No, that one's on Bayou Rapides. Loyd's Hall?

HK: You're going south on Hwy. 71, you know where 71 goes to LSUA?

DL: Right.

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HK: That's 71, ain't it?

DL: I think so.

HK: What they call that? What'd she call that?

DL: Loyd's Hall is south of Alexandria, though.

HK: Yeah, as you go on the other side to Hwy. 1, going to LSUA. On the same side, left-hand side.

DL: Do you pass LSU?

HK: No, back this way.

DL: I don't know the name of it.

HK: [laughs] Well, Jerry's young. He'll probably remember it – I've told him so many times.

DL: They owned that one, too?

HK: Her sister did. Their father give them all that land, all the way to Mississippi, that place I was telling you about, the house that got blowed away in '05?

DL: Okay.

00:53:25

HK: You talked about what they did to the house here? This was just rock here, [rear walkway] they put bricks, so – she had gotten in a wheelchair – so she could go back here if she wanted to.

[inaudible due to wind noise]

00:53:49

HK: And they finally put an elevator for her – not only for her, but for people who couldn't walk up the steps. Got parking back here, handicap parking.

00:54:05 -00:54:50 – [walking, trying bent gate latch]

HK: You know, my son and Jerry, they don't check stuff. I got to come over here and just check everything out. I'm a person that check everything. I'm just the nosey one.

DL: Well, that's because you take care of stuff. That's not nosey – that's just taking care.

HK: You're right. And all this brick right here? She had some people from Alexandria – she had the house closed for three years – they took all the old pillars out, all the way through the house, redid all that.

DL: What were the pillars before? Were they all brick?

HK: Well, some of them were brick, some were, like that, posts like ...

DL: Oh, like cypress?

HK: Yeah, like a piece of cypress cut off and under the eave of it, and it was sinking. You can see some of it over there. She left some so people could see how it was.

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DL: I see that.

HK: Yeah, she spent a lot of money on this place.

00:56:08

HK: That's the first bale of cotton was made on this place when she bought it.

[walking]

00:56:33

HK: You want to see the cellar here?

DL: Sure.

HK: I bumped my head so much here, I had her put this up here so I don't bump my head anymore.

DL: Wow – nice.

HK: See this where – this's where he handed his whiskey to him – right through the cellar there.

[laughter]

HK: I don't know why this lights isn't coming on. The other one's coming on. [trying lights]

00:57:53:

DL: [exiting cellar] That is kind of a short space, isn't it?

HK: Yeah.

[discussion of James unlocking the house]

00:58:51

HK: [inaudible]

DL: It's more stable.

HK: Yeah, you can tell when the wind's coming from the west, there's a storm coming. See, all this was wooden. See, it's cypress here. See that wooden box? I have to put oil on it all the time.

DL: Just to keep it from drying out?

HK: Uh-huh.

[inaudible discussion between Henry and James]

00:59:36

DL: Y'all have done a fabulous job. The grounds are just beautiful.

HK: Well, we had some problems – had to put new grass on it twice. Low spots here, and then [inaudible]

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01:00:08

HK: It'll be alright after a while.

DL: It's just getting too much water in the low spots?

HK: They put the wrong stuff on it.

DL: Okay.

01:00:26 [inside house]

DL: Wow.

HK: What we're doing here now, we, uh, my wife, uh, people coming up here to, uh ...

DL: Clean the silver?

HK: No, uh, to take inventory ... of all the stuff – the dishes, and the spoons, and stuff. Let me give you one of these [printed history of house and family]. You can read this, too, you can sit on the porch or in here.

DL: I'll just take a picture of it and read it when I get home.

HK: This is her grandfather here.

[photography, walking]

01:02:36

HK: They call this the stranger's room here. They used to let people come through this door [indicates door that provides access outside].

DL: Oh my goodness, look at the armoire! That thing is massive.

HK: Yeah.

[more walking, photography]

01:03:01

HK: You know what this is, don't you?

DL: The chamber pot?

HK: Yeah.

[more walking, photography]

01:04:36

HK: This room here, I was telling you about it? They covered it up, but the trap door was right here, and the slave would hand the liquor to him. A little short man – you can see the way he looked in there – a little short guy.

[laughter]

HK: That clock still works – let me crank it up for you.

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DL: [reading] Chateaubriand

HK: Let me set it for you [strikes five times]

DL: Oh, that's metal. It's pretty. It looks like it used to be gilded. My goodness, she has some beautiful stuff.

HK: Yeah, she loved to have parties.

DL: I bet she did. This is a great place to entertain.

HK: These doors close, we can get them out of the way.

DL: They're massive. They're beautiful.

HK: We got a gentleman live here – see these doors? He take a chicken feather and do all that design [false mahogany]

DL: Is that right? Wow

HK: Yeah, he's good.

DL: I see now, now that I get up close and look at it, yeah, you can see.

HK: Uh-huh, chicken feather. Make those designs.

DL: There's a name for that, I just can't think what it is.

HK: Uh-huh.

01:06:30

DL: But that's a good job because I never would have noticed if you hadn't pointed it out to me.

HK: And he did all this, the architect – Mr. Harris – did all this here. This cloth he put in here.

01:07:03

DL: Who is this in the picture?

HK: This person here? Someone she knows teach down in New Orleans.

DL: Oh, okay.

HK: This gentleman here? And the lady right there, she teach down in New Orleans.

DL: Oh, okay.

HK: Yeah. This room here [inaudible] for her husband.

DL: My mother used to have a [full tester plantation] bed exactly like that and they call that part the rolling pin [detachable piece on headboard], and it came off and you could roll, like, the cover down to the bottom so it didn't get wrinkled. They had a chest down here [at foot of bed] and you would pull that piece off and roll it and set it down there. Oh my goodness, I haven't seen a bed like this in forever. My mother had that bed forever, finally sold it when she got older and downsized a bit.

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HK: Yeah, she always sleep over there and he sleep over here. But he was shorter. He had to take this [stool] to climb up in the bed. She short, too.

DL: Oh my goodness. Lovely.

01:08:08

HK: This a, this a [inaudible]. Let me show you this here. [inaudible], that's her mother, that's Miss Nolan, that's Mr. Nolan, this one of her sons here – that's Bill, and Bob, this her daughter here, then a few grandkids. But now they got, Oh Lord!

DL: More than you can count? [laughter]

HK: Their grandkids got grandkids now! Now in here, about 10 years ago, this her here. Yeah, she loves, see her hand here [inaudible].

DL: She's a lovely woman.

HK: Yeah. This all her dolls here. She kept all her dolls and that's them here. Look at the family reunion here – that's about 10 years ago.

DL: Oh my goodness – there's a passel of them, isn't it?

HK: And what she would do, she'd say, "Henry. I want to do one thing." She had people bring some polypots from New Orleans up here and she say, "I'm gonna put the Christians over here and the drunks over here!]

[laughter]

HK: And that's what she did. She had a polypot over here [inaudible], the alcohol go over here and the Christians over here.

[laughter]

DL: How funny!

HK: Now, I can't go upstairs.

DL: Don't worry about it – we won't go upstairs.

HK: Alright.

DL: So what's upstairs, like a sleeping area?

HK: She was going to put that, but he said "Nope. We're going to store stuff up there." Right here, now, this is the way the house was built before she got here. See how, at this point, it's clay? [inaudible] ... to show you how it was ...

DL: The bousillage construction.

HK: Yeah, and the old wood ...

01:11:17

DL: Well, she did a wonderful job bringing this house back.

HK: Oh, yeah, she brought it back.

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DL: She obviously did, and it was obviously a labor of love.

HK: She loved this place, yeah, she loved it.

DL: Who are these folks, these ladies, these two ladies here?

HK: Oh, Lord! She didn't tell me who those were.

DL: Oh, okay, I was just curious.

[laughter]

HK: I guess I forgot to ask her that.

DL: Well, it was obviously, you know, her life's work to bring this back and she did a wonderful job, it's just beautiful.

HK: Right now, if I could see something going wrong, I'd call her and she'd say, "Get it fixed."

01:12:10

DL: Get it fixed – oh, they call it the trundle bed, or the occasional bed, uh-huh? Bless her heart. So, nobody's going to come now? Her sons don't have any interest in staying here, or her son?

HK: Her grand-daughter, she come, but her oldest son, he's a doctor. He's still up in Seattle. He come about once ... he was down her about two months [ago] already. Sometimes they come in – they were all here for the tour, but other than that, no. It's just the grand-daughter.

DL: Well, at least her grand-daughter has her love for it.

HK: Oh, yeah, she's got love for it.

DL: So maybe when she gets to a point in her life, maybe she'll come down here.

HK: Yeah, I hope so.

01:13:09

HK: I won't be around to see it – I'll be gone [laughter].

DL: Well, but I mean, you have helped her bring this back.

HK: She's helped me. She helped my life.

DL: Well, I'd hazard a guess that you helped hers, too.

HK: Yeah, I tried.

DL: Well, it is beautiful, it really is. It's just lovely.

HK: Yeah, well all you can do is try.

DL: Well, I think you've done, both of you have done a spectacular job.

HK: And my wife is still trying to keep it. She, my wife, she knows everything in this house. She's been here, she was here before I met her, you know. She was knowing Miss Nolan when

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she was in high school. I'm 20 years older than she is. She was in high school when Gladys get her to come down here and help Miss Nolan.

DL: Well, I'm sure you love it as much as they did.

HK: Oh, yeah, yeah.

DL: Well, I sure appreciate you talking to me and taking me around and showing me everything, Mr. Henry.

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Interviewee: Julie Kennedy

Interviewed February 5, 2015 at Cherokee Plantation by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:37:54

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

0:00

RT: Today is January 16, 2015. We are at Cherokee Plantation and I am here with Mrs. Kennedy who has worked here at Cherokee for a little while and she's going to give us some background on the operation of the plantation in terms of entertainment, parties, etc. So, Mrs. Kennedy if we could start with just give us your full name please.

JK: Okay, my name is Julie Kennedy.

RT: Okay, and the reason I really wanted to speak with you is of course to get that inside story on what it is like to work from inside the house. And, I know that you were not the cook, however if you could kind of tell us what your role is here and maybe how things have changed from what you understood it to be in the past. Just wherever you want to start on that.

JK: Okay, role as taking care of Cherokee?

RT: Your role in taking care of Cherokee?

JK: Okay, I'm basically here during the week making sure that everything is ready if there are guest that will be arriving. Make sure that the house is kept clean at all times and if there are any preparations that need to be done. If we're having a gathering, then my job is to get those things done prior to the gathering.

RT: Okay, well okay, so what does that look like? Let's say you get a call from the owner and she said, "We'll be there in three days and we're bringing 50 people."

JK: Okay.

RT: Okay, let's start from there.

JK: First of all she would tell me what things would be needed to be purchased for that gathering. She would describe what type of gathering it is. What we would be serving and the day and the time. Those things would be the initial things we'd discuss. And, I'd write down any plans or things that would be needed *before* her arrival. I would have those things done.

RT: Okay, okay so then you have everything ready including the selection of the tableware, the dinnerware and all or what?

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JK: Well, she would decide which China pattern she wanted to use, which glasses, and she would tell me so I would have those things washed and ready for her. Normally, she would do the table setting. The napkins and things would already be ironed and ready to be out on the table. All of those things would be ready by the time she arrived.

RT: Okay, and so typically what size groupings would she have here for parties...?

JK: Well, it has varied. We have had from... a party of maybe six or eight to up to 50 or more persons here at one time.

3:16

RT: Okay.

JK: We've had celebrities to come out and government officials at some of those gatherings. So, we've had a chance to meet some different people here. And also she just had family gatherings which we've also served here.

RT: Okay and I keep referring to she, give us the ...

JK: Mrs., uh, the late Mrs. Theodosia Nolan who was the owner of Cherokee.

RT: Okay. And I knew that because I came here (laughs) actually a few years back and had lunch and I think that's the first time I kinda got a glimpse of you. That day was an interesting day for us that were there being served. I think that after it was over with, we kinda got together in our own little corner and talked about it. And you know I think that the basic consensus was, it felt odd for us to sit in there at that table in a plantation home and then to be *served*. Ugh, do you have any thoughts about that? What it's like if you walk out there and see, maybe African Americans as guests versus European guests. Does it matter in any way?

JK: To me it doesn't because it has been happening over the years since I've been here and I've worked here several years. And, prior to the changing of time, originally, it would have seemed very strange to have African Americans in this place because that was not one of the things that would have been practiced years prior to this. But, now a days it just seems like a common occurrence because it happens all the time now. Whenever there's a gathering, you can expect anyone here not just of a particular race of people which would have been the original format in prior years.

RT: Okay, and so that does speak then to the changing world of the plantation

JK: Yes.

RT: Because certainly, maybe back then, your job would have included some cooking and a couple of others things maybe. So...

JK: Yes, yes.

RT: Right, but with the vacancy, so to speak, of the huge plantations that everyday day care and cooking and stuff is no longer needed. Is that right?

JK: No, no it's gone. (laughter)

RT: So, how many people does it take, I mean if you're handling all the inside... does it take to run this place, you know, every day?

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JK: Well, normally, there are two people here inside on an average time during the week. Then, outside there's usually from two to three persons on the grounds that come daily to Cherokee still. Because not only is this house maintained but there are other properties that's owned by the owner here that has to be maintained also. So, that's why there's quite a few of us working still here even though it's not occupied on a regular basis.

6:34

RT: So, do you know about how many acres are here? Roughly.

JK: (hesitates) No, I'm not sure.

RT: Okay.

JK: But I know it's over 10

RT: Okay.

JK: Including the fields which are leased out.

RT: Okay, alright so you need that staff just to maintain what's right here fenced in so to speak.

JK: Yes, that's all basically we take care of is the property that the house is on and the cabin across the street.

RT: Alrighty. The day that I was here with some people from the Smithsonian Institute, there was a gentleman who was here. He did the serving. Can you give us his name please?

JK: His name is Ananaise and he came from Arkansas. The owner lives in Arkansas. He works for her in Arkansas. So, he came down from Arkansas with her. And, that's what he came to do was to serve that day.

RT: Okay, and is that common for her to travel with people, her staff from Arkansas?

JK: Yes, yes, very common.

RT: Okay. You also mentioned about the preparation stuff. You're not a cook yourself but sometimes there are cooks and sometimes there aren't because you order or ...

JK: Uh, usually if we're having a large gathering or ... she brings the food pre-prepared already from Arkansas if there's some favorite things she wants to serve. If not the food is catered by a local catery. Northwestern [State University] has done some of the things. The service there or some of the local restaurants prepare the food and it's brought in. And, there may be like rice, rolls or something that is prepared here to go along with that but the basic meal is usually done elsewhere. And, if we have to heat it or whatever, then that's our job to get that done before it's served. But, usually those things are cooked and brought with her if she flies in from Arkansas and she'll bring those things already prepared.

9:08

RT: Okay. You mentioned about not having ever done that ... serving before and now why is that?

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JK: Well. It's not one of the things I've ever preferred doing so usually I'll get things ready. Or if there's food to be prepared to carry out, then I take care of those things behind the scene. If there's trays to be made or the dishes, the serving pieces together then I'll do that but I'm not ever been comfortable serving the food. That's usually done by someone else. (smiles)

RT: And do you know what type of preparation goes into the servers knowing exactly what to do? Is that something that is passed on amongst family? Do they... (laughs) Is there a school or something where they... Do you know anything about that background?

JK: Well, I've never known there to be a school but usually the persons that have worked here... The only thing I've seen... that they get those instructions from the late Mrs. Nolan was the person to instruct them how to serve or when it was to be served, and from what side you pick up, what side you served the food from. And, those were things that I've only seen, you know, she has instructed the persons that worked here. Now, people that already knew that I don't know of those people and I don't know they had gotten it other than from the persons they worked for prior to that.

RT: Okay, and you have been here how many years working?

JK: (Laughter)

RT: If you care to share. You don't have to share that if you don't want to.

JK: I've been here, off and on, over 30 years.

RT: Okay, so you have quite a bit of history here then.

JK: Yes, I've never... I've only worked part-time because I've always had a full-time job and I'm retired so that's why I'm here more so. But, I've just been in and out of here for those years doing something around here.

RT: So, you mentioned about seeing the changes in terms of who the guests may be. What other kind of changes have you seen then over the last few decades because I know you had to have seen some (laughs)?

JK: The changes are that when I first began working here, they [family members] stayed. Many times they would come and stay at the plantation. Mrs. Nolan, who was the owner, and her family. Well, I guess you'd call lived here because they would come in and they stayed for days and weeks at a time. But, no one actually lives here anymore even though the family still comes and they stay... it's not a... what you would call a person in residency here at all times. So, that has been the change.

12:24

RT: When they come then to stay, are you expected to be here more or are your hours pretty much the same?

JK: No, I'm expected to be here more to have things ready, like I say, for them when they arrive.

RT: Okay.

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JK: To make sure there is food for them to eat and make sure the house is ready for them to occupy when they do arrive.

RT: Okay.

JK: So, that's been the changes.

RT: What is, maybe, some of the most exciting parts of working here for you? Some of the more exciting... or some great memory that you have? Maybe it was meeting some dignitary or something...

JK: Well, we've had quite a few people to come in but actually the tour that they have once a year. It's basically the thing that we all look forward to each year and work toward getting prepared for that. So, that's when the most excitement at this house is usually once a year.

RT: Is that the Historic Tour of Homes?

JK: Yes, the historical tour once a year in October.

RT: Okay.

JK: So, that's our most exciting time.

RT: And, what about... This is open to visitors currently or at certain times? Is it like once or twice a year?

JK: Just that time.

RT: Just that time.

JK: I'm here.

RT: Do you know what the plans are for place? Is it just to continue as it is and be a family residence when people want to come? Or, are you aware of any changes like that?

JK: Well, basically that has been the information that I've been given and they will continue to keep it. They will continue to have the tours cause that was one of the things she most wanted them to enjoy this place and to carry that on. So, from what I've heard, what they've told me. They're going to continue to do that because this was her love, the life that she loved was Cherokee. This was her family's place before she owned it – her grandfather.

RT: So, several generations of ownership here?

JK: Yes.

RT: So, defiantly you can understand the sense of pride. Okay, let's shift a little bit from the home and I'd like to find out a little bit more about you and your family. Where were you raised in Natchitoches?

JK: I was raised in the City of Natchitoches.

RT: Okay.

JK: I was born here. My family is basically from here and surrounding areas.

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15:13

RT: Here, you mean Cherokee here?

JK: No, Natchitoches.

RT: Okay Natchitoches.

JK: I'm the oldest of 10 children.

RT: Okay.

JK: My mother passed when I was 18, so I cared for those 10 children after that. And I'm just a big family lover (chuckles). I was educated here and I worked here. I love traveling but it's... I'm always coming back home because this is home for me.

RT: I can understand that and many people are retiring and coming back here for that same reason.

JK: They're trying to build a ... Natchitoches as a retirement place for people so...

RT: Exactly and that's kind of where it looks like it's going (laughter RT and JK). I think that's why I got so turned around coming down here. I didn't recognize anything anymore (more laughter). Very few things anyway.

Okay, and I'm asking you about this too ... We uh, you know lack some information around African American history in Natchitoches and while we know some things about schools and churches and things like that... We're trying to delve into some of the topics that have generally been considered taboo, if you would, and talk about that a little bit. And so I wanted to ask you, based on that preface, are you aware of any connections in your family with Native Americans?

JK: My great-grandfather, on my father's side, they say that his last name was Lynch that he had Indian blood. But, I don't actually know any of that history.

RT: Okay.

JK: I don't really know that but that was one of things I was told as a child about him

RT: And what about any other mixtures – Spanish, French.

JK: I'm not aware of that.

RT: Okay, no problem. And so did you go to Central [High School] then?

JK: Yes, yes and one of the things that we've just completed was the LNC Monument which is a part of the three black schools here in Natchitoches Parish and we completed that on last year. (Smiles proudly).

RT: Oh.

JK: That's something that I'm very proud of. I worked with that and we finally got it completed.

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RT: And where is the monument?

JK: It's at the site of the Ben Johnson Auditorium.

RT: Oh, okay.

JK: Off of Martin Luther King and that is the former Central High School which is where I attended. I graduated from that school. So, that's something that has made me proud and our race proud because we have no history, as such, of those black schools are not really included in material that you would read about. So, we have tried to create a history for us which has been hard but it's something that we are really proud of and that's something that we completed doing. So, I'm extremely proud of that.

18:48

RT: I can tell too and you should be (laughter). It's difficult to get things... to go from the vision to the reality.

JK: Yes, yes.

RT: So, I understand. I'll have to go by there and take a look. I didn't know that had been done.

JK: That's a wonderful thing.

RT: Influential people in your life?

JK: Uh, my mom, former teachers who have taught me. Those things even though it's been years, some of them, most of them are dead now. Those things have lasted with me. And, my family, those are the people that influenced my life. Even though I watch television and I know movie stars and things... they were never, you know like most people say that... has not been a part of who I am. It's just the people who have actually touched my life that has really influenced me.

RT: And, what is your maiden name?

JK: My maiden name is Horn.

RT: Horn.

JK: There are... I've tried to do a history on us and there aren't a lot of us that I can find out about because it is an unusual name. It's not very many of us.

RT: Is this the Horne like Horne Street in town?

JK: Yes, Horn.

RT: Okay, because I think the other one, the street has an "e" on end, I think – H O R N E. Is that right or no?

JK: No.

RT: Okay, I wonder if there's some connection with that.

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JK: I don't...

RT: You don't even know that ugh?

JK: I have not been able to get any information about that.

RT: That would be good to know (Laughter from RT and JK). So, I know that as African Americans, you know, we've lost a lot of our history. It just didn't get passed on as we got moved around, migrated out, and things like that. But, is there any stories that were told to you, as a child, about maybe where some of your folks came from or how they arrived in this area. Was any of that passed along?

JK: Well, one story my grandfather told was that, either his grandfather or... They came here from Virginia and they migrated to this area from there but now that's as far as I've gotten on that story. It's a history that they originally we're from Virginia, but nothing else beyond that.

21:33

RT: So, I've been hearing a lot, like people came in from North Carolina and things like that so to hear Virginia, that's the first time I've heard Virginia.

JK: That was.... And when I went back to do on my grandmother's side, as far as I could go back, were relatives that had come from or were born in Virginia and that's where our history began with that. I don't really know anything other than that.

RT: Yeah, I know it's difficult for us to trace back like that. We normally can only go a couple of generations back and the records are lost so that's unfortunate. Are you aware of the genealogical library in town?

JK: Yes, yes.

RT: In the [old] courthouse.

JK: I've utilized that through the years. I've gone there.

RT: Alrighty.

JK: And, we're getting ready to use it again because we're getting ready for the [family] reunion. We're gonna have this summer. So, I've talked to the lady there and she's gonna try and help me get some information for that.

RT: Okay. And, I know that you were in town, but around in more of the rural areas, not just Natchitoches but other places as well... people tell me about the amount of land that was owned by their families at one time. Do you remember a period when lots of land was owned by African Americans?

JK: Yes, even my family, my grandmother and grandfather on my father's side lived past Provencal and they owned this beautiful land. As a child, my father would carry me out there and the most amazing thing to me was that on the land there was a stream and the water would just bubble-up out of the ground cold. And you could see, when it ran, it just ran clear and that was the most amazing sight to me as a child to see that the water was just cold coming up out of that hot ground, you know. And they owned that property. There were several acres. Uh, all of my grandmother's children had an area there when you first went in the gate, there were homes. And

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then their house sat in the center and it was a log cabin. I'll never forget that. There was moss and I guess...

24:18

RT: Bousillage.

JK: Yes, between the walls and the wallpaper on the inside was newspaper. And as a child that was amazing for me to see. Newspaper on the wall (Laughs). And, my grandmother would call in the cows in the evening and that was another thing... In the front yard there was sand and it was just cool to lay out there as a child and feel that. And in the afternoon she would call the cows in when they had gone out, So, those are stories I remember from a child and that's amazing.

RT: Yes, because I think that's when they still had that "free range" ya know where the livestock could go anywhere but now...

JK: Yes, yes.

RT: So, that's another change that you've witnessed.

JK: Yes, I've witnessed through the years.

RT: Okay, and then around this land stuff too. I'm hearing things like uh, people being tricked out of land or ugh didn't realize that taxes hadn't been paid and loosing land. Do you hear stories like that?

JK: Yes I do. I've heard stories like that.

RT: You do?

JK: Several stories.

RT: Not to give any names or anything like that but could you kind of recant one that you've heard or what happened in that situation? You don't have to name names.

JK: Well, I don't actually know... my aunt was telling me that there was this man that owned some property and he went to the nursing home and some kind of way, I don't know how it got to be that they know, that someone just came in and they could just... I don't know either the family lost track of it, but it's no longer owned by them anymore. And it was just taken over. And I never did get the real story of what actually happened because I told them that I couldn't believe that could really just happen that people could just come in and just take, you know, your property like that. That was something to that effect. (26.13).

RT: And how long ago was this?

JK: It's been just about, maybe about 5 years ago. She's in a nursing home now and she mentioned that to be but I never found out what actually happened.

RT: Alright, and in terms of recreational activities around here growing up, what were the favorite things? If you came, not inside of Natchitoches town but in the rural, more rural areas, what did people do for entertainment?

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JK: Well, I basically... Sunday's was a time that they would, the children went out and played. The older people... Well I know my grandmother lived in, what may have been considered the rural areas and on Sundays we would go down to visit, you know, them and many times my mom would either bring food or she would cook food and the children would go outside and play and the adults would be inside laughing and talking and we would do tag-type games outside. But. Most of our activities were on the outside. We played games and we would eat and that was basically our ugh, you know, Sunday afternoons (laughs).

27:42

RT: Because during the week it was too much other stuff going on. Is that right?

JK: Yes, school and all of that so it wasn't anything else that you did except for, you know, we would get to see our grand [parents] and cousins and stuff. We would all meet a lot of times down there so that's what we did.

RT: Okay. I want to ask you about something else that came up in an interview I did a couple of weeks ago and the woman that I was interviewing, ugh, we got on the subject of (searching for the right word) ... I don't want to use the term Voodoo but ugh, she mentioned how a lot of people would come into Natchitoches to see a lady. There was a lady and a man, not living together, she didn't want to give the name, but that people would come in to kind a get like their fortune told, if you will, or to see what was going to happen during the week and things like that. And she said that it was very common for people to come in and do that. Do you remember anything about that?

JK: Well, just stories

RT: Well, that's what we're doing, we're sharing stories

JK: My grandparents say... and in one incident that happened to me, I worked in Houston. I think I may have still been in school and it was like a summer job. It was at a hotel in Houston and ugh the people were... men were saying about Louisiana women. That they didn't trust ladies in Louisiana because everybody knew about Voodoo and all of that. And ugh, it was just, those were things that they said over in Texas because I was from Louisiana. And I remember one story that my grandmother told ugh, that, I think my uncles, went to Texas and they didn't have money to come back home so they made this little ugh stuff up to sell to someone and that was considered, supposed to be Voodoo. And all it was, they had put some, I think, straw or something in a box and I think it was like file or something and they sold it to these people and they got the money to come home (laughs). You know but it was just... and I don't know if it's a true story or not.

30:13

RT: It probably was. (Both RT and JK laugh).

JK: But I was told that as a child and you know it's just amazing how, what people will believe.

RT: Um huh.

JK: And it's just because of where you're from. Now, that's one of the stories they tell because of the fact that they were from Louisiana. And you know, I mean, I guess nobody from Texas could have gotten away with that (laughs).

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RT: Um hug, in the same way (More laughter). So, you didn't actually hear about the people I town she was talking about then? You didn't, never heard about people coming in to speak with a particular woman who was supposed to be good with herbal medicines and all kinds of stuff?

JK: Well yeah there was a lady that they use to talk about that did and I don't know, people came from all over, I don't know. But I know they would say that some of the local people here would go to see her.

RT: Okay.

JK: You know and I guess it's just a part of things that, of stories that have been brought down from, you know, part of our history. But, now, ugh, I know it was told to us, you know, that those things happened.

RT: Okay.

JK: But to actually have witnessed those things, no I've not.

RT: Okay.

JK: But, I've heard the stories.

RT: Alright, it's just sometimes you hear something ...

JK: And if you lived here, if you're from this area, those are things that you would have heard, you know, as a child. Now, the people that are younger than us, these are not things I don't think they hear now because I'm older and I heard them. But, if you ask some of my siblings who are younger than me, these are things that they would not know about today.

RT: Okay, I had something else for you. Let's pause for one moment.

JK: Okay

(Second portion of interview)

0:00

RT: Okay, now I remember what I wanted to ask you about.

JK: Okay.

RT: There is a process, a ritual process known as the mourning bench and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that and if you know if it's still being practiced anywhere in this area?

JK: Yes uh the mourning bench is a part of black Baptist Christianity and it is still practiced. It's where if you were a person that did not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you wanted what they called to be saved at the time and people would come and pray for you and the minister would preach and if you believed what he said then you would go up and join church. But the children that did not know Jesus as their personal Savior would go to the mourner's bench. This is something that was practiced during the summer. I mean as a child we would go to church and if you did not belong to church that particular time of, revival is what it was called, you would go to the front and the sisters and the brothers of the church would have you kneel down around this mourner's bench which was usually the first bench in the church, on the front row, and they would pray for you. And, this was a practice that is still carried out in black Baptist churches now even though people join church now all year long. That was a part of our growing

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up as a child. That that was one of the things that we did. We were on the mourner's bench as children.

RT: So you only joined in the summer?

JK: Well, no but that is when it was done.

RT: Okay.

JK: That is when that particular... we had revival in the summertime. And I think, maybe it was because when we came along, you baptized in the river and I don't think they baptized in the winter months even though I'm not sure that it didn't happen. But, basically the baptizing would be done in summertime because they used the rivers.

RT: And that followed then after the mourner's bench?

JK: Yes, after you had joined church.

RT: Uh-huh.

JK: And you've been considered saved. And what they would do then was take us down and baptize us in the river on that Sunday and then we'd come back to church and they'd give us the right hand of fellowship and read the Covenant to us and we were members of the church. And this is still a practice in black churches today, some Baptist churches today.

3:04

RT: Right here in Natchitoches, they're still practicing?

JK: Yes.

RT: Okay, good to know because a couple of people I talked to they were saying they don't really know a church that was still doing it anymore.

JK: Yeah, well my church actually does.

RT: And what church is that?

JK: St. Mary's Baptist Church and it's on the river. It's on Cane River.

RT: St. Mary's ...

JK: Across from the skating rink. Past the hospital.

RT: Yes, yes. I know exactly where you're talking about.

JK: Yes, we still do it.

RT: And you do it in August? A specific month or any time?

JK: In June this time.

RT: In June. Wow!

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JK: We usually after Vacation Bible School. We have Revival. Now we don't have... we used to have two weeks because the first week used to be prayer meeting.

RT: Okay.

JK: And then you'd have the next week of preaching which would be two weeks and now we only have one week so we have both at the same time.

RT: Okay, and so they come in that Sunday, are the mourner's bench and all, those who had said they accepted Christ, then they immediately went to go baptized – is that correct?

JK: They would do it...

RT: The same Sunday?

JK: No, they would do it the Sunday that would follow the Revival.

RT: Oh, okay the Sunday behind the Revival. You see I was raised Methodist so I don't know the process so...

JK: (JK and RT laugh).

RT: Well, okay that's fascinating. I would love to maybe be able to talk with your pastor at some point about ... having a documentation about that.

JK: Well, you're invited to come.

RT: Okay then well thank you very much. I shall. (RT and JK laugh).

JK: You're invited to come in June when we have Revival.

RT: Well, you know, I want to thank for taking this time out of your day and I usually like to end the tape by asking the person I'm speaking with to imagine, if you can, fifty to a hundred years from now, in which your descendants might get hold to this tape. Is there a message that you'd like to leave to them or some saying or whatever it is but imagine that you're speaking to [them] fifty to a hundred years from now and they just happen to get hold to this tape.

JK (Laughs) To tell them that this is... these are actual facts that they are hearing and that these things did actually happen and that the message that I learned from my mom was to always be truthful about things and I think that will carry over fifty years from now. And, they will not see the things that I've described but their lives can be enriched by just believing in themselves.

RT: Very good. Thank you.

JK: You're welcome.

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**PMIS 189964 A
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Interviewees: Henry “Buddy” Maggio Sr. and Sadie Maggio Dark (Natchitoches Italian community)

Interviewed November 7, 2014 at Natchitoches Genealogical Library (Old Courthouse, Second at Church Sts., Natchitoches), by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 01:05:51
Transcribed 2/22/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form and photos]
Note: ... indicates speaker’s pause**

00:00

BM: Did you see the two articles in *The Genealogist*?

DL: No sir, I live in New Orleans now so I come and go.

BM: Okay, well okay.

SD: What two articles?

BM: On Ross Di Maggio and Italian contributions to Natchitoches.

DL: No sir.

BM: Would you like a copy?

DL: I would love a copy, yes sir.

BM: Okay, before we leave I’ll get her to make a copy.

00:50

DL: I’m just going to say I’m talking to Buddy Maggio and Sadie Dark and this is the seventh day of November 2014, and y’all are siblings, brother and sister?

BM: Brother and sister.

DL: So what I’m interested in, what the Park Service is interested in, is trying to get a good idea of the people who came to Natchitoches. Natchitoches, as you know, started out as a native settlement, and the people who agglomerated there were the French, the Spanish, and whomever, and the Italian community came, what, the late nineteenth century, early twentieth century?

SD: Well, I imagine probably in the middle.

DL: The middle?

BM: Yeah.

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DL: The middle of the nineteenth century or the twentieth century?

BM: Twentieth.

DL: Twentieth century.

BM: No, the nineteenth century.

SD: 1870 something, 1850s, I've got a lot of it here. All of them came early.

DL: Where did you family originate?

SD: We're from Sicily.

BM: Cefalu, Sicily. Sadie, you go ahead and talk about, you know, when Pappa first came over and all that kind of stuff.

DL: Your parents came directly from Sicily?

SD: My mother was born in Louisiana, and my father came from Sicily, and when she was about four years old, they moved back to Sicily, and then she didn't come back again until my father, she and my father married and she was fifteen years old at that time. My father's brother came here but I don't remember what year he came. He was the oldest one in the family, and he was married, and he and his family came, and their first home was the Steel Magnolia house [Herman Taylor house]. At that time it was on the sidewalk.

DL: I've heard that.

SD: It was a grocery store, and they lived in the ... the living quarters was behind the grocery store, and later on, of course, the house was moved back where it is now. My father came to see him when he was 16 years old, and it was in 1895, and he stayed with them for four years. At that time, Italy had compulsory military duty, and when he became twenty he had to go back for military service, so he went in the navy. He stayed there for four years, came back for another year, then went back and married my mother, so he actually made three trips to Natchitoches.

DL: What were your mother's parents' name, her maiden name?

SD: They were Maggios, too.

DL: They were Maggios, as well?

SD: Distant, way back. In fact, we haven't gone back, we've gone back several generations, and they still haven't met. So, anyway, the name was real common.

DL: What was her first name?

SD: Carmelite.

DL: And what was your father's name?

SD: Sam. When Pappa first came, he was 16, he came by way of New York, and New Orleans, and then to come up here to see his brother, he walked the railroad track to Natchitoches, stopping along the way to work in the cane fields, and he worked for fifty cents a day in the cane fields, and today, we still have his machete that he cut the cane with. Let's see what else I want to say about

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that? Anyway, years ago, I asked my aunt, his sister, why did they come to Natchitoches? Who was the first one in our immediate family that came to Natchitoches? And she said a Brocato, and she said he was in New Orleans, he wanted to open a business, and he was told to come to Natchitoches, it was a growing community and to come here, and well when he did, he couldn't get anywhere, he couldn't do anything. Finally, someone told him, said if you joined the Masons, you will be in, and so he did. As you know, the Masons were a secret organization at that time, and the Catholics could not join them.

DL: That's true, that's historically correct. At first, the Catholics were excluded from the Masons.

SD: So anyway, he joined the Masons, and he immediately was in the community, so he opened a ... actually he did peddling, most of them started out with peddling. As you know, the Jews started out peddling, the Italians, too.

DL: He peddled up and down the river?

SD: All around Cane River.

DL: And what did he sell? What did a peddler generally sell?

SD: They had fruits.

DL: So they had food.

SD: They had vegetables, they had flour, you know, it was bulk stuff, they sold all that.

BM: One of the stories, Sadie, whenever he was peddling, he had a horse and wagon, and he'd start out early in the morning, and mama had told him go all down Cane River, and mama told him if he'd go to church first, and start out later, he'd sell more, and sure enough, he caught more people home, and his business really increased. I just want to put that in.

SD: I can remember, of course my father had a store, but the black churches had, what they called, once a year, they'd have an association, of course they cut it down to 'sociations, and they were having once a year a big affair at their churches, and I went with him a couple of times down Cane River, and he would actually have ice cream, and you know, he would serve ice cream, and I would wait until it was all gone, and scoop up the melted part. I remember that more than anything else.

DL: So, he had a store, but then he also peddled down river?

SD: Later on.

DL: Later on.

BM: He opened up a store, and then he went into the shoe cobbler business, and he raised eleven kids out of that business, really. Really, the war helped a whole lot, WWII. He was in debt like everybody else was, and it really came out, and Northwestern had a naval school here, and I worked with him in the shoe shop, and I was in school, you know, but every afternoon I'd have to work. I worked in the shoe shop to kind of keep the shoes straight, and everybody had about a nine, and they all black shoes—all about nine and nine and half, and that was a hard, hard, hard job to do, keep the shoes straight. They all looked the same; and anyhow, I'd tie the strings together, this, that, and the other, and my job, too, was to take the sole half, half soles, leather soles at the time, half soles, and rubber heels, and I'd take those off, and help him finish it, but he'd put that on, he had a stitching machine, and things. And the reason the soles and the heels wore out so much, they'd march to Grand Ecore about once a week. They did a lot of marching even though they were in the navy. That

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got him out of debt, really, it really did, it sure helped his business.

SD: Well, the shoes were rationed too, so everybody else had to have their shoes fixed. He had a lot of property. A friend of his who had a Coca-Cola company and an ice company told my father, he said, "Put your money in property," so he did. That's how he got into debt really, he would put his money into property [laughs].

BM: But he didn't buy farm land. He bought city lots—on corners, especially on the corners— and he built a house, had a house built on it rather, and then he rented the house out. Of course, he had more than one store, too, that he rented out.

DL: When your grandfather had the place, the store at the old Taylor place, the Steel Magnolia house, right?

SD: No, that was an uncle, his oldest brother.

11:37

DL: So, what happened to that store? Did he keep it? Or when did they sell that, more or less?

SD: Diane might know that, because I don't know, if she has that or not. She has a lot of names here.

DL: Ok, I will definitely want to look at that.

SD: Maggio, Cabrini ...

DL: It's quite a few.

SD: ... Bruno, Dodaro. She has, let's see, she has other people in here too. Catanese, Maggios, of course, Debusca, Marsalis, Delmonico, Nardini ...

DL: That's a lot, that's quite an extensive community. Well, where was your dad's shop, the first store? Where was it located?

SD: My father's first store?

DL: Was it downtown?

SD: It was on Second Street, then he had a cafe down there, a restaurant on Second Street, too, near the college; everything was near the college.

DL: So everything was oriented toward that college trade?

SD: The students could not have, well, the women, the girls could not have a car on the campus, and of course the boys could not afford one, and they were here, they had classes on the weekends, so they were here all weekend too, and so that part of town was very active.

13:18

DL: Back up a little bit. You told me before we started the tape that a lot of these Italian communities that you just named, the Italian families you just named, left before WWI, or during the Depression?

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SD: During the Depression.

DL: And they went where?

SD: Most 'em went to California.

DL: And they were basically looking for better opportunities?

SD: Looking for work.

13:45

BM: And my father, when he had that little cafe over there on Second Street, he went in business, he sold ice cream at the college, and that was one of the things, you know, it was private, you know, and everything, but he'd been in business with somebody else—it was Frank, wasn't it? And they sold ice cream everyday on the college. They had a little stand that they'd sell out of.

DL: I bet that was popular. I mean, that was really smart, gearing your business toward that population, because it is a kind of transient population, but there's always people there—they come and go.

SD: Like I said, they didn't have cars. They walked, the children, the students did.

14:37

DL: Where did y'all grow up? Where was your house, your family home?

BM: Well, it was on Second Street, what we called the big house, but I'll let Sadie tell it. My sister, she got run, a car run over her. You go ahead and tell the story, Sadie, and why we had to move.

SD: She was two years older than I was—and I was a baby—and just a tomboy, she'd run out into the street all the time. Of course, it wasn't much traffic, but one time a car literally ran over her, this Model T, and Poppa picked up the car, and the next week, we were living on what we called Jackson Square. Of course, it was a big community then, but we got away from the traffic.

BM: Yeah, Sadie, he was going to the country, ... and, of course, I was born back there.

SD: And I was born in the big house.

BM: It's North and Lake Street.

DL: Okay, North and Lake Street, I was going to ask you where Jackson Square was, because I'm not familiar with that, okay.

SD: After my mama died, we moved back to the big house.

DL: Is the big house still standing?

SD: Uh-huh. It's right at the railroad crossing, that house that has the little curved porch on it.

DL: Oh, yeah.

BM: It's still in the estate, we still own it.

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DL: Is it?

BM: Yeah.

SD: There's a story on that thing. It was originally an Indian warehouse, and then of course they kept adding on to it until it's what it is today. But, there's just been so many other Italians that you need to know about.

16:49

DL: I'm definitely going to look at these [articles], but we can learn a lot from one family's history. Was there, what you said a minute ago, Mr. Buddy, was there an actual Italian community? Was there a place where the Italian families congregated?

SD: No, they were all over Natchitoches.

BM: But they had a section of Natchitoches called Italy.

SD: Called Little Italy, but that was early.

BM: Not Little Italy, just plain Italy.

SD: Just Italy, but that was earlier.

DL: And where was that?

SD: That's where the Lemee house, where Steel Magnolias, round that section was called Italy. That's when they first came, probably the 1830s or something, when they first came, they all lived around there.

DL: They probably lived there to take advantage of the river, the water, the transport from the river? I mean, the 1830s that would have been pre-railroad, right?

SD: Oh yeah.

BM: Well, they worked at the lime kiln.

DL: Okay.

SD: That's another story. They were bricklayers, you know—masons. They worked in the grocery stores, they had grocery stores.

DL: Well, there's a long-term tradition of bricklaying, masonry, in the Italian community. It's interesting they brought that skill with them. Are there any buildings that you know of that were built specifically by Italian brick masons?

18:18

BM: Oh, yeah. Lemee house, and we had the house that burned, you know, a couple of years ago, the Levy-East house. The guy is rebuilding it on the same lot, but it was built by Trizini & Soldini.

SD: He has a story on them.

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BM: Yeah, I'll give you a copy of this, Italian Contributions.

18:43

SD: They were bricklayers, you know, masons. But Sicily was more of an agricultural place. Actually, the Depression didn't hurt us so much because my father did have a huge garden. He just had a half of block of garden, and so we had plenty to eat, and the Italians from New Orleans would come up and they'd peddle spaghetti and hard cheeses and things, so we lived on spaghetti and tomato sauce. That came from Italy, you see, it always came in big boxes, so I never knew we didn't have any food. The Depression didn't bother us as it did ...

BM: Father had a

SD: My father had a store so that helped, and these other people were just workers, that moved to, and just couldn't make it.

BM: And the second oldest boy in the family, Charlie, he raised chickens and everything. It was during the Depression. We always had chickens to eat, you know, and he had milk cows, so we always had milk, and we really didn't ... it was like you said, we never had to go hungry, and Poppa had every fruit tree that you could think of in his place. I mean grape, orange, apple, persimmon—it just goes on and on—and all kinds of vegetables. He gardened; it wasn't easy, but he really had a good garden.

DL: Was that around the area you're calling the big house?

BM: On North and Lake Street.

SD: On Harrison Street.

BM: Whole back yard.

SD: I do have a story, it's just a story. You can turn that off. It's just something that when my mother and father first came to Natchitoches, after they married. This is what happened. It's silly.

BM: Sadie, you ought to let her record it.

DL: Can I record that while you read it?

21:54

SD: "The water is calm, the air so sweet" (this is my father). "As I stand on deck, I can't help but think back to the events of the last few days, no, the last few months and years, so much has happened. Sixteen, that's when it all began on my sixteenth birthday. My parents let me go to America to visit my brother and his wife. My brother, Ross, left Cefalu, Italy, a few years before and was making a new life in the new world. Oh, what excitement! The ocean crossing, seeing the Statue of Liberty, going through customs at Ellis Island, the train ride taking me halfway across the United States to New Orleans, and then working my way to Natchitoches. I remember cutting sugar cane in the fields of south Louisiana, at White Castle, for 50 cents a day. Finally I arrived in Natchitoches. My brother and his family had a grocery store on Jefferson Street, and like almost all of the Italians in American at that time, they had their living quarters in the rear of store." Of course, that's the Steel Magnolia house. "Arriving in Natchitoches, I knew I would never go back to the old country; but unfortunately, at 20, not being an American citizen," (because he thought he just was going to be visiting), "I had to return for military service. I chose the Navy and must admit I enjoyed it very much. I can remember climbing barefoot to the top mast, and sliding down the rope to the

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deck below. But there was one feat I could never master, diving over one side of the ship, holding my breath, trying to swim under the ship, and come up the other side. Several of the sailors would show off their skill, but alas, I never made it.” Undoubtedly, they did their training on the old sail ships, and not the new ones.

BM: Oh, I thought you were going to read where mama was sick?

SD: What?

24:00

BM: Where mama got sick on the ship.

SD: Well, this goes on, it's coming to that. “One day while on leave, I returned for a visit to my parents' home, and walking down the street,” (this is not very true, this is just something ...), “a beautiful young girl approached me, ‘Hi’ she said, ‘you're from America aren't you?’ ‘How do you happen to speak English?’ I asked. ‘Oh, I was born in America, I grew up in Louisiana but my parents returned to Cefalu when I was five. I like America. I have a sister, Seraphine, she's living there now. She lives in Natchitoches where you were living.’ ‘Really?’ I said, and after a few more minutes of chatting about America, I had to leave for I was due back on the ship.

“I returned to America, I continued working at odd jobs, helping my brother in his store, selling fruits and vegetables up and down Cane River, and somehow, I kept thinking about the beautiful English-speaking girl in Sicily. She had a sister here, she said, Seraphine, that's it, I'll look her up. Perhaps she will write to her for me. Finally, after several months of correspondence with Carmelite through her sister, I got up enough courage to ask her parents if I could marry their daughter. Oh, what a wonderful day when I received a reply from them, saying that Carmelite would be happy to marry you!” That part, you just have to imagine.

DL: So your mom said that wasn't actually how it happened?

SD: Well, my mother died when I was 13, so I didn't get to talk to her too much. My father would tell me stories, you know. “After our wedding in Cefalu, we talked Carmelite's mother into returning to America with us so she could visit her other daughter. The trip back started out beautifully.” This part is true. “Our ship was large, the waters calm, the sky clear and sunny. Because of our lower-class passage, the women had quarters in one section below deck and the men, another. Each day, my bride would meet me on deck, where together, we'd talk and stroll for hours.” This is why I wrote this story, because of this little part right in here. “But, alas, one day the wind started blowing, the waves rocked the ship from side to side, then rain began falling in angry torrents. Carmelite didn't meet me that day. I asked the steward if he would please see about her. ‘Don't bother me in this storm, I must see after my other passengers.’ The next day the storm grew more fierce. None of the women came up, I again asked the steward to check on them, he again refused. With no thought of being in forbidden territory, I started for the women's quarters.” Since Poppa had been in the navy, the storm did not affect him at all. “Opening the door, I gasped, the moaning of the women lying on their cots, the whimpering of their little ones, clutched in their arms, made me cry in alarm. Quickly, I ran to my wife, she was so sick, and could only raise her hand to acknowledge that I was there. I bathed her face, and fed her some soup I had warmed on the tiny stove nearby. After she was resting comfortably, I did the same with her mother. I looked at the others, so many, so sick. I knew I could never leave them, I had to help them too. Finally, after several days, the storm abated, the door opened, and in walked the steward. Seeing me, he yelled that he was going to get the Captain. ‘What are you doing here?’ asked the Captain, ‘Steward, take him up on deck, I will see to him later.’ ‘No, no,’ cried the women in unison, ‘no one came down here to see about us, he alone cared for us, we felt we were dying, he saved our lives.’ Clenching his fist, the Captain looked fiercely at the steward, slowly he relaxed, turned to me and in a quiet voice, said ‘You may leave now, young man, I will

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send nurses down to care for the ladies.””

“Now I am back on deck, tomorrow we will arrive in America, and a new life. The past has been good to me, but what of the future, I wonder? Whatever happens, I know there will be years of happiness and fulfillment, for in my heart there is much love, and in my America, much hope.”

28:43

SD: So that last part, I wrote the first part, bringing in about his being in the navy, but how they met, I don't know how he exactly knew mama, so that is not a true part.

DL: It's a little connector.

SD: But as far as him being almost put in the brig [laughs] for being down in the ... they had steward's quarters ... because they couldn't, gosh, he came over three times!

DL: Right, exactly, and that's a long trip too.

SD: A long trip, and they had to raise the money to do that.

DL: They came into New Orleans?

SD: No, they came in, on the internet you can get the, Ellis Island.

DL: They came in at Ellis Island.

29:46

SD: We had ... Diane should have the ship he came in on, but he came to Ellis Island. All his family came here except one sister. She could not come because she had a son who was blind. You could not have any defects to come into the United States, even an eye infection or anything. You had to be healthy, so she could never come with her son, with her children. We had a home in Sicily, in fact I saw it, but right after the war he gave it to his sister. He owned it, he was the last son, it went to him.

BM: My wife's first trip over there, to Cefalu, she saw Pappa's sister when she was still alive, but she was 99 years old, blind and everything, and she died about month later, but she did see her alive.

DL: Is your wife of Italian descent?

BM: No, French.

SD: She came with St. Denis, her family came with St. Denis.

31:16

DL: Did y'all speak Italian growing up?

SD: We didn't speak Italian at all. Buddy is younger than I am, and I was the middle one, and mama spoke English, see, because she was born here, and she never did. They spoke Italian.

BM: Brother Charlie told this story, whenever, Poppa got over here, he wanted everybody to speak English, he wanted to learn the languages over here, and one day he told my brother, Charlie, and my brother, Joe, Charlie, uh, Ned to do something, and they just sat there, they acted like they didn't

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understand him, and he told ‘em again, and he got angry, and he didn’t realize he was speaking Italian to ‘em. They said, “Poppa, we can’t understand you. You always tell us not to learn Italian, not to speak Italian, not to learn Italian. You have to tell us in English!”, then he realized it, and they did what he wanted. Charlie told that story; they weren’t but about eight, ten years old.

DL: So he reverted.

BM: Yeah. I was going to say that I’ve got the Italian Contributions to Natchitoches, and I’ve got here such fields as agriculture, architecture, construction, store merchants and planters, and I should have put down, and this is motion picture industry. Yeah, because Ross Di Maggio, his name was Ross Maggio, and he changed his name when he went to work for Columbia, and this is his story. He finished here at Northwestern, and he was a very good violinist. Sadie can tell you more about it. But he wrote a college song and everything while he was at Northwestern, he was just in all kinds of organizations with music, but he left to go to California after he graduated, and his wife was, she had a studio and she was teaching the young actresses, and so, one thing led to another, and Columbia hired him, and he wrote music for many, many movies, and even in, I’ve got in here on, the Three Stooges. He wrote, he and somebody else, “On the 135th short subject of the American slapstick comedy team, the Three Stooges, the trio made a total of 190 shorts for Columbia Pictures between 1934 and 1959. The 135th film is a satire of the south seas genre of films. The standard Three Blind Mice theme is replaced during the end titles with a hula composition titled ‘La La’. The tune was written by Columbia pictures composers, Ross Di Maggio and Niko Brava.” He changed his name, you know, when he went to work for Columbia.

SD: Like Joe Di Maggio, he thought he could get in better if he changed it to De Maggio.

BM: So we had him in the movie industry, and we also had my brother’s stepson, he made movies. Now, one of them—he had bit parts in several of them—but one of his better parts was in, he worked for Twentieth Century Fox films, and he, his family, in fact when they had the show playing here, the Cane Theater was still here, they had *Onionhead*, the title of the movie, featuring Bobby Byles and Andy Griffith. They had it right on the marquee. I wish I’d got a picture of it.

SD: I had one, I gave it to... I had his picture, and when Andy Griffith died a couple of years ago, I took it to the Natchitoches Times. I had a picture of the marquee where it had his name and Bobby’s name on it, and I said “You ought to do this because Andy Griffith just died,” and she did. I went back to get my stuff and I had a lot of material on it, and she said, “Well, I can’t find it,” and I don’t know why I didn’t make copies before, because I’ve always sent things down there and always got stuff back.

BM: You know, I’ve turned in things over there though and they found it later, so you should check again. On the royalties, his mother kept getting royalties until she died, and Bobby’s buried at the Catholic cemetery.

37:02

DL: Did y’all have a, did the Italian community go to Immaculate Conception, or was there a church of particular attachment?

BM: Well, we went to Mass. The thing that was big, and we’ve got a story on, for the Italians was the ...

SD: St. Joseph

BM: Yeah, St. Joseph Altar, that was big, and just about every family had a private St. Joseph. I can remember when I was a little boy, I mean, Poppa had one, it was in the dining room. There was

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all kinds of food and everything, and how it got started, Cefalu had a famine way back, and they prayed to the saint that if they would have rain for the crops and everything, that they would do this, and they did it, and it's still carrying on today. Natchitoches has it, it's at the Knights of Columbus hall, and it was really, really big last year. More people came, a lot of people brought in, it's no meat, everything is, it's no meat, because it's always during Lent on St. Joseph's Day. So, you'd be surprised at how at the number of dishes you can have, you'd have some vegetables, fish, and sweets and everything they'd have down there.

SD: Talking about the church, they'd have midnight Mass at the church, and after midnight Mass, we would have open house at the big house on Second Street there. We had ham, and all kind of things to eat, you know. The people of the town, after Mass, would come out, because in those days, you couldn't eat the day before Christmas, and at midnight Mass you could eat but you couldn't have but one full meal, and you couldn't have meat, it was just a day of fast. So before midnight Mass, of course, everybody was hungry, and for years—years and years—we had this open house after midnight Mass at that house.

40:26

DL: What was the typical meal at your house, growing up? What did you typically eat?

SD: Our Sunday meal would always be spaghetti and meatballs. I know one day I went to ... no, my son, went to Choate's and Pam was there, Pam Kee, and Johnny said, "Oh, we're going to have spaghetti and meatballs," or something like that, "for Christmas." "Spaghetti and meatballs?" "Yeah," he said, "you know we always have that," and then she said, "You know, that's a good idea." She's told me since, "You know, I always fix spaghetti and meatballs for Christmas" and everybody else has turkey. Well, we have turkey and all that, which we've always had, but the big meal, the main thing was spaghetti and meatballs. We passed that same recipe down through the years.

BM: And Fridays, you couldn't, Catholics couldn't eat meat for a long time, but now you can. We always had fish, or some kind of fish product. Every Friday, every Friday, it was the same, no meat. Pappa would buy buffalo, you know, catfish, and things like that. We'd always have some kind of patties.

41:55

DL: Was there a lot of fishing, commercial fishing that went on around here at that time?

SD: They had their fish markets where you could buy fish. [Looking through photographs] This is a picture of my grandmother, my mama's mama.

DL: Wow, how beautiful, and she was here, in Natchitoches?

SD: She came with Mama and Pappa when they first married, that was the true part about that, then she went back, and I guess, after her husband died years and years later, she came and lived with her sister, her oldest sister. Mama just had one sister, there was only two of them in the family, and then she died here.

BM: She's buried in the Catholic cemetery.

DL: Catholic cemetery? That's the one on Fifth Street?

BM: Yeah, Fifth Street.

SD: This is an article in the paper about Pappa. Somebody liked him and just wrote it.

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43:08

DL: So he continued in the cobbler business?

SD: Yeah. He actually, that came about during the Depression time. He had a grocery store, and his sister in, what they called Bayou Natchez then, we call it Natchez now, they lost everything. They had money in the bank, and the Depression really hit 'em hard. So Pappa just walked out of his grocery store and gave it to 'em, and they moved to Natchitoches, and he went on into cobbler, to shoe repair business.

DL: But he had done the smart thing, you know you were talking about that earlier, buying property. It may go down, but it's always going to come back.

BM: And that shoe shop—after the war, the veterans who were returning, and my sister, Jeanette, she married a gunner, and he, Pappa taught him how to be—you know the government wants you to find a thing, they pay for it, you know.

DL: Like the G.I. bill.

BM: Yeah, the GI bill. So Pappa taught him how, about the shoe business. He had a fine shoe shop on Second Street in East Natchitoches for a long, long time before he died.

44:50

DL: Where was your dad's shoe shop?

BM: It was right next to the big house on Second. It's still there, the building's still there, attached.

SD: He added it on to the house, because he owned the other lots, the other buildings. As I said, they had a restaurant at one time.

DL: The restaurant was there, at the same place?

BM: It was called the Rendezvous.

SD: He rented out a dress shop. It was all one right after the other. He rented, someone had a cleaners and a barber shop.

DL: Did he own that little strip?

45:24

BM: Yeah, he owned that little strip at the end there—Olivier's, one of Olivier's buildings, it was a photographer.

SD: That was later on, there was a barber shop, cleaners, restaurant, dress shop.

BM: Several, several photograph people stayed there, the Erbachs ...

SD: Guillet ...

BM: Yeah, Guillet, and then I'm trying to think, the guy that still takes pictures of weddings, from Cane River, down there.

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DL: Oh, Adrian [Demery]?

BM: Yeah, Adrian, that's where he got his start. It was just a line, Pace was there, just one after the other.

DL: Were they all in the same business?

SD: That place was really good, because of the college, good property.

DL: Does your family still own that?

BM: Yeah, estate, the estate. It belongs to nine people.

46:50

DL: So you guys, there were 11 siblings, is that what you said to begin with?

BM: Yeah.

DL: Wow, that's quite the family.

BM: Five are deceased, and six are still living.

SD: It's a tradition that we have, since Pappa's time, that we still do.

DL: What is the tradition?

SD: It's a tradition, this is Diane's stuff, I've got mine in a little book. Every Christmas, Pappa, do you want me to read it?

DL: Yes mam.

47:29

SD: "Every Christmas, Pappa's Italian friends would come by to wish him a Merry Christmas." This would be in the big house, where we're talking about. "Pappa would go to the sidebar, take out a bottle of bourbon, and fill tiny glasses with the liquor, each taking one, and a toast of Merry Christmas was proposed, and with one gulp, down the train." I don't know how they drank that stuff. "Through the years, his friends grew fewer and fewer. Finally, they were all gone, and now Pappa would toast Christmas with his sons and sons-in-laws. Then one Christmas, he, too, was gone, but my brother, Ned, filling the small glasses, passed them to the other men in the family, he raised his glass, and wished a Merry Christmas, not to those present, but to the family members who had died. Each year thereafter, before we sat down to Christmas dinner, Ned gave the same toast, and each year, the list grew longer. Alas, the Christmas of '92, Ned was among those being toasted." Ned was the third son. "That year, the women and children holding glasses of eggnog, cokes, or just plain water, joined the men. No family name was forgotten; someone would be sure to remember a dear one, and whisper his or her name. Then with raised glasses, Merry Christmas would ring out. Some little one will always ask, "Who was Mary; who was Uncle Johnny, who was this person?," and an amusing antidote of each is told to them. There are no tears; we are not sad. We know our family will always remain together by this simple Christmas tradition. Merry Christmas."

DL: That's a great tradition.

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SD: We still do that.

DL: That's wonderful.

BM: We're all in a circle around the living room table. Everybody remembers, everybody, each person remembers.

SD: Remembers someone who died, and the kids, I mean just the little ones, we have glasses for them too, holding Seven-Up, or Sprite. The men still have theirs. They do not sip it or anything until it's all over, until we say "Merry Christmas."

DL: That's a wonderful tradition. What a lovely way to keep family alive for the next generation who have never met these people.

BM: We had some terrible accidents. We've had some killed in car wrecks, sickness, a lot of died younger. But everybody's remembered.

50:35

DL: Mr. Buddy, when did you go into business?

BM: I went into business in 1947. My brother, Ned, was working in California, and he came back for a visit, and Natchitoches was going to have an election to see if they were going to vote alcohol back in. Alcohol was voted out in 1943 on account of ... there was so much trouble on account of the G.I.s, there was so many of them here, thousands you know, and they just had trouble. They'd go into a place, and ...

DL: They'd just caused a ruckus?

BM: Caused a ruckus. So Natchitoches was voted dry. My brother came back in 1947, he came down for just a short visit but I talked him into staying because the election was going to be happening. Now, I need to back up a little bit, my oldest brother had a place of business, we went into business with him, Ned and I went into business with him. He had a place that started about the middle of 1935, somewhere in the middle of the 1930s, it was right around 1935. His, the building, you didn't go in to drink, that's when you brought your own bottle.

DL: Set-ups.

BM: Right, you brought your own bottle, and he filled the wine up out of a barrel, and they'd take it on back, you know, and that's how he went into business. In 1941, though, Ned went into business there, and he stayed until he was drafted, and then the parish went dry. Of course he went into the service, and all his time was in Alaska. Sadie and my wife went over there. They built an Alaskan Highway, he was an engineer, and his whole term of service was counted in Alaska, building the highway. So, after service he came back, then he went to work in California, and then they had the election, and it passed, and so, I didn't have much talking to do to keep him here, because he really wanted to get back in the liquor business. So we went to Shreveport and got our whole stock in the car, on the back seat and in the trunk, the whole stock, and we opened up the store. Then it just took off from there. Later on, I moved across the street, in a big grocery store. The building is still there, it's on Martin Luther King and Amulet street; it's a church now.

DL: How ironic.

SD: If you want to look them up, she has some stories on some of these people.

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DL: I will definitely look at that.

BM: I'm going in there and get these two things made for you.

54:37

DL: Ms. Sadie, let me ask you a little question real quick. Where did you marry, who was your husband? Mr. Dark?

SD: He was from Winnfield. I'm a WWII war bride, so I have a lot of stories.

DL: So his family was from Winnfield?

SD: Uh-huh. He had a grandfather who was in the Civil War. His people go way back, but I'm first generation Italian.

DL: What was his ethnicity? Was he English? Dark is an unusual name, that's why I'm asking.

SD: There's not too many Darks. They had a baseball player, Al Dark, years ago. It branched off into his family. They seemed to think that it came from the France, like Joan of Arc.

DL: Okay. That would make sense, so he would've been from an old French family. I was wondering if it had been abbreviated through the years. So have you always lived in Natchitoches? When you got married, you came back here?

SD: No. Winnfield was real Baptist, you'd call it the old time hard shelled Baptist, and in fact we married, and I went over there. He didn't go into service until a few months later, he was 19, he wasn't 20 until later, and one of his aunts said, "Sadie, you're just like any other gentile!" I didn't know what they thought Catholics were, but that's how Baptists were. I worked in the picture show after school, and one weekend somebody wanted to go someplace on the weekend, and so they'd known I worked at the picture show, and they wanted to know if I wanted to work for that weekend, and I said, "Yeah, I would." But my mother-in-law, she was so sweet, she said, "Sadie, you'd better not," said, "They really don't like for the show, to have shows on Sunday!"

[brief discussion about Winnfield]

58:41

SD: I had to come here [Natchitoches] to go to Mass. Don would drive me here every Sunday. You asked about when we lived here, after the war, he said we would live here so they [their children] could go to school the Catholic school, so we moved here.

DL: I bet you were glad.

SD: I enjoyed it over there, they were just wonderful people, but I was glad to move back.

DL: I'm sure you were. Being from a traditional family, it's hard to make that break. How many children did you have?

SD: Four.

DL: Of your siblings, of your 11 siblings, how many boys, how many girls?

SD: We had six girls and five boys, and mama died with child.

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DL: And you were 13? Where were you in the family, in the placement?

SD: Let's see, I think I was the seventh one.

DL: So you were a little past the middle.

SD: There was four below me. We had one sister who was nun. I had one sister in Kansas City, and she was in service, she was in the WACs for two years.

DL: I appreciate y'all talking to me. This has been very entertaining and educational.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Mr. Clyde Masson (Cloutierville)

**Interviewed February 11, 2015 at Highway 1 Market, 14843 LA-1, Cloutierville, LA, by
Dayna Bowker Lee; Henry Maggio also present**

**Time of interview: 01:26:20
Transcribed 2/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:04

DL: Mr. Clyde Masson.

CM: That's correct.

DL: And it is February 11, 2015. What we are interested in finding out is basically the history of the area, and I know you've been real involved in business and agriculture, and one of the things I wanted to talk to you about was changes, especially in the agribusiness, things you've seen change in this area during your lifetime. So, let's just start with some basic stuff, and tell me a little bit about your personal history. Where were you born?

00:42

CM: Well, I was born in Alec [Alexandria, LA]. I was born in 1938, soon be 77, and I've been right here most of my life. I was gone eleven months in the service for a while, and I came back. I was still in the service. I stayed home most of the time, but off and on, I would have to go where they called me. Let me tell you what I can remember about Magnolia. In 1945, that was high water, and we had to—I say we, I was just a little boy—my father took the cattle out to the Kisatchie National Forest, and everybody here put their cattle in one big herd, and drove 'em out to the forest, and I remember, my daddy and my uncle had a hundred head, and when they brought 'em back, we were one of the few cattle people that got all our hundred head back, and right by the Magnolia store, was a big ol' corral, and my uncle, of course he had 'em all named pretty much, and he said, This is ol' Nell," and whatnot, and he got everyone of his cattle back. Some of 'em never got all their cattle back.

01:55

DL: Did you brand your cattle? [Mr. Masson drew the brand]



CM: Oh, yes, they were branded, but he almost knew them by name; but it wasn't that many that didn't come back. That's really one of the first things I remember about Magnolia. Now, Mr. Matt Hertzog, who owned it, every Saturday, he'd have a whole crowd'd be on that porch at the store, and he'd bring his saddle horses, or walking horses, and they'd parade 'em up and down the road right there. He had a bunch of kids, and people would be there on that porch—I'm talking about it'd be 40 or 50 people there watching his horses. He was so proud of those

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horses.

2:30

DL: Didn't they have a race track over there on his land?

CM: Yeah, the race track is on past the big house. They used to go to church on the riverbank and the race track was right across from the church. Now, I went to some races there, I can tell you, but they did have races there on Sunday, and I went with my daddy several times.

DL: Let me back up a minute. Tell me your parents' names.

02:55

CM: My daddy was named Clyde too, but they called him Tootie. My mother was Emma. She was originally from Lafayette, Louisiana. In fact, she was a full-blooded German. Her mama and daddy came from Germany, and they lived in Lafayette. My mama came to teach here, '35? Mama must have come here at least three years before I was born. They put her off at Derry from the train, and the guy who carried the mail, carried her to Cloutierville at the big ol' house— it's pink now, I believe—down the street down there, was a boarding house, and the streets were still dirt. So, between the time she came, and I was born, that's when they poured the concrete street with the sidewalk, and that's one of the few little towns that's got concrete streets with a sidewalk in Natchitoches Parish.

03:57

The way they got that, Huey Long was good friends with the priest here, by the name of Father Becker; yeah, Father Becker and Huey Long were real good friends. Father Becker said, "I could get you all them votes if you just give us that street." That's how they got it, and if you ride down the street, there's one place that's got a bare spot in the concrete, where all the rest of it just like the day they poured it, and most of it was done by hand, 'cause I've talked to people that worked on that street. It drains pretty good. In 1945, down almost to the church down there, the water came up and drained in the street. The Coast Guard—that was the headquarters for this area, and they parked down there, we call it Carnahan's store, it's burnt. I bet there were eleven businesses in Cloutierville at that time. I'm trying to count, coming up, it was a lot of businesses there.

04:55

DL: Was there a Masson store there as well?

CM: Yes. We sold everything but cars and airplanes at that store. We sold wagons, wagon wheels, horse harnesses. We sold all that at that store.

DL: Where was that at in relationship to ...?

CM: You know where that little shack used to be a pizza place? Well, it's right across the street from that. In fact, that old building still sitting in the back was our furniture warehouse for that store. When they took it down, they left that one building warehouse for a storage place.

DL: When did they close that store?

05:38

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CM: Probably 50 years. We sold it to a fella by the name of Spillman, and he run it for about ten years, and he decided to go out of business, and my brother—I was gone to a football game with Tech and Northwestern—and my brother went to the sale, and anyhow, when I got back that Saturday night from the game, the phone was ringing, and he was worried to death. He'd bought every bit of hardware they had in that store, and its down there in that ol' store-building where my daughter lives now, over at my mama's house, and my mama, we've got a bunch of old metal and stuff, and my mama, of course she's dead now, she lived to the 90s, she used to go over there and dust that off, and move off the shelves, but he bought all that stuff, it's all stored in that building.

DL: So, it's all the hardware from the store?

CM: The store. He didn't buy any of the shoes, clothes parts, or he didn't buy any of the dry goods stuff, but he bought almost every bit of the hardware. It's like, you bid on one thing, and you take some of the shelves, and he bought, it wasn't all that much money he paid for it but he bought it. I know it took us a couple of days to get it moved.

06:57

DL: What about the other businesses there? I know there was a gin.

CM: There was a gin. The gin belonged to Father Becker, the priest, and belonged to the estate of Mr. Sam LaCaze, that's who the gin belonged to. My daddy worked for Mr. LaCaze—Mr. LaCaze is my daddy's uncle, and my daddy worked for him. He was the guy that got out and sold cotton, and bought pecans and stuff. And my oldest uncle, he run the store—he was like the bookkeeper—and my other uncle, he was the man that took care of the farm, and then one day they decided—sometime in the '40s, I guess it was—to go in business for their-selves, and they bought the commissary that was there at Montrose, and they tore that down and moved it to Cloutierville, that's what they built the store with.

DL: Oh, okay, that was the store building?

CM: Yeah, the store building. I was just a little boy when they did that, but I was old enough to know all about it, you know.

08:04

DL: Do you have pictures of what it look like then? I'm just curious, because I have found just a dearth of pictures of Cloutierville.

CM: I don't have any pictures.

DL: I was talking to Ginny Tobin not too long ago, and she had put together a little book about Cloutierville for her family, and she had more pictures than anybody I've ever seen.

CM: That's my father right there, and that was his youngest brother. They're sitting on the bread box in front of the store.

DL: Oh, wow, that's a great picture. I'm going to take a picture of this.

08:43

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CM: Yeah, that was my father and my uncle. The oldest brother, he decided to sell out and them two bought the store, and by that time, I was old enough to do the farm, so I kinda took care of the farm, and they run the store, and my uncle, he'd get up every morning before daylight, and he and guy run the place would go out there and walk through the pasture, about starting before daylight, walk two or three miles every day, and one day he tried to walk and his legs just gave out, and he had to give it up.

DL: He was walking for exercise?

CM: He'd go see the cows, but it was exercise. You'd think somebody that did it, it was good exercise, but it sure ... his legs went out. It'll tell you, when it's time for you to wear out, you wear out, you'll wear out. My daddy died at 52 years old. He was a young man, but he smoked three packs of Pall Mall cigarettes a day. The brother, Uncle Mel, lived up into his 80s, way up in his 80s.

DL: You said your mother lived a long time?

CM: Oh, mama was 91, 92, I can't remember exactly what it was. My mama was a teacher—home economics,—but after I was born, she did a little bit of substituting; but she never did go back into teaching professionally.

DL: How many siblings did you have, brothers and sisters?

CM: Two. I had two brothers. My youngest brother is still living. He's in the store with us.

10:30

DL: So, you started running the farm?

CM: Yeah, I took care of the farm, and I tried to take on the farm before I ever got out of school.

DL: What did you start out doing?

10:43

CM: I took care of the cattle, made the hay, I made hay. We always had a couple of guys that worked for us on the farm. Then my dad died, I really took over. My uncle and my aunt kinda tended the store, and in later years, Uncle decided to go out. I took the farm over; I bought him out, and I kept it for a good long time, and finally, I sold it. We divided the property, and my brother and I—my brother passed away in the '70s, and we owned the place—well, we still own it together. Now I have the place where I live that belongs to me, and my other brother, a part belongs to him, and the rest of it still, I guess you'd call it estate land. It was good. The first job I had, I made five dollars a day. That don't sound like much money, but it was. I could take five dollars and go out on Saturday night on five dollars, buy gas, and go to a movie.

DL: Tell me what the businesses were that you remember.

12:02

CM: Okay, I'm going to start down the street. Down there by the church, they had a grocery store, let's call it, let's call it Livingston's Grocery. It was somebody else before that, but, Livingston Grocery...

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DL: Is that on the side of the church, or on the river side?

CM: Across it, it was on the river bank. Alright, then you had the Carnahan store.

DL: Okay, so the Livingston store building is still there? Is that right?

CM: Yes, old boy used it for a workshop, across from that pink house. Alright, you had the Carnahan store that burnt down, alright when you crossed the street, the old, where they had a filling station garage, that was Poché, Lawrence Poché, alright, when you came by that old bank building, that was the Red, White, and Blue, we called it the Boo's Saloon.

DL: That was the bar after it was the bank?

12:48

CM: That was the bank building, uh huh. Alright, you came up the street a little bit, and this other building on the same side of the street, you'd be coming up the street, that was the Red, White, no it wasn't, that was the Poor Boys Bar, I believe they called, it really was the Gill's store. It was a store that had all kinds of stuff in it. Across the street was the Red, White, and Blue Bar, that belonged to the Charleville's, and then some other people had rented it over the years. Alright, you come back up the street, get back on the right side, we call it the post office building, that was Ms. DL Charleville's store, and that was also the post office. She was the postmaster, but that was when you'd get your mail in that old building. The building's still there.

13:40

Alright, come up the street a little bit more and it had a Texaco station. The old station is still there, but it's not open anymore. Come on up the street, and that's our store, a big store, called the Masson Brothers. Alright, you come on up the street, they had a filling station right there on the corner where you turn to go to the schoolhouse, that was Estate of Sam LaCaze's service station, and then right across the street in front of it was a big store, Estate of Sam LaCaze's store. Alright, you cross the river, it was this block building right over here, and it was called Luddie's at that time, but a couple more people owned it after that—but if you want the old time, Luddie's would be the name you called it. I won't even tell you these other folk's names who owned it because it would be in more modern time, but Luddie Lavespere got out of the service, and he and, I can't think of the other guy, they built that building over there, the block building.

14:42

DL: And it was a store.

CM: It was a store, grocery store, but they'd sell five points [screws] and nails, and stuff like we sold, and the Elephant, which is across the road over there, that was called the White Elephant, that came later, it was built later. That service station was built later too. I'm going to say that was built in the '50s, '55, and Lawrence Poché, by that time, had moved in the old station that's about to fall down, past the post office? He had moved there, that's what I'm tellin', had a lot of businesses.

DL: It sounded like it was kind of a happening little town.

CM: Yeah, well, there was a lot of people lived here. You turn right up the road up here and go

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on the river, there was just one house one after the other.

DL: I've got a map from 1939. It's a topo map, but it's got, you can see the houses just everywhere.

15:43

CM: You go behind the school back here, well, that road, there was house after house after house, that was called Estate LaCaze place, and he was one of those farmers that had about ten to twenty acres, and I can remember, almost across from the store, that's where they kept the mules, and early in the morning, people came to get their mules to work their land.

DL: So, sharecroppers would come pick up their mules?

CM: Uh-huh, sharecroppers, that was the lot right there. That was the lot where they kept the mules.

DL: Was that just for the Estate LaCaze place, or was that where everybody?

CM: Well, that wasn't for everybody; that was strictly for LaCaze. They owned a bunch of property. They owned what we'll call the Del Valley [?] place here now, but they owned all that property what we call Coco-vin [Coco Bend? - coq au vin?], course they had some places down at Monette's Ferry too. They had a mule yard down there, too. Yeah, I had an uncle who lived down there—his name was Wallie LaCaze. He was a man that took care of the mules and stuff down there. People that lived toward Marco, there was just one house one after the other.

DL: And Marco, was that a sawmill town?

17:01

CM: No, it was a farming town. Let me tell you, at our store, we would run a transfer truck. On Fridays, we'd go to Gorum; on Saturdays, we'd run up Cane River, and we went almost up to St. Matthews school, and we would pick up people, or pick up their order—what they want—and come back, and we'd go back and bring 'em back, bring the orders, and that was every Saturday, and when I got old enough to drive, I did that, I run that truck.

DL: You were kind of busing?

CM: Well, the later years, we had a bus.

DL: I had heard there was a bus.

CM: First we had a big truck with a tarp, and of course a bus was so much nicer, 'cause you could heat it. People started getting cars and stuff, then we went to a pickup that had a bed made for it, and of course everybody got cars. Today, most people's got three. I can remember, there was like, I'd say, there might have been a dozen vehicles around Cloutierville. At night, in the summer months, we would skate up and down the streets of Cloutierville, and we might have to get out of the street a couple of times during the whole night. Now, you can't stay five minutes somebody's passin'.

DL: Yeah, I know, I was taking pictures the other day, and normally I would be able to park there, and walk up and down the street, but there was a lot of traffic.

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CM: There's a lot of traffic, but like I said, I learned to skate on concrete. I wore many a skate wheel out.

18:37

DL: How many acres did you have on your farm?

CM: We had about 2,000 acres, 'cause my uncle's and Dad's was together.

DL: Were you raising mostly cattle?

CM: Cattle. We had cattle, we did oats, we did pecans. The oats, we used that to feed out the cattle. We had barns out here that had feeders and things under 'em. We'd buy cattle and feed 'em.

DL: So, you didn't really engage in cotton agriculture?

CM: No, no. When I started on the farm, that was the last. My daddy and them never raised cotton. Thank God, I didn't have to fool with that, but we did oats. Oats was a big deal for us. We made a lot of hay, we'd feed a hundred bales a day, so it was a lot.

DL: Do you still farm at all?

CM: I fool with a few pecans and some hay, and all the rest of the place is hunting, and believe it or not, we don't make nothin' out of that 'cause it's nothin' but friends, and kinfolks. He's [Henry Maggio Jr.] taken over the crawfish. If you want some, he'll be the crawfish man.

DL: Hey, Henry.

Maggio: How are you?

DL: I'm good, how are you? Henry and I went to school together. I just looked at him.

Maggio: [laughs] I didn't want to interrupt.

CM: He's the crawfish man.

DL: Okay. I interviewed your daddy and your aunt a few weeks back.

CM: Last year, Henry crawfished, but he and the alligators didn't get along, and he said those alligators follow him, licking their lips.

Maggio: I was watching 'em eat my crawfish. They're eating my crawfish—leave 'em alone!

DL: So, do you have ponds? On the land?

CM: Uh-huh, yeah.

DL: Wow, I have no idea. I remember kind of back when that crawfish place first opened in Natchitoches, I do remember it.

Maggio: There's quite a few ponds back in there, and quite a few people fish.

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DL: I know there's a lot, like the, what is that, Old River that runs back there?

20:41

CM: Well, we've got Little River. Our land lay between Red River and Little River. Its between the two, right by that Federal reserve, and ducks, they've got lots of ducks.

DL: What Federal reserve?

Maggio: Its fairly recent.

CM: Recent. They bought a bunch of land, and part of it they'll deer hunt on, going toward the dam—the lock and dam—but where we are, it's strictly for wild birds.

DL: Oh, okay, like a migratory refuge ...

CM: The ducks come right in there. They plant rice and stuff for 'em, and it makes it good for us because duck's come flying in the morning, they have some good hunts. I didn't go but one time this year, but they kill a lot of ducks.

DL: How many acres do they have? Do you have an idea, more or less?

CM: Well, I know one place over there, it's probably over 2,000 acres, one part of it. I think they plant 300 acres of rice for the ducks.

DL: So, is that, coming from Alexandria where they've got some rice and crawfish, is it on this side of I-49 or the other side?

CM: Before you get to Alec [Alexandria]. I don't know if that's part of that thing, or not. I know they've already put traps and stuff out; we were talking about it the other day. This starts down around Monette's Ferry, it comes over Red River, it comes all the way—you've got a few people live before you get on 491—and then you skip a little, then you get back on it, and that thing goes all the way to Melrose Plantation. It's a big ol' area. A fella by the name of Kennedy sold that to, whatever they call their-selves. I know it makes duck huntin' good.

22:45

DL: So, that's basically what you're hunting, is ducks, fowl?

Maggio: Ducks, doves, squirrels, deer ...

CM: Hogs ... ducks and hogs. Now, we go through that place, and we've got—we can't carry loaded guns while we're in the reserve, but as soon as we step out of the reserve, we load our guns and shoot. Yeah, I have one ol' boy that does it, and the game wardens were waitin' for him the other day when he come out, and asked him what he was doin'. He said, "I've been back there to check the hog trap." "Well, you can't trap hogs on the Federal reserve." "I wasn't in it." He told 'em where he was. Of course my grandson got stopped here right at the first of the season, and they stopped him and told him he was huntin' on Federal land. He said, "No, I'm not hunting on Federal land, I'm hunting on my grandpa's." My grandson in 19 years old, he's six foot seven, weighs 310 pounds, and he ain't fat. Big fella, isn't he? We wanted him to go to college, but he loves farmin', and got in with a fella from Ohio—I can't think of this guy's name—anyway this fella don't buy nothing but the best equipment, and he and my grandson is farmin' 5,000 acres. Last week, he told my grandson, "I'll see ya in about two or three weeks,"

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and he took off. My grandson's plowing and rowing it up—he had to hire one guy to help him—but that fella put that much confidence in that young man.

DL: My goodness, and that's right around here somewhere?

CM: Yeah. Some of the land's down there, some of it's across Red River, but they've got 5,000 acres you can say that two people's farmin'.

24:33

DL: Do you see the big decline, I guess, in businesses around here? Is that associated with the rise of mechanized cotton?

CM: Yeah, yeah, oh yeah. The type of little bitty farmer's gone. When we finally went out of the cattle business, like I was tellin' you, I had cut out 1,200 acres of what we had. I had 265 mama cows, but at one time, I had a 1,000 mama cows, but in a year, I didn't make a nickel. By the time you pay the feed, pay the labor. We had a guy, everyday, he rode part of the pasture, and every one of my cows had a number branded, it was a freeze brand and white, and this day, he went out there and number 300 cow had the foot rot. Well, he'd come back and tell us, and we'd go out there and catch that cow, and doctor her, but that's all he did, was ride those pastures, and it got expensive. Those two guys that worked for us, must've worked for us 35 years. The colored guy—well the white fella, he been dead for about seven or eight years now—and the colored guy died here about two months ago, and he was born on the place, and he, you say he died on the place because he died next to my brother. We moved him up there on the side of the road, next to my brother's house. I had him all my life, my kids called him Uncle Edness, he was black as the ace of spades, but they loved that guy. He loved them too. I laughed when they got ready to get married because they introduced their girlfriends, and said, "This is Uncle Edness." But they loved him to death.

26:26

DL: When you were in business here, they were still sharecropping? When you started out in business?

CM: Most people weren't sharecropping, they just worked.

DL: Right, but I meant the sharecropping system was still in place.

CM: Yeah, but it was going out.

DL: It was starting to decline.

CM: We were the first, when I took over the on farm, those ol' boys were making five dollars an hour, I mean five dollars a day, and three dollars were the going wages. Then later, we went to five dollars an hour, and everybody else was making three dollars an hour, and then we went to ten dollars, they got ten dollars an hour, what we paid 'em, and it was a long time before the rest of the farm labor got that kind of money, but we only had those two guys, you know, and like I said, they were family pretty much, because we always paid 'em. The white guy, when I moved him on the place, I went and got everything he owned in a pickup truck, and after my aunt and uncle died in Cloutierville, we decided we'd move him from out there to Cloutierville, I don't know how many loads I made with a ton and half truck of stuff that he had accumulated, 'cause he had five children. I remember that first year on the pecans, 'cause whatever they picked, they got whatever they made, and he bought everyone of 'em mattress and box springs

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for Christmas that year. We're not talking a whole lot of money, probably a hundred dollars apiece, but like I say, it was over a thousand dollars for those mattress and box springs. My daddy ordered 'em and we picked 'em up in Alec.

DL: So you had just those two guys?

CM: That's all we had working for us.

28:19

DL: And in terms of around here, when you had the business but were not engaged in that type of agriculture, when do you think sharecropping kind of petered out? Was it before mechanized cotton?

CM: I wanna say '50, '55, it was pretty well gone. Let me tell you, most of those people either went to Chicago, California. A lot of 'em went to Pineville, went to work down at the, we call it Central, and some of 'em went to work in grocery stores. Let me tell you, it was the best thing that happened to them people. They thought it was terrible, but they moved to Pineville down there, and got a job at Central, or some of those stores down there, and everyone of 'em, and the ones that went to California and Chicago came back here. They owned a home and whatever, and they sold it and come back to Cloutierville. We've got a couple that live up the road here, I'm thinking about, they sold their home for five times for what they paid for this home right up the road a bit. It was the best thing that ever happened to 'em when they had to leave here.

DL: Yeah, I know economically and in many ways it was. I think, what people have told me is that it just broke up their communities. You know, it was like these communities that they had lived in all their lives, I think that was the biggest loss. They lost their churches and schools.

CM: Let me tell you. My son worked for this guy, these tractors they've got, when he's plantin' seed, all he does is looking at a monitor screen, and he's gone down there, and plantin', I mean, number five, a clog jumps up and gets in the tube, the tractor automatically stops, and it tells you something's wrong with tube five, so you get out, and find out what's wrong, you clean it out and you come back and you push the button, the tractor'll take off again. All you do is take and turn it around at the end, it automatically straightens its own self up, you don't touch the steering wheel except to turn it on the end. I mean, it's something else, you don't turn the key to crank the tractor no more; it's all push button. One of these tractors they have up there, is tracks, big rubber tracks.

30:45

My grandson was working for this man when he was going to school, making ten dollars an hour, which is pretty good money for a kid. Well, he finished school in January, and they told him at Central that he had to do something, take a class or go to trade school or something to be able to walk with the class. So, he went over to the trade school, and he was going to weld. He went a week or two, and that guy over there told him, "Son, you're wasting your time and mine. You can weld better than I can." He said, "I'll check you in everyday, just go on." So, he started working for this guy, and the fella's son came there, and his daddy got sick, he was in intensive care at Natchitoches in the hospital, stayed over a month, and the boy worked about a week there with Hunter. He told his daddy he was going back home. He said, "You're not going to stay and help Hunter?" "Hunter don't need any help," he said. "I don't come close to what that boy knows," and he left. Like I said, he took off last week. Hunter makes almost 25 dollars an hour. I never thought I would see anybody work on a farm and make 25 dollars an hour, not in labor. You ever see a fella going to work in the morning, smiling, that's the way he is.

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DL: Yeah, I was talking to people whose families sharecropped, and one of the things that comes out is, there is a lot of good memories, but one of the things that comes out is they never broke even at the end of the year.

CM: No. Well, Hunter, when he first started foolin' with the farm, he was working for the Scarborough's up there. They pretty much let him do the whole crop that year, and at the end of the crop, they made one hellacious crop. They gave him a Benelli shotgun, a pair of waders, and a dozen decoys—that was his bonus. The shotgun alone was like sixteen hundred dollars, but he did that good. I don't have a picture of it here, but they've got a picture of him standing out in that cotton patch. They made over three and half bales a cotton an acre, I mean, that's a devil of a crop. I never fooled with cotton. I don't know that much about it, you know.

33:10

DL: Did anybody around here grow peppers, the red peppers? I remember coming down here ...

CM: Well, there's still some folks growing. I've got a real good friend of mine grows it, and his brother-in-law takes it and dries it on out and makes red pepper out of it. The man lives in Pineville, because Charles Roge, who's a deputy here, that's his brother-in-law, and he plants it and he gets about two five gallon buckets during the season, and he takes it down there, but he gets so many orders for it, it's really not enough to fill the orders.

DL: I remember coming down here, I mean, when I first started doing this, and this was back in '96, there was a man named Mr. Dalme that lived over ...

CM: Yeah, James Dalme, at the end of the bridge.

DL: Right, at the end of the bridge, exactly, and I drove by there one day, and there were peppers as far as you could see. He was drying peppers in the front on, like, muslin, some sort of white cloth.

34:05

CM: This white guy that lives in this house right here, we'd go and get sassafras, and we had a big boy that's in here, and he'd get strings, he'd hang that stuff and dry and make file; and fact of the manner, we've still got file in the deep freeze. I don't use a lot of it, and my wife used some that he made. Every year he'd give me a bottle. I'd got out there and help him get it, you know, but there's not a lot of people that do that anymore either.

DL: Yeah, that's true, there's just a few. I know a couple, but not many. It's hard to find it. You know, the sassafras doesn't grow as low to the ground as it used to anymore, when you go out in the forest.

CM: Well, we used to go out to Red Dirt, but they don't allow it anymore. We'd go out there with a horse trailer with no top on it, and we'd just cut it and fill the trailer up, and we'd go back and Jimmy would haul that in the shed, and it was hot and it'd dry it. There's more to that than just picking it and drying it. I'm going to plant some red pepper this year. I figure if I get enough, the ol' boy'll dry it and ground it on half, if I get to fill fifteen bottles up. I've got some this year, I gave Henry a bottle of it, usually can't hardly find that pepper anymore. I don't know how long Johnny Ray'll—he was born and raised here in Cloutierville—gonna fool with it. He retired from the state, he fools with that a lot.

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35:32

DL: When did they put the highway in, Hwy. 1?

CM: This used to be Hwy. 20. When you got to the Monette's Ferry bridge, now you cross the bridge coming this way, you would take a left, right there by that church. You go along the river, and you come on around, and you'd follow the river all the way to that point, which is on Little Eva down there with the pecan trees, and you come back out, what we call Brossette-ville, you come out and when you got to the bridge, right there at Nichols, at that truckin' company? You would turn and come up on what is 495 now, and you'd come through Cloutierville. Now, then when you come on this road, that road to Derry wasn't there. You would turn right up here about a three-quarter or a quarter as you on the river. And that house up there, you'd come back out at Derry, or either go by the river road, which is [Hwy] 419 now, but actually that was old Hwy. 20.

DL: Okay. So when did they put in [Hwy] 1, I mean, when did they designate this [Hwy.] 1?

CM: I can't really give you a date on it, I just all the sudden one time looked up ... but when they blacktopped, which is [Hwy] 491 or [49]5 now, that was [Hwy] 1 or [Hwy] 20, whatever you want to call it.

DL: Did that change the dynamic of the town at all?

CM: Not really, no, but I remember the bus coming through Cloutierville. Me and mama'd be going down to Lafayette, and the bus'd stop and pick us up in front of the house. It was like a city bus, you know, pick you up.

37:07

DL: And the trains. There was a depot at ...

CM: At Derry.

DL: At Derry and there was a depot a Natchez?

CM: At Natchez.

DL: At Cypress?

CM: Yeah.

DL: And that's not, I mean, is there even train service there anymore?

CM: Not passengers.

DL: Just freight?

CM: Freight.

Maggio: That depot up there at Little Eva, where did that come from?

CM: That come by Natchez.

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DL: I think that was Natchez. Yeah, I remember when B. A. Cohen bought that. She had her little shop there for a while.

Maggio: Listening to them all talk, the biggest change to come to Cloutierville is with the bigger implements, the bigger tractors. It's like with any small community, the one-row cotton picker was the thing, well, that knocked people out when you're looking at six-rows.

CM: Now they row it like you roll a bale of hay.

DL: I've seen that.

CM: Those pickers would cost \$700,000.

38:53

DL: I bet there's been a lot of changes in the pecan business?

CM: Yes, yes, they've got some of the cleaning equipment, and the pecan, I don't see where the pecan pickers have changed very much. The only difference from the type I've got and the new ones, the new ones dump from the sides, and mine dumps from the back. Our picker's over twenty years old.

DL: Do you grade them?

CM: Yeah, we've got a cleaning plant.

Maggio: We've got a cleaning plant and grader. I say grader, you hand clean them and they go in this sizer.

CM: You had clean and then it sizes them up.

DL: Do you have a big call for the native pecans? Are they very popular?

CM: Well, that's all I sold this past year, but let me tell you, I sold the Tuesday before Christmas, I sold 'em and I got 85 cents.

DL: A pound?

CM: Yes. Alright, the Monday or Tuesday after Christmas, some of the same pecans I couldn't take, I sold 'em for a dollar ten cents a pound. I couldn't put 'em all on the truck the first time, so if you look at it, I lost thirty cents by sellin', you know, but 85 cents was top price that week.

DL: Who do you sell them to?

CM: Well, I sold these in Boyce, but they've got different people. They don't have near the buyers they used to have.

DL: I'm just wondering about the native pecans. They're so hard to pick the meat out of. So what do they do, do they use that a lot for pecan oil?

CM: Let me tell you something. You'd have to go see a shellin' plant, and they don't lose anything on them pecans except the dust. The shells are used in oil fields, in that mud, so they don't lose anything. You wouldn't believe ...

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Maggio: You call it mud, but it's those oil and gas rigs, it's part of the mixture for the mudders.

41:00

CM: You'd have to go watch. They've got an eye, and it closes going through there, and if it's a bad one, it [crunch sound], and if it's one that the meat's bad, or got a spot on it, it picks it out and puts it in the drum.

Maggio: What it is, it's got a tray with an air hose—the eye will pick it up and a jet of air will shoot it into the trash bin.

CM: They've got one in Mansfield. I went through that one, and they've got more modern ones since I've been in one.

DL: Wow, that's like big business, that's obviously a huge advancement from when you started.

CM: I tell you what, it costs a lot. When we bought our pickers, we paid like \$5,000 for them. I think those pickers are around \$25,000 now.

Maggio: But theirs are twenty years older, and all you got to do is change the fingers out where ever they need them, and keep the maintenance up on it.

CM: We put new chains and everything on ours. Like I say, I didn't get half of mine picked this year. It was wet and I didn't want to cut ruts under the trees at my house. We got enough to pay the taxes, that's all that counted really. It's changed a whole ... farmin' around here has changed. The old hay baler that's under the gin, up there? That's the first hay baler I ever worked on, a baler by the name of Ann Arbor, and you hand tied the hay in that thing.

DL: And was it squared?

42:46

CM: Square bale. The first job I had on the farm, you shoved the wire back through. The next day it had to be tied, then somebody else was shoving, and you'd tie it, and then you had to put a block between 'em to get your bales of hay, and it looks like to me, all that was hollered was, "Block! Block! Block!" but, I mean, you had to bale like a devil to bale 500 bales a day, but that baler, I gave that to the Park Service.

DL: Wow. There's quite a bit of difference, even from when I was living down here, starting in the 80s. I've seen huge differences in just the way farming is done, and the advances in the machinery is just astounding.

Maggio: That's what has been the difference, the advances that's made the differences. Therefore, there's no jobs; people having to move into the city, out of state just to find something. That's why all the little houses are gone.

DL: Yeah, all the little houses, that amazes me too because there were a lot of houses associated with Magnolia—I mean a lot more even before I was down there.

CM: Oh, they had ... there was people. Once you got up to the tip of the racetrack, around what they call the Point up there? There was houses all around that Point, back up to where the

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tractor shed is up there.

Maggio: I can remember back in the 80s, all those houses. There's still a handful left but, the little shotgun houses ...

CM: You met Stanley Gallien?

DL: I know who he is, I have not met him.

CM: Well, Stanley went up there and talked to 'em up there at Magnolia, 'cause he lived in the overseer's house. He and my brother, Sammy [?], had school together, and Sammy [?] would go up there and play with him up there, but they lived in that house. He went up there, and told 'em that wall wasn't that color. Oh, he gave 'em the devil because they had changed a bunch of stuff, you know.

44:52

My grandpa was from France, and he got shanghaied on a boat, and he was an alcoholic, the best we can check up on him, and ended up in New Orleans, and, what was that lady's name? Anyhow, she found him down there, and brought him up here on the plantation, and he kept the books for Magnolia. There was Bayou Camitte and there was one up at Melrose, and he was bookkeeper, and Mr. Matt used to show me in the book where he would sign for a jug of whiskey. He had a beautiful handwriting, and his name was Ernest Masson, but he was the bookkeeper, and that's how he ended up in Cloutierville.

DL: So, he was shanghaied and brought to New Orleans?

CM: Yeah, and he left the boat down there. He's probably drunk, passed out as far as we can find out.

DL: So, that would have been mid-nineteenth century, early nineteenth century?

CM: I don't remember the exact, but I know how he got here.

DL: And that was the first Masson here?

Maggio: Isn't he the one that, who was here during the Civil War?

CM: That was him.

Maggio: The Union came over and came to their house, all the houses down the street, they were raiding and taking everything, and they took his last chicken, and he went out there and sit down next to fire with 'em while they cooked the chicken. "What the hell are you doing?" "Well, that's my last chicken. I'm gonna to eat with you!" That's one we've heard for a while.

CM: He sued and he got paid for a lot of that stuff, because he was, what they call it, a free America, free something. He wasn't a citizen.

Maggio: I remember his mother telling us something about that years ago.

47:14

CM: My mother had one sister and four brothers, and like I say, my mama's daddy and mama

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were both from Germany and best I remember, my grandpa ordered her from Sears, Roebuck, and she came, and they married, and they bought a little ol' farm down there in Lafayette, and it wasn't two or three years they had paid for that thing, and every one of those kids went to college.

DL: Did her family come through New Orleans?

CM: He did; she came through, and so did he. He worked for the railroad, you know. I know you've seen these guys out on the railroads oiling? That's what he did, he was an oiler. They married, and like I say, she was a Sears & Roebuck bride, but grandma was a real city person. My mama picked pecans, and she would bend from the waist, you never see her on her knees on that ground. She'd buy something she wanted. [We'd say:] "Mama, you want me to take you back down?" "No, I'll walk, the weather's pretty. You bring the groceries, I'll walk."

Maggio: A few days before she died, she was push mowing the grass. She was mowing the grass, and they had to put her in the hospital a couple of days later.

CM: Put her in on Monday, she died on Friday. My brother, John, had come by there, and he said she had the lawn mower, she was lying down on the ground, and he stopped, and he said, "Mama, is something wrong with you?" She said, "That's a hell of a thing when somebody can't lay out in their own yard." He didn't tell her nothing else, so he came over here and said, "You better go see about mama." So, when I got there, she was in the house, she had her recliner, she said, "I knew you were going to be over here." I said, "How you know that?" She said, "Yonnie." That's what we called him, said, "Yonnie was going to tell you I was laying out in the yard, but that's my yard, if I want to lay out in it." I said, "Mama, that's not it. I'm worried there's something wrong with you."

Anyway, on Monday she decided to go to the doctor for a checkup, and she went in on Monday, and she died Friday morning. Listen, she had all kind things that was wrong, but never complained.

Maggio: She went every day, probably two, three times a day to her best friend in the world, moved up here with her about the same time, and her husband had died years before too. It was after his dad died, but she took care of her, and they were both the same age. They'd visit two, three times a day, well they lived, well, there was a house in between, but every day, walk over there.

CM: Lucille was a librarian—I think it was a librarian, she was, at the college—but, anyway, mama would go over there in the morning, and when I came before six o'clock, if the drapes were pulled open, and I could see mama, everything was good, but if I passed and them drapes hadn't been pulled, you stop and see what's wrong, that was our signal. I had to stop a few times. But Lucille had a certain time she had to eat her breakfast and Mama would see her a few times and she hadn't eat breakfast. Mama'd fix it, and make her get up and eat it, and we thought Mama was going to outlive Lucille. Lucille lived five or six years after that. She went to California with her niece, but she lived that long after mama died. We thought she was going to outlive her, but Mama, you'd never think that something was wrong with her.

Maggio: Gardened, mowed grass, everything was outside except when she was cookin' or sewin'.

51:14

CM: Now his [H. Maggio] wife took up sewin', but the rest of 'em didn't. Now, I've got a

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wife I found in the middle of Cane River Lake, right under the Church Street bridge.

DL: [laughs] you found your wife there?

CM: It ain't no joke. I tell you what, I found out she didn't drink, she didn't smoke, she was pretty damned good lookin' and she could cook. She had all the qualities. Anyhow, that's where I found her.

DL: And she was doing what?

CM: Well, she was in school, she was in college. I knew her daddy pretty much all my life, but I really didn't know her. Me and her had braces at the same time, the same dentist, and I didn't know what day it was but we'd go see the dentist. We'd come to Natchitoches and I don't ever remember seein' that girl until I met her in the river.

Maggio: They were skiing.

CM: Yeah, I met her on a blind date's what happened, but that's where I met her at.

DL: And she's from Natchitoches?

CM: From Natchitoches. Her mama was a county agent. She was Willie Ethel Boydsen. I used to tell her daddy that he didn't pay me enough to take her! Boy, I used to make her mad!

DL: She probably didn't take you too serious.

CM: We've been married 52 years, that's a long time.

DL: That's a long time to put up with you.

CM: Me? I'm the one putting up, what are you talking about? We have four kids—three boys and a girl. The girl was second, she's a policeman. My oldest boy drives an eighteen wheeler. The other one lives in Natchitoches, he works for CP-TEL—he's a computer man for CP-TEL—and my youngest one, he just does all kinds of stuff. He was at Valley Farmers, even done some carpentry work and all kinds of stuff now. He owns a horse farm out there on Waterwell Road, just past the pipe fits with an inside arena, outside arena?

DL: So he raises horses?

CM: Yeah, he raises some horses.

Maggio: He stables a lot of horses.

53:50

DL: Do they still grow, I occasionally see cotton here, but is cotton still a major crop around here?

CM: Last year they got eighty cents for cotton if you booked it, which is a good price. Cotton's down to 55 to sixty cents right now, if cotton goes up, they'll raise it.

Maggio: There's probably a lot more cotton this year than there has in other years. I guess it's a third, a third, and a third, in cotton, corn, and soybeans.

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DL: I was going to ask if soybeans ...

Maggio: One year they'll have more soybeans, one year they'll have more corn. They'll probably never have as much cotton as they used to have, because prices haven't been as good, is what they're saying. It may not even be a third every year; it'll never be the major crop that it used to be.

CM: You raise two or three different things. If one fails, you'll have the other one.

DL: So, not just rotate, but divide your land.

CM: You need to rotate it.

Maggio: They don't rotate as much as they used because of all the chemicals they use.

CM: But those bean—beans are probably the easiest one to raise, but that cotton, the poundage this year was something else.

Maggio: Some of the prettiest cotton I've seen was in this field right back here, and that is one pretty field. He hit everything right, he planted right, the weather was right.

55:28

DL: When did they tear down the Derry chapel?

CM: No, I remember it there though. In fact, I remember going to church there, so they had to tear it after '38, and I was old enough to remember. So, I want to say '40, '41.

DL: Father Becker was the minister there?

CM: My daddy ... Father Becker owned this gin in Cloutierville, or part of it, and Daddy and Father Becker would go to St. Louis or wherever it was, and sell cotton, and Daddy said that as soon as he got on the train, Father Becker'd unbutton that collar and pull it off, and told daddy, "You call me Mr. Becker." Of course, Father Becker was an alcoholic. He drank a lot, but Daddy said that they went a lot of places—and I don't have a doubt in my mind that Daddy did some runnin' around—but Daddy said he'd ain't seen Father Becker talk to a lady. He'd said he didn't do that, but he drank.

I remember I was in the primer, they called it, at the Catholic school, and Sister Dominas was her name, I was in the primer. You remember the shades that had the spring in 'em? Whomp, broke that thing over my head, and she picked up the broken part to hit me again? Whoosh, I was out, and I ran—we lived half way to Cloutierville—I run home, and I got there a little earlier than I should have for lunch, and Mama said, "What's wrong?" "I've got a knot on my head where Sister hit me." Well, when my daddy come home, she told him what happened, and we ate lunch, and he took me, went down, and stopped at Father Becker's. Daddy, Father Becker went back there in the kitchen, I assume they went back there and had 'em a drink, but anyhow, I sit there in that little ol' room, nearly froze to death, but anyhow, Father Becker came out there, he called me Little Toots, "Come on, Little Toots," and he held my hand and we walked up the street. You had to walk inside the building and Father Becker did to the Sister and Sister, she came to the door, and said "Go sit in your seat." So I went and sit in my seat. I don't know what he said to her, but she never did hit me again, 'cause the next year I went into first grade at the public school. But poor Eugene Spillman, you know who Eugene Spillman is?

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DL: Uh-huh.

CM: She pulled his ears, she beat his hand, she did poor Eugene Spillman everything you could do to a human. I mean, he sat right in front of me, so I know, but that was a mean Sister.

DL: Was she Irish?

CM: I don't know what she was, all I know she was mean. Like I said, that was the only year I went to the convent.

58:30

DL: That was St. Mary?

CM: St. John Catholic school.

DL: I thought they were called St. Mary and Joseph.

CM: St. Joseph was a colored school.

DL: And St. John's was ...?

CM: The whites, I think that was the way that was. Don't take that as a hundred percent, but I think.

DL: I thought so, too, but I thought the other was St. Mary.

58:52

CM: Then we had a priest came here by the name of Father Lyons, and he was a young man, and his family ... he was from New York, and his family had a lot of money, and I'll never forget, he had red Pontiac automobile. It was a fancy thing. He'd take two or three boys to go somewhere and take 'em out to eat and stuff, and he and the preacher that was at this church over here. His name was Webb, and some reason, that preacher and him hooked up, and he gave that preacher money to rent a school bus, and take the kids skatin' and stuff, and nobody figured out where Brother Webb was getting' that money, but Father, that's who was doin' it but he had a lot of money. The Bishop told him that he ought not have a fancy car like that, but later years, and I'm talkin' about three or four years ago, they accused him of molestin' some kid, but I don't think that was the truth because I know those kids he run around from here, and if that had been happenin', we would have known about it; but we did know he had a girlfriend, but nobody cared about that, but he was a nice lookin' guy.

DL: Did he replace Father Becker?

CM: I think so.

DL: And Father Becker had a motorcycle?

CM: When he first came in, and a sidecar, and then he had an old car, I believe it was an old Dodge, if I remember right, but I remember when he had the motorcycle.

01:00:37

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DL: Has there been a lot of Mexican immigrant labor associated with the farms down here?

CM: Some, not a lot, not like they've sugar cane, and vegetable farmin' and stuff, no. There's couple, three of 'em at Derry, and a few at Little Eva at pecan pickin' time, but that's the only ones I know of. They sent some Guatemalans in here, but they wasn't worth two cents.

DL: Is that right? There's a lot of Guatemalans and Nicaraguans around New Orleans. We've got some Mexicans but that's mostly post-Katrina, you know. You had lot of workforce come in—builders, carpenters. I just wondered, because every once and awhile, I'll hit a little town, and there's a huge Mexican population.

CM: We've got some that works at that Martin mill down there. Now, we've got some down here at this scrap yard, but it's not that many, not compared to other places.

DL: But you really don't have a, since you're not doing cotton, I guess it would be more intensive, but since you don't really have high labor intensive crops here.

01:02:07

CM: Tractors, equipment's taken it all. I'm goin' to tell you this, you know during WWII, we had a lot of German prisoners here, they worked and things, and when they built that mill out there, I guess that's on [Hwy] 6 back there, anyhow, they put that press in, and my brother, Sammy, his father-in-law was doing the wirin' and Sammy was there whenthey put that press in, and they had this German guy came, engineer or whatever he was, came from Germany to see that the press got put in right, and Sammy brought him down here one day. During our conversation, I said, "Have you ever been to Louisiana before?" He said, "Yes I have." I said, "Well, what were you doin'?" He said, "Pickin' cotton up the road right up here," and he said they were really good to him. They gave 'em money, and they could go to the canteen, you know, to buy stuff, but he said he couldn't pick cotton. He said he never could get a hundred pounds a day.

DL: Was he working for a farmer?

CM: Yeah, they'd bring 'em to pick cotton. You had to pick by hand then, and right up here between here and Derry, he'd pick cotton, right here at Derry. He came down here with Sammy, and he said, "I picked cotton right there." So you never know, you know.

DL: You never know. Was there a center for the German prisoners here, or did they farm them out?

CM: I don't know whether it was where the airport is, or the Northwestern campus, but they had a compound for 'em. I never did go look at that, but I was told that, and I know that's where he was, and he said they weren't treated bad. He said they would get money, and go buy stuff if they wanted it. They just couldn't leave and go over town, you know.

DL: But they kind of farmed them out for labor?

CM: I'm sure some of these other farms probably on up the river there, they had 'em too, you know, but he told me he'd pick cotton right there between here and Derry.

DL: That's interesting to know. I didn't know there was a compound.

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CM: They used them to hoe the grass out of the cotton too, you know, but he told me, “I picked cotton between here and Derry,” but he said he wasn’t too good.

DL: I can imagine. I think it’s an acquired skill.

CM: But that was an interesting thing

01:04:35

DL: What was the biggest change besides the mechanization that you’ve seen in this area in general? Is it loss of population? Is it ...

CM: Oh, the population’s went down a lot. Yeah, the population is down, you don’t have near the people.

DL: Are there a bunch of young people around Cloutierville?

CM: Not really. Now look, most of what they’ve got in Cloutierville now is older folks.

DL: What does the school go up to, the grade?

CM: That’s junior high over there.

DL: So, it goes K through junior high?

CM: Yeah, higher goes over at Central. Let’s see, there’s probably ... I graduated ‘56, so they had a ‘57, ‘58, probably ‘60 was the last high school graduation they had here, the best I can remember. I remember we had a shootin’ one night at the school.

DL: What for?

CM: Two fellas got into it. They lived out there on the levee. They shot the hall, if I remember, that bullet hit six or seven times before stopped. It didn’t hit anybody. I had brought two guys from Northwestern for the graduation, and, boy, they said, “What do we do?” I said, “Hit the floor!” We had a principal here by the name J. W. Bullock, he’s dead now. I tell you what, he was one good principal. I tell you what, he didn’t let stuff go on that goes on today. He’d pull that belt off and paddle your butt right there. I never did anything wrong ‘cause where daddy was sittin’, Mr. Bullock would stop out there every evenin’ and talk with him. If he’d told my daddy I had done something at school, I would have gotten a butt whippin’.

01:06:45

DL: And those were all segregated schools. Where did the black kids go? St. Matthew?

CM: The blacks went to school first down at Chopin, and that school burned, and they then came back and they went to school ... which is a Catholic dance hall now ... until they built the Springhill school, and of course that went under water two or three times, and by that time, they were integrating the school. The NCAAP paid, I know this for a fact, paid some people to send their kids to school, and one of ‘em was Jordy Jefferson, and he had twin girls, and they went to integrate the school, and they fit in perfect. Hell, we all played together anyhow. So, they hired this other old boy—oh, he was always into something—they hired him, gave his step-daddy ten thousand dollars to send him to school, and he went up to school, and there was Dahlia Boudois, sent Dahlia up there, and it was the same thing. We played with Dahlia all the time, nothing ever

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happened, they could've just integrated the school without this baloney, and nobody, all these people played together and whatever. I know my kids were coming up, we had some lived behind us, and them kids stayed at the house as much as my kids stayed over there. They'd eat at each other's house all the time, never had any problem.

DL: Probably a lot different in country situations where everybody's living in close quarters and working together, and more rural situations where people are closer.

CM: We probably got a television when I was fifteen years old, and let me tell you, I wanted to go to Monroe, 'cause it was snowin' all the time—snowed on the television! But, I was probably fifteen, before we had television. One of my—she's my daughter-in-law now—she moved in Mama's house, and she said, "How'd all y'all live in the house?" It was weather like this, you were outside; you didn't stay in the house. It had to get pretty bad for you to stay in the house. You ate your dinner after you came in, after you ate your supper, then you went to bed.

DL: That's what we did, stayed outside until ten o'clock until they called us in.

CM: We've got full television at the house. We had two computers, I see my wife took one of them down, I don't know where it went to, one of the grandkids might have it, I don't know. I don't fool with it. I hate to turn the thing on.

DL: Yeah, quite a bit of difference when y'all were growing up. Did y'all listen to the radio a lot?

CM: Oh, yeah. I remember on Saturday Less for Ten [?], that was one of the shows I liked.

DL: I know people gathered around the radio a lot.

01:10:07

CM: We had one that ran on battery or electricity. Now, I never remember never having electricity. Mama said, well first off, we had a DELCO plant, where you charged up the batteries, and Valley Electric come through and put electricity in Cloutierville, so when I got to remember electricity, that was like running water, I never remember not having running water.

DL: I was going to ask you about that, because on the river, they didn't get water until late '60s, early '70s.

CM: I'm one of the board members on that water district. I've been there all but four years since it started. The best water in the state comes from Water District Two.

DL: I know, I used to live down there. Water Works James would come down with the truck.

CM: We had some stuff we were putting in the water, but now, we dug us a water well, and now it's so good, and that filter plant we've got cost five million dollars. I never wrote a check that big in my whole life. I was the one that was elected to take care of paying that, and it wasn't my company's money, but I never wrote a check that big in my life. When I was writing, I had to stop and think so I got it right. It's been good.

DL: Seems like you've had a pretty good life.

01:11:57

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CM: Yes, I have. When I finally got out of the army, they put me on the draft board, selective service. Well, I read up on it, and twenty years is the longest you're supposed to stay on it, and I wanted to get off. I never did a whole, because they never hardly draft anymore, and 25 years later, I got this beautiful certificate, got a big brass medallion thing in the middle of it, thanking me for my service, but I served 25 years on the draft board. I wasn't doing the same secret stuff I was doing when I was in the army. I never left the United States. I never had to go and fight in no war, and I did all kinds of things. I went in, I got out July—they let me out—they discharged me because you had to get permission to get married. I got discharged, I got married in November, and in January they drafted me again. I spent eight more years, but I never left home, I stayed home more than I stayed gone.

DL: Were you in the Reserves?

CM: They didn't call it that, that's what I called it, but it really wasn't. They called me, "Say, look, you need to come, we've got ..."—the first time I went I had to teach a class in artillery, never fooled with that in my life. I did that several times, and then I went down there another time, I had to go down the roads at Fort Polk, and from one to ten, I graded 'em. Every road in that place, I rode 'em. Then I went down there at what you call Range 35, which is close-call live ammunition. I did that for a while. Trained troops for Vietnam. Let's see, what else did I do? I worked out on the 45 Range some. I worked in the motor pool. We tried to catch some stealin' that was goin' on, that was with the C.I.D. I did a bunch of things while I was there, but I tell you, I stayed home more than I stayed gone. I didn't have to go until they called me, but they didn't call it the Reserves. I got \$500 a month. That was a lot of money. I never did get higher than E-5, which was sergeant.

DL: Do you remember the maneuvers on the river?

CM: Yes, I do. Eisenhower ate at that house right next door to us.

DL: Is that right? Do you still live in Cloutierville?

CM: No, I live out on 491.

DL: But you did live in Cloutierville?

CM: My daughter lives in my mama's house.

DL: Which house is that? Is that on the main road?

CM: Yes, but it's on the riverside. My daughter lives there.

DL: You were talking about Ms. Lucille earlier. Was that Lucille Carnahan?

CM: Uh, huh.

DL: I interviewed her way back in '96, '97, and that's what she told me, she came from Abbeville. That's where your mom came from?

CM: Yeah, my mama came from there, but her and mama was a completely different person, but listen, they were just like that. I'll tell you what, the Saints was playin', they had a Saints cap—they'd put that cap and watch that. You couldn't go talk to 'em—oh, that would make 'em mad—you just wouldn't go around there, and I'll tell what else, too, they knew every one of those players by name, and my mama was never an athletic person, but boy, game day, you

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needn't talk to her. You know, you love your parents, I loved my daddy, I loved my mama, but I miss my mama. There was nothin' I couldn't go talk to her about,

DL: I know. You feel that loss. It's kind of like emptiness.

CM: I'm goin' to tell you this, I know you're recordin' it, but I was datin' a little ol' girl over in Natchitoches, and the military wanted me to go to college. So, I went in ROTC. They were wanting me to be an officer. I had joined up a long time in the army, I just hadn't left out yet, and I didn't know where I was goin' to be, or where I was goin', but what I was goin' to do was very dangerous. And I told mama—she [the girl] was pushin' marriage, you know—she was about two years younger than me, maybe three. I loved the girl, but my mama told me, "You know," she said, "you need to get rid of that girl." Said, "All you'll cause is sorrow for her." And that was one of the hardest things I've had to do in my life. I had to break up with her, 'cause even after I did it, she came around. I hated it; it just had to be like that, you know? I haven't seen her in over fifty years. I'd like to see her, just to see how she looks. She had bad luck. She married twice and both of her husbands died. Mama told me, said, "You need to let that girl go because all there'll be is sorrow." She said, "I don't want you to get killed," but I could've. That was when they were havin' a lot of problems with Castro. I started twice to Cuba. We'd leave out twice, and they'd turn us around and send us back. I wasn't no sniper, but I was goin' with a sniper. I was the guy that kind of lookout, a range finder with Delta Force. I can talk about now because it's all over. That's why I got put in selective service. I was under the same thing, I couldn't talk about nothin'. Hell, I've got a, my cousin, Cokie Carnahan, he said, "When you went in the army? I never missed you." "I've been gone, man." Oh, he, one day he was sittin' on Aunt Mildred's porch, and he and Dennis told me, "You're lying." So, I pulled my credentials out, and showed 'em. He didn't even know it.

DL: So, Cokie Carnahan's your cousin?

CM: My cousin. Let me tell you, Cokie's mama and Cokie's daddy, I was kin to both of 'em. Well, let me tell you what happened then. People married ... now, Mama was new blood, so was Lucille; but most people, they're married within the community. You had some of 'em marry close kin. You go out to Gorum, they had lot of people marry first cousins. Yeah, Mama was new blood. Talkin' about the Massons, I did a lot of traveling. I've been all over the continental United States, every state, and every time I stayed at night, I looked through the phone book to see how many Massons. There wasn't that many, and when I worked for the Sheriff's Department, lot of nights, not much goin' on, I run our name through the teletype, and at one time there wasn't but 65 Massons, but we've got that up way over in the hundreds.

01:20:04

DL: Do you remember when they spoke French around here? Seems like there was a lot of people that spoke French around here.

CM: I never spoke it, but I did hear a lot of it. I mean some real French folks. My daddy didn't speak it, I don't know if he understood it, and my uncle didn't understand either. Now, my grandma, I don't know if she did or not. I never did know her. I've got a picture of her up there. She was a, my grandpa is buried next to that priest, down here in the graveyard, and my grandma, she's buried way on down by the sidewalk. She's buried with the Hoods, and I never could understand why they did that, buried them apart.

DL: That's interesting. Seems like there was plenty of room.

CM: There was.

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DL: Was that her family, the Hoods?

CM: The Hoods, but she was really a Lacaze. She was Sam Lacaze's sister. Like I tell you, it's ...

DL: So where's the Hood connection coming in? Was that on the other side, on her mama's side maybe?

CM: It might've been on her mama's side. I had the tree one time, but I don't remember, but I never could remember why, and we had some people workin' on that, course I've got it, but I know where my grandma's buried. My uncle took me to the graveyard, and he said, "I want you to know all this," [whirring sounds], and I remember most of it, and had a lady by the name of Septa, Leona, Bill Septa's sister, and she was kinda up to date on that. Now, Mary DL's still living, who's a sister, but she don't know nothin'. She went to live in Alec a few years, and she just lost all, she can't remember all that, you know, and a lot of people come back and ask me. A lot of it I can tell, some of it I can't.

I was on vacation and my, every night we'd call some of our kids, find out something gone wrong, and we called at Randy Roge's, told me I needed to call my brother. So, I called him, said, "What you want?" He said, "Well, Uncle Van's all upset. He's afraid Father John Cunningham will bury somebody in our plot." So, I called Uncle Van, "What's wrong?" "Oh, Father John's gonna bury somebody in our plot. What you think about buyin' some concrete vaults?" I said, "Well, how many you think we oughta buy?" "Let's buy nine or ten." So we bought all them vaults, and we put 'em down. I've used one for my mama, and I used one for my uncle and my aunt, and I used one for my brother that passed away. My daddy, we just buried him and put a slab on top of him, so we decided it looked wrong, so we broke the slab, and put a vault on top of him, but there's nobody in it. It was kinda like an extra vault there. We've got all those vaults, and I said I'll find somebody in one of those vaults, I'll take 'em out! But Uncle Van, he was upset about that. I bet if we bought those things, today they're about nine hundred or a thousand dollars. I bet we bought those things for \$150 a piece, because the guy that put 'em, he didn't come and put 'em all in one day, he came when he got a chance to.

DL: No big hurry, huh? You just wanted to reserve your space.

CM: Like I said, I got for me and my wife, one for Yonnie and his wife. I got one for my cousin, got one for her. She wants to be buried by Mama and Daddy. I've got a few more little spots in there, and I should buy two more in case one of my kids ..., but I ain't done it yet. I had, my mother-in-law bought me a place in Natchitoches, but I want to be buried here. So, I told 'em before she died, she sold 'em.

DL: Mr. Clyde I sure appreciate you talking to me.

CM: I hope you learned something.

DL: I did. I learned a lot, and I might come back and ask you some more, once I sit down and transcribe this.

CM: If you decided to get back, most anytime I'm around. I just had a too much goin' on last week.

DL: I understand y'all had a big Mardi Gras parade?

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CM: Seventy-six, now I ain't talkin' about each four-wheeler—I'm talkin' about four-wheelers is one thing—76.

DL: How long y'all been doing that?

CM: Four years. The second year we had it, it was cold, and the lady from the Lottery gave me a whole case of sweatshirts with hoods on 'em. Man, it was cold, and I had those people comin'—I remember Louie Bernard comin'. Louie and I've been friends since we were in school. He was at Central, and I was on the debate team. We were big competition. I like Louie a lot. He said, "I'm about to freeze to death." I said, "Louie, I got what you need." So I went and opened that case and I got him one of them t-shirts. Well, when I did that, I opened it wide open because we were gonna throw 'em, and I had to give those things out. Louie told me here about two or three weeks ago—when I paid my taxes I went over to see him and I always drop in—and he said, "You know, I was lookin' the other day, you know, I still got that sweatshirt and it meant a whole lot to me the day you gave me that thing."

01:26:20

[Sound interference began shortly after this point, and recording became indecipherable. The conversation continued, but concerned types of guns and duck hunting, not of great interest. The corrupted recording was deleted].

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Interviewee: Mary Sue Metoyer

Interviewed October 10, 2015, Oakland Plantation, Natchez, LA, by Dayna Bowker Lee

Time of interview: 00:17:00

Transcribed 10/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

01:14

DL: Start with my name is, and tell me your parents' name, and how long you've lived in the house.

MM: Okay, my name is Mary Sue Metoyer, and my parents were Leo Metoyer and Camille Metoyer, and I was born here and my father also was born here. His mother and father lived with us after his father had the stroke; he took over the overseer job.

DL: What were his parents' names?

MM: Raney Metoyer and Suzette Metoyer.

02:00

DL: And Raney was the first overseer?

MM: No. What's the guy's name? I've forgotten his name now.

DL: And Raney was the overseer after that?

MM: I guess so. I'm not sure; but they have in there that the other guy's the overseer. They didn't have anybody else, but I don't know.

DL: What did the overseer do?

MM: Well, he did stuff at the house, and took care of the cattle, did a lot of plowin'.

DL: Did the overseer supervise the workers, like the plantation workers, at all?

MM: I don't think so, not that I ever known it; and he did the garden, the flower garden.

DL: Did your mom work here too?

02:57

MM: Yes. After my grandmother, well my grandmother was the first one that—I mean not the first one, I guess—but my grandmother did the cookin' over there, at the Big House, and when she got to where she couldn't, my mother started workin' over there.

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DL: And that was her role, she cooked?

MM: Yes.

DL: Did you work here?

MM: No. I picked cotton; first started out with the sharecroppers, pickin' with them, had a little flour sack, pickin' cotton, and a few years, I guess when we were teenagers, my dad took a little crop for us to do. But he was always busy on the farm; he didn't pick.

DL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MM: One brother and one sister.

DL: And y'all all grew up here? What years?

03:49

MM: Well, I was born in November 1933, and I stayed here until August '55. My brother, let's see, he was born in August '34—uh-uh, August '35—and he left here from here, I'm not too sure—he must've been 17, 18 when he left. And my sister lived, she was born in '37 and she, let's see, she left here in '57 or '58 and went to work in Natchitoches. But my mother did babysit for Alphonse and Jane Prud'homme. She did that, too, and my sister babysit for a while.

04:56

DL: So, when you were growing up, it was before mechanized cotton had taken over?

MM: Yes.

DL: So people were still doing cotton by hand?

MM: Yes, they were doing it by hand.

DL: Can you tell a little bit about that process? When they planted the cotton, what was the process? And then when you took the cotton from growing stage all the way to harvest.

MM: We did the hoein' and the pickin'.

DL: How many people worked out there?

MM: At one time there was two, let's see, was there two sharecroppers? I'm thinking there was only two. Then dad took a little piece of land, I can't remember what year it was. We were teenagers, but I think it was only two who were sharecroppers. I might be makin' a mistake, but I think there was only the two.

DL: Were there a bunch of kids out here you grew up with?

MM: Not too many. The one we used to pick cotton with, he only had two children, and, well, the other had, I think they had about seven or eight children. Well, the other lady that moved here and stayed in that house, at one time, she was raisin' her grandchildren. She had three granddaughters that she raised, but they didn't have a crop.

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06:37

DL: Where did you go to school?

MM: I first started at St. Paul's school, then I went—well, we did move away in '47, after my grandfather died. He died in December '46, and daddy said he was going to try and work in Natchitoches, so I went to school from January to May at St. Anthony's Catholic School in Natchitoches. And my grandmother grieved—she wanted to come back home; this was her home. So dad asked 'em, and they took him back, and then we went to St. Matthew then. Well, St. Paul closed right after that, and I finished high school at St. Matthew's.

DL: Where did y'all go to church went you lived out here?

MM: Well, went to St. Charles sometimes and sometimes we went to St. Augustine.

DL: It seems like it would be a hard trip to St. Augustine.

MM: Yes, uh-huh. Well, let's see, before we left to go, I have it in there, I don't remember what year, but it's on that picture in there, my dad—no, it's writing, it's not a picture—that he bought a Model A Ford. Oh, we picked pecans too. We picked pecans that year, and he went and bought a car, and we say, "Why'd you spend our money on a car?" and he say, "Y'all wanted a car, didn't you?" So, that's how we got that Model A Ford.

08:15

DL: Well, you mentioned going to town, moving to town briefly. So, did a lot of people leave the river and move into town?

MM: Yeah. People went to Chicago and places like that, you know.

DL: When mechanized cotton came in?

MM: Yeah.

DL: What was your parents' typical day? You said your mama was the cook and your daddy was the overseer. So, when they got up in the morning, what did they do?

MM: Everything. Did breakfast and do whatever you had to do around the house or whatever. Like he milked the cows and stuff like that, you know, plant the garden if it was time to plant, tend to the garden. Lot of times we helped with the garden, too, because we cut the grass in the garden, hoe the garden, yeah.

DL: So you had the garden in the front but did you also have a vegetable garden?

MM: That's what I mean, the vegetable garden. He would see to that, too, and we would help with that. And we had a little garden here and we had fig trees. We had three fig trees, I think, right out there, and I can see myself climbing those trees. I've got two trees now and I can't climb 'em!

09:40

DL: So you and your mom would make preserves?

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MM: Yes, she would can a lot of vegetables and stuff, wasn't no freezer, or electricity until, oh, I don't remember when we got the electricity.

DL: Were you a kid?

MM: No, teenager.

DL: You didn't have electricity, but if you killed a hog or something, how did you preserve the meat?

MM: They dried it out or something. Well, we would get ice. He had a little refrigerator that would hold a block of ice, and we'd use that for the food. Couldn't have too much at a time [laughs].

10:33

DL: I notice Dustin put a stove back there. Is that the kind of stove you grew up with?

MM: No, it was a regular iron stove; it wasn't a fancy one like that [laughs].

DL: That one's too fancy, huh? [laughs] What did you burn in it? Did you burn oak? What kind of wood did you burn in it?

MM: I'm not sure, probably it was pecan. They had a lot of pecan trees. I can't remember. I was the one—my brother and sister and I were the ones that would cut the wood. We would saw the wood, had a little thing to hold the logs up and we would saw, and if it needed splittin', we had to split the wood. Daddy was always workin'.

DL: So that was some of you kids' jobs. What else did you do, because your dad and your mom were working all day long, what else did y'all do?

MM: We were in the house, working stuff, my sister and I, and my brother ... after he got old enough, he tried plowing, did some stuff around the plantation until he left. I can't remember what year he left.

11:54

DL: Tell me about the inside of the house. I saw a bedroom over here, and a living room, so tell me about the interior space and how it was used.

MM: Let's see, when we were first born, there was that little room over there, and this living room, which was a living room and bedroom together, and on the back, to the right, there was a really small kitchen, and then that was a back porch, my dad closed that in. And then, well, I can't remember what year, but he took this room over here for a kitchen. Well, there was a bed in there when we were small, and he made a kitchen out of it, and then he put a bed in that little room back there. One time there was two beds in the living room.

DL: Who slept where? Who slept in the living room?

MM: I slept in the living room; my grandmother slept in here. After my grandfather had a stroke, he had a little bed that he slept on, single bed. He died in '46. I think he had that stroke for five years—been five years he couldn't do anything, had to help him out of the bed and

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everything.

DL: When did your parents leave here?

13:40

MM: Let's see, I was already working in Natchitoches when they left. I think it was in '65 that they went to Natchitoches, because my mother's dad died in '64, and I was living with him and my mother's sister. And so she said they had better move to Natchitoches. It wasn't much going on here anymore, so they moved to Natchitoches with us.

DL: You had a good time growing up here?

MM: Oh, yeah, played hide and seek and all kinds of games. Children don't know all that these days. You see, this house was so high, we could hide up under the house [laughs].

DL: What else did you play? Did you play marbles?

MM: Yeah, played with my brother. I had to shoot the cap pistol for him so he could put his hands on his ears! [laughs] And we played hide and seek, hide and switch. Somebody said something about that the other day, said, "Children don't know nothin' about playin'." I said, "No, they don't know nothin' about that. All they know is the TV."

DL: Tell me about, I've never heard about hide and switch.

MM: You hide the switch, and whoever found it would get behind everybody and try and whip 'em before they got to the base. I don't know who invented that, I thought it was just us did that, but my sister-in-law said the other day that they did.

15:28

DL: I see you've got these big double doors on here. Did you get a lot of storms out here, like tornadoes and bad winds?

MM: Looks like the weather wasn't as bad then, sure didn't seem like to me, but I remember the lightning hittin' those trees. But like hurricanes? I don't remember anything about hurricanes until I was working in Natchitoches, and I think it was Hurricane Audrey came through, and I didn't know what it was, and the boss man said, "Y'all try to get home before the weather gets too bad," and he said, "That's a hurricane."

DL: You don't remember any tornadoes hitting out here?

MM: No, I don't remember.

DL: What about flooding? Did y'all get any flooding?

MM: We had flooding but it didn't bother us. It was over the river. The people from over the river had to come over to this side.

DL: So, it was more from Red River?

MM: Yeah.

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DL: Your daddy took care of the cattle out here?

MM: Yeah.

DL: How many head of cattle did he have?

MM: Oh, I don't know, and they had several horses. I don't remember how many horses.

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Interviewee: Becky Thomas Meziere (Clifton Choctaw, Cane River)

**Interviewed September 26, 2015 at Magnolia Plantation, Hwy. 119, Natchez, LA, by
Rolonda Teal**

**Time of interview: 00:37:16
Transcribed 11/2/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:02

RT: Today is September 26, 2015 and we're here at Magnolia Plantation at the overseer's house. We're here to interview Mrs. Becky Meziere, and she will be talking today a little bit about her basketmaking expertise, and also, the genealogy research she's been doing that's going to connect the Creole community with the Choctaw.

BT: Good morning. My name is actually Becky Thomas, my married name is Meziere. I am a descendent of the Clifton Choctaw tribe. The Native American connection comes in early on, around the early 1800s. There was a big movement beginning of the 1800s for Choctaw people; however, history shows that Louisiana had the largest area of native Choctaw Americans in the entire country, primarily because they were moving from Mississippi over into Louisiana, trying to prevent the removal to Oklahoma.

Our beginnings start with Hickory Flat, and that area is in St. Landry [Parish]. That was a large push at that point, when they were moving from Mississippi into Louisiana. Hickory Flat was a site for surnames such as Baptiste, such as Clifton--there was a Clifton there, Brandys. These names you'll see later on as they're moving. Also there is some Smiths that are in that area. Fast forward a little bit, all those names, those tribal names, will split. You'll see some that will become Koasati, which is known as Coushatta. You'll see some that will become Texas Koasati because St. Landry is not far from the line between Texas and Louisiana, and then you'll see another movement northward, and that's where my line is going to come in at.

02:11

We have documented, or rather, I have documented, from 1870 Smith families known as Native Americans, documented in census records and other documentation. So those Smith families, they are going to move in to Rapides Parish with other Native American tribes that are there, and I say tribes because the Smith family is unknown of their Native American origin, meaning what tribe affiliation. We're assuming Choctaw because they were traveling with Choctaws, however, it's still unknown. When they move into Rapides Parish, I'm going to fast forward now, to about 1840, 1850, at this point, there was a gentleman known as Carroll Jones. He was a descendent of a, he was a slave but he was later emancipated. His father was a white man from Tennessee. He moves into the area of Louisiana, this is around probably 1850 I'm going to think, I think it's around 1850, and he moves down, and he was a fantastic horseman. He trained race horses, and he also sold race horses.

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03:28

So he moves into the Rapides/Cotile area, which is considered Ward 9, he meets Catherine Clifton. Now, Catherine Clifton is sister to Jesse Clifton. Catherine and Jesse Clifton are born around the beginning of the 1800s, somewhere between 1800 and 1825. They are known as Native American, Choctaw Indian; and because Carroll Jones is a horseman, he is also a businessman, which was the same type of business the Cliftons were in at that point in time. They were having a store, they owned lots of land, and the two met because they were in the same area. Upon their meeting, which happens about 1850, I think maybe it was 1848, they meet, and the beginning of the Jones line starts in Rapides Parish. This line begins, they have several children in Rapides Parish; but after the Civil War, after the 1860s, Carroll Jones and Catherine Clifton decide to move to Natchitoches area.

04:41

Now, when they moved to Natchitoches, they moved to the outskirts of Natchitoches first. Now, when they moved here, they moved with, I think they may have had five or six children at that point. They move here, and making an establishment, he ends up being a successful businessman, and at this point is when the entire Jones line starts, and they are going to start being part Native American, part African American, and part white. Interestingly enough, most of the Joneses today do not connect with their Native American side; however, documentation shows there is a direct line from our community, which is now the Clifton [Choctaw] community, with the Cane River people, and this is the Jones line.

05:27

Then going back a little, after 1860 they move here, establish all of the Jones property. Catherine Clifton and Carroll Jones have, I think, a total of sixteen or seventeen kids all together. Now ironically enough, as years go by, the vast majority does marry into the Creole, if you want to call it, or the people from here on Cane River. Now, another professor of mine once said, 'Indians seek Indians.' Most of Native Americans, most of the people they marry, have other Native American connections. Some were Chitimachie [Chitimacha], some were Caddo, and unlikely enough, there were a couple of Joneses that married back into Catherine Clifton's line. They married back into the Cliftons and some Tylers.

06:22

Now, coming back up a little bit further, there's another line known on the river as Terrell, their last names are Terrell. Now, Violet Terrell, born in the 1820s as well, her origin is still not completely known, [but] she was from Native American descent. Now, if you look at the timeline, we have Catherine Clifton, Native American, and here we have Violet Terrell being from Native American descent, both from Rapides Parish. Ok, Violet marries, well, let me take that back, I never knew who her husband was, I don't know if Terrell was, in fact, her maiden name or her married name; however, she was of Native American descent. Her children married, not far from here, one of them married a lady called Sarah Metoyer, then later known as Sarah Terrell. Miles Terrell marries Sarah Metoyer. There's another connection from our community to this line here. Then they have children and they marry into here. Again, there's another line that's marrying into the Isle Brevelle area.

07:40

Most of the area in Isle Brevelle, the river, as most history knows, a lot of Native Americans were here. We had the [inaudible] Choctaws that were out by the Red River, we had

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the Apalachees that were there at Sang-Pour-Sang, Emmanuel Hills. My husband's line which is Allie May Wright, is from the Sang-Pour-Sang area. They lived in a place called Sugar Town. She remembers her grandmother being of Native American descent, and we also have that documentation, and I think theirs coming in with some Caddo, probably some Choctaw, and Apalachee. So as you can see, most Native Americans, ironically, seek out other Native Americans.

08:30

Over the years, I think the culture here on the river was more focused on their Creole culture, and they did not focus on their strong Native American heritage, kinda forgotten even though it is only twenty miles away. Because at one point in history, being Native American was not a point in history that you want to admit to because if you admit to being Native American, they were afraid of being forced off their property, or being ignored totally in time. So that's also why it is very hard to make direct connections to Native American lines because of that hidden culture and identity.

09:17

My family line is Thomases. My mother was a Tyler, and her mother was a Tyler-Clifton. Probably around the 1960s to the 1970s is when a man called Claude Medford—most people are very familiar with Claude—he went around the country documenting Native American culture and traditions. Claude Medford was linked to our community through Dr. Pete Gregory, anthropologist for Northwestern State University, because where Clifton is located is extremely rural area, as were most Native Americans. They come out there and discover, “Wow, here is a Native American community.” Of course, there is no “wow.” It's been there the whole time, just kinda unheard of. He comes out and he documents my Thomas line, which my great-grandfather, Paul Thomas, Sr., [who] tans hides.

10:23

Now, there is a Choctaw tradition as do most tribes have, where they have a certain way that they tan hide or make baskets, and it's kind of signature to that tribe. Well, they discover that my great-grandfather smoked hides in his process of tanning. Well, come to find out, that process is known through the Choctaw people. Primarily, Choctaws smoke their hides; it's another form of curing the hide. They document that, and also discover that my people, at this point in time, also had a history of making what was called white oak baskets, which is the start of some of the Native American traditions. But they also made other weaving techniques with vines, things that would be native to that area that they could use for basket weaving.

11:18

Well, now we are in the 1970s, Claude Medford has come and he's documenting the other traditions, and he also says another tradition for Choctaw people is called pine needle basket weaving. This is, at this point in our tribe, is lost. So, in order for him to help us to bring back that tradition, he set us up with workshops that would show us how to bring make that particular tradition to my community, and this is, actually, one of my mother's baskets right here, that is woven with long leaf pine needles, not the short leaf. This is found in the Kisatchie National Forest area, and it is woven with what is called raffia, and that you can buy in most hobby stores. Now, what they might have weaved that with early on prior to access to new materials would have been maybe a very thin vine, or some other river cane, those types of stuff. Of course, the Forest Service, as most people know, with loggers coming in, and they were heavily in our area, cut out most of the supplies for what the early Native Americans would have used to do their

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traditional basket weaving.

12:46

So, with that said, I learned from my mother, and I'm trying to pass it down to my kids. My mother has been doing basket weaving for about forty years. I've been doing it for about twenty-five [years]. I have baskets on display in museums in New Orleans, Europe, France. I'm one of the top five artists in the southern states for basket weaving. I also travel and do venues such as Jazz Fest, representing my tribe. I've done some TV interviews, and of course, an interview today. So the connections to the river are vast.

13:33

I'm currently doing research and making those connections as well, to try and document where are original family tribes left off. They left off with finding the true genealogy of the community probably around the early 1980s, because there was a grant at the time that the tribe, because our tribe was established in 1972, and it was state recognized in about 1978, I think. So, in 1978 it was part of the state process to do the genealogy for the tribe. So two Mennonite girls were to come in to document and hear the folklore, and also do one on one interviews with the elders of the community, and try and establish how long they've been there, and their Native American traditions. Well, after documenting several interviews throughout, I think they may have been there two years doing intensive documentation, then we became state [recognized].

14:44

Now, since that point, we now have access to internet, a little bit easier to document stuff, and a little bit easier for genealogist to find more information. So, at that point, documentation and looking for genealogy just stopped in the early 1980s, and has never resumed. So, once I became an adult, went to college, always, always was interested in my history of my people, because there is some mystery to where did the people originate from. So I started myself about ten years ago, tried to make connections, tried to find out more information, and doing that, now, I'm making connections to other Native American tribes that were all following each other.

1535

In the Cane River area, there is a name, Dupree, that is kind of prevalent in this area. As I'm doing my genealogy, I'd say around 1870 when I was talking about the documentation earlier of the census bureau, where they're going around at this point, and they're documenting these large, I'm going to say enclaves, of Native Americans. This is around Hickory Flat, Barnes Creek area, again around St. Landry, and shockingly enough, there's a Clifton in this same Native American area and a Dupree. This same Dupree is going to come in later on as a major play in the Cane River area, and this Dupree is going to follow the same Native American families. Now, this is new information, this has not been documented prior to now, cause this is information I've recently got.

16:31

So, I go back and say, wow, that's interesting, I wonder how far was he following these Native Americans, so I continued to look. I follow him right along with my family and other tribes all the way from Hickory Flat to Lake Charles, eventually to the outskirts of Rapides Parish. So, shockingly, I find this Dupree who's traveling with my people. Keep in mind, this is prior to all of the Jones connections, and he is found in Natchitoches, the Dupree, and this Dupree is documented as being part Creek, he was half Creek and half white. But, somewhere

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along the way, and of course, nobody's ever done any genealogy on the Dupree family other than a little bit that says, okay, we know he's part Creek, and we know he is part white, but until now, there's never been a connection to my tribe.

17:51

Now, fast forward to present day, some of those same Duprees from that family line, believe it or not, unbeknownst to them, marry back into my people, again going back to my statement, "Native Americans seek Native Americans." Sometimes even they don't even know it. But all of these connections are going to come from Isle Brevelle, the river, and the Sang-Pour-Sang, Emmanuel Hills area. It doesn't really come into Melrose area, or I think they call that Isle Brevelle until a little bit later. Now, with all those connections, my family is the only family that has kept the traditional basket weaving, and that's only because my family has held their Native American identity through all this time.

18:40

Now, somebody might ask, okay, why would all of these Native Americans marry Native Americans from the river, but only one section continue those traditions, and continue the identity? Well, here's why. When you look at the distance, it's about, I'm going to say, a twenty-mile distance between the Isle Brevelle area and what is now called Clifton Choctaw area. It was not called that in the 1800s, it was a different name, but it was Ward 9. Well, my people lived very, very rural, and they still had to survive with the skills they knew from their Native American history, and heritage, and traditions, but that wasn't necessary when you moved to the Isle Brevelle area. There was Natchitoches, [it] was a large outpost at one time. It was no need to keep your Native American identity, because you had access to other jobs that did not require the Native American skills you once had. So, therefore, you had same families marrying into each other, one section keeps Native American identity, the other just has a small focus, and hearsay that yes, Grandma had Native American, but they do not keep their identity. They eventually identify with the Creole people.

20:01

And it's actually sad, but if you think about it, it was not necessary to keep your identity as Native American. The focus was on providing for your family, that was the main focus, and the focus for that in this area was more prevalence in having Native American kind of blend, and become successful, than to be Native American and unsuccessful. Today, I know that the Jones family is a humongous name on the river, and I actually met someone several months ago, I'm not going to give a name, he was unaware that he had any connection to our community, and so when I started giving him names that were familiar, and he was completely shocked. So, that is an example of how Native Americans lose their identity when they change areas. It only takes a point in history to lose your entire identity, and to pick up a completely different identity.

21:07

RT: Very good. I'm hearing you talking about this, and I'm seeing parallels as you're talking. The statement you just made [recording blanks out briefly] family history, along the Native American line.

BT: Right, I'm going to ask the question: how would you trace your Native American heritage or culture, and how would you link that to a tribe? You would start with your maiden name or surname, and you would look in that area. Well, you're going to do two things, you're going to do two things at one time. First, you want to find the history of your area, or what area you think

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that your family may have been. Once you find that, take your surname, and there are databases, or courthouse records, most places now have genealogy societies, and for example, Natchitoches Parish. They have an entire genealogy area that you can search at the courthouse, and you're going to go in there, and you're going to find your surnames, then you're going to look and see whose families were connected to that, and the local tribe, like, for example, my tribe. You're going to see if any of those surnames pop up in this local tribe, and I'll give you an example to understand more of how that would work.

22:23

Let's say a Jones, born in, say 1980, I heard my grandmother was Choctaw Indian, or I heard she was Native American, I don't know how to begin my search. What I'm going to do, I'm going to first is find out what the tribe is, and of course, there is a local tribe, the Clifton Choctaw tribe that does have a tribal roll. Tribal roll is where every member of that tribe with family connections to each other have a long list of names that are associated to families specifically for that area and that tribe. So I'm going to contact them first and see if my surname would pop up in their genealogy. Ok, if they say yes, some tribes are helpful and let you look into their information, and some do not, but if you call my tribe, we do. So, we're going to say, ok, we do know that your great-grandmother was Catherine Clifton Jones. Well, you may not have even known that her surname was Clifton but there you made a connection, and from that point, you can see where your family line merged with that local tribe, and that's how you search.

23:44

But, let's say you don't have that option, and you can't locate that tribe, there are online databases, such as Ancestry.com, My Heritage, some of those have memberships, some do not. You have access to millions of records and census records that you can find, that may link your particular person you're searching to one area, or many areas. So, educating yourself on how genealogy works, how to locate the names you need is crucial to finding what you're looking for.

RT: This we may need to cut, but I need to talk to you about....

24:25

BT: You see a major, major difference. Most of my people married into that area. The reason being is because they already knew they were Native American people. Dupree, more than likely, is going to end up being the same one, definitely the same line.

RT: Oh, definitely the same line, they're the only Dupree here, and I'm going to say that there is a lot of Native American mix in there.

BT: Well, let me tell you, and this is probably another part of history that's not always talked about. Currently, it is definitely documented in my family. The Clifton family originated, there is definitely some English there. Choctaw people, if you are from the northern part, or middle to northern part of Louisiana, you are going to see a lot of English last names. Now, if you are a Koasati Indian, you're going to see a lot of Spanish and French last names. Now, my people, think about the last names I'm going to mention, we're looking at Clifton, which is English, Thomas, which is English, Neals, which is English. Now, there is also a separate separation that is very, very noted in history, between the difference now, between family lines. My community is predominately Baptist. The only connection we had to Catholic is in recent history because one of the tribal members married a person from this area, and then he converted to Catholicism, but this entire area is almost all Catholic, almost all French last names, so now you're seeing the differences in the two, because Choctaw people are usually known to have English last names.

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They were the first people, the first tribal people to actually adopt the English ways, adopt their last names, adopt their way of surviving. They were friendly people to the English people. So that's why you're going to see a vast majority with English last names, and that's another thing to look for when you're doing genealogy. Are those names English, Spanish, French? Has a lot to do with tribes as well.

RT: Let's switch focus back a little bit...

26:26

BT: Right, the tradition of basket weaving was introduced back into our tribe in the 1970s, and I say introduced back because there was a point in time where it was lost. Our tribe did other types of traditional Native American stuff. This was introduced in the 1970s. My grandmother was a basket weaver but not as prevalent as my mother, but she does know how it works. My mother started in the late 1970s, and attended one of the first Folklife Festivals they had at Natchitoches with her basketmaking. I learned how to make baskets from her, and from that point on, she and I both have done our very best to keep the tradition alive in our community, and that goes into how we gather. I think I'll speak now about how the process goes when you're making Native American baskets.

28:00

What we do, and I mentioned earlier about the long-leaf pine needles. Those are in great demand, because after the loggers came in and started clear cutting. There was, at one point, virgin timber, and it was all longleaf pine to this area. Loggers come in, and they cut all that out, and they replant a more, faster growing pine tree, but it was short leaves. So, some years went by, and they said, 'well, you know what, this is not going to work. We need to reintroduce these pine leaves back to the forest.' The area we're from, which is the Kisatchie area, there are still some long-leaf pine trees that live there and thrive. We get a permit from the National Forest Service, because we're Native American, we get a permit, and the permit allows us to go in designated areas, and gather long-leaf pine needles, but we promise not to cut any trees, or break any limbs, or destroy anything, which you know Native Americans don't do that anyway. So we go in, and to make the baskets, and the types we make, it can't be a tree any taller than twelve foot. We never pick up needles off the ground. We take them green, right off the tree.

29:19

When we take them home, and we put them in a dark, ventilated area, and they dry. If it's summertime, they'll probably dry in about a week and a half, but if it's wintertime, it takes maybe two to three weeks for the needles to be prepared to sew, and when I say dry, they're going to end up turning this color, not the brown that you would see on the ground. The reason we do not use any needles off the ground, or a larger tree, is because you've got to think about the seasons that came, they've either been run over by a borer, or either frost, and so forth and so forth. You want to get needles that are just natural to the tree. So, we've dried our straw, and it's been about two and a half weeks, and now I'm ready to weave.

30:09

When I begin weaving, what I do is, I take seven or eight long-leaf pine needles, and I'll soak them, because I only want the beginning to be pliable, because what I'm going to do is, I'm going to start my basket with a coil, and the coil is going to look similar to that, and if you look at the top of this lid, right here you'll see the very beginning of the basket, and if you can see, then I am making a loop, and I'm going to sew from that point, and is where I'll begin the process

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of basket weaving.

30:46

You only wet the straw, and this is key. There's many people that do basket weaving, but there's only probably three tribes that I know of that do this particular process, and that is the Elton Coushattas, the Coushattas from Livingston, and Alabama Coushattas, and myself, the Clifton Choctaws, and this is why. We only soak our straw to start, after that point, we immediately start using dry straw, this is why. If you think about when straw is wet on a tree, and it's got everything natural, it's expanded, but when I dry my straw, it's going to shrink. So, what you want to do is, if I made this entire basket of wet straw, guess what it's going to do when it dries, it's going to shrink, and the basket is going to be loose.

31:42

And speaking of the African American connection, just like Native Americans, what I've noticed on the river, especially, and really anywhere, but especially here, I've noticed that if you were of lighter color, they tried to hide any connection to any other color source, whether it be African American, Native American, Spanish, however, they thought it was more prevalent and more prestigious to become totally white. I know of families, not just here on Cane River, but also in my community, moved to places like California or Chicago, completely disassociated themselves with their original culture, and became totally white. Now, this generation that's come in now, and I say that because I was a council member for my tribe, and I worked in an office, and I cannot tell you how many calls I've got with this generation that's asking now about those connections. Unfortunately, there's a lot of history lost, especially after 1900, move all the way up to now, oh, my goodness, it's an entire area of time that was lost, because that particular area you're looking at is, the United States is establishing itself. It's got industry coming in, and the focus was on making money, and the focus was also on establishing your home site, had nothing to do with culture. But now we understand the importance of culture and where you come from. So, it's difficult now for those same families to find those connections, but I've always been as helpful as I could possibly be, 'cause I love history, and I love my people.

33:34

I wish there was more documentation for the Creole people so they can understand they're not just a Creole link. They're not linked just to New Orleans and the Creole or the Haitian. They're link closely, if you actually traced their heritage, they would probably have more Native American connection to this area than they ever have with their Creole current culture, but if they don't know about it, how can you trace something you don't know.

34:05

RT: Very good point. So, in terms of you conducting this genealogy, and knowing the difficulties, not just dealing with African Americans, is [recording blanks out briefly].

34:14

BT: Okay.

RT: You stopped, you finished with talking about why you did the straw like that.

BT: Okay, preparing the straw and weaving dry is key. I only use the wet straw at the very, very bottom to start it. The remainder of my basket is always going to be woven with dry, and

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the purpose for that is, you can feel my basket, and it will not move, it's hard. Now, if you feel a basket that moves, and is out of shape, that is someone that doesn't know the Native American tradition of how to weave the basket to get it tight, or how to prepare the straw for basket weaving, that sets it aside, that sets our Native American culture aside from the more Anglo basket weaving.

RT: How is the second basket you made a different process from the first basket.

35:08

BT: Ok. The process, as you can see, this is natural basket weaving with the natural straw. This is dyed straw. The process for that is, is where I'm going to dye the straw after it's dry right here, and I dye the straw whatever color I want to make my basket, and the process for that is boiling. I boil my straw and add color. Now, the early Native Americans would use stuff like black walnut. They would use berries to dye whatever color they want to make as their signature color. Choctaws were known for color. As you can see on mine, I have red, and I have black, and I have other color, where the Koasati are more known for their natural colors, and that sets different tribes apart from each other. All basket weavers have their own signature basket weaving techniques. Mine and my mother's are different. Mine is more of a tight weave, my mother's is more of a spaced wheat stitch, which is what this is called. My mother likes to weave baskets more traditional with less color, I like to do more contemporary, but I do effigies as well, which is I can create turtles, armadillos, shape my baskets into different shapes, sizes, but this particular basket is a double process, because I'm actually curing the straw twice, and that is the reason you see it the different color. This one is called the Red Wing Blackbird basket because the idea is you'll see the red wing, and the rest of the basket is the body of the blackbird, and that's the types of tradition we do with the Clifton Choctaw tribe, and I live here in the Natchitoches Parish area now.

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PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Mayo Prud'homme

Interviewed October 10, 2015, Oakland Plantation, Natchez, LA, by Dayna Bowker Lee

Time of interview: 00:15:07

Transcribed 10/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:08

MP: My name is Mayo Prud'homme. I was born here, at Oakland Plantation in 1932, and I remained here until I graduated from college, and at that time I left and went into the Air Force. I was 23 years old at the time and overall I spent ten years in the Air Force, and then I joined Eastern Airlines and I spent 25 years flying for Eastern and retired as a Captain in 1991.

DL: Can you tell me about growing up here? Tell me who your family was, and who your parents were, and your brothers and sisters, and a little bit about growing up here?

MP: My father was Alphonse Prud'homme II and my mother was Lucille Keator from St. Louis, and I was the third son of four children. I had one younger sister, I had two older brothers and, of course, they always led me astray and taught me bad things and that's the reason I did the bad things [laughs]. But, at any rate, after leaving here, as I said, I took up a flying career; and for a while I tried farming, but when they built the Berlin Wall, I got called back to active duty and lost what interest I had in farming. But my two brothers, Al and Ken, though, continued to farm for many years. They farmed Oakland; and as a matter of fact, Oakland is known as a Bicentennial Farm. It has been farmed by the same family since before the Constitution was signed in 1776, and also Magnolia Plantation is considered that. They're the only two west of the Mississippi River. Cotton was first raised on a commercial basis here at Oakland by my great-great-great-grandfather, Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme.

02:22

Jean Pierre Emmanuel was the third generation Prud'homme in Louisiana. He was the one who built Oakland Plantation. It started in 1818 and finished in 1821, and my siblings and I were the eighth generation to live at Oakland Plantation. We were the tenth generation of the Prud'hommes in the family. Our elder was a French marine at Fort St. Jean Baptiste, and he came over in 1716 or -17, somewhere in there, and he married a Casket Girl in 1725. Casket Girls were poor orphans who were brought over from France to marry into the colony to help populate the colony. She was twenty; my ancestor was fifty-three. They had numerous children, about seven or eight. They helped populate the colony, but the family never left here. The people who did leave almost always came back, including myself. I left here at twenty-three and came back at eighty-three. There's sixty years of which people ask me about Natchitoches in that span and I know nothing about it.

04:04

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At any rate, my brothers continued farming here until they quit farming. I've forgotten what year it was, but the price of cotton was very low and it was becoming very unprofitable to raise cotton. But like I said, I went through St. Mary's Academy in Natchitoches, the Catholic high school, and then on to Northwestern State, now the University, at Natchitoches.

04:35

DL: You said you worked in the ... you were the Assistant Postmaster?

MP: Yeah, my dad ran the post office for 37 years, I think it was. He was the Postmaster at Bermuda. It was a fourth-rate post office, and when he was on vacation or anything, which was very rare, but when he was off on vacation, I became Assistant Postmaster and handled all the chores of the Postmaster. See the mail slots back here? I have a friend where I'm living at the assisted living at Natchitoches who was a veterinarian, and he always talked about my dad. He said if he ever needed to find anyone down here, he would come by the post office and talk to my dad, because he knew everyone from here down the river, out to Red River, and he did.

05:33

DL: They're alphabetized, so this was not just for the people on the plantation, this was for the whole community?

MP: For the whole community, yeah, right. We had two mail riders who went out from here, one that brought the mail in and went on down to Magnolia Plantation. The other one started here, by horseback usually in the wintertime, and he would go out to Red River delivering the RFD mail, and gosh, it was interesting. I used to ride with him sometimes when they later upgraded and used vehicles to make the routes, and I would ride with him. It was really interesting to go out and see where everybody lived at out there.

DL: I bet. Were they roads paved?

MP: Oh no, no, no. This one road in front here was gravel. The ones we went to out on Red River were all mud and dirt.

06:37

DL: How many people were support workers? How many people did you have working on the farm when you were growing up?

MP: Oh, golly. There were about five families of sharecroppers here that were on half-share. We had a quarter-sharecropper, he owned his own equipment and mules and everything, and that was Felix Helaire. Almost all of them were from the Helaire family that have been on the plantation since way back when. And as a matter of fact, their ancestors were born on the plantation in slavery time, but they never left, and as things progressed and mechanization came in, my dad had to go to day-farming, day-pay farming, and there was no reason to keep the families on the plantation, and a number of them cried when they had to leave because this was the only place they had ever known.

07:50

DL: Where did you guys go to church? Did you go to St. Charles Chapel?

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MP: No, we went, there's a little church up the road, about half-mile from here, St. Charles, there's another name for it, but St. Charles Church, and we had church. The priest would come up from Brevelle every Sunday, either by horseback or by car depending as the times progressed, and we would have 7 o'clock Mass almost every Sunday morning; and at Lent, he would come up on Friday, and we would have the Way of the Cross, and the kids would go out and we'd play football up to the time of the services themselves.

08:44

DL: Who all went to that church?

MP: Everyone. All the old families down here were Catholic. They were mostly, when growing up when I was a kid, they were mostly the whites that were there, but later on, blacks started attending there because it was more convenient than going down to Isle Brevelle. But one thing about the French slave owners, they insisted that the families, the mothers and fathers married and all the children were baptized as Catholics, and they were very strict about keeping Catholicism alive around here—very religious in this area.

DL: So, a lot of the sharecropping families were Catholic as well?

MP: Not necessarily the ones that were living here. They had their own churches, the Southern Baptist for the most part, and they had a number of churches. One, about a mile north of here, across the river, there was one south of here. This was for the blacks, now the "mulattoes," half white, were all Catholic and they were the ones started attending mass up here.

10:15

DL: We're not going to keep you very long, but what I would like for you to do is tell me just what you told me about coming back to Cane River and drinking the water.

MP: Well, it's almost weird because people ... you can hardly wait to get out of here when you're growing up, and see the world. Well, I went and I saw the world, as did a number of my nephews and nieces, but once you've drunk the Cane River water you've always got to come back and try it again. Unfortunately, I lost my wife about five months ago, and within three months, I was back down at Cane River, and so I have numerous ... well, my sister still lives here, and we've all gotten into our 80s, and doing quite well. My older brother, Ken, passed away in December, and he was a major patriarch of the family, and that has fallen onto my shoulders, and I don't know how strong my shoulders are. But you always come back to Cane River. Honestly, we have a nephew up in New England who works for an insurance company up there, and he and his wife—his wife is the vice-president—and when she retires, they're planning to come back to Cane River. And so, there's something about Bermuda and the Joyous Coast, which is what it was called back in the 1850s when cotton was really king and people made a lot of money.

DL: Thank you Mr. Mayo, that was wonderful.

MP: One other thing I would like to mention is, my grandfather and great-uncle attended Notre Dame, and a couple of their sisters went to St. Ann's up in Indiana. My great-uncle was the captain of the first Notre Dame football team, Edward Carrington Prud'homme, and he is still recognized at Notre Dame as having that position.

DL: Well, you were talking about education, I'm sure the Prud'hommes went all over. I

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would assume in the early generations that the children got their education in France.

MP: They did go to France. Now, my great-grandfather was planning to go to Yale, and his father, my great-great-grandfather, sent him to a preparatory school; but it was in the 1850s and there was a book that had been written by a lady named Harriet Beecher Stowe, and from what I understand, she never came south of Cincinnati, but got her information from runaway slaves. But at any rate, instead of going to the preparatory school for Yale, he went to the University of Virginia for a couple of years, and then went to the University of North Carolina where he received a degree in engineering. When we transferred the plantation to the National Park Services, we collected all the things that we had in the attic at Oakland. Now, understand, no one left Oakland. They came, they brought their stuff, and they died. The next generation came and brought their stuff. They put the other stuff in the attic, so over the years, with us being the eighth generation to live in the home, we got together, and presented the University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection with fifty-three boxes of family history. They already had two of the old ledgers from the 1700s, so this added to this collection.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Ms. Viv Prud'homme

Interviewed October 10, 2015, Oakland Plantation, Natchez, LA, by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 00:12:05
Transcribed 10/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:09

VP: I'm sorry my two daughters aren't here to be in it, but that's the breaks. Mayo, my brother and I are the sixth generation. I was the last baby born here, and it's just been home to so many of us for generations. It's still the Big House; it's still home to all generations, as we have visitors from Harlingen, relatives from Harlingen, not just visitors. But for all of us, really, it's the Grand Lady of the river.

00:46

DL: Ms. Viv, can you talk a little bit about when the pilgrimage started, when y'all started doing the tours?

VP: Mama started taking, and my grandmother started taking tourists in back in the '20s. My Mom and Dad married in '27, and my grandfather had moved the two cabins that were behind the house—it was for the carriage driver and the cook—had moved them to the northeast side, and my grandfather rented them out as camps. And Cane River was an excellent spot for fishing, so they did a lot of fishing in there, and people from those camps would come and say, "Ms. Prud'homme, would you take us through the house?" And after World War II, so much of the old metals were turning up, and showing up, so that they started what they called the museum, we didn't know we grew up in a museum! [laughs] Under the house, they had two rooms down there with all the old things that we used to build the house, and things we used on the plantation. Everything in there was from Oakland. And then just ... I'm truly not sure of the year that the historical group took over in Natchitoches, and it reached a point that my Dad was blind and deaf, and Mama asked that the house just be on tour—and in fact, it had started out with that group—in the afternoon, and then they decided no, it needed to be afternoon and had to be all day. And Mama said, "Please put Oakland in the afternoon because of my husband," and they said no, they wouldn't do that, so, they had to take it off the tour for several years. And then my Mom passed away and we got all the cousins, first cousins and grandkids from them, and we put it on tour ourselves the next year, and I think two years after that, and then the Park had gotten it to a point when it could be viewed, and so we began to staff it, or put docents in here so to tell everything about the house.

03:19

DL: So your parents were some of the earliest people on the river to actually incorporate tourists into the plantation economy?

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VP: I didn't think of it as that way, you know, it was just something Mom did. We'd be sitting at the dinner table, in the dining room—all our meals were served in there—and people would walk in the front door 'cause we never locked the door, and they'd see us and, "Oh, you live here." "Uh, yeah!" [laughs] Mom said, "If you wait, I'll give you a tour." [laughs] She was always the gracious one. It started way back then, and progressed to the historical group.

[unidentified female relative asks Ms. Prud'homme to talk about the room set aside for the people who came through as tourists]

04:15

VP: [laughs] Well, that was in the early years! They had the end room down there, it's called the stranger's room because it was just a room. It had no entrance into the main house, and they had access to the outhouse, bowl, linen, pitchers. And anyone late traveling in the day they knew could not make it to Natchitoches, they'd invite in to spend the night and gave 'em bed and breakfast [laughs]. They would invite them in to eat dinner, and they always shared news of where they had been, and who they were, and that sort of thing. Then they took news from here on up the road—the river—with 'em. It wasn't until 1920—Mama and Daddy married in 1924 and in 1927, when my oldest brother was born, they cut a door into the stranger's room to make it accessible from their bedroom. But we still call it the stranger's room.

05:34

DL: Tell me a little bit about this time of year on the plantation. This would have been, I guess, harvest time?

VP: Yes, ma'am.

DL: Can you tell me a little bit about the activities that went on here, and kind of the festiveness of it?

VP: Well, we enjoyed it as kids 'cause we always got to ride on the little trailers ... wagons. It started out wagons of cotton, and we enjoyed going down to the gin and have it suck it up. [laughs] I have a cousin that lost a hat in every bale of cotton that went through there [laughs]. It was a gay time. It was fall and all the crops were in and the gardens were plush. A little bit later, they had the *boucherie* where they would kill the hogs for the plantation. It was great then, you know. Like I told Mayo, we didn't realize that we grew up in a museum until we moved away. Can you think of anything that was more festive than harvest time?

DL: You had big Christmases?

06:45

VP: Oh, Christmases were a ball. When we were little, all my aunts and uncles, and all the kids came here. My grandparents were still living, so we all had Christmas here at the Big House. We had oodles of table space [laughs], and it was always a great, great time, and after both of my grandparents had passed away, my one uncle was married to an aunt, a sister of my dad, and he decided, he had seven kids, so they decided they were going to do Christmas at home, so that kinda put an end to that part of it, and still, we still always had a big table.

[unidentified female relative]: And Aunt Dot wintered in Bermuda!

VP: Yeah, she did [laugh]. We had a lot of fun with that Bermuda name. The Air Force had a

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school at Northwestern. We called them the Remington Raiders. They were in the business part, and, of course, we were girls at St. Mary's, and we had lots of fun. We met these guys and we told them we were from Bermuda. They said, "oh, Bermuda, wow," [laughs]. And when my brother married, his wife was from Bayou Chicot, and the article came out in the paper, "Alphonse Prud'homme Jr., from Bermuda, Oakland Plantation marries blah, blah, blah," and they were going to Bermuda on their honeymoon. No, no, no! That wasn't it! She was marrying Alphonse Prud'homme of Bermuda, and somebody said, "Wow! A honeymoon and living in Bermuda!," and Jane said, "Yeah, I can see Al paddling down Cane River!" [laughter]

08:44

DL: How many people were here on the plantation when you were growing up, workers?

VP: We had at least five families, most of them were Helaires and Behars, and when daddy retired from the post office in '49, I believe, the overseer ... did he retire from farming at that time? Is that when Al and Ken over?

Mayo Prud'homme: He retired in '50.

09:16

VP: Okay, he retired from everything in '50 because he was losing his hearing and his eyesight, and at that time the overseer said, "Well, when Mr. Phonsie retires, I will retire," and so he did, and he moved into Natchitoches, and then, let's see, little by little, the others, the blacks on the place. Leo was—at that time, we called them "mulattoes," which was because all of us were Creole. It was Creole the white and *de couleur*—and so anyways, they were all like family, but they all scattered and went all their different ways. And then my brothers began to take over the farming here, and it was a good life, it really was. And people always asked us what was it like growing up at Oakland, and my brother Mayo's answer was always, "What was it like growing up in your home?" It was home, you know [laughs]. We didn't know any different; it was what it was.

DL: It was a good place to grow up?

10:28

VP: It was, and my friends loved to come out here for slumber parties, and we'd sleep in one of the camp houses, or in my bedroom. Oh, they loved the four posters and all that, and I just wanted a long, low, footless blonde bedroom set. Never got it! [laughs]

[Unidentified female relative]: The beds came from Louisiana, right? Weren't they built there?

VP: Yes, they're from New Orleans. Seignouret was one for this bed in this bedroom, and Mallard did the large one in the master bedroom.

[Unidentified female relative]: Who was the uncle that had to have it made really large for? You had one really tall uncle somewhere. They had to custom-make that height?

VP: I never heard.

MP: Grandpa Alphonse.

VP: Well, Grandpa Alphonse was tall, and that's when they put the armoire, the clothes press

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upon pillars, on blocks, and then my grandfather Pappé was very tall, my daddy was tall.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Kathy Prud'homme Guin

Interviewed October 10, 2015, Oakland Plantation, Natchez, LA, by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 00:08:43
Transcribed 10/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

KPG: Hi, I'm Kathy Prud'homme Guin. Welcome to Oakland. This was my grandparents' home when I was growing up. I've spent a lot of time here. My father was born here. Oakland, the building, was started in 1818 with slave labor, and was finished in 1821. The builder of the home is here [points to painting], Jean Pierre Emmanuel Prud'homme. He and his wife, Catherine Lambre, were the builders of the home; and they originally had a home on the banks of the Cane River, which was then the Red River, but because of flooding, in 1818 they decided to push back and build a larger home. So, he was a planter, and his first crops were indigo and tobacco; but around 1797, after Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, he decided to try his hand at cotton, and was considered to be the first man to successfully grow cotton in the Louisiana Purchase.

01:00

When they finished the home in 1821, Emmanuel and Catherine went back to Paris to visit relatives and to purchase furniture for the home. When they came back, well, they also had their portraits painted in Paris, and on the back of these portraits, it says "*Paris, 1822.*" So, they bought furniture and it was shipped to New Orleans, where it was put on another boat and went up the Mississippi, and transferred to another boat to the Red River, and it docked right out front and they brought the furniture into the house. They kept enlarging the house, as Catherine bought too much furniture on their trip to Paris. So, they immediately ... Emmanuel had to start renovating the house and making it larger.

01:44

This was the room that we spent a lot of time as children. We always had our Christmas tree right here. Lulu always sat right here, and my Pawpaw—these are my grandparents who I referred to as Lulu and Pawpaw. This is James Alphonse Prud'homme II and his wife, Lucille Keator Prud'homme. After Emmanuel ... Emmanuel was the third generation in colonial America. His grandfather had come over as a soldier from Rhone Dauphine, France about 1719, I think the census shows, here at the fort as a soldier. So, Emmanuel is his grandson, and ever since Emmanuel, all the Prud'homme men were cotton farmers, all the way down to my dad, James Alphonse Prud'homme III, and his brother, Kenneth Prud'homme. They farmed until the 1980s, and almost always cotton.

02:38

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DL: Can you tell me about ... you were talking about earlier, your Pawpaw had a good crop? So, tell me a little bit about the harvest, and from year to year, what that kind of did to the family, the ups and downs, the good times and maybe when it wasn't so good.

KPG: Well, if you're a farmer, you know, you have good years and bad years. So, there were a lot of early really, really good years; and then of course different things happened—the War Between the States—and different things happened that changed the dynamics here on the plantation. We're very fortunate that the family was able to hold on to the plantation during difficult times. In my lifetime during the 1950s, my grandfather had a very good cotton crop, and he put in the new pine floors. He put in a new bathroom. He put in some more closets in the house. I tell people that Lulu got the new red couch. They put in a new kitchen; they took in part of the gallery, the porch. They were always taking in the porch, adding to the house, always. So, yes, different things would happen and the family persevered through that.

03:50

DL: Do you remember having a large workforce out here? You're young, so you probably don't remember that sizable workforce I'm talking about pre-mechanization. So, what kind of workforce was out here when you were growing up?

KPG: Well, I actually do remember when we still had people picking cotton in the fields. Yes, I do. In the 1960s, they still had people that were picking cotton. By then, mostly they had moved on the large cotton pickers and whatnot, and my father and Uncle Kenny, they had their office over at the store. My grandfather ran the store, and was the postmaster there. Most all these old plantations had a store that went with it. They had all their equipment, all their cotton pickers and tractors on the side yard, but there was a pretty large workforce because they were farming a lot of cotton at the time.

04:40

DL: Did they still live in the tenant houses, on the land?

KPG: Yes, yes, there were still some people that were here that were living in those homes.

DL: Tell me about family gatherings. You talked just a bit about Christmas. Tell me about how many people would come, you know, the extent of the family.

05:00

KPG: Well, I have thirteen first cousins, and we would gather here at Christmas. Well, we were here a lot, my brothers and sister and I. I have four brothers and sisters, and we were here a lot along with my first cousins, Uncle Kenny's children. We lived in the area. My aunt lived in Dallas with her children, and my uncle was a pilot for Eastern Airlines, so he traveled a lot and lived in different places, but they would always be here for family gatherings. We were almost here on a daily basis, us kids were, but at Christmas, we had a big family portrait that we took in 1968, I believe, here on Christmas Eve, and yes, again, we would gather all the time, Easters and all kind of things.

DL: Did everybody sleep at the house?

KPG: Well, yes, all these bedrooms were always used. It was always a very lived-in house until the end. All the rooms were used. All the beds, the trundle bed, everybody slept in the trundle bed.

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06:04

DL: Was it sad to see it end?

KPG: It was very bitter sweet. We had a family meeting and actually the Parks Department [NPS] had come to us years before and had wanted to talk to my grandfather about it, and he had said, no, he didn't think so, but Pawpaw lived to be 94, and he, I believe, was beginning to see the value of having ... at that point, the house was about 187 years old, and structurally, really, really ... it doesn't look like it does now. The Parks Department's done a wonderful job of renovating everything. So, Uncle Kenny, my father was deceased at the time, and my grandparents were deceased, and Uncle Kenny said, "You know, guys, this house is going to fall down or it's going to burn down if we don't really think about this and do something to save it." We couldn't have done, if we put every penny we had into it, we couldn't do what the Parks Department did. So, the hardest part was when we first did it, and several years the house was closed and they took all the furniture out. They had to structurally reinforce the house and do all their renovations. So, that was the hardest part, the first few years, but it's really great what they've done, and we have a good relationship, so we're very happy we did it.

07:19

DL: You still get to come out and do family things?

KPG: Yes, occasionally, we'll have some events here. I believe it was about a year and half ago, you know John Wayne made a movie here back in 1959, *The Horse Soldiers*, and so the rangers, they rented a video and big screen, and we watched under the oaks and the allée, we watched *The Horse Soldiers* on the big screen. So, that was a lot of fun, a lot of people, a lot of cousins came for that. That was fun.

DL: Briefly in closing, can you just talk a little bit about the legacy of your family being in this area for so long, and what it means to you?

KPG: Well, it's interesting. I left and went to Dallas in 1979 when I was in my 20s, so, even though I love the home, and I loved my grandparents very much, I didn't have the appreciation for it. I don't think it comes until you're older. So I came back 28 years later, and I'm a tour guide now in town, so of course I really, really do have the appreciation for it. It's very rare that you find bicentennial farms that are owned by the same family, and farmed for over 200 years. So, it's a great legacy, and I'm so happy the house will go on for years and years. It is very special.

**Oral History and Ethnographic Interviews with Traditionally Associated People of
Cane River Creole National Historical Park**

PMIS 189964 A

PEPC 53382

Interviewee: Doris Delouche Roge and Charles Roge (Cloutierville)

**Interviewed January 7, 2015, at the Roge home (1543 Highway 495, Cloutierville, LA) by
Dayna Bowker Lee**

Time of interview: 02:12:54

Transcribed 4/21/2015 [D. K. Greer]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

(Recording 1 of 2)

00:00

DL: This is Ms. Doris Roge and today is January 7, 2015.

00:08

DL: Ms. Roge, can you tell me again, describe to me again, first of all start with that Kate Chopin quote, and talk about Cloutierville as it was, as you were just doing?

DR: Well, I'm not exactly sure of the quote.

DL: But the gist of it.

DR: But the gist of it is she described Cloutierville as a little muddy road with fallen-down houses on each side, and I suppose somewhere in between then, which was the late 1800s and the early 1900s, possibly the '20s and '30s, Cloutierville kind of ... well, the paved road did quite a lot for Cloutierville, and I understand the old priest we had at that time, Father Becker, was very politically connected, and he supposedly, through the Longs—Huey, Earl, the older Longs—got the road paved through Cloutierville, just through Cloutierville, and even got sidewalks. Cloutierville is only a few of the little villages that have sidewalks on each side, concrete sidewalks, and I guess then, Cloutierville was on the main road from Natchitoches to Alexandria. It was known first as Hwy. 20, and until 1949 all the traffic went through Cloutierville and down this road in front of ... this was graveled, down this road in front of my house, and in 1949 they opened the place from where the traffic light is, the caution light, to the south bridge, which is about a mile and a half. They went through the woods and cut this loop off. [Hwy] 495, if you come onto it in the town of Cloutierville, if you keep traveling, you'll meet Hwy. 1 again, about a mile and half down the road. I don't know if you needed to know all that.

DL: It's all very interesting because we're trying to get an idea of the changes.

02:40

DR: So, during the time that Cloutierville was the main thoroughfare, so to speak, through the ... from Natchitoches to Alexandria, the town kind of built up, you know, people built houses, and I suppose some of the fallen-down houses....

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[interview interrupted by arrival of Mr. Charles Roge]

CR: Hello.

DL: Hello, I thought you told me you were retired?

CR: I am.

DR: He doesn't know how to retire! I do!

DL: Ms. Doris is telling me about Cloutierville, about the changes in Cloutierville.

03:33

DR: And '49, the road went through, I guess, the through traffic became less, [Mrs. Roge offers coffee or cold drink] ... and I guess the business places kind of dwindled. At one time, you could buy anything you wanted, it was like little Walmart's, at the LaCaze store—or the McCoy's store, as we called it—and the Carnahan store, and the Masson store.

DL: I remember the Carnahan Store. It was fabulous!

DR: Even before that, there was a Charleville store that was, that became a bar.

CR: They had several small stores, too.

DR: Yeah, they had Livingston, it was Babby's, store.

04:26

DL: Did y'all both grow up in Cloutierville?

CR: More or less. I was raised up on Cane River at Melrose and moved up here in '41, '42, somewhere in there. I was about nine years old.

DL: And what about you?

DR: I was born here.

DL: What was your family name?

DR: Delouche. We're one of the old families.

DL: So, were people still speaking French when you were growing up?

DR: Well, my father spoke French very well, [also] my aunt. We had a dear friend who passed away last year who loved to speak French.

DL: Was that Mr. Monette?

DR: Yes.

DL: Oh, he was wonderful!

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DR: My daddy spoke French, in fact, I think he told me he was about sixteen before he learned to speak English, because as a small boy, they went to a French-speaking school. Cloutierville is like, now this is off the record, Cloutierville is kind of like a little piece of south Louisiana, moved up here with its own little unique style. It's about, ... it was, ninety percent Catholic. It's not anymore, but it used to be about ninety percent Catholic, and the Creoles and the Caucasians all went to the same church.

CR: But they were segregated.

DL: They were segregated by rows, right?

05:57

DR: Right, and then there were two Catholic schools, and then there was the big high school, ... public school, as we called it, to separate it from the Catholic school. And then as the stores, and the mechanization of the farming came in, the tenant families who used to there, to the big places like the Carnahans and the LaCazes, there used to be ten or twelve families that made a living sharecropping. Well, with the advent of the tractors and the cotton picker, and whatever, the place just went down.

CR: People had to leave to make a living. Most of 'em went to Pineville and went to work for Central State Hospital, and they transferred from Cloutierville to Pineville, and we just lost population here, and kids that did grow up here, there was nothing to keep 'em here. They had to leave to find employment somewhere else.

DR: When we grew up, there was a lot of kids. We had a lot of friends. Then enough of us came back, and raised our families here that when my kids were here, there were enough kids—they enjoyed a social thing—but there's no more.

CR: Even after we moved back here, there were enough young people, kids and stuff around here, to have a little league ball club and stuff like that. When our kids grew up and got older, they left, and the population was left more or less, it was the elderly people. There's hardly any young kids around here anymore; no recreation type of program, ... more or less the community of elderly people. Very few young people have come back.

08:14

DL: Ms. Roge, can you tell me again what the names of the stores were? I want to make sure I get all the family names.

DR: There was Carnahan's General Store...

CR: J. C. Carnahan.

DR: J. C. Carnahan, yeah, and then there was the Masson Brothers' big store, and what we call McCoy's really was the LaCaze's—Sam LaCaze—and then there were, that was about all the big stores. Before my time, I think there was a big Charleville general store, and one time we had a bank.

DL: Is the building still standing?

DR: Uh-huh, and it makes me really sad. I wish they had enough extra money to restore that building, but the people who own it ...

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CR: ... have all passed away.

DR: All passed away, except one, and she's got Alzheimer's. So, they won't let it go. There would be some people who would pick it up and try to restore it. It's a lovely little building.

DL: It's a great building, and it's in good condition, and because of the material that it's made out of, because it's not wood, it's in good shape, it's structurally sound.

CR: And it's still a big safe and vault in that thing.

09:45

DR: It used to, after it was the bank, it was the post office for a long time, and then it was a bar. At one time, there were more bars in Cloutierville than there were stores! There was ...

CR: ... Red, White, and Blue.

DR: Yeah, the Red, White, and Blue, the old Charleville store became a honkytonk ...

CR: ... dance hall.

DR: When I was a kid, it was a very popular place to go on Saturday night, except for me—my mother didn't let me go, and I don't imagine his mother would have approved either. It was a lot of, ... that was before you could not go in and drink until you were 21. You could go in when you were thirteen!

DL: It was different then, I know. I remember even when I was growing up, my dad, there was a bar called the Rendezvous, I grew up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and he would take me and sit me on the bar, and, you know, we'd sit there with all his friends.

10:54

DR: Well, there was a place on the riverside called the Brown Derby.

CR: Really it was La Carnadelle.

DL: What was it again?

CR: La Carnadelle ...

DR: ... it was from Carnahan and Delouche ...

DR: ... had a nightclub there, and a bar, dancehall.

DR: People would go on Saturday nights with their families, and on one end of the Brown Derby, as we called it—it had changed its name by then—on one end there was a bunch of chairs, and that's where the ladies and the children sat, and on this end was the band that played and the bar, and that's where the men sat and drank. When the band would play a good number for dancing, they'd go get their lady and dance and then bring her back and go back to the other end, and it was a family type thing with open drinking, and nobody thought too much of it, but every once and awhile there'd be a fight, and finally with the fights, the women got to where they didn't want to go.

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12:04

DL: Do you remember who the musicians were?

DR: Yuke and Duma.

DL: Yuke and Duma, Sheck and Eveck, yeah, the La Cour brothers.

DR: Yeah, they were, what was their last name?

DL: La Cour.

DR: Even if you had a party at home, and you hired Yuke and Duma to play for your party, well, you were uptown, baby, 'cause they were the ones to play.!

CR: One night they had a big fight at the Brown Derby there, and Yuke and Duma was playin', and they got scared, and the one playin' the bass fiddle, threw it out the back window, and jumped out the window, and jumped right on his bass fiddle and busted it up. Of course, the building was built right on kind of a bluff bank.

13:02

DL: Now where was the Brown Derby? Tell me where that was exactly.

CR: Between here and Cloutierville.

DR: On the riverside.

CR: There is a little trailer house sitting on river side right now, all by itself, as you came out of Cloutierville, it'd be on the right side, right-hand side. There used to be a large cotton gin directly across the road from there that belonged to the estate of J. C. Carnahan, and that's where all the local farmers would bring their cotton to get it ginned.

DL: And the one in town, who did that belong to?

DR: That was the estate of Sam LaCaze.

CR: And the Rev. Michael Becker.

DL: They went into business together?

DR: The priest went in with him, Michael Becker. [to CR] I was telling her that Father Becker was the main reason we have a paved road and sidewalks through Cloutierville.

DL: Now, I had heard a story about them getting into a fist fight, Father Becker and Sam LaCaze.

14:18

DR: I think they got into something. I don't know, ... rather it was a fist fight, or actual physical fight, but they got into something and they split friendships, and that's when Father Becker started running the movie theater, which is not there anymore, but it was an old Catholic

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hall, it had been like an auditorium for the school.

CR: And he'd have movies on Saturday night for the colored, and on Sunday night for the whites. Then he'd have a serial, a continued thing, every week, and [laughs] you'd always wonder what happened all week. They'd run off that cliff in a wagon, and ...

DR: ... they played mostly Grade B westerns.

CR: Johnny Mack Brown ...

DR: Johnny Mack Brown, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Lash LaRue, The Lone Ranger ...

CR: Whip Wilson ...

DR: Whip Wilson, mostly the old Grade B westerns, because that's what most of the people around here liked, and every once in a while, he would bring a more modern movie in, and of course, the younger people liked it, and the older people would say, "Hmm, hope it's Roy Rogers again next week!" They didn't like the, what I guess we would call now, the chick flicks, but we went because it was a place to go, you know.

CR: It was the only entertainment we had, locally.

16:05

DR: We even had an outdoor theater for a while.

DL: Like a drive-in?

CR: Yeah, you'd go in and they had just big screen, you sat on benches.

DR: We had a drive-in over at Luddie's.

CR: Sure did.

DR: Had about ten places with speakers. They weren't individual speakers, ... each row had a speaker on each side, and the back row had, you had to roll your windows down.

DL: So, you didn't have one hanging on your window?

DR: No.

DL: Where was Luddie's?

CR: On Hwy. 1, where Hwy. 1 market is.

DR: The place on the side of Hwy. 1 Market, which is now the Crawfish House, where the Crawfish House, that was Luddie's place, where Clyde's store was.

CR: That old building was there.

DR: Yeah, that was Luddie's place.

CR: Where the old building was.

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DR: Yeah, that's what I said.

CR: And the drive-in theater was adjoining to that, on the side.

DR: And the Hwy. 1 Market building was not there at the time.

17:15

DL: About what time period was this?

CR: In the '50s, more or less, we were in school, before we married.

DR: It would be in the '50s because we were married in '54 and this was before that. I'd say the early '50s because I was old enough to go, I know it was '51, '52 something like that. I don't remember the exact year. Then Robert Vercher and Van, didn't they have a sit-down outside, weren't they the ones that had that?

CR: Dewey and his wife used to have an outdoor movie, had Poor Boy's saloon.

DR: I thought that was Robert Vercher.

CR: No, Dewey and Abbie Grace [?] ...

DL: Dewey ?

CR: I don't remember Dewey's last name ...

DR: Browder, Dewey Browder.

CR: That was my first drunk, the first and probably the last. In high school, an older guy there had a bottle, and I was drinking a grape, not a grape soda, a cream soda, and he started giving me a little bit out that bottle, and I was chasing it with that cream soda, and I got home, I was so sick, the bed was spinning.

[laughter]

DL: My goodness, how old were you?

CR: Probably fourteen, fifteen.

DR: I think every, even our kids, even as late as our kids, and probably our grandkids would have, too, but I think every country boy probably experienced a first drunk at about fifteen, you know, because you would go to, like after the, ... we're just skipping all around ... [laughs] ...

DL: No, that's okay because I'll pull it all together. This is great!

DR: But after the movie, after Father Becker left, in '52, '53, when they finally got him out in '53. He didn't want to leave.

DL: I heard that.

CR: They evicted him several times, but he wouldn't evict!

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DL: The church evicted him?

19:55

DR: The bishop did. When Father Lyons first came here, who was to replace Father Becker, he had to live up at Magnolia with Miss Sally Gunn, at Miss Sally Gunn's, at Sally Gunn's home for several months to have a place to live because Father wouldn't let him in the rectory.

DL: He was determined not to leave, wasn't he?

DR: He didn't want to leave, but anyway after he did leave, then Father Lyons started, ... turned the hall into a Saturday night dance.

DL: Like a CYO kind of thing, or just for everyone?

CR: Everyone, a family type of thing.

DR: He would have different local bands. I don't think Yuke and Duma were still playing by then ...

CR: Yeah, they were gone by then.

20:44

DR: But he would have local bands, ... local musicians play, and it was kind of a family-type thing. They didn't sell liquor but you could bring your own bottle and drink outside, and that's where one of our sons experienced his first drunk. He was a real tall teenager, ... he was the third one, and he had gone with his two older brothers to the dance on Saturday night, and for some reason, we hadn't gone. I guess maybe we were, the little one had not gone, and Randy, the second one, came, well about, ... back up to the beginning! About nine-thirty, or ten o'clock, a knock came on the front door, and we went, and some local young boy, a little bit older than our son, had that big lug draped over his shoulder, and he says, and it scared me, he says, "He's alright, Ms. Roge, he just had too much to drink, and I saw him out there in somebody's truck so I brought him home."¹

Well, I was really mad at whoever, because he was just fifteen, at whoever had given him something to drink, and whatever. So we put him to bed, and then it wasn't thirty minutes later, Randy came in, the one next to him, and he was frantic: "Mama, I can't find Rob, Mama, I've looked everywhere, and I can't find Robert. Russell can't find him either!" That was my oldest son, and I said, "Robert's here." So they came in and they felt so sorry for him, and the next day was Sunday, but after we went to church, it was also hay-making day. Oh, God, it was so hot, they were bringing the bales of hay that we made, and stacking them up in old Mr. Mick Jones' barn, and it was all made of tin, and of course Robert had a hangover, and Charles had no mercy on him. The other boys begged off, "We'll do double the work 'cause he's going to die in this field!" Charles said, "No, he just *feels* like he's going to die!" Probably every young boy in this community experienced that!

DL: Sure, that's kind of a rural tradition!

DR: And it was always some older person, and this one happened to be his future father-in-law! His later years, he married the same guy's daughter.

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DL: How funny! But you're right, that is a rural tradition. I mean, those are the best stories, you know, about the first time.

23:40

DR: I remember my brothers doing it, you know. I have two brothers, he has four sisters, neither one of us have a sibling of our own gender, but anyway, he was the middle of four sisters, two older, two younger. They still think ...

CR: I caught it coming and going.

DR: Oh, they still think you walk on water! [laughs]

CR: I wasn't spoiled as you were! [laughs]

DR: I was the baby, by far, of two older brothers seventeen years older than I was.

24:25

DL: So, was French spoken in your home?

DR: Yes. [Mrs. Roge answers telephone call].

DL: [to CR] So, you grew up on Cane River, over by Melrose?

CR: Just south of the old St. Matthew school, and lived there on the lake, 'till '40, '41. My father bought this property down here, and we moved down here.

DL: Are you kin to Mr. Edgar [Roge]?

CR: Yes, first cousins.

DL: I knew him, not terribly well, but I talked to him a couple of times.

CR: Oh, he was quite the character, really.

25:10

DL: Did your family, didn't they own Frenchie's, your extended family?

CR: Well, we lived adjoining to Frenchie's property.

DR: Wasn't it one time part of the Roge estate?

CR: It may have been.

DR: Because they broke it up in boys and girls.

CR: I don't think they ever owned the property where Frenchie's little store was, where he lived, but we were right in that neighborhood.

DL: I've seen a picture, there's a picture of that in the Library of Congress, it's a color picture. I can send it to you if you don't have it.

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DR: Anna gave us— where she gets that, I don't know—but she gave us a color picture of Frenchie's for Christmas.

CR: I never did see it.

DL: I can send it to you and you can look it up on the computer.

26:13

DR: She also gave us last year a little colored print of Ray's old station when it was there in Cloutierville.

DL: What's Ray's old station?

CR: A service station. It was right next to the old museum.

DR: Next to the old Bayou Folk.

CR: It was the only full service station we had.

DR: He was a bachelor for a long time, so was Fred. They were kind of, they liked to hang out where the young boys liked to go.

DL: What was the family name?

DR: La Cour, and they lived further on down...

CR: Almost right across from the little bank building.

DR: Yeah, directly across, it's falling in now. That's where they lived, but they ran that service station for years during the time we were growing up because the boys, and some of the girls, just liked to stop on their way from school or to school. They had candy and stuff inside, and they would kind of shoot the breeze, he was a big basketball fan, and some of the boys played basketball. Football was never a thing.

CR: Never had enough people, kids...

DR: Growing up, we never had big kids to play.

CR: Big kids, but not enough of 'em.

27:49

DR: My friends all wondered how I became such a big football fan, you know, not growing up with it, but my dad and Father Becker were big buddies, and Father Becker was a product of Notre Dame. In fact, he, for four years he pitched on the Notre Dame baseball team, and was drafted by the majors but decided to become a priest instead. He was a very good baseball player, but he loved football too, and my dad, my dad and mom had a big radio. That thing must've stood that high, you know, and with a little outside antennae, and a big ole battery, and on Saturday evenings, or afternoons, whatever the case may be, you could get the Notre Dame, on one of the stations, the Notre Dame game, and so, he would come down, and my mom would usually have a little supper cooked. They didn't have Mass on Saturdays, ... no Anticipation

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Mass ... and my mom would cook some supper, and he would eat, and he and dad would either before or after supper, depending when the game was played, they would listen to the football game, and he would explain to my dad about the bounds, and what it took to win the game. And of course there was no TV, but you had to listen to it, and he would explain it, and of course, where my daddy was, I was sitting right beside him. I was his spoiled little baby girl, my husband likes to tell that!

CR: You are.

DR: My dad was 47 years old when I was born, that was his last...

DL: And you were the only girl ...

DR: ... and the only girl, and the baby by a number of years. In fact, at that time my brothers were probably gone from home, or they would've been gone on Saturday night anyway, because my oldest brother went into the service in '45. He finished school and went to service. But anyway, to get back to this, I learned to like football. Then shortly after my oldest brother came back from service, after the war was over, he enrolled at LSU, so again, Dad and I were there on Saturday nights. When I wasn't old enough to go anywhere, we were listening to the football game, and I learned to like football that way, because long before I saw it played, I knew how, and I still liked it. My husband says ...

CR: Speaking of LSU football, our oldest son works for the LSU police department, and he travels with the football team, and he's Coach Les Miles' bodyguard.

DL: I probably see him all the time.

CR: That's right. He's always there at halftime when they come off the field ...

DR: When they take them off the field, there are two policemen ...

DL: ... on either side of him ...

DR: One is a tall, dark state trooper, and the other one is a little bit shorter, with a funny hat on, and that's our son.

CR: ... black uniform.

DL: Well, I'll look for him.

DR: Anyway, my older brother graduated from LSU and so from then on, we—my husband laughs and says if there's a football on, I'm sitting in front of it! He's not as big of a fan as I am. I'll watch anybody. I pick out two teams, and I'll pick one of those, if it's not one of my favorites, I'll pull for one or the other.

31:41

DL: You were talking about baseball. There was a lot of baseball fields around here, weren't there?

DR: Yes, a lot of baseball fields. My brothers played baseball.

CR: Yeah, they used to have kind of a summer league. Each community had a team, and

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Cloutierville, Provencal, Marthaville, Gorum, Robeline, and on up, Coldwater ...

DR: And they'd get together on Sunday afternoon on one field and play.

CR: They'd go from one to the other, and have the league play.

DL: What about the plantations? Didn't the plantations sponsor teams, too?

CR: Whenever she was talking about Father Becker playing ball, back when Mr. Matt Hertzog was a young man, he was the catcher and Father Becker was the pitcher, and they had a team back then, but who they played, I have no idea.

DL: I had heard that Magnolia had a team, and Melrose had a team, and seems like, Hyman Cohen sponsored a team?

DR: Somebody must have sponsored Glen and those, I believe it was Carnahan's store, I'm not absolutely certain about that, but somebody paid for their caps and uniforms. I don't think they had a complete uniform, but they had shirts with the, what they called themselves.

DL: Right, the logo.

CR: I never did play baseball. Every time I went out to play baseball, I got hit in the head, so I quit!

DR: I didn't marry him for his athleticism! We raised one boy who played football, who went to St. Mary's.

CR: The oldest one went to LSU.

33:36

DL: How many gins were here? You mentioned a couple of gins.

DR: There were two.

DL: The Carnahans and the LaCazes.

CR: LaCaze's gin was closed by the time we moved down here, was not in operation when we moved down here.

DR: It was when I was a little girl.

DL: I'm wondering, there's a picture from the nineteen, maybe late '20s, early '30s that I've seen that shows a gin that said Cohen, and I'm wondering if the LaCaze gin was the old Cohen gin.

DR/CR: No.

DL: Was there another one?

DR: There was another one not far from where the Cohen house is.

CR: By the side of the river, south of there, and then they also had one back in my younger

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days, when we were still living on Cane River, at Melrose. Mr. Henry had a gin.

DR: Which one was called Typo gin?

CR: Well, that's the one on up at Bermuda.

DL: That's the one at Bermuda.

DR: It was long after the gin closed, Ted Tobin bought the house falling down with all the trees around it, and he also bought the gin property. They used it just for storage, I don't think it, I don't think that had any...

CR: Just up the road from Shell Beach, Bermuda, Mr. Alton Lambre had a gin up there.

DL: I lived in Mrs. Lambre's house, in a—she called it the camp house behind her marriage house—when I was in school way back when. [Questions and discussion regarding interviewer's family members in Natchitoches and other personal history].

36:31

DR: We grew up, so to speak, here in Cloutierville, and even in our growing up years, going to Natchitoches was almost like going to Shreveport is now. You didn't do it every week.

DL: Of course, it was quite the trek.

CR: Dirt road and gravel road, and automobiles didn't go over 35, 45 miles an hour. If you drove any faster than that, you were a fool! If you drive over 60 on those roads now, you're a fool! [laughter]

DL: That's true! But, now, the river, Cane River, what was that—I know they dammed it up, what was that, in the '30s, or the '40s when they dammed it?

CR: Probably in the late '30s.

DL: So, the Cane River you cross over going into Cloutierville, that was the extension of what runs through here now?

DR: Yes, in front of our house...

DL: That's Cane River?

DR: That's Cane River.

DL: As opposed to Cane River Lake ...

DR: They left us the ugly end, and they made the lake on the other end!

37:32

DL: When you were growing up, was there still river traffic coming up Cane River?

CR: No.

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DL: Not at all?

CR: No, no.

DR: My brothers used to swim in the river. I guess, his sisters and him, they did too.

CR: Now my grandfather remembered steamboats coming up and docking at Cloutierville and picking up cotton, and taking it down to New Orleans, I guess. He used to tell me about the steamboats coming up.

DL: So, it connected to Red River?

CR: Right.

DL: And does it still connect to Red River?

DR: No, no. When Red River, when my grandfather had a store, it was back there on Red River, because, I think they were still connected then, but more of the big traffic went on the Red River, and some of the traffic came here, but it's not connected anymore, except by the canal.

CR: What?

DR: Cane River's not connected to Red River anymore.

CR: Sure it is.

DR: Where?

38:38

CR: It empties into the Red River. It used to empty into Red River right where the Lock & Dam #3 is in Marco.

DL: Oh, ok, at Marco.

CR: And back in probably the late '40s, maybe early '50s, they came in, the Corps did, the Corps of Engineers, and they dug a diversion canal from Cane River to just north of Boyce. It's about eight miles long, and they dammed up Cane River where it does not flow into Red River at Marco anymore. All the water is diverted to the diversion canal, which was for flood control. They said there was an eight-foot drop from Cane River to the mouth of the diversion canal, said Red River would have to rise eight feet higher than it normally did to back water up into Cane River to flood this area up here. Still, bass boats come up the diversion canal and fish in the lower Cane River. There's kind of a small, I guess you'd call it an oxbow lake, between the dam and where the mouth of Cane River, where it goes into Red River. It's a pretty body of water down there, kind of like Cane River Lake.

40:10

DL: When y'all were growing up, were people doing much commercial fishing around here at all?

CR: Yes. My father used to commercial fish in the off season when he wasn't farming--in the spring of the year he would fish, and also after he finished harvesting in the fall, he would

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commercial fish.

DL: Where were they fishing? I mean, did they have particular areas?

CR: He used to fish in Cane River. That was before the diversion canal.

DR: Cane River used to stay higher.

CR: And also, we would have more backwater after flood rain and stuff, and after we built the diversion canal, it did not have the population of commercial fish coming up Cane River, because they had to fight that swift water, and the diversion canal had no place for them to rest, or anything. They had eight miles to go and so, commercial fishing, his commercial fishing kind of dropped off. Now, Mr. Cannon still does commercial fishing.

DL: What is his first name?

CR: Bernard, James Bernard. His father commercial fished entirely.

DL: Now, what was his name?

CR: Jimmy Cannon.

DR: James, people called him Jimmy Cannon.

DL: What were they fishing for?

CR: Catfish.

DR: Buffalo, gar fish, ...

CR: ... gaspergou ...

DR: Gar.

CR: Yeah, gar. They'd rather not catch gar, because gar snapped the net, but it was good eating, but most of 'em were so big and everything that they would just make big holes in the nets.

42:03

DL: Were they still making wooden boats here?

CR: Yes, yeah.

DL: Were there people who specialized in that?

CR: No, it was individual. My father made his own boat that he commercial fished in.

DR: When the old hall was a boat factory, they were making something.

CR: That was fiber glass boat factory. At one time we had a factory that made bass boats down here.

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DR: The old hall, I don't know if you know where it is, but it...

CR: The church hall.

DR: The big church hall, was once the gymnasium and cafeteria for the colored school.

DL: And that was St. Joseph's, and St. Mary was for the white students? So, they had a separate auditorium and all that?

CR: Oh, yes.

DR: After the school closed in about, our school closed in '55, the white, St. Mary's, at the end of '55, because we moved here in '54, and our son went one year to the St. Mary's school and they closed it. Russell went one year.

CR: That was in '64.

DR: I'm sorry, '64.

CR: I was wondering what, we didn't get married until '52.

DR: We got married in '54!

DL: Did St. Joseph's close at the same time?

43:46

DR: No, St. Joseph's closed a couple of years after that, probably '67. I'm sorry.

DL: That's okay, I know how it is trying to remember backwards!

DR: Because we came here in '64. We moved back to Cloutierville—we had been away since we finished college in '57, we moved down to the Lake Charles area, and in '64 we moved back here. His father's health was not good and he was going to move back and run the farm for his mom and his dad, and I was going to teach or whatever, and his dad died the next year.

CR: Two years later.

DR: He died in '65.

CR: I thought it was '66.

DR: He died in '65.

DL: Where was your family land? Where did you live?

DR: Right here.

DL: Oh, because this is it, ok, so you lived next door?

DR: This was part of it.

DL: This was part of the land. How many acres did you have?

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CR: When he bought the property, he had 714 acres.

45:00

DL: What was he growing, cotton?

CR: Cotton, corn, cattle.

DL: Ok, a lot of cattle.

CR: Uh-huh, most of it was in pasture land, and then when Mr. Evans bought Little Eva plantation, our boundary extended over kind of into what he bought. So, to kind of straighten the lines up, my father sold him part of the property back there, turned around and bought another 85 acres on this side.

DR: So we ended up with 640 ...

CR: 640 acres in the estate.

DR: And my father's little farm is right next door.

DL: How nice. They were farmers? Your family were farmers, too?

CR: Yeah, he had a few cows, cotton, corn.

DR: He mostly raised cotton because our farm was smaller, a lot smaller.

DL: And was your family, were they French-speakers as well?

CR: My mother spoke French in her early life but it kind of faded. I don't think my dad ever spoke French that I know of.

DR: Even though his grandfather came directly from France.

CR: Yeah, but I've never known him to ever speak any French. In fact I don't know if he could even understand French.

46:26

DL: That's interesting. What was your mother's family name?

CR: Brosette. There's three different versions of Brosettes.

DR: In the spelling?

CR: The spelling of it. Hers was the longest I think.

DL: Was it -sette?

CR: -tte

DR: It didn't have an e on the end of it.

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DL: It didn't?

CR: It did on the original.

DL: Yeah, it did at one time.

CR: [inaudible] shortened his, I believe, to two t's, or one t.

DL: Because I know there was, I believe his name was Pierre Brosette, who married a La Cour, who was actually half Caddo Indian, that would have been 1830s, 1840s, and I think he was the progenitor, and it had two ts and an e on the end of it.

DR: It was the same thing with Delouches. The original spelling, Jean des Louches, who came here in 1700s, and was at the Post of Natchitoches and later settled here in the Cane River area. He spelled it with a d-e-s and then a capital L-o-u-c-h-e-s. Later, they started with a small d-e and then L-o-u-c-h-e, left off that s and this s. Then my daddy, I said he was lazy, he just started it with a capital D and spelled it all in one word, and for years, I separated it. I spelled it De, and then capital L-o-u-c-h-e. My brother, who was of the same family, spelled it all in one. So, it just gets changed through the years. I always laughed and said my daddy was too lazy to separate it, and just ran it all in one word!

48:23

DL: It's easier to write that way!

[to CR] Well, when your dad was making boats, were they making them out of cypress?

CR: Yes, yes.

DL: So, there was plenty of cypress growing around here, in the bottoms?

CR: They had a lot of cypress in the area, and of course, and of course, all these local sawmills cut cypress lumber.

DL: There was a bunch of sawmills around here at that time, too?

DR: Y'all had one on your place for a while.

CR: There was one back here located on our property. They were harvesting timber off of other properties in the area back there.

DL: Was it attached to a waterway at all, or did you transport it by truck?

CR: No, they transported it by truck, and that was back there in the time that they had the cross-cut saw, and a team of mules to load it on, the logs on the trucks, and stuff like that, skidded it out of the woods with teams.

DL: I have driven back, it seems like it's down around Nid Aigle somewhere, and there's still some cypress standing back there.

49:22

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CR: Oh, yes, sure, Bayou Nid Aigle is loaded with cypress.

DR: My daddy's place is called Cypress Break.

CR: We have what they call a cypress break right back here, it must be forty, fifty acres of cypress trees.

DL: And do y'all still own that?

CR: Well, part of it. Her family's part of it.

DR: We sold the Roge place. It's gone, except the two little acres right here. Thank goodness, we had bought two acres with our house. We built it on the corner of the Roge land but we bought, his dad deeded us an acre, then we later bought from his mom another acre, but I still own—my brother and I and my nephew, still own—that 140 acres that adjoins this place. That's where part of Cypress Break is, Cypress Lake.

DL: That's nice—that's wonderful! It's beautiful back there, I mean, the area that I drove back in.

DR: We don't make a thing on it, but he [?] pays us enough rent to pay the taxes on it.

DL: Does he farm it?

CR: Runs cattle on it.

DR: In fact, he doesn't have a fence anymore, but my brother and nephew kind of let me take care of it. My boys still hunt on it, my husband still hunts on it. I would hate to let it go, and I don't see no reason to. My nephew, for a while, kind of wanted to buy it out, then his mother passed away and left him a bunch of money, so now he's got a ranch in Texas. My brother, the one still living, my older brother's dead, but my brother who's still living lives in Starkville, Mississippi. He was a Ph.D. botanist, at Mississippi State.

CR: He taught over there, thirty years.

DR: He's taught over there forty years. He taught and ran the seed experimental laboratory, and he traveled all over the world with the different entities—the World Bank, and the A.I.D., and entities in undeveloped countries and tried to teach them to make better use of their land and how to feed themselves a little bit better. He traveled for fifty years, I guess. Even after he retired, he traveled as a consultant. So, his only interest in this land here is because he knows I'm interested in it. He doesn't need it, he doesn't need to sell it. He's got a good retirement.

52:30

CR: An interesting story of him. He was in China when they had the Beijing uprising. He was in the outback, in the country. He had interpreters, he cannot speak

DR: We lost him for a week.

CR: Chinese, and when the incident happened in Beijing, all the interpreters left him to check on their families, and he was out in the country, not able to communicate with anybody, and for about a week there, we had no idea what had happened to him.

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DR: He was traveling for the World Bank at the time, and the people from the World Bank called his wife and said we've lost contact with him. He felt like he had to tell her, he said, "We're putting out every effort to see that he gets home safely," and she kept in touch with me, and because our older brother was dead then, she kept in touch with me, letting me know each day what was happening. And finally, he met a man who spoke English that led him to the other side of the little village that he came across, and they spoke English, and fairly understood, and he was able to tell them what he wanted. So, they got in touch somehow, they got him in touch with the World Bank, and the World Bank put some pressure on it, and got him.

CR: He caught the last flight out of Beijing.

DR: Anyway, we finally heard that he was ok. My oldest son who is a real clown, he says "Uncle Curtis is really a C.I.A. Agent. He's an undercover man, 'cause," he said, "every time there's problems in a foreign country, he's there!" You'd have to know my brother to know that he's the least likely person that would be, but Russell is a real clown, but yeah, he is. He was in Ghana when the Jones massacre ... he came through that airport about an hour before that. He was here when that happened, he was here when that happened...

55:15

DL: When do think that French, you said when you were growing up, it was like a large French- speaking town. When did it kind of just die out totally?

DR: It was not, only the older people spoke it. The people of my generation, there was only a few that speak French, but my aunt spoke a lot of French. My dad, whenever he could find someone, my mother didn't care about it, she knew how to speak French, but she kind of felt like if we were to grow up in an English-speaking world, we needed not to speak French. I wish they had.

DL: What was her family name?

DR: Poché. Somebody will say, Roge, that's such an odd name, what was your maiden name? De Louche. What was your mother's maiden name? Poché. My mother-in-law's a Brossette; it's all that French.

CR: I guess our generation is really where the French died ...

DR: I would say so...

CR: ... because none of our friends or relatives ever spoke any French.

DL: Are there any people—I know Mr. Monette just passed—but are there any French-speakers you know of now?

CR: Not to my knowledge.

DR: T-Femme [?] spoke French. She's in the nursing home, she spoke French pretty fluently.

DL: What is her real name?

56:40

DR: Lavinia Coutee. I believe she's still living, isn't she?

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CR: She was at home here not too long ago. I don't know if it was a visit or what, but her granddaughter called...

DR: But our generation, that's where it died out, I'd say in the '50s. Now, we had a French Canadian priest here in the early '60s. Father Peltier [?] was here in the '60s, and he would speak French to a lot of the people, even though the gumbo French that we speak here in Cloutierville, like my father spoke, was a little different from the Canadian or the Parisian French, but they could understand each other.

CR: Or the Cajun French.

DL: Or the Cajun French; it's a very colloquial dialogue.

57:38

DR: It's kind of like Chinese; that's why my brother said that's the one language he'd never tried to learn because each little village had its own dialect, and he said he didn't speak it well enough; but, anyway, that's way French is, but I remember my daddy going and sitting on a Saturday afternoon on Father Peltier's porch, the porch at the rectory, and talking French to Father Peltier, and if he would meet up with Mr. Monette, or if he would meet up with Aunt—with my Aunt Elsie—or if, when my grandmother was living, and she spoke. My daddy loved to speak French, so anytime he met with someone who could speak French and wanted to ... he and Aunt Elsie used to speak French a lot, and she and her sisters kept it up, and of all the people my age that learned French, my cousin Charles was the only one.

CR: I never knew he could speak French.

DR: Yeah, he speaks French pretty well, or he did, he's probably forgotten it now, but his mama, Aunt Elsie taught him some French.

DL: He's a De Louche?

DR: No, he's a Poché. I don't know if he speaks it anymore. I took French in college one summer. Jenny and I both did, and for a while, we would speak to each other, you know, and then she got away, and you lose it.

DL: I know, I took in school for years, and I can still read it but the sound, the spoken word, means nothing to me.

DR: I'm just the opposite. A lot of the words, because I'll pick up on, and even as early as late as the World's Fair, you remember, I was listening, that was a couple of years after I took that, and I was listening to the two French boys who were showing one of the ships and I was laughing, and Charles said, "What are you laughing at?" and I said, "They're watching the young girls go by and commenting on the size of the boobs!"

DL: Does Charles Poché, does he live in Cloutierville?

59:58

DR: No, he lives around Dallas area, but his mother loved to speak French, and she was kind of like my daddy, and I remember when my daddy and my grandmother on my mother's side—he called her the Old Lady—he and the Old Lady used to speak French a lot. Now, my grandpa

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didn't very much, but my grandpa De Louche, who died when I was fifteen, he spoke French. When my daddy would go out there, that's all they would speak, unless we were there. He also knew Kate Chopin.

DL: Oh, wow, I guess that was the late nineteenth century when she was alive?

01:00:45

DR: Yeah, he was born in the 1865 or '6, and so he was a teenager when she was here in the 1880s. He had a few stories he used to tell me about her, and he would try to make it what the ears of your fifteen year old, fourteen year old granddaughter would hear. One day he said, "You know, my baby," he said, "men liked her," he said, "but the women didn't care for her," and I said, "Well, why?" and he said, "Well, she smoked for one thing, in public, and she wore slacks in public, and her husband died and she had to take care of the plantation. She also spoke to men alone, and she rode straddle instead of side-saddle so that you could see up to her knees when she rode to Cloutierville!" How scandalous!

DL: That is scandalous!

DR: And he said, I knew later what he meant to say, he said, "The women kind of thought she was uh, uh ... a lady of the evening," he said. Somebody said, "Why did he say it that way?" and I said, "Because I was fourteen years old, and his granddaughter, he wasn't going to say what he wanted to say. I will never forget that, because I went to his house, and that was before he got sick and died the next year or two, and there was a copy of *Bayou Folk* on the couch, and I loved to read, and I said, "Vieil Pop," which is French Old Pappa, and I said, "Where did you get this?" and he said, "Somebody sent it to me," I don't remember who it was, and he said, "You know, I knew that lady that wrote this book," and that's when we sat down and he started talking about it, and said, "You can take it and read it if you want to." So, anyway, that's when he said that, and that was so funny, and I'll always remember, he had real pretty white hair, and he would always go like this [stroking his hair], "Well, uh, the women, uh..."

DL: He was struggling!

DR: Yeah, he didn't want to say what he said!

DL: That's nice, that's a beautiful story. She was from St. Louis?

DR: Yes, that's where she went back after her husband died, and she had a struggle running the plantation, and anyway, right at that time, I really didn't know what he was trying to say, but later on, I realized, a "lady of the evening!"

01:04:03

DL: Mr. Roge, when did you get into law enforcement?

CR: In 1974.

DL: At that time, there was still, ... I've been told about the cultural landscape a little bit, let me back up here. At the time, I'm thinking that St. James Church was still there, across from Magnolia Plantation, and wasn't there a little bar there? St. James Church. It was an African American Methodist church that got knocked down off the, somebody hit it, and it got knocked down off its little piers that it was built on. Do you remember that church?

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CR: No.

DL: Okay, it would've been, as the crow flies, it would've been opposite the river from that St. Andrew's church that is there now, and from what I understand, there was the St. James Church there, and there was a little bar, or maybe two little bars over there somewhere. One of them was called the Green Door, or something like that. That may have been before your time.

CR: Had to be before my time, don't even remember seeing them as a teenager.

DR: Well, when y'all lived up there, you were too young to...

CR: Well, I was eight, nine, ten years old, but like I said, I don't even remember passing them when we came to Cloutierville where my grandpa lived down the road right here, and we came down here every Sunday. Of course, back then, all my dad had was a pickup truck, and we had three or four kids, and I always had to sit down on the floor between my mom's legs, so I couldn't see.

DL: Do you remember the race tracks, the horse races that they had around here?

01:06:18

CR: Yes, yes, I remember that. They had one at Melrose, and they had one down here at Cloutierville. Mr. R. T. De Louche had one, I don't exactly remember...

DL: Did they call them like brush tracks?

CR: Right, brush those horses.

DR: And besides that, it distinguished them from a harder surface. They were just grass and dirt.

DL: I understand they had one on the line between Magnolia and Lakeview Plantation.

CR: That area's right, uh-huh.

DL: And somebody told me, oh I know who it was, it was Ms. Irma before she—Ms. Irma Hertzog, before she died—was telling me that the races started by mutual consent, that there was no real standard as to how they started. Everybody kind of said okay, and then they went.

CR: They used to bet good money, big money on those horses, had several races a day.

01:07:34

DL: Where was your patrol area?

CR: Back when I started working, the whole parish. Whenever, I worked night shift, almost entirely, not full time, I worked nights almost entirely, and we had three cars on at night, and two people per car, and we had one car that came on at five, and they worked until one o'clock, and then I went on at seven—me and my partner went on at seven—and we stayed on until three o'clock, then the third car came on at nine, and they worked until five. Between five and eight, had nobody out.

DR: In between three in the morning until eight or nine, there was nobody on?

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CR: Huh?

DR: Nobody came on at three o'clock after you got off?

CR: There was someone on until five, though. Between five and eight, there was nobody, if anything happened, you'd have to call somebody off the day shift to take care of it.

DR: And the way you got to be a deputy then was they gave you a gun, and if you had no police record, they would say, "You're a deputy!"

CR: Raise your right hand, no training, no anything, on the job training.

DL: Who was the sheriff?

CR: Mr. Sam James.

DL: Was he kin to Mack James?

CR: No, different. Mack James came from Rapides Parish. This guy, born and raised up at Marthaville. Worked that way until 1980, then Mr. Fletcher got elected, and whenever he got elected, he more or less cleaned house and kept one patrol deputy, Mr. Stevenson, and then he formed the Civil Defense Unit, and I went into the Civil Defense Unit, and worked part-time up until today! [laughter] After he got in his predicament and got kicked out of the sheriff's office, he had hired Boyd Durr as Chief Deputy, so they appointed Boyd as sheriff. Of course, Boyd and I worked together back in the '70s, and by then, I had a state job, state gasoline ...

DR: And I dared him to go back!

CR: And he came by here several times, wanting me to go back to work for him ...

DR: It's too uncertain.

CR: ... and I said, "I did that, I'm not doing that anymore," and I said, "If I do, I'm going to lose a wife!," and so I said, "I'll help you anyway I can."

DR: Then you became part of, he was in Civil Defense.

01:10:32

CR: Well, I was, and even under the regime of Sam James, we had an auxiliary unit, it was called the Sheriff's Posse, and we had some elderly gentlemen. I can't say they were elderly, because I was fairly young back then, but they were in their 50s, 60s, and if anyone got lost in the woods, most of them had horses and stuff like that, and even parades, they would help ride in the parades, and then they'd help 'em direct traffic and stuff.

DR: And then y'all started, [they started] riding with y'all every once in a while.

CR: Yeah, they'd ride with us on occasion, and help us on the weekends mainly, and after Mr. Fletcher got in there, he started the Civil Defense Unit and started giving a little training to these officers.

DR: When did you go to post ...

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CR: I went to the post class under Sam James in the late '70s.

DR: They finally started sending the men to train.

CR: It was '78, '79 was when I went to the post class.

DR: Post certified; they finally decided they needed more training.

CR: Well, it was mandated by the state, whoever, it was mandated that everybody be post certified, and like I said, after Mr. Fletcher started the Civil Defense Unit, then you started having volunteers on weekends the Civil Defense deputies, two riding together, taking calls, and stuff like that, and I think Jones was the one that did away with the Civil Defense Unit, and started the Reserve Unit, and of course, people just followed one unit into the other.

DR: He also wanted you to go to work full time.

CR: Yeah, he wanted me, because he and I worked together, under Sam James together, and I, of course, [chuckle] there's a little story behind that. He was working the late shift, and they were, he and his partner were working across Red River, and his youngest child, his wife was pregnant with the youngest child, they lived right down the road down here, and I was working this area down here, and she started having labor pains. She called him, called the office and they relayed the message to him, because back then didn't have a cell phone, and said his wife was in labor, and so they called me on the radio, and told me to go get her and take her to the hospital, put her in the back of the patrol car, and rushed her to the hospital, and she delivered a little girl. They always said I was the godfather of that little girl!

DL: You're still working as a sheriff's deputy now?

CR: Yes.

DR: Part-time.

DL: Because he told me yesterday he had retired!

01:13:53

CR: Well, I retired from the state, but I stayed in law enforcement all these years, as a Reservist, I guess you'd call it, Civil Defense then into the Reserve Unit, but about five years ago?

DR: Right after Katrina—it's seven or eight years ...

CR: I went half-time. I'm a half-time employee.

DR: It's what they call a community liaison.

CR: Liaison police, and I have an unit that I keep all the time, and I go out into these rural areas where the regular deputies don't have time, and check on their elderly, [laughter], the *other* elderly—you can't get any more elderly than I am now!—and stop and talk to them, and see if they have any needs, if there's anything to eat, what else I can do for 'em.

DR: It's great PR.

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DL: I'm sure it is, absolutely.

DR: In fact, the sheriff carries this community when he runs for election better than he carries Melrose, because he's [Mr. Roge] always there, you know.

CR: Of course, I make this patrol in the rural areas three or four times a week, and know most everybody, where most everybody lives, and all those little pig trails and roads and stuff like that.

DR: He drives the truck instead of the car.

01:15:29

CR: At lot of times, [inaudible] will call me and say "Where's this little road at," or "Is this road in the parish?" It might be over in Rapides Parish, stuff like that, and then in 1972, we organized a Volunteer Fire Department in this community ...

DR: Way back there ...

CR: ... in '72, and started off we had a little trailer, and about that time, the water system came through, and they put us up a few hydrants in the village of Cloutierville, and her uncle had a garage, and he built us a little trailer, and collected a little money, and just bought about 500 feet of hose that we could hook up to the fire hydrant in case we had a fire in Cloutierville, anywhere else out in ... so in '72, we did organize and started a Cloutierville Fire Department, and one of the members, Don Vercher, had a cousin who lived in Orange, Texas, and he was quite a scrounger, you might say, and he was with the Volunteer Fire Department in Orange, and he found us a used fire truck that the old naval base in Orange—they were closing it and getting rid of the fire truck—but somehow we acquired it, hook, crook, or some other way. Anyway, we acquired this truck and that is what we started out with, and now, present-day, we have six stations within the district. We have a tanker and pumper truck at each station, but we have no members.

DL: Oh, my goodness. We were talking about how many fires have been in Cloutierville. I can remember ...

CR: Oh, my gosh, there's been several big fires.

DL: Big fires, the Carnahan's store...

CR: Carnahan's store...

DR: The church...

CR: The Red, White, and Blue burnt...

DR: The Red, White, and Blue bar burned, LaCaze's old store burned...

CR: The museum burnt...

DR: The church...

CR: The church burnt...

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DL: I guess they were all cypress?

CR: Oh, yes, wooden buildings.

DL: So, once they go, even if you've got fire services there...

DR: Well, some of it was before we had bigger fire service, but we just can't get people interested in it anymore.

CR: People don't want to volunteer, people won't to do anything, much less get them to volunteer.

DR: Our rating has gone up, which is bad, it should be down.

CR: Insurance premiums jumped up.

DR: Insurance premiums have gone up, and people call us, and they're fussing at us, and so, I guess I'm a little bit feisty, and after I answer, knowing how hard he has worked, and how much of our personal money we have spent trying to do the best job we could. I've got a standard reply for 'em. "What's the problem, y'all wasting our money," I say, "No we're not. The trucks are fine, the training is fine, the stations are fine," I say, "You want to know the trouble?" I say, "Look in the mirror, if you don't see a volunteer fireman looking back at you, that's the problem. If you've looked in the mirror, and you looked on the right side of your house, and the left side of your house, and you don't see a volunteer firemen over there, that's the trouble!" They've got to where they don't call me anymore; they don't want to hear that. So he says to me, one of 'em said, "Well lady, I'm 65 years old and I just retired. You can't expect me to join the Volunteer Fire Department." I said, "Excuse me, my husband is eighty, and he's retired. Sometimes, he *is* the Volunteer Fire Department. Sometimes, he's out there, by himself!"

DL: Exactly.

01:19:48

DR: We always laugh. Our boys come periodically, and spend the weekend or the one in Natchitoches will just come down for the day. Almost, always happens, while they're here, there's either a fire call, or a medical emergency.

CR: Or a wreck.

DR: I think Robert's made the last three wrecks. He's just happened to be here, and he's a big boy, big man, tall, and he'll go and ride with his daddy, and they know enough about everything.

CR: Christmas Eve, we always have big supper, fried oyster, fish, shrimp, stuff like that.

DR: That's our Christmas with the kids.

CR: We just walked out the door to start cooking outside and the pages went off, had a wreck on I-49 and had some people trapped in a vehicle, 'cause I carry jaws-of-life in my unit out there. Well, three out of four boys wanted to come. I said, "Somebody's got to stay here and cook!"

DR: You can't take but two.

DL: Somebody needs to cook!

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DR: The grandsons pitched in, two of the boys went with him, and two stayed here, and we got the supper cooked out there, and I'm going, "No, no, you're not going to leave us!" The women were in here, mealing and flouring, and they were doing the frying outside, and they missed supper. They came in late.

DL: Who responded when, Kate Chopin was the last major fire? Who responded for that?

CR: I was the first one there.

DL: Were you the only one there?

DR: No.

CR: We had several fire units there. We also had an unit from District Five, which is Natchez area and also District Six in Natchitoches responded.

DR: Same thing with the church. We had several respondents on that. Of course, our house burned down.

CR: For the church, we had, Robeline responded to the church fire.

01:22:11

DL: When was the church fire?

DR: That was in '85.

DL: And when did your house burn?

DR: 2004.

CR: 2004

DL: Oh my goodness. So, this house has been built since then?

DR: Yes, this is thirteen years old.

CR: Same floor plan almost.

DR: When our house burned, Lord, we had response from all over the place, and they just couldn't save it.

CR: It was metered they put over 200,000 gallons of water on this house.

DR: It started in the shop out there, and when it, the shop was metal, but they had some wood structure inside, when it finished feeding on the wood, it came right under the carport, and into the attic.

CR: And the heat had to come out to the front, and had a south wind blowing, and blew the heat right into my house, and you can see we had vinyl siding on the house, and I can see it melting. I had a water hose on the far side of the shop over there. I ran and turned it on, and as I tried to wet my house down, as I tried to save it, the hose was too short.

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DL: Oh, no.

DR: The Fire Department got here pretty quickly, and they would put it out on one end, and we had about two years before that we'd had some leakage, and I told my husband one day, I said, "Whatever we have to do, I am not fixing any more ceiling tile." He has a first cousin who is a commercial contractor, and I said, "You ask Lloyd if he will sell us, I want some tin that goes, some metal, that goes from one end of the house down all the way," and sure enough, he came here and put us a commercial grade roof. So, we had a double roof, so when it got under there—when the house went down, the roof went down with it.

01:24:29

DL: Like in one piece. Did they ever figured out what started the fire at Kate Chopin?

CR: Electrical short out in the shop.

DR: No, she's talking about Kate Chopin. Suspicious nature.

CR: Very, very suspicious.

DL: That's what I heard about the Carnahan's store too.

CR: Yeah, same thing.

DR: And the church.

CR: Now, of course, the same person, I mean...

DR: Carnahan's store and Kate Chopin, I believe is the same person.

DL: Would it be for profit or just meanness?

CR: Let me tell you this scenario. This young guy, whenever I arrived at the scene of the museum fire, the young man already had his camera and laptop computer set up, taking pictures of it, and I was there, oh, less than ten minutes. Never could prove anything, so we can't say for sure, and he has...

DR: ... he has mental problems, kind of a loner. Real formidable looking, I wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley, and as a lady, I do not trust him.

CR: Then we had a mobile home fire downtown Cloutierville under very suspicious nature. It started on the front deck, where there's nothing, and the couple was sDLping at the back of the house, and if they had not been awakened in time, they would've been trapped.

DR: It's something everybody knows, but nobody says because nobody can prove it. I mean, the Bayou Folk started where there was no electricity, the electricity was off.

CR: No electricity to Kate Chopin...

DR: ... to the Carnahan's store...

CR: ... no gas hooked up to it or nothing. It was just an idle building.

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DR: In fact, for a while, when Mandy was there as the curator, they did have electricity, and then after she moved away and they had closed it down, kind of closed it down to remodel it a bit, and reopen it on weekends, and it burned during that time.

CR: There was no power, though, they disconnected it.

01:27:25

DL: Wow. Okay, jump back a little bit, when you were patrolling, was Bubbá's still open?

CR: Yes.

DL: The Metoyer brothers. Did you get calls to Bubbá's?

CR: Many, many, many times, many times. Back then, at that time, I would say we had close to twelve nightclubs in the parish. Had the Lake Club out on Clear Lake, Black Lake; had what we used to call the Old Folks Home was—what the hell was the name of that place? I can't think of the name of it now, but it was a nightclub where elderly people, no kids, very, very few young people, but they had their own kind of club. We had the Lake Club, right out of Campti, out there, and then we had the black Lake Club, the black club behind the Lake Club.

DR: Didn't they have a Cherokee, a place called the Cherokee Club?

CR: Well, now, that's later. The Cherokee was opened after that time. Then they had, the [Yonk?] brothers had a club out on [Hwy] 480, up toward the paper mill, and then came down to Clarence, they had a club just north of Clarence, then they had a black club just south of Clarence, and then you get on this side of the river, they had ... trying to think ... I don't think they had any in Natchez then ... Williams Club on Old River Road, colored club out there, and then you came down Cane River, you had Bubbá's on one side, and you had the French, the French ... the Friendly Place across the river.

DL: The Friendly Place.

CR: Then come down to Derry, they had the club there, right on Cat Island Road and Hwy. 1, that little building used to be a nightclub, and then you come into Cloutierville, we had, what is the Southern Bar now ...

DR: The White Elephant.

CR: It was the White Elephant, and in downtown Cloutierville, we had the Red, White, and Blue, before it burned, and we had Boo's Place.

DR: That was back before your law enforcement days.

CR: Boo was still open when I was in law enforcement. Then prior to that, we had one down at Monette Ferry, the Lawrence [Duff?] Place, of course that was before my ...

DR: So was the Brown Derby, before your time.

CR: Oh, yeah, the Brown Derby was a hay barn whenever I was sheriffing full time.

01:30:44

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DL: I knew Bubbá and Raymond. Bubba was real quiet, but that Raymond was ... he was funny.

CR: Oh, yeah.

DL: Probably wasn't funny when you were in law enforcement.

CR: Nope! You can't talk to him and find out anything, "buh, buh, buh...", What the hell did he say?!

DL: Was their mama still alive?

CR: Yes, yes.

DL: I understand she was the brains behind the power.

CR: Well, she had to be because Raymond and his brother were not, to me, were never playing with a full deck.

DL: They were different.

CR: Yeah, they had a little mental problem.

DL: From what I understand, even though they were Creole, there club was more for black clientele.

CR: Black, right.

DL: More for the workers?

01:31:42

CR: They called themselves Creoles back then, we call them "mulattoes," and whenever I was growing up on Cane River, we had the Jenny's Club ... I don't know what they called that thing, but it was a "mulatto" club.

DL: Where was that?

CR: Jenny, I can't remember what that woman's name was.

DL: I know there was a Kirkland, Kirkland's.

CR: Jenny Kirkland! The lighter skin people went there, and across the river, I'm assuming over around the Friendly Place, they had what they called a black club.

DL: No, the Friendly Place, they actually ...

CR: In later years.

DL: Yeah, later.

CR: Back then the blacks did not associate, per se ... some of them would integrate, but not

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like it is today.

DL: Bubbá's was more for the plantation workers?

CR: Well, more or less, yeah, but people from Natchitoches would come down. Oh, yeah, they'd have cars from almost Roque's garage almost to Melrose at the intersection, on both sides of the road. If you met a car, you could hardly pass. They'd have tremendous crowds there. Of course, they had horse races there on Sunday afternoon at the track there, and they also had BBQ for many years, and they used to have ballgames there, and man, they'd have tremendous crowds for the ballgames.

DL: I bet a lot of betting went on, but was there a lot of trouble over there? They called Raymond "The Enforcer" – that's why I was asking.

CR: He always carried a gun. We didn't try to enforce anything. That was kind of a normal thing, for the owner to protect himself. Kinda like the Blue Light Inn in Powhatan, we had a young man always in trouble up there, and he went in there one night, and started trouble, and the bar owner shot him right here, with a .32 revolver. He called us and went up there, and he was still alive. Brought him to the hospital and Dr. Charlie Cook was the coroner back then, and he got to checking, checking, checking, [parts inaudible due to telephone call in background] and the bullet fell out, and the bullet hit him, ricocheted around his skull [inaudible]

01:34:08

DL: Well, what kind of trouble, when you had a call to go down to Bubbá's, what was going on? Was it just a fight?

CR: Yeah, it was fights, most of it stemmed over women. "You're dancing with my woman!" Most of it, I would not say it was gang related, we didn't have such things as gangs. Of course, when two people got into a fight, "That's my friend, I'm going to join in," and that one joined in, and it just kind of escalated. [Mr. Roge and Mrs. Roge stopped to discuss telephone conversation regarding cemetery fees].

DR: [Mr. Roge's sister and brother-in-law, the Sullivans] are not going to be buried here but they ... like my brother ... we try to overlap. My brother sends a check even though his plots are in Starkville, MS, but you've got to kind of think about your grandparents and your parents, and nobody to pay for them...

CR: ... and the cemetery is run on donations...

DR: ... so we always try to pay more than our \$20, to cover those people who no longer have anybody to pay for them.

DL: Sure

01:36:50

CR: But I've seen at times on Sunday afternoon, this one particular incident, Boyd Durr and I were riding together and we were down here on the Lena/Flatwoods Road, which is in the very border of the parish between us and Rapides. We get a call out toward Belmont, on [Hwy] 120, out of Marthaville, big fight going on out there, people with baseball bats. It took us an hour and 35 minutes from there to up there, because there was no interstate.

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DL: Right, and those are back roads anyway.

CR: They done settled their differences by the time we got there, most of ‘em had left, but that will always stick with me. Of course, Boyd Durr was not the best driver—he had one eye and he had a bad shoulder. We were running like crazy, and if we made it, we’d be lucky!

DL: Bellwood, back there, that’s a different kind of backwoods from over here.

CR: Go Hwy. 1 into Natchitoches, go out Hwy. 6, then all the way into Marthaville, almost to the parish line at Belmont.

DR: I get tickled at law enforcement people, they drive fast and don't think too much of it, and we used to follow the St. Mary's team. My husband was a deputy then, and his job was to, on Friday afternoon, we'd pull for St. Mary's team wherever they went. Our son played then, and even after our son graduated, we still did it for a long until he got off the force in '80, and one of the boys got a severe concussion, and his mother did not want him in Shreveport, she wanted him back home in Natchitoches. So, after the ball game, when they realized he was talking out of his ... something was wrong, they asked Charles if he'd take him back as fast as he could, and we had Coach Odom with us, John Wayne Odom, and he was sitting in the back, and I was kind of used to this fast driving, sirens going, and you don't stop at stop signs, and I could hear his fingernails going across the seat every time Charles made a curve. I kept talking to him, and when we got there, and the boy went in, and then they sent him back to Shreveport, which I thought was real dumb of his parents. John Wayne said, "I don't know about a concussion, but I almost had a heart attack!"

01:40:28

One night when my husband was working, one of our sons fell out in the shop, and he ripped his arm open right there, and when he came in, he was about twelve, I guess, and I said, "What's the matter, Robert?," and he was like this, [holding his arm] but there was no blood, and he said, "I cut my arm," and he did this [put down his arm], and Charles' mother was here, and she goes and gets a white towel about his long, and she's wrapping it. So, he didn't have a shirt on, and I said, "We've got to go to the hospital," so I called Charles, and—you were somewhere else, but Ronnie Dowden was down here. He said, "Ms. Doris, I'll pick y'all up and take y'all on to the hospital," and we had to find one of Russell's old shirts because she'd wrapped the towels this big around his arm, and Ronnie was driving real fast. He stuck his arm out the window to check to see if there was drizzle, I said, "Look, you keep your mind on your driving, I'll tell you if it's raining!" It was really funny, the nurse got there in the emergency room, and Charlie Cook was the doctor, and he was our family doctor, and he was on call, so he comes in, and the nurses, they're fussing, "I don't know what y'all are making such a big fuss about, it's not even bDLding," and she started unwrapping it, and when she got to the bottom, she says, "Dr. Cook!," and for some reason, because of the shock or whatever, he said it didn't bDLd until they started deadening it, but it was just funny looking. The nurse was fussing because we were making such a big fuss, until she got down to it! But Ronnie was driving about ninety miles an hour, and I said, "Ronnie, it's not an emergency, slow down, I'll tell you if it's raining outside." If you're not used to it, it's scary. My husband still scares me when he drives!

CR: Not near as much as you scare me when you drive!

Continuation of Roge Interview (2 of 2)

00:00

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CR: The biggest thing that happened to this community and most all small communities, was when I-49 came through. It just killed small communities off of the interstate. Used to have, like she said, several big stores, we have one now, the Handy Mart, I call it, and no more traffic. People get amazed at the traffic out when we have to shut the interstate down for some wreck or something, and just bumper to bumper traffic, and it makes you wonder, and of course I realize back then they didn't have this number of cars on the highway, as you do now.

DR: [offers a dish] Just taste it. If you don't like it, don't feel obligated to eat it.

DL: What's this called?

00:52

DR: It's called souse and it used to be made of hogs head, people would call it hogs head's cheese, but we don't make it out of the hog's head anymore. We make it out of Boston butt.

DL: That's good, that's very good.

CR: It's got pure meat in it, don't have no lips or ears and all that like the old people used to make!

DR: This has just meat.

DL: Thank you very much. That's delicious, I'm going to eat it all. I'm going to let y'all put your signatures side by side [on the consent form].

DR: So, we laugh, we always called it butt cheese, because it's made from Boston instead of hog's heads.

01:35

DL: So, in the old days, what would you have made it out of?

DR: Hog's head.

DL: Just everything.

CR: That's right, everything, the ears, the lips.

01:44

DR: All of the hog's head, and they would take the outer skin off and they would use everything else, and put the onions and garlic. It was a much harder process. My parents and his parents, I guess, were among the few people in this community who was ahead of their time in that, all of his siblings are college graduates, and all of my siblings are college graduates. I have a Ph.D. and I had a CPA, and he has two nurses and two teachers.

CR: In fact we were probably the most progressive people on Cane River at the time. We had running water, indoor bathrooms, and we had hot water heater, it was an old kerosene heater you had to light.

DR: Your mother had a gas driven washing machine.

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CR: Agitator washer.

DL: Where did the water come from, because I understood they didn't ...

CR: It came from Cane River. They had an elevated tank, pumped water out of Cane River into this elevated tank and gravity fed into the house.

DL: So, you didn't use cistern water?

03:23

CR: We used cistern water to drink and cook with. We used all this other for dish washing, bathing, commode facilities.

DR: We only had the cisterns. We had three cisterns, and in the summer time, my mother literally drew a line around the bathtub that you did not go over!

CR: I can remember us, after we moved down here, we had cistern water for drinking and other purposes, and we'd run out of water, and one of the stores, either Carnahan's or LaCaze, had a truck that they outfitted with a thousand-gallon water tank. You'd go to Boyce, and buy a thousand gallons of water, and come back and dump in your cistern.

DL: So, they did like water delivery?

CR: Right, yeah, no, they'd pay for the water down there.

DL: No, I mean, they delivered to different people's houses?

CR: Yeah.

DR: You had to order it, they wouldn't just go get it and deliver it around. Like if Charles' daddy or my daddy would want some water, we would tell them...

CR: ... make arrangements...

DR: ... make arrangements to go get it, and you had to pay for the water and the transportation, and the ice came in a big truck, and you put a sign in your window, as to whether you wanted a whole block or a half a block, or two blocks, or whatever, and he would deliver it around to your ice box.

DL: With a lead lining, which probably wasn't very safe.

DR: No, probably wasn't.

05:15

CR: We always had refrigeration even as a kid because the electric service came through up on Cane River before it came down here, and so we, I never remember having to use lamp light.

DR: I do because it didn't come down here until the middle '40s, just before '42.

CR: When we moved down here, we had no electricity because my daddy had to wire the old house that we moved into.

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DR: '41 I believe, I was four years old, I just barely remember my brothers studying at the table with lamp light. Mother would put it here, the dining table was here, and her kitchen was there, so she would move the lamp from the kitchen to the dining table as soon as she finished the dishes, and we had us some lamps in the living room, but she would move it, and put it in the middle of the dining table where my brothers would sit and do their homework, and I probably sat and pestered them!

06:21

DL: Where did y'all go to college?

DR: Northwestern.

DL: Was it still the Normal School then?

DR: No, no. It was Northwestern State College, NSC. It didn't become the university until I got my Masters. I got my Masters and my Masters plus 30 and my principal-ship, and all that other good stuff I have. When we graduated in '57, it was the NSC, Northwestern State College, it became the university later.

06:56

DR: Anyway, we were laughing about cooking, Cloutierville has a very unique style of certain things they make, and one of them is gumbo. Our gumbo is not like anybody else's, not south Louisiana, not New Orleans, not anybody else's except right here. It's Cane River gumbo, and it's a very fairly thin broth with filé to thicken it, the roux, but it has no vegetables in it except onions and garlic. We don't put okra in it, if it's okra, it's another dish, and we don't put tomatoes, and we don't put any of that in our meat gumbo, and I like I said, it's unique almost to this area. Even Alexandria's gumbo is a little bit different, and south Louisiana.

DL: You use chicken?

DR: Yeah, chicken.

CR: Squirrel.

DL: Ok, but you don't use sausage?

CR: No, Cajuns put that in chicken gumbo.

DR: We only added that after we grew up, and the next generation. My mother never put sausage in her chicken gumbo.

DL: So, it's like a thin, brown gravy, not a red gravy, no tomatoes?

DR: No, like a thin brown, darken the roux enough to make it dark. It's more like a brownish green because you put the filé in it, but it's dark, and it's real thin.

CR: It's thin, not like a gravy, per se.

DR: It's like a broth

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CR: More like a soup, real thin soup.

08:50

DR: And we make, the Cloutierville meat pies are even different from the Natchitoches meat pies.

DL: I know that, and even the tamales.

DR: So are the tamales, and it is unique to Cloutierville, but you bake your meat pies, and your tamales are made differently, no chili, and they're fat. Even Vic Jones, after eating their tamales up there, which are smaller, he came one night and he ordered a dozen tamales, and I said, "You want to wrap 'em to go?" "No, I'm going to eat 'em here," and I said, "You want to make a bet?" and he said, he calls me Ms. Doris, "Why Ms. Doris?" I said, "I bet you can't eat a dozen tamales." He got down to about eight, and he said, "Whatever I bet, I owe you, because you make a really chubby tamales!"

DL: They are chubby. I came down and documented—I think you were there—y'all were making tamales one day, and meat pies, and the meat pies use the rendered fat, so they're sort of pink. They're good!

CR: They're not as greasy as the Natchitoches meat pies, and more seasoned too.

DL: They're moister, they hold the moisture better.

10:19

DR: Because we make ... the filling is almost like a gravy. We put enough flour, and brown it, and water in it, to where, when you break open some meat pies, the meat just kind of rolls out, like ground meat, you know, ours stays together like, kind of like that is except it doesn't have the gelatin in it to hold it together. Now, even in Cloutierville, there are two styles of meat pies, and tamales. There what they call the twice baked, twice cooked tamales, and the ... when my mother and his mother, that generation, made their tamales, and even before the church burned and we integrated the two altar societies, when St. Mary's made their tamales, the light ladies as we call them, and the Creole ladies, they made with raw meat inside.

DL: Really?

DR: The dough was raw and the meat was raw, and you seasoned your meat, and I remember mother taking a little bit and frying it to see if it had enough seasoning in it, you know, and as soon as the meat had enough seasoning in it, you put it inside the raw dough, raw, and kind of loosely pat, and then you wrap it up, and you had to cook it a lot longer. Instead of an hour to cook the dough, you cooked it about two and half hours on a low light, and it would cook the meat and the dough. When we integrated, they used to make the fried meat pies, so we started, we called it the, we started making the white meat pies and the Creole tamales, because we liked their tamales, which the meat was already cooked, and that's what the old ladies used to call the twice cooked, as you cooked the meat, then you cooked it again. Even within this little village, there were differences, but you will go down to south Louisiana, New Orleans area, and you order a seafood gumbo, or a gumbo, it's not at all like ours.

We were traveling one time with my mom and dad, gone to see my brother, and we were down along the Mississippi coast, and our second son was little, and he said he wanted some seafood gumbo, so I said, "Baby, you're not going to like it." "Oh, yeah, I love seafood gumbo,"

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and I said, “okay.” Naturally, my mom said, “Go ahead and order it, I’ll order some shrimp, if he doesn’t like it, I’ll eat it, and we’ll trade,” and when it came, he looked and he says, “That’s not gumbo!” But it’s just a very, and I try, and the ladies used to get all feathers ruffled if someone would say the gumbo was okay. Most people like it, but once in a while you’ll find someone who expects it to have something more in it, and I would say to people who didn’t know and would come in for church bazaar, and I would say, “Now, that’s Cane River gumbo, it’s Cloutierville gumbo, and you’ll love it or you won’t.” That’s why I said before that Cloutierville is like a piece of south Louisiana moved down here, but with a little bit different culture, especially a little bit different cooking.

14:16

Our dirty rice, our jambalaya is not quite like theirs.

DL: How do you make that?

DR: Well, you can make it several different ways. What I call the dirty rice, rice dressing, is made with the gizzards and the livers, and maybe a little bit of ground. Now they make it with ground pork and sausage and whatever, but the dirty rice that I always liked is made with chicken parts. I use only about a third as much of the livers as I do the gizzards and a little bit of ground meat, because I don’t like the liver taste. Down in south Louisiana, they make a lot of it out of pork liver. I remember when they cooked for you, when you worked for PCA, they would cook that dirty rice was made a lot with liver, had a lot of liver in it. North Louisiana, their cooking, their culture, their religion, is about as different from south Louisiana, as Louisiana is from Michigan. One of my sister-in-laws who married my oldest brother was from Mansfield. She had never eaten dirty rice; they didn’t eat rice and gravy.

DL: That’s all Anglo people over there.

DR: They were 100 percent almost north Louisiana Baptist, very hard-shell. She never did get used to us drinking wine for Christmas, and they just did not eat the way we did.

CR: A lot of potatoes.

DL: That’s an Anglo thing. I grew up eating a lot of potatoes, my grandmother’s English.

16:34

CR: Speaking of the gumbo, Church has a fair, used to have it in July, now they’ve changed to in the fall.

DR: They changed to May.

CR: Well, May, they have two, a big fair and a little fair, one in the spring, one in the fall. Anyhow, in the spring of the year, our oldest son loves to cook, and he comes up here.

DR: In July, he would be able to come then.

CR: Yeah, and he would come up here, and he would make the gumbo, and it kinda got to be a tradition. When he came, everybody wanted to know when he was coming to make the gumbo, because he makes such good gumbo, and people’ll come and they’d buy it by the gallons. One of the ladies in the church group, kinda the boss lady, she would come, and she’d want to help him season his gumbo: “Oh no, no, no, only two people help me season my gumbo—my mother

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and Ms. Cecile Monette. Anybody else touches my gumbo, I'm leaving!"

DR: It's funny, because once a year, he usually still comes and makes gumbo.

CR: And the people know about it.

DR: And the people know about it, and they'll come. He'll say, "Mama, it's like stone soup." I'll say it's consistent; it's the way people in Cloutierville like it. He doesn't put any, like the sage and some of the thyme or bay leaf or any of those south Louisiana spices, and it's the way people in Cloutierville like it. We have one or two families who'll come when they know he's making the gumbo, and they'll buy about \$150 worth. They bring gallons, and she takes it home and freezes it. He thinks it's really funny and he's introduced a lot of that to the Baton Rouge people, the Cane River gumbo. Cloutierville is a very unique place, and I see it dying.

19:13

DL: Do you have any idea how many people live in Cloutierville proper?

CR: Less than 500.

DR: In the little street of Cloutierville?

DL: Just the little general area. The main street and the little side streets.

DR: A hundred, at the most, and we tried to incorporate it several times, and people didn't want to; some people didn't want to and some people wanted to.

CR: Got in real hot water. Almost lost my job over it.

DR: One of the bigwigs who didn't want it, tried to get some of us who, not me because I was a teacher, but they tried to get some people fired, you know.

CR: And I was one of 'em.

DL: How many people when y'all were growing up, you have any idea about how much the population has declined?

DR: Probably by half. When we grew up, we had a good many children around here. The school was just basically a community school, and we had three or four hundred kids in school, and then when enough of us came back and raised our families here, the Tobins, the Verchers, and us—enough came back that had ties here, farms or whatever, you know, and enough of us raised our children here, that when my children grew up, they still had enough kids to socialize with. None of that generation came back, none of 'em, except for Charles Brossette and a few like that, but none of those people came back because there's nothing to do here.

DL: Right, unless you just want to live here and work in Natchitoches.

CR: Right, Charles Brossette lives out on the levee, but he works in Natchitoches. He worked up there for 25, 30 years, but he's always live here.

DR: People that have a place here, a few of them came back, but most of them didn't have, their parents are still living in the house, or they just never came back, or they didn't have a place to start with, own a place, and now, if this was not a consolidated school, we wouldn't have

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enough to have a school.

21:55

DL: What's a consolidated school?

DR: That means we bus people in from Natchitoches and they closed the school at Gorum, at Cypress. They closed the school at Melrose. They closed one of the town schools at Natchez. So, all these kids come here to this school, but if it wasn't a consolidated school, just the people who used to go to the Cloutierville school, there wouldn't be enough to have a school, because even with Creoles, they have not come back and raised their families here.

DL: What grade does it go up to?

DR: Eighth. Pre-K to the eighth grade, and then they go to Natchitoches Central. There's only three high schools in the parish now: Lakeview, Natchitoches Central and...

CR: Nothing.

DR: Nothing? You're right. Two, I don't know why I said three. Two high schools, Campiti and Natchitoches. So, everybody—Marthaville, Robeline, Provencal—all those kids come to Natchitoches Central, and the ones north of the Red River go to Lakeview, Goldonna, Fairview-Alpha, those places all go to Lakeview, so there's only two high schools in the parish. I drive through Cloutierville and I see so many of those houses just falling down, and nobody that I grew up knowing, this person on this spot, none of the original owners are there. The house has either been sold, or it's passed down to the child.

DL: And it just sits.

DR: And you see a community that, even the Catholic church doesn't have a lot of members because it's just not a lot of people there. So you see a community that's kind of dying on the vine, I'd guess you say. It's really, because like I say, at one time, it was a thriving little community. We had churches, the church and halls, and bars, and grocery stores. You could go to Carnahan's or LaCaze's store and buy almost anything you buy at Walmart, especially LaCaze.

CR: They had fresh meat. They'd cut you any cut of meat you wanted.

DR: They even had clothing and material and ready-made clothing. I don't think Carnahan's ever had ready-made clothing. They had materials.

CR: They had pants and shirts.

DR: Yeah, pants and shirts but not women's clothing so much.

CR: Carnahan had the only store in Cloutierville that had a large shoe selection and had a rolling ladder to get to the top shelves.

DR: And they had a bench in Cloutierville that was made out of some solid wood, and at each end, they had an animal face.

DL: And they were carved?

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CR: Yeah. They were cut out, about that thick, about two inches thick, and cut out of a lion...

DR: Hand-painted, the features, and Debbie tried several times, Corky Carnahan's wife, to get him to bring that out of the store. Of course, she said he had been offered \$15,000 for the bench, and he didn't want to sell it, and when the store burned, all of that stuff burned in it. She said they had the showcases that had the sliding doors and they had the ladder that moved, rolling up and down.

DL: It was a fabulous place.

DR: And LaCaze store, which you probably have never been in.

DL: No, I've never seen that one. I had seen the Carnahan's store, and I came and photographed it.

DR: LaCaze store was even bigger.

DL: Was it really?

CR: Large dry goods department.

DR: They had a large dry goods department: materials, thread, shoes, clothes, linens, bed linens, towels. They even had a little dressing room where you could go and try on your dress, and tons of material.

CR: And then they used to package cow feed ...

DR: ... in a sack ...

CR: ... in a printed material for people to use that to make clothing for their kids. We wore many a feed sack.

DR: I remember my summer stuff. All the little short sets, little sun suits, and little blouses, and peddle-pushers, and all that was made of ...

CR: ... feed sacks.

DR: And if my daddy went to town to buy another sack of feed, my mother would give him a tiny bit of scrap, and say "Don't you come back unless you match this." My mother was a great seamstress. Even in college, she made all my formals and stuff like that, and I think her greatest disappointment was that we didn't give her enough time to make me a wedding dress. She had always dreamed of making, we just decided we were going to get married, so we did. We had a church wedding, but it wasn't ...

CR: When she purposed, I couldn't say no!

DR: We just celebrated our 60th anniversary and his 80th birthday, and we had a big celebration at our son's in Natchitoches.

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Interviewee: Cheryl Rushing

**Interviewed April 14, 2015 at the Cane River National Heritage Area and June 24, 2015 at
the Sweet Riders Trailride, Campti, LA, by Rolonda Teal**

Time of interview: two parts: 00:12:33

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

Note: The first portion of this interview was lost due to electronic equipment failure. That interview was re-recorded on April 14, 2015. Part 1 is from the original interview and Part 2 was recorded at a later date. The second interview (Part 2) consists of people who were at the Sweet Riders Trail Ride and the last portion of the interview is Cheryl Rushing recapping some of the lost information from the first interview.

Part 1:

RT: One of the things I also wanted to ask you about was if you had any Native American connections in your family? It doesn't matter if you know the tribal group. And what are we going to say about that.

CR: My grandmother, my daddy's father was ... not a full-blooded Cherokee but she had a lot of Cherokee in her. And, it's like a red blood. And she talked about, you know, how her mother was a real Indian. And, you know, the things that they did. And, it was very interesting although I was a little girl then.

RT: Right.

CR: And she did let us know that she did... her grandmother was a full-blooded Indian.

RT: Um huh. And so you know the story. Did you know a name or anything?

CR: Rosemary Kochinsky.

RT: That was your mother's name. I mean your grandmother's name or her mother's name.

CR: Naw, I don't know her name.

RT: Okay, okay. Very good. And did she live here?

CR: She lived in Winnfield.

RT: In Winnfield, okay. Thank you very much. And then the other thing I was going to ask you ... if you imagine 50 years or so from now, your great-great, perhaps, grandchildren, that

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never got to meet you ... What is something, a message you might want to leave for them. Something you think is important for them to know.

CR: The most important thing for them to know is education. If it's no education, they're gonna be in a world of trouble. Because even my grandkids know if they don't get the right education, you're gonna have a bad life. Education is a lot, you know. I have a granddaughter who is 17. She go to Northwestern [State University] and she work at the prison. But, I know the prison is not gone last forever, but the education ought to last til she die. So, that's my big thing to let them know- education.

RT: Yes ma'am. Thank you very much for coming out today.

CR: You're welcome.

Part 2 (June 24, 2015):

PL: Hi I'm Paula Lewis with the 911 Riding Club out of Clarence, LA

NJ: Hi I'm Nicole from Natchitoches, LA. I'm with Rockhouse Saddle Riders.

BH: I'm Bertha Hart with 911 Clarence, LA.

CG: I'm Curtis Gray with Showtime Riders out of Natchitoches, LA.

RT: Can you tell me how long you've been a member of your club?

PL: I've been a member of, well riding club, since 2002. The 50-50 Riding Club and then I changed to 911 in 2009.

RT: And what made you switch from one club to the next?

PL: Because me and my brother started a new club but we still supportive of all clubs.

RT: [Practically inaudible, but RT generally asks a question about male members in female clubs.

PL: Yes. It's typical with the Sweet Riders Club for women to start their own club.

RT: Have any of the clubs you've ever been a part of been a mostly female club?

PL: No, mostly the ones that I started off with has been mixed. It's been men and women.

RT: Why are you here today?

PL: I'm here today supporting the Sweet Riders Club.

RT: Thank You.

At the DJ Booth (1:53)

VS: Hello, my name is Virgil Smith. This is John Jackson and we're out of Sweet Riders.

RT: How long have you been with the Sweet Riders?

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VS: I've been with the Sweet Riders over six years.

RT: And what all have you accomplished in the time that you've been here?

VS: We have done benefit rides for kids, like you know, kids with like cancer. You know, kids that need help.

RT: Okay, do you enjoy being a member of the club?

VS: Yes ma'am very much.

RT: Why?

VS: I enjoy being a member of the club cause it's helping and at the same time I can have fun too.

RT: Okay, where did you learn about all this music you're playing?

VS: I learned all this from my uncle right here, John.

RT: (Laughs) He taught you all this music?

VS: Yes ma'am.

RT: If you had to tell another child about this, about being in a riding club, what would you tell them?

VS: I'd tell them they need to join. It's fun and it help. They need to join because it's positive.

RT: Do you own a horse yourself?

VS: Yes ma'am.

RT: What's your horse name?

VS: My horse name is Fly.

RT: (Speaks to the uncle) He says he learned this music from you. Where did you learn your music from?

JJ: I just listened to it. I learned my music through listening to it you know. Just feeling the vibe. Just something we got into and just went with it.

RT: (Inaudible).

JJ: Yes ma'am. We got a club. We like to help people out so, you know, it's very active and we like to do it.

RT: Do you get to travel around to the different groups and play?

JJ: Yes we do. We go lots of places. All over Louisiana. We go to Houston, Dallas, a little bit of everywhere.

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RT: And so is that all with riding clubs when you go to these other places or is it just playing music?

JJ: We go with riding clubs. Different riding clubs have... just have fun.

RT: Olay, can you tell me some of the names of some of the riding clubs at some of the other places?

JJ: Ugh, you've got Avoyelles Riding Club. You got 50-50, 911. It's a whole bunch of em. And you got ... what's the big trail ride? (Asks his nephew).

VS: Step and Strut.

JJ: Step and Strut, that's like one of the biggest things that everybody goes to.

RT: How important is it to have a DJ at the trail ride?

JJ: I mean it's very important. It keeps everybody going. It's just something, an activity to have fun with your family with. You got all ages. Your kids from knee high to... everybody have fun.

Recording is interrupted and picks up with Cheryl Rushing who recaps portions of the lost interview.

RT: Ms. Cheryl can you tell us how this club formed?

CR: This club formed 8 years ago which would be 2008. My daughter, Shitaka Waldrup, she come up with an idea we needed our own club so we come up with the Sweet Riders.

RT: [Inaudible].

CR: Well, I had a son come in from Dallas. I had plenty of family from Shreveport. And they come from Houston. They come for our trail ride every year.

RT: What was that big ride that you were talking about a month or so ago we talked about out of Mississippi?

CR: The ride that I was telling you about that all the peoples was going to was Camden, MS.

RT: Give me a description of that ride?

CR: Well, that's when Louisiana and Mississippi meet and they ride together once a year and that's in Mississippi.

RT: You said that one of the focuses of this ride is around the youth. I see you have a lot of young people out here today. Can you tell me why [unintelligible].

CR: It's important because I have so many grandkids and I try to keep them together and it brings other young people around and just keeps them in an orderly manner. And, we just have a good time with it.

RT: So, you say this is very much a family event?

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CR: It's very family oriented. Huh, my kids and grandkids, my daughter and a couple of outsiders and my husband.

RT: Was that one of your daughters I saw riding on the horses in the trail ride earlier?

CR: Yes. It was one of my daughters riding on the horse, Toni Johnson.

RT: Okay, and what's the youngest member you have - age?

CR: The youngest member we have is 6 years-old.

RT: Really, okay and the eldest member?

CR: The eldest member is myself.

RT: Okay, and we don't get an age on that (laughs).

CR: I am 54 and proud of it.

RT: What made your daughter want to start this trail ride? I mean one of your own.

CR: Well, it was so many clubs that we just couldn't pick the right one so we decided to have one of our own. And my daughter is deceased but we still keep it going.

RT: I noticed on your arm there's a rest in peace. Is that in honor of your daughter?

CR: Everything we do is in honor of my daughter, Shitaka Warden.

RT: One of the young people I was talking to mentioned about you guys helping raise money for children. Can you talk about some of the groups that you've raised money for?

CR: Well, we raised money for ugh, a club out of Jonesboro, [LA], Lance Walker Club and he had cancer and we raised money for him to go back and forth to the doctor.

RT: Can you think of another one?

CR: Uh, we raised money one time for Triple Three just to help them out cause they were in a ... tight and we just had a fund-raiser for them.

RT: And didn't you mention to me once about having like a scholarship for the kids?

CR: We have a scholarship. We give it out, Central Louisiana give a scholarship out once a year and all the clubs donate to the scholarship. We give it out every graduation year.

RT: (Points to a horse-drawn wagon), How did you get this wagon which is very pretty by the way?

CR: Honestly, I got this wagon through a lady I met in Campti, LA. Her husband wanted to be horse-driven to the grave and she told me when she finished with it, I could buy it for little or nothing. So, she let me have the wagon for \$100.00. And, we just been keeping the wagon. It's not in perfect condition but it's in condition enough for the kids to enjoy.

RT: How far did you guys ride today? Do you know?

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CR: It's about 7 miles.

RT: Wow, is that pretty typical?

CR: Mostly, it's longer than that but it was because of the heat we took a shorter route.

RT: Okay Ms. Cheryl I know it's been a long day. Thanks.

Recording is interrupted (9:35)

JB: I'm John Babers, president of the LA High Steppers Riding Club out of Natchitoches, LA which has been in existence since 1987 and I have been president since day one. In 1991, we joined the Piney Woods Association out of Lufkin, Texas and been a member of them since that day. And in 1999, the Central Louisiana Association came in existence and I'm Vice-president of the Central Louisiana Association which consists of about 23 clubs. And as of today, Ms. Cheryl Rushing who is President of the Sweet Riders is having her ride here today.

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Interviewee: James and Glennie Scarborough (Cypress area; Magnolia Pln.)

**Interviewed February 25, 2015 at the Scarborough home, 4654 Hwy. 119, Natchez, LA, by
Dayna Bowker Lee**

**Time of interview: 01:36:43
Transcribed 4/12/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: This is the 25th of February, 2015, and we're talking to Ms. Glennie and Mr. James Scarborough.

00:28

DL: I do have some notes that I made from the last time I was here, but what I failed to get from both of you was your family, your parents' names. So, Ms. Glennie, what were your parents' names.

GS: My daddy was Bryant Dowden, Sr. I had a brother later on that was Bryant Dowden, Jr., and my mother was Ollie Moss Bowden.

DL: And Mr. James?

JS: My dad's name was Samuel Scarborough, and my mother's name was Nettie Ola Wagley.

01:28

DL: I started doing a little bit of investigation in the census records, and I did think that that Bryant Dowden must be your father [GS] but I wasn't sure, but I've got them going back to 1910 so far. I've just started on yours [JS]. Do y'all have copies of the census records? [No] Ok, I'll make sure y'all get those, because it's interesting.

01:52

DL: Ok, Ms. Glennie, let's start with you. You grew up where?

GS: I grew up in Good Hope community, which is about six miles southeast of Cypress.

JS: Yes.

DL: And you mentioned before that there were four families there?

GS: There were, in our parents' young life, there were four families that had homesteaded in that area. My grandfather was Willis Dowden, and there was a family of McLarens, and then

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there was the Beasleys—I'm not sure the name of the Beasleys—and Russell family

DL: And your mother was a Moss. How did she get pulled into that community?

GS: Well, we were speaking the other day, my grandfather was a sharecropper at Melrose—my mother's father, Benjamin Moss—and I don't know how long they lived there, but that's the first place my mother can remember telling us she lived, and they did not live there very long. They moved to the Good Hope community. My mother's older half-sister—her father's first wife had died—had married one of the Dowden sons, Willis Dowden's son, who was my dad's older brother. They moved out there, and he was a tenant of my other grandfather, and then my mother married my father, who was Bryant Dowden in 1927.

03:38

DL: Okay, I'm curious. So, he went up there [Good Hope] to go to work, your grandfather that left Melrose?

GS: Went up there to farm. Yes, he lived at Good Hope for a number of years. It was not ... a lot of things did not fall into place for him, and he moved his family to Montrose logging camp, out in, James, you'll have to tell me the location of it.

JS: It's out in Red Dirt.

GS: And there was just a camp community there where families lived, and the logs were sent to Montrose—Frost Johnson mill at Montrose.

DL: I didn't know that's who ran that mill. Can you tell me a little bit about the church?

04:34

GS: The church at Good Hope?

DL: Yes, ma'am.

GS: It was built by the people in the community—different ones of them did certain things. Mr. Adam McLaren hewed the long timbers that are the sills under the church—they're still there. My dad and Mr. O'Bannon, who was a son-in-law of the Beasleys, went out to the logging camp and got some pine stumps that are the blocks under the church, and they're still there, and Daddy and Mr. O'Bannon, hauled the lumber from Frost Johnson mill in Montrose in a wagon to build the church, and my grandfather, whose name was Benjamin Moss, brought some Spanish moss from down in the swamp, put it in those trees, and they're still there.

DL: The trees, are they oak?

GS: Yes, oak trees. There's a picture of them up there. We have some...

DL: Oh, I see it.

GS: But there's a more recent picture with more foliage on the trees, but you'll see the church someday.

05:59

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DL: And the organ?

GS: Well, when the Montrose logging camp was in operation, there was a church there, and I think it was, I'm not sure about this, but I think it was shared by different groups, but somehow, I don't know how, a little pump reed organ was purchased for the church. When the logging camp was closed, the organ was stored with one of the ladies who lived at Montrose with the understanding that if a church in the area was ever established, the organ would be part of that church. It was given to the little church that was built in Good Hope around 1924, and now we have it. After it was replaced with a piano at the church, my daddy bought it, and my sister and I learned to play hymns on it.

07:04

DL: Who was the minister, who was the preacher?

GS: Out at Good Hope? Reverend Monroe Roberts.

DL: And was he there all the time, or did he come and go?

GS: No, he was there when it was organized but over the years there were several ministers there. I can remember a few of them. Do you want some names?

DL: Sure.

GS: Okay, after Brother Monroe, I remember Reverend E. E. Dees was one.

DL: D-e-a-s?

GS: D-e-e-s, and then Reverend Jimmy Myers, ... and then let's see, after that, I know there was, Rev. Ray Brown who married us, we have to not forget that one, and then there was Rev. Delk, I don't remember his first name, and now, it's Rev. McDonald. There must be some I've forgotten since 1948 when I married.

DL: You were telling me that only two marriages had been performed there?

GS: That's right. We were married there in 1948 by Rev. Brown, and then my grandson, my oldest son's son, was married there. I can't remember the year they married.

DL: Who married them? Who performed the ceremony?

GS: It was his minister from his church, and I don't remember his name. I can get that, but they were not members there. He had been in Iraq, and he had come home, and you know, destination weddings were trendy, and that's a picturesque little place, and it had some sentiment to me and some other people. My grandson and his bride were married there, and it was his minister, but I don't remember the name.

DL: But it had meaning, I'm sure it had deep meaning for him, I mean, besides being a destination and being picturesque, I'm sure it really had deep meaning for him.

GS: Oh, I'm sure it did, and I can't remember the gentleman's name. The bride was from Vacherie, so the minister was not her minister or our minister—it was his minister, and I think it was someone in the military, wasn't it?

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JS: Yes.

10:10

GS: [anecdote redacted at the request of GS]

DL: How many pews are there in a row?

GS: I don't remember.

JS: Six.

DL: Six? Is that it? So it's a tiny little church.

JS: I think there's six.

DL: And we were talking before, at the very beginning, it was gender separated, more or less?

GS: Well, voluntarily; it was more voluntarily separated, but only on one side of the pulpit, there were two pews, and most of the men sat there, married men sat there. That was just kind of a tradition, I guess.

DL: If you were looking at the pulpit, would it be to the right or the left?

GS: On the right.

DL: So the men sat on the right.

GS: Most of the men sat on the right.

DL: Where did the unmarried men sit?

GS: Just anywhere, just wherever. Usually, the younger guys sat toward the back, you know how young guys ... just wherever. That was just where the older men sat.

DL: Was there any organization to the way the women sat? Did the older ones sit in front?

GS: Not necessarily. The older ones mostly sat in the front because that's kind of traditional, but it was not established in any pattern.

12:20

DL: And you had mentioned earlier that services are held every other Sunday now?

GS: Every other Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

DL: And how many people go to the services?

GS: About a dozen.

DL: Is it first and third Sunday, or second and fourth?

GS: First and third, and I don't go as often as I did. When Mama was living, you know, I

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went, but now I only go on special occasions. Sometimes when my sister comes, she and I will go together, and we have the homecoming at Easter. We have a friendly rivalry to see which of the pioneer families have the most descendants. We win sometimes, sometimes we don't.

13:11

DL: And is the cemetery still used? Do people still bury out there?

GS: My grandfather who brought the moss for the trees, wanted to be buried there, and his was the first grave that was there.

DL: That was Benjamin?

GS: Benjamin Moss, and then my dad's brother, and my dad's sister, and a cousin, and then my dad's brother's wife were buried there, and Mama and Daddy's buried there, and that's all.

JS: What about your brother?

GS: Oh, my brother was just buried this year.

DL: So, it's just your family that's buried there?

GS: Yes.

DL: The other three pioneer families?

GS: No, they're not buried there. They have kind of ... well, my daddy's family has a cemetery ... and the McLarens have a family cemetery in another spot. The Beasleys and the Russells have family cemeteries.

DL: So it's much more family cemeteries. So this small cemetery that was attached to the church was just your immediate family?

GS: Yes, immediate. My grandfather, my parents, and his older brother, his wife, and their son, and then my dad's sister, who was not married, and my brother. It's just family.

14:32

DL: So, I want to get you y'all, so now you're married, now I want to get you up to when y'all married, so Mr. James, where did you grow up?

JS: Early, I grew up out on the Posey Road out of Natchitoches.

DL: And you mentioned that you lived in Powhatan for a while?

JS: Yes, ma'am. It was when I first started to school. We went to school in Powhatan.

DL: Were you living on Posey Road, or you moved to Powhatan when you went to Powhatan school?

JS: When I went to school in Powhatan, it was earlier.

DL: Oh, it was earlier, before Posey Road.

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JS: Yes, ma'am, and I went to school in a covered wagon.

DL: And how many kids did they pick up in that wagon?

JS: Oh, eight or ten.

DL: And this was what, first grade?

JS: First grade.

DL: And you went to, what grade did that school go up to?

JS: It went to high school.

DL: So, it was all the way through?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: And when did you move to Posey Road?

JS: About 1938 we moved to Posey Road.

DL: How long did you live out there?

JS: We lived there until 1942.

DL: Where did you move to then?

16:02

JS: We moved down Hwy. 1 to Montrose.

DL: Did your father go to work at the lumber mill?

JS: Farmed—he raised cattle, didn't row crop.

DL: He didn't do any row cropping?

JS: He didn't do any row cropping, just hay and cattle.

DL: Was he working for himself? He had his own farm?

JS: No, ma'am. He worked for James W. Gerard in New York, who owned the ranch.

DL: He was an ambassador?

JS: He was an ambassador to Germany, just before the first World War.

DL: How did he get interested in having land down here? Was he from here?

JS: No, ma'am. He was from New York; he had an oil business around Shreveport, and east Texas. He had a man who did the oil business, and he bought property for Mr. Gerard in '43.

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DL: And who ran the business here, not Mr. Gerard, but wasn't there a manager?

JS: My dad.

DL: So, y'all came there in '43. That was Horseshoe Lake?

JS: Yes, Horseshoe Lake.

17:26

DL: First of all, how big was that ranch?

JS: It was eleven hundred and twenty acres.

DL: What type of cattle?

JS: Hereford. He bought 150 Hereford cows from the B. F. Goodrich Ranch in Lampasas, Texas. They came on railroad cars to Derry.

DL: So, he established this? There wasn't a ranch there ahead of time that Mr. Gerard came and bought? He bought the land and y'all built the ranch from the ground up?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: So you started out with a 150 head of cattle?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: How many did you end up with?

JS: We ended up with about 450 in '52, '53. We had high water in '53, and we had to move the cattle to out in Red Dirt reservation.

18:40

DL: Okay, lets' go back a little bit, because you said you moved there in '43, and then the first big flood was in, what '45?

JS: '45.

DL: So, that would have been your first experience at moving that many cattle.

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: Where did y'all move the cattle?

JS: We moved them out near Provencal.

DL: How did you get them there?

JS: Drove 'em. We went right up Hwy. 1 to Natchitoches, out across College Avenue, out on Hwy. 6.

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DL: So, you basically drove them right through town.

JS: Yes, ma'am. We had a big ol' white Brahma bull. That ol' bull got in the lead, and we just drove 'em right on out there.

DL: So, it wasn't too inundated at that time for you to actually be able to drive them by foot? Y'all were on horses obviously, but, it wasn't like the water was so deep that they had to swim or anything?

JS: No, ma'am. We got them out before the water got too deep.

DL: So, you could see the water starting to build up?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: Was it coming from Red River, or was it coming from Cane River?

JS: It was coming from the Red. The levee broke south of Natchitoches, and it came into Cane River Lake, and we didn't have much water over on the Old River side, but it broke through here at the spillway, and put us under water pretty quick.

20:36

DL: I want to get the geography right, I want to make sure I'm getting this right. Was there water in Horseshoe Lake at this time, or was it just kind of the remnant, you could see it?

JS: The lake itself had water.

DL: It had water in it? Okay.

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: So, it would be natural for the water to kind of come to that area.

JS: What it did, it went over here at the dam, and Old River flooded all of that area back toward Cypress. It backed in, and came over the dam that we had built here at Horseshoe Lake.

DL: So, you had actually built a dam at Horseshoe Lake?

JS: Yes, ma'am. We built that in 1946.

DL: And that didn't stop it either?

JS: No, ma'am.

21:35

DL: How long did it take you to drive those cattle from Horseshoe Lake to Provencal?

JS: We drove 'em, oh about four, five miles out on Hwy. 6, and we had an area we penned them that night, and the next day we drove 'em on out to close to Provencal.

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DL: It was like a two day event?

JS: Two days.

DL: To go, what, ten to fifteen miles? How far is that?

JS: Twenty miles.

DL: Because you see in the movies when they're driving cattle, it looks like it's going jig-time.

JS: It didn't work that way for us.

DL: And then the next big flood was in 1953? Did you take them the same route?

JS: No, ma'am, the water was too deep going up Hwy. 1, north. We had to go south, and we hit 119 at Derry, and went out 119 to Vista, out into Red Dirt.

DL: Into Red Dirt, ok.

JS: It was in the Vista area.

DL: How long did it take to get from Horseshoe Lake to Kisatchie—well to the Red Dirt area?

JS: About all day, just one day.

DL: You did that trip in one day? That wasn't quite as far?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

23:18

DL: Was it in '53 when the water came up on the steps of the church?

JS: That was the school; that was in '45. I was still in high school. The principal and I got the books we needed out of Cypress school, and took 'em to Natchitoches High School, and they gave us four rooms, I believe, and we had our school in those four rooms.

DL: For the rest of the school year, or just for a while?

JS: Well, it took until the end of school, and I think it was in '45 that we had the graduation back in Cypress.

GS: They had it in the study hall on the third floor because the bottom floors were soaked, and the kids that lived out in Good Hope, and the lower end of Bayou Derbanne went to school at Bellwood during that flooded time.

DL: You had originally gone to Cypress, but since you lived out there they sent you to Bellwood.

GS: But during the flood, the kids on Bayou Derbanne along there, and Derry went out to Red Dirt to Bellwood. It was a trip.

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DL: Did they have a bus?

GS: They had a bus.

DL: Because I was going to say, that's a long way to walk.

GS: The bus ran, and the children who lived from Montrose south didn't ordinarily ride that bus, but that was the only arrangements they could make.

25:14

DL: You were actually working on the ranch when you were still in high school?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: And then you took over?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: What year did you take over?

JS: '53.

GS: We finally got settled after the flood happened.

DL: So, that was the post-flood. Y'all were already married at that time?

GS: Yes. We had a baby. He was born in '52.

25:47

DL: In the ranch, or where you were working at Horseshoe Lake, that's where you got to know Ike Dupre?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: And you said you kind of grew up with him too, right?

JS: Well, he and I were both 19, and he went to work for my dad, and we worked together until '62.

DL: And did his family, his wife and children, live at Horseshoe Lake?

JS: They lived at Horseshoe Lake.

DL: Were they the ones who went to the front?

GS: Yes, to the front.

DL: Can you explain again what that means, "going to the front"?

JS: Well, those boys would be gone on the weekend, and ...

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GS: Ike's boys.

26:44

JS: Ike's, Isaac's sons, and our oldest son would ask them where they were, and they'd say, "Well, we went to the front," and he didn't understand what the front was. We had to explain to him that we lived on the back, and they went to the front on Cane River.

DL: And the river was the front.

GS: Do you hear that expression in dealing with these people now?

DL: I do among the older set, because some of them, like their parents used to work at Montrose, and they would live on the "back" [of their land on Bayou Brevelle], but they would just move the house, you know, like the house was on piers, and of course there wasn't any plumbing at that time [to anchor it to the ground], and they would actually roll the houses from the front to the back, and then later, they would just roll the houses back up to the front. [Other people abandoned or razed the houses on B. Brevelle which were more like camp houses].

GS: They told us that when families, the children inherited the land, they would try to give each child a house place on the front, on the river.

JS: Some of it got even down to just so many farming rows.

DL: Is that right, like they measured it in rows? You get so many rows?

JS: By rows, yes.

GS: Well, the place we first bought when we moved to the front, was from Mr. Willie Roubieu, and he had inherited it from ...

JS: His folks, parents.

GS: Who were they?

JS: Roubieu, he was a Roubieu.

28:23

DL: Where was your house in relationship to Ms. Vera and Isaac's houses were?

JS: It was on up river, about four miles.

DL: Going towards like Mr. Charles Roque?

JS: Bermuda.

GS: We were right above Mr. Charles. He had a little shop there on the side of the road, and then there were the Tolars, and then Louis Chevalier, and then ours. Our grandson lives there now.

DL: Is it kind of set back from the road, and it's got big trees in front of it?

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GS: That's Mr. Tolar. Then there's a little strip—Honey, correct me on this, between Mr. Tolar's and our place is a strip that belonged to Louis Chevalier. I don't know who has it now, and our house, little Bob's house now. Earl Metoyer and Percy Christophe, you know where they live?

DL: Yes.

GS: Ok, well, our house is between the Tolars and Percy Christophe and Earl Metoyer.

DL: Ok, I know what you're talking about now.

GS: It's on the front.

29:44

DL: Well, let's go back a little bit. In 1953, transition, the business transition, is that when Mr. Gerard sold?

JS: He sold the cattle, and he willed Horseshoe Lake to Mr. Skidmore. In '54, Mr. Skidmore and one of Mr. Gerard's nephews bought a big place at Clear Lake in Mansfield, and they wanted me to go to Mansfield, and they leased Horseshoe Lake out, and I moved to Mansfield then we ran cattle up there, and improved that old place, and in ...

GS: '57, we moved back. I don't know what you were going to ask ...

JS: Mr. Gerard passed away and he willed Horseshoe Lake to Mr. Skidmore. So I moved back to Horseshoe Lake, and I commuted back and forth between Horseshoe Lake and the place at Mansfield.

GS: 'Twas not an easy life.

DL: I was going to say, that's not an easy commute, especially not at the time; that was when the roads were not nearly as good as they are now.

GS: We're pretty tough. We had another baby.

DL: So, did you stay here, or did you go back and forth too?

GS: I stayed here, and he commuted.

JS: I went and came every day.

DL: Every day?

JS: Not every day, but went and came the same day. It wasn't bad.

DL: It wasn't? Seems like it would be.

GS: In retrospect it wasn't bad. I can't complain. James made us a good living. It was not easy.

DL: I'm sure it was somewhat tough, especially with small children.

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GS: Well, it was.

32:01

DL: You were you living at Horseshoe Lake? This was before you moved?

GS: We moved to Mansfield first, and we lived there for a few years, and then we moved back to Horseshoe Lake, and he commuted, not that anybody would be interested in that ...

DL: I think it's interesting. Now, what type of housing was that at Horseshoe Lake?

GS: [laughs] It was really okay. It was the house that we lived in when we had first married.

JS: When we moved back from Mansfield, I moved the little house that we lived in, up to the edge of the lake bank.

GS: On the "front" of the lake [laughs], because water had not gone into that house when it went in our house in '53, when we went into the kitchen in a boat. That was not easy, but that was in a flood, and everybody was in that situation, and we did okay. I mean, I had those little ol' boys, and they were the sweetest things, and James was gone long hard days, and he ... that old farm was run down, but he made a ranch out of it.

DL: The one at Horseshoe Lake, or the one at Mansfield?

GS: The one at Mansfield. Horseshoe Lake had been a farm too at one time.

33:27

DL: How many people stayed at Horseshoe Lake when you were commuting back and forth?

GS: Nobody.

DL: You were staying out there by yourself, basically?

JS: Ike's family.

GS: But you didn't think anything about it.

DL: Well, except if something went wrong, and you wanted to holler out the door at somebody, and say ...

GS: I've never lived where you could holler out the door at somebody, 'til Betty moved over here. I don't remember that being a problem, do you?

JS: No.

33:58

DL: Did you and Ms. Cecelia get real close, living out there by yourself? Or had you started going to school?

GS: I hadn't started going to school. Well, you know, she had little ones, and I had little ones. Now she had two more little ones. We were friends, but we didn't see a lot of each other. James'

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dad was sick and I had to help with him too. I sound like a martyr here.

DL: No, you're just recounting what happened; it's events. I know you're not trying to be a martyr. It's just events of what you were going through.

GS: We didn't see a lot of Cecelia but we were fond of each other, in as much as we could, and she had those two little ones; after them, she had twins, after that she was pretty busy and I had the two little boys. I had to help with James' dad.

DL: Y'all stayed there until when?

JS: '62.

35:12

DL: Where did you go then?

JS: I went to Sligo, up at ... south of Bossier.

GS: Mr. Skidmore had died in the meantime, and his wife leased the place out, didn't she?

JS: Yes, well, Gerard from '57; Gerard and one of his partners leased the place, and I stayed on there until they quit in '62, then I moved to Sligo.

DL: How long did you stay up there?

JS: About eight months.

DL: [laughs] Okay, I know what Sligo is like.

GS: Did you know Mr. Scannel?

JS: Mr. Scannel.

DL: You worked for Mr. Scannel and he had a big ranch up there?

JS: He had a big farm. He had about 10,000 acres; I think it's already been subdivided in houses and lots.

GS: That was the hardest. James' dad was really not well, and I had to come and see about him a lot.

DL: So, you moved up to Sligo too?

GS: Yes, we hung in there together [laughs].

DL: I didn't know if you stayed here while he moved up there. Oh, my goodness, you moved up there and you would have to come back here to see about his daddy?

GS: On the weekends I did, because neither Pawpaw nor Mammaw could drive, and he had to go to the doctor, and I had to come see. Should I tell 'em about milking the cow? [laughs] Oh goodness. James' mother couldn't milk the cow, and Pawpaw wasn't able, and the neighbor would milk the cow during the week, but somehow I got roped in coming down and milking the

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cow on the weekend. Those little ol' boys and I would get in that corner, and I'd milk the cow Saturday and Sunday. James' mother could get blood out of turnip, and I was the turnip!

DL: She was good at that?

GS: She was a good mother-in-law, she really was, and she needed help. She had her mother living with her who had had her leg amputated and was in a wheelchair and Pawpaw was sick. Actually, we were almost desperate to get back down to this part of the country so we could take care of him, help take care of him. It's funny now, but then I don't even remember it being funny, or anything else. It was just what you did.

DL: It was just life.

GS: It was just what you did.

DL: It's fine, it's fine, because what you're talking about, I mean, your experiences are singular, but they're also common to what was going on during this time period. It's typical—people had to take care of their families. They didn't have support systems, you know, all these nursing homes.

DL: When I do the transcript, you can X out what you don't want in there, but I think it's very expressive of what everybody was going through at a time when you didn't have the same type of, what do we call them, social services maybe, that you have now, you know home health service, and that kind of stuff. People were having to take care of their own.

GS: We did it. My mother died in 2009, but after James got cancer, she had to go stay with my sister for a year, and she came back home. He got sick again, and my sister had her, and we cared for her.

DL: Exactly, and that's actually, in terms of an elder person, that's so preferable, you know, being able to be taken care of at home as long as possible. I mean, that's certainly what I would hope would happen to me.

GS: That's what we pray will happen to us, that we will be able to, but I laugh when I think about some of the things that happened, and how you just did it.

39:50

DL: Just adapted, and went on. So, how did you get back down here?

JS: I came back and went to work at Melrose.

DL: What year was that?

JS: '63.

GS: That's when I started back to school. Robin was in the second grade when I, it's not significant, I did one semester before we moved to Sligo, and then I had to stay out, and when we came back, I started back to school, and it took me two years to get my degree, teaching degree, but I was home with the children all those years when we were doing this, how the young mother's do it now, I don't know.

DL: I know, without daycare centers, and so forth, it would be very difficult for women to

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have any kind of support to work or to go to school. So, you went to work at Melrose? Did you go to work for Mr. J. D [Henry]?

JS: Yes.

DL: That's who had the farm at that time? And he was primarily growing pecans?

JS: He, they still farmed between the pecan trees. They [trees] were real young. They still row cropped between the rows of pecan trees.

DL: So, he planted the pecan trees?

JS: Yes.

41:28

DL: How long does it take pecan trees to mature in order to produce?

JS: Probably 15 to 20 years.

DL: So, while they were growing, and getting to the point where he could harvest them, then he was doing row crops between, and he was doing what, cotton?

JS: Cotton.

DL: And the cattle were kind of a second thought to him?

JS: Yes, he used the cattle to keep it clean under the pecan trees in the pastures. Of course, they had some producing trees, but he had Melrose, and he had land back on Little River, he had about 1100 acres. They farmed some of that and had pecan trees planted on it.

DL: How many acres did he have altogether at Little River and Melrose?

JS: He must have had 5,000 acres.

DL: Because that kind of, doesn't it kind of abut, that Little River area and the Melrose area, doesn't it kind of almost join up?

JS: Almost, some of it doesn't quite join, and he had, Frost Johnson Mill land down at Montrose.

DL: Oh, that was his land too?

JS: Yes, ma'am. He bought that from Frost Johnson, when they cut out the mill.

DL: And he used that for farming as well?

JS: Just cattle.

43:08

DL: How many cattle did he ... did you start out with the cattle with him, or did he already have cattle?

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JS: He had cattle.

DL: How many did he have?

JS: About 1400 head.

DL: Pretty good group, I mean, you're talking about have 300, 400 head of cattle, that's pretty big for not being his primary interest.

JS: He told me that I couldn't make any money with cattle. The 1400 head he had, it was probably half of 'em would never make any money. I kept culling them out, and about three years, he told me they were making a little money.

DL: Did you keep around the same number with birth and selling off?

JS: Well, I cut them down to about 800 head, what the pastures were capable of carrying.

DL: So, that's probably one of the reasons he wasn't turning a profit on of them, because he was over...

JS: Yes, he had all kinds, and they didn't take care of them.

DL: Were these Herefords too for the most part?

JS: Cross-bred mostly. Brahman, Hereford, and whatever.

DL: That's probably another reason why he couldn't make much money off of them, because they weren't a main cattle breed?

JS: With your cattle, bulls are most important, and I kept getting better quality bulls, and we just improved them 'til ...

DL: So, you improved your breeding?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

45:06

DL: That makes sense. So, how long did you work for Mr. J. D.?

JS: 'Til 1970. Mr. J. D. died the last day of '69.

GS: And in the meantime, he drove the school bus.

JS: Yes, in '64, I told Mr. Henry I was going to drive a school bus. He said, "Well, you can do both." I drove a school bus 'til '69. He told me, he was postmaster, and Eugene Lavespere worked in the store and he was assistant postmaster. Mr. J. D. told me, I told him I was going to quit driving the bus, I'd sold it, he said, "Well, I tell you," he said, "we'll just make you assistant postmaster, and Eugene postmaster."

DL: That was at Melrose?

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JS: Yes, but he died the last day of '69 and that didn't happen.

DL: Where did you drive the school bus? Where were you going from and to?

JS: I started at the Derry bridge down here and went all the way to Natchitoches.

DL: So, you were taking the kids into Natchitoches. Which school?

JS: Five different schools.

DL: You were hitting all the schools basically?

JS: Yes, then you could go to the Catholic school. So, I carried kids to St. Mary's, elementary, junior high, and high school.

46:57

DL: When did y'all move to 484, Hwy. 484?

JS: In '64.

DL: So, not too long after you started working for Mr. Henry.

JS: Yes.

GS: We bought that piece of property in the meantime.

JS: When Mr. Skidmore passed away, he left me some money in his will.

DL: So, you used that?

JS: I used that to buy a place up there.

DL: Did you build the house yourself? Did you have the house built?

JS: I had a contractor.

DL: And you built that in '64.

JS: Yes.

DL: And that's when y'all moved in

47:47

GS: We lived at Melrose from September of '63 until we built the house in March of '64. You talk about an interesting place to live, at Melrose. We did that, too.

DL: Where did you live at Melrose?

JS: Do you know where the shop is? Where the Y?

DL: I know where the Y is.

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JS: On the left past the store. It was an old house just past the shop.

GS: It was a mess, but, you know, those little boys enjoyed living there so much, always something going on. I started back to school. James was driving a school bus, and it was a sight.

JS: And the gin was right across from where we lived, and it was still in operation.

48:52

DL: Ok, let me mark that—so, okay, there's, I'm driving across the bridge, coming towards Melrose from Hwy. 1 and I cross the bridge, and I go past Mr. Williams' place on the right-hand side, Mr. Ambrose Williams' trailer on the right-hand side, and I get up to the Y, and there's that house that kind of sits in the Y, that usually the caretaker at Melrose lived in?

JS: That's where Mr. J. D. lived.

DL: Oh, that's where he lived? He didn't live in the big house?

JS: No.

DL: Was anybody living in the big house?

JS: No, ma'am.

DL: So, Mr. J. D. lived there. Okay, and then on the right-hand side is that, is that the shop you're talking about?

JS: Yes.

GS: Housing was not Mr. J. D.'s strong point. [laughs]

DL: I can imagine. Well, most of the people that came out, didn't they come out just for the day, weren't they mostly day workers at that time?

JS: Yes.

GS: [laughs] It was so funny. The lady, the people that lived in Mr. J. D.'s house—who'd he work for, T. L. Jones?

JS: Yes.

GS: His wife asked me where we lived, and I said, well, we lived in Bookie's house, and she said, "You did not!" It was a sight.

DL: You lived in Bookie's house? Now, I think I've heard of Bookie before. What was Bookie's last name?

LS: Moran.

GS: Bookie Moran. I mean, it was just funny, it just was not the most desirable thing, but it was where we could live until we got our house built. Some of the things that happened there were funny.

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DL: I bet it was a great place for the kids. There was stuff always happening in there.

GS: My kids loved it.

JS: They picked pecans. Mr. J. D. would pay them a little more.

GS: They had a good time there, you know, just because it was not elegant ... and so, I had some of my funniest tales about the hot water heater singeing your eyes brown, but the boys enjoyed it, they had some good times.

51:06

JS: Mr. J. D. was good to us. I had, our oldest son, he followed me, and he was working, we were tearing some old boards down. I was going to build a barn, and Mr. J. D. came by, he talked to me, and he left. Bookie was his driver, just a few minutes, he came back and he told me, "Son, I see you've got Jim up there working," said, "Put him on the payroll." He was there a day or two, and he came back by one day, and he said, "I need Jim," and I didn't see him anymore, he drove Mr. J. D., and he didn't have a driver's license.

DL: It was a different time back then.

GS: I can remember that, he didn't have a driver's license. I was teaching school. That was the thing, you know, I was not part of the community as much as James—not by choice, but I was blessed. When I graduated from college, I got an opportunity. I'd worked in the public library in the summer, that first semester, but I got an opportunity to work at the Lab School, and I've never worked anywhere else. I started in a very blessed position.

DL: Was that Warren Easton ?

GS: Yes. I started there my first day of teaching, and I spent my last day of teaching at Warren Easton. I mean, the Lord blessed me beyond ...

DL: That's wonderful, and to be happy in one place. Was Warren Easton an educator? Is that the man it was named after? Because there's a Warren Easton in New Orleans, too.

GS: Early on. I don't know exactly what his role was, but he was ...

DL: He was some sort of educator.

GS: But I'm realizing that I haven't been as much a part of this community, but I had an opportunity to go to work there, and I never had to move. Well, I moved by choice. I moved over when they established the Middle Lab School and put the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade there. I did that for several years, and then I, they renovated Warren Easton, and I moved back to Warren Easton, but I taught at the Lab School for 30 years.

DL: What did you teach?

GS: I taught Fifth grade for a long time at Warren Easton Elementary and at the Lab School, and then I was librarian at both of those schools, a traveling lady, and then I was librarian at the middle school. When they renovated Warren Easton, I went back to Warren Easton.

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DL: Well, you mentioned—and I think that it's probably an interesting observation—that y'all were probably the only non-Creoles living in that 484 area.

GS: Just Mr. Tolar and us.

JS: And the people up the road.

GS: Oh, yes, the Richardsons. They were a couple who lived up there where Terrell [Mark/F.J.] Delphin's house is, that two-story house. He was retired military, and she worked for one of the lawyers in town. Dot, and I can't remember her husband's name, Richardson, and they moved from there, but they, us, and Mr. Tolar were the only non-Creoles.

DL: Were they and you the only non-Catholics, too? Were the Tolars and Richardsons Catholic?

GS: The Tolars were Baptist and they went to church in town, but the Richardsons went to church in Cypress, the brief time they were there.

DL: So, the three, like that little enclave down in, kind of that end that was the only non-Creole, non-Catholic presence.

GS: I realize that James knows so many more people than I do, and he knew so much of what was going on, but there really wasn't anyway for me.

DL: You weren't around.

GS: And it wasn't by choice to not be part of the community. It was just circumstances.

DL: But you formed relationships because you were talking, you spoke so dearly of Ms. Vera.

GS: Oh, yes. Ms. Vera helped us out when your daddy was sick. I didn't have full-time help, but I had, Herman Christophe's wife helped me a little bit briefly when your daddy was sick.

DL: Genevieve?

JS: Yes.

GS: A time or two, and then a lady who's deceased, her name was, Amelia, was she a Christophe?

JS: Jones. Earl and Lisa Metoyer and the Percy Christophes were good neighbors.

GS: James' dad was ill, and he was an invalid, and Mammaw didn't want anyone in the house. She took care of him very, very well, but it was exhausting, and somebody had to be with him almost all the time, and she didn't want anybody else. So, we got Amelia to help us, and she would come and do some cooking at my house, and do some housework, so when I came in the afternoons from school, I could sit with his dad, and Mammaw could get a little relief, and James and Jim spelled each other every other night, staying with him. Mammaw would stay one night, James one night, Jim one night, we did that. Well, I couldn't handle him, I could not lift him, and work, but Amelia helped us a long time with some housework and little bit of cooking.

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DL: You stayed at Melrose until Mr. J. D. died, and then did you go directly to Magnolia?

JS: No, I worked with his nephew, his wife's nephew, Dan Regard and Joe Regard.

GS: For what, two years?

JS: A year and a half, two years.

DL: Where was their place?

JS: It was back on Little River, on that Alcott place that Mr. J. D. owned. We did pecans, and I bought a few cattle for back there.

DL: Did you sell off Mr. J. D.'s cattle when he died?

JS: They wanted me to stay until they sold the cattle, and I sold the last cattle in June, I think.

DL: So, you worked for them for two years?

JS: Well, when I sold all the cattle off of Melrose, I worked for an auction barn over at Clarence, until about a year.

GS: I get lost right in there. I was trying to get my masters.

JS: Then I went to work for Dan and Joe Regard.

DL: Ok, so you worked for the auction barn first, and you worked for them for two years?

59:09

JS: About two years, a year and a half really because I left in August, and came to Magnolia in '71 in August.

DL: You want to say something, Ms. Glennie?

GS: I can't get it placed in my mind, those few years. Talk about a hard, hard time of the year, when you worked for the auction barn, to me, was one of the hardest, physically, because every day was really a hard day working people's cattle—getting them up, cutting them out, and getting them to the sale. If you're doing your own, you don't have that everyday ay. You just do it ...

DL: Occasionally.

GS: That was hard on him. I was trying, I mean my life was entertaining those boys, and taking care of Pawpaw and teaching school.

DL: But you were at the barn, and you were having to basically ...

JS: We would go and work people's cattle, and work the calves, and then if they had anything to sell, we would take them to the sale barn.

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GS: Physically hard, that was when, I remember that being so hard on you. Because every day was a bloody day.

DL: Exactly, well, you're going to people's places and culling calves, and stuff like that.

GS: De-horning, vaccinating and castrating, and

DL: It's a long day.

GS: Long day, and I say every day, just about every day, different place. I remember it being so hard for you.

DL: I'm sure it was physically, hugely demanding, and plus, that's a little bit of a commute.

GS: [laughs] Not as far as Mansfield!

DL: Well, I guess not, but it would make for a long day, I'm sure.

JS: But I thoroughly enjoyed it.

GS: He did, he enjoyed it, and people liked his work.

DL: I'm sure, and it doesn't look like you ever suffered for work, you know. It doesn't look like you ever went without work.

JS: I've never been without work.

GS: Isn't that remarkable?

DL: It is remarkable, and it's a credit, you know, that you were able to that because I know not everybody was able to keep a job all those years.

GS: And not everybody's willing to do that kind of work.

JS: And not many people have that experience.

GS: Was that during the years when your sister's children came and spent the summer?

JS: Yes.

GS: They were still little.

DL: And they came from where?

JS: California. My sister lived in California and for several years she spent the summer in Louisiana visiting relatives and assisting our mother. Her two boys always spent the summer with us. Four boys can have a lot of fun.

01:02:29

DL: So, you went to Magnolia in 1971? How did you get that job? What led to you getting that job?

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JS: A veterinarian, Dr. Ray Hargis, he and I were, grew up when we were kids, we knew one another. He was our veterinarian at Horseshoe Lake for years and Betty was working at the bank, and she asked him one day if he knew anybody that she could get to come.

DL: I never knew she actually had a job anywhere. I just assumed she was always on the farm.

JS: People's Bank. He said, well I had a job, but if, he'd tell me to talk to her, and I came and talked to her, and I told her I couldn't come right then, but in August I would come, and I came and worked the cattle until I became full time.

DL: So, her dad who had run the farm, prior to, he was not able to run the farm anymore? And how long had been since somebody actually supervised the farm in between?

JS: Two or three years.

DL: At least two or years, because I think you said you only met him one time?

JS: One time, yes, after I came to work. I knew him before, really, before I went to Sligo, I came and talked to him. I was better off to go to Sligo at that time.

DL: Well, in terms of coming to Magnolia then, Magnolia was probably not in very good condition.

JS: It was getting in pretty bad shape.

DL: And what were they farming at that time, when you came to work for them?

JS: Mostly cotton, then they had a few beans, soybeans.

DL: You remember how many acres?

JS: I don't know that.

DL: How many acres is that land all together?

JS: It's 2,460 acres in Magnolia.

DL: But you don't know how many were in row crops? More or less half?

JS: Probably 900 acres.

DL: So, that was in row crops. Did they have cattle?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: So, they already had cattle when you came. How many head of cattle did they have?

JS: Yes, ma'am, they already had cattle. He had about 600 head of cattle.

DL: What kind of cattle?

JS: Just mixed.

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DL: So, you were hired really to take care of the cattle, or with the whole farm?

JS: The whole farm.

DL: How many people were working there at that time?

JS: It was about 6 or 7.

DL: Those were the men you named before? Isaac Dupre?

JS: Isaac didn't work then. It was Raymond Metoyer, Lloyd Rachal, Ollie Gallien, Charles Metoyer, Henry Anderson—that's about it.

DL: That's what I got, that's who you named last time. I'm just making sure, and you said Isaac came later.

JS: Isaac came later.

DL: He came to work after you came? Did you get him over there, you was the one who got him over there?

JS: Yes.

DL: Did these guys do row crops and cattle, or did these guys just do cattle?

JS: We did it all.

DL: Okay, so y'all, so this was it, this was the workforce?

JS: Yes.

DL: No tenants?

JS: No, ma'am.

DL: That was past the era of tenancy?

JS: Yes.

01:07:15

DL: When I asked you before, you said that the changes in the way things were done was due to the size of the equipment?

JS: Equipment.

DL: What was it, two-row?

JS: It was four-row, then I went to six, and then I went to, I had some eight-row later.

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DL: And were those, you know, I don't know much about farm equipment so I'm going to ask stupid questions, but when you're talking about four row, six row, eight row, is this the capacity to reach that far?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: And is it sowing seed, is it harvesting?

JS: We had six and eight row planters that we plant six to eight rows at one time. Then you had cultivators that would cultivate six and eight rows.

DL: But there were two pieces of equipment, planters and cultivators?

JS: Oh, yes.

DL: But they were still divided along the rowage?

GS: You did go up to eight didn't you?

JS: Yes, but you have to have it all synchronized.

01:08:35

DL: I'm just curious, and I know that you weren't a big row farmer when you were coming up, but the difference in the amount of time it would take to go out and plant seed by hand, or plant seed with one of these planters, it has to be astoundingly different.

JS: It was no comparison.

DL: I mean, are you talking about a couple of weeks instead of a couple of days?

JS: Back then, though, they had maybe 8 or 10 tenants, and they each had their own one-row planters.

DL: So, they were the two rows, four rows. So they were responsible for a number of rows, and so they went and worked those rows

JS: Well, they had a certain plot that they farmed, yeah, the tenants did. Some of them were fourth-hands, and some of them were half-hands.

DL: And being the fourth of the profit they received, or half of the profit they received, and not what they ...

JS: The fourth-hands, the plantation furnished everything. Half-hands, they did it on their own, and they got half of what they made.

GS: I thought it was the other way around, I thought half-hands, the plantation, I didn't know, I never farmed half-hands.

JS: It stands to reason, that if the plantation furnished three-fourths, they got a fourth.

DL: And the half-hands ...

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JS: Got half.

DL: Got half, okay. So when the plantation, on quarter-hands, the plantation furnished everything, that would be like the seed, the mules, the houses, all of that?

JS: Yes.

DL: And for the half-hand, what did the half-hand furnish? What were they responsible for?

JS: They had their own teams.

GS: And the plantation got half of it. I didn't know how that worked.

DL: I was talking to a lady not too long ago, and her father, she wasn't sure if he was a quarter-hand, or half-hand on one of those farms, the Roque's, Earl Roque, and she said, I asked her if he was a quarter-hand or a half-hand, and she said, "All I know, is that he never broke even at the end of the year. He always said he tried to make even, and she said he never did.

GS: My daddy farmed and we still own part of the property my grandfather homesteaded. I though the landowner got one-fourth if you were a quarter-hand, but never was involved in the process of sharecropping.

DL: That's what I thought originally, too.

GS: And I thought a half-hand, the plantation owner furnished everything, and got half. I thought it was the other way around.

DL: Ms. Glennie, that's exactly what I thought when I started this too. I thought that they gave a quarter, not that they got a quarter.

GS: I thought they furnished their mules and everything and gave a quarter, and I thought the plantation owner furnished everything and got half.

DL: That's what I thought too, but they disabused me of that when I was talking, not only to that lady, but then I was talking to Ms. Gloria Jones, and I said [regarding Jones' sharecroppers], "Oh, they gave you a quarter?," and she looked at me, and she goes, "No, we gave them a quarter."

GS: I don't know, it just had passed beyond my ...

DL: Well, if you didn't experience it, you know... I can remember growing up in north Louisiana, and I can remember people talking about sharecropping, but I never experienced it. So, I'm like you, it's an assumption, you get a quarter, you think you're paying out a quarter, but no, you're getting back a quarter.

01:12:53

DL: So, you worked for Ms. Betty, and I feel sure, you improved the farm since it had not been taken care of properly, and so, you worked for them for how long doing that?

JS: We quit row cropping in '91, I think, we leased it out to, the row crops to Bayou Camitte Plantation.

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DL: Okay, Mr. Churchman?

JS: Mr. Churchman, yes.

DL: You continued to run cattle?

JS: Yes, ma'am.

DL: How many head of cattle did you have then?

JS: Well, we had picked up two or three different places. I had some cattle on Horseshoe Lake, and some up at Cypress, and I had Masson property leased at Cloutierville. We had about 800 head of mama cows.

DL: How many bulls? You said the bulls were the most important and I was wondering how many bulls.

JS: We had one for about every 25 cows, that's what we usually ran, but we always had some extras.

DL: So, you ran about 800 head of cattle, and how long did that go on? When did she sell all the cattle?

JS: About 2001.

01:14:45

DL: So, during that time, that's from 1971 to 2001, so 30 years, over 30 years basically. How did the landscape change there? You said Ollie Gallien, I know that there was a Mr. Gallien who lived in that overseer's house for a while. Was that him?

JS: Different Galliens.

DL: So was anybody living in the overseer's house when you were there?

JS: No, ma'am.

DL: What about the brick cabins, the tenant cabins? Nobody was living in there?

JS: No, ma'am. They had one or two families who lived this side of the big yard down there.

DL: There were a couple of little houses right on the road.

JS: Well, there was several rundown houses. I was looking a day or two ago, I was coming up the road, and I could count 20-something we took down.

01:15:45

DL: Is that right? So, you took down the St. James Church after it got knocked off its piers, and there were about 20 houses you took down, and then there were a couple of people that were still living in those houses? Seems like when I came and first started doing this work in '96, down on this end of the river, there was a lady, an African American lady living in one of those houses whose name was Rosaline or ...

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JS: Rosalee.

DL: And I think she was the last person that I knew living there.

JS: Last person. She and Saul Metoyer lived there in one of those houses.

DL: Yeah, I tried to talk to her, but she didn't want to talk to me, but I'm sure—this was at the very first beginning of the park—and now, I think, people are used to seeing Dustin come up and down the road, you know. He stops and talks to everyone, and it's a lot more familiar now, but when I first started doing interviews for the park, it was before the park opened, and I did meet with a little bit of a resistance. People had no idea what we were trying to figure out. One lady called me the social security police!

01:17:05

DL: So, nobody was living in the cabins. So, the cabins were not used at all? Was that all overgrown?

JS: It was overgrown. We cleaned it up, and I made hay in the quarters there.

DL: Did you store the hay bales in the houses?

JS: No, ma'am, we had started using the round bales. When I first came, they had square bales in the gin, and we fed it out.

DL: Was that cotton press being used at that time?

JS: No, no, that was way back.

DL: So, y'all weren't processing anything in terms of cotton or anything else on the farm itself? You were taking everything out?

JS: No.

01:17:49

DL: So, go over the gins with me again, starting with, let's go down river. So I guess that Cloutierville would be the first? Like how many gins were in Cloutierville at that time, when you were there?

JS: There were two there but they weren't being used.

DL: Neither one of them were being used?

JS: Cohen had a gin right up here.

DL: Okay, so Lakeview still had its gin?

JS: Yes. They had the Bermuda gin, up at Bermuda, then the Lambre's gin at Bermuda, it was still running. Then they had J. H. Williams, south of town. That was the only gins.

DL: I think I asked you about this last time, but wasn't there a gin where that brick factory is

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now, that's right at Cypress, is it a brick factory? You know that building I'm talking about, at the four way. Was it a brick factory? Used to be a gin?

JS: Yes, a gin and they've got some kind of ornamental brick.

DL: So, there was a gin there as well?

JS: Yes, that was the Alma gin, there at the oil mill at Natchitoches. They took it down and moved it to Cypress, and L. J. Melder ran that gin.

DL: So, at that time, starting in the '70s, there was Cohen, there was the Bermuda, Lambre's gin, J. H. Williams gin, and the Alma gin.

JS: But the Alma gin was later.

DL: I think at that time, that was the only one, in the late '80s, that was the only one I can remember being functional at that time.

JS: Probably, G. C. Messenger came by the Cohen gin one day. I had gone by Cohen's gin going to Bermuda, and when I came back with an empty trailer, he flagged me down, and wanted to know why I was going

DL: You were going past Cohen's.

01:21:06 [Interview interrupted by telephone call, and an unidentified person at the Scarboroughs.]

01:23:12

DL: Okay, you were telling me about taking cotton past Mr. Cohen's place, and coming back with an empty truck.

JS: Mr. Messenger asked me why, and I said, "Well, I get more for my seed, and he said, "Well, I don't believe that," and I showed him my gin tickets. He looked at 'em, and said, "It's time for the farmers to build a gin." So, they built a gin up at Powhatan—Three League gin.

DL: And why at Powhatan? That's kind of a long distance away.

JS: I really don't know, because most of the cotton was down in this area.

DL: That was quite a little haul up there. The farmers went in together and built the Three League gin?

JS: I don't really remember how that came about, but I think they formed a little co-op, or something. We weren't in it.

DL: You didn't take your cotton up there to be ginned?

JS: I ginned there, but we didn't have any interest in the gin.

DL: Was that at the same time that the Alma gin was open?

JS: No, ma'am, it was later.

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DL: It doesn't seem that the Alma gin was a gin for an awful long time.

JS: Very short time.

01:24:48

DL: One other thing I forgot about from earlier, you were talking about Ms. Dee. Now, was Ms. Dee Mr. Matt's wife?

JS: Wife.

DL: Was she from Lecompte?

JS: Lecompte.

DL: You were real fond of here. Did she outlive him?

JS: Yes.

GS: She died in '83? When did she die?

JS: I don't remember.

DL: But Ms. Dee, you said she used to feed you lunch?

JS: Yes, I brought a lunch, and she sent the boy who was taking care of Mr. Matt at the house over to the store one day, and told me she wanted to see me. I couldn't figure what Ms. Dee would want to see me for, I never had met her. I went over there, and she told me, "There's lunch on the table everyday over here, you be here." She would come and sit with me, she wouldn't eat, but she would come and sit with me. I think that table could seat 16 people.

DL: That's a big table. I understand, Dustin said the house is kind of undergoing transition inside.

01:26:12

DL: One other thing I forgot to ask you about. This is going way back to the church, but you told me that the Cypress Church moved to its present location, what, in 1950-something?

GS: '52, when Jim was born.

JS: No, that was the new one. We moved the old church in '48 I think.

DL: And where was it prior to that?

JS: It was over at ...

GS: No, it wasn't '48; we married in '48, so it must've, and you were ordained a deacon in the old church at the old location in '50, so it must've been around ...

JS: '49, or '50.

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DL: Okay. Where was the original Cypress church?

JS: It was about a half a mile, I guess that was old [Hwy] 120. It went straight on by the church, and the school was over on the riverbank.

DL: Where the church is now, you would go past that, like you're going to Flora?

JS: Flora. When they built the interstate, they changed it, cut that off.

DL: Where was the school before the interstate?

JS: It was right over, about a half a mile past the church on the riverbank. We moved the old church, it was right by the school.

DL: That's the church you moved originally?

JS: Yes, and then we built the new one, and had the first service in it in August 3, 1952.

01:27:48

DL: You tore down the old church after you moved it? Is that what happened? Dismantled it after you moved it?

GS: After...

JS: ... we moved it.

DL: Did you use the materials from the old church in the new church? Or was it built from scratch?

JS: We built it from scratch. We tore down an old school building back on Little River and built the present church. Then later, we took the old building down, and built the education rooms back behind it, and joined it.

DL: That's where y'all go to church now?

JS: Now. I have attended church there for 73 years.

DL: And that's where you keep the nursery? You still keep the nursery?

JS: I still keep the nursery.

GS: If there's anybody...

DL: I was going to say, how many children do you typically have? How old does the nursery go up to?

JS: Pre-school.

GS: Right now, you just have one regular, he's two, but we have some twins nine months old that will soon be in there.

DL: But you really don't, you make somebody else take care of the little babies, right?

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JS: Yes.

GS: I used to keep the little ones, and James started helping me, because of the toddlers. I couldn't lift them, and he started helping, I just let him do it.

DL: Well, obviously you must have a gift for it.

GS: He really does.

JS: I told 'em they put me back there in my age group. [laughter]

GS: He has a gift with children.

DL: I'm sure that's true, because you would know it. Children don't put up with a whole bunch of stuff. What age group—I know you teach Sunday school too.

GS: I have second through fifth grade, and he has, right now we only have one. Noah's two, but when the twins get old enough, and unless someone moves to the community.

DL: I think you said that you typically have around 30-ish people in the service?

JS: We have from 35 to 45

GS: Last Sunday we didn't have very many, but we usually have in the 30s.

DL: That's a pretty good number for a small rural church. I'm sure there's a tremendous amount of comfort there. It's a beautiful setting; it's a beautiful little church.

GS: We're very thankful.

DL: And I'm sure it's a tremendous sense of community there.

GS: Attenders of Cypress Baptist Church are quite ecumenical, but the church provides a place of worship and a sense of community for a fairly wide geographic area. It is one of a few Protestant churches between Natchitoches and Cloutierville, where there are two Baptist churches. Good Hope has been mentioned and there is Weaver Methodist Church at Florein in the area.

JS: By Little Eva down there, they have another.

GS: They built a new one down there, beyond Cloutierville.

JS: It's just below Cloutierville.

01:32:00

DL: This is a total aside, but driving past Cloutierville down Hwy. 1, right, I guess you're going on the edge of Little Eva, there's this big huge barn that's kind of in the woods. I mean, it's right on the road, but it's a huge barn, and the trees are kind of all around it. Do you know what I'm talking about? It's before you get to that, there's an African American church on the right, I can't remember what the name of it is, there's a little African American church on the left, Good something, I think, and then you keep on going, and there's a larger African American

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church on the right that has the cemetery in the front of it, so the cemetery is in front on the road, and the church sits off of it, but there's some big barn right there, and I've always wondered what that is, but nobody's ever been able to tell me. You don't know what it is either?

JS: Just below Cloutierville, they used to have, the Carnahans had a big old barn, a big building on the left, red?

DL: I bet that's it, red, exactly.

JS: That was the Jungle Bar.

DL: That was the Jungle Bar? Okay, I've heard about the Jungle Bar. I wondered about that.

GS: James, she's going to get the wrong impression of you.

DL: That's okay. I didn't realize that's where the Jungle Bar was, because I kept hearing about the Jungle Bar on Hwy. 1. I just assumed it was where the White Elephant was, right outside of town.

GS: I didn't know you interviewed Charles Roge, now he grew up in Cloutierville.

DL: So did Ms. Doris, and she from one of the old families.

GS: Des Louche.

DL: Des Louche, right.

GS: Clyde Masson is from Cloutierville, and he just so congenial. His mother taught school at Cloutierville.

DL: I understand she was quite the lady.

GS: She was, and she started lunches for children. Kids would come to school without that much food, and she would get people to contribute, and she would make a big pot of soup, and serve kids.

DL: I understood she was quite the lady, and quite the long-lived person, that she lived way into her 90s. He said she just died a few years ago.

GS: She did.

DL: It's a funny thing about those bars. I was asking Mr. Roge about the Creole bars, like Bubbá's, but he was not as familiar with them as the ones around Cloutierville [laughs]. Miss Doris said, "Well, we didn't go there! We just knew where they were!" Was that built as a barn, or was it built as the Jungle Bar, because that's a big ol' building.

JS: The never did use it as a barn, as far as I know.

DL: And the Jungle Bar was frequented by African Americans?

JS: Everybody.

DL: Well, there wasn't that much entertainment around here, back in the day ...

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DL: Well, there wasn't that much entertainment around here, back in the day ...

GS: There's still not! [laughter]

DL: It's not that much of a jaunt to Natchitoches any more, but at that time, dances halls, juke joints, and that kind of place, that was the big draw. People had to have something to do on a weekend!

GS: And close enough that they could walk or catch a ride.

DL: Or like you were talking about Isaac, ride his horse to—or have somebody roll him home so he could ride his horse back! Well, I think we have covered everything, and I appreciate this.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Glennie Scarborough (Good Hope Community)

**Interviewed September 27, 2015 at Good Hope Baptist Church, Good Hope Community, by
Dayna Bowker Lee**

**Time of interview: 00:13.14
Transcribed 10/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: Tell me a little bit about the Good Hope community.

00:04

GS: The Good Hope community was founded by four primary families. There were the McLarens, the Dowdens, the Beasleys, and the Russell families. They and their descendants were the ones who founded the community, and somewhere in the mid-twenties they established this little church. It was established by members of those four pioneer families, and the materials were garnered from the area from people who lived in the community. When we go outside, you can see where the long sills that are underneath the church were hand-hewn with a broad-axe by Mr. McLaren—Mr. Adam McLaren—for the church. I wonder where they found those straight pine trees, and then the blocks that's under the sills, if you look at them, they are made from pine stumps that are turned long-ways. Some members of the church went out into the cut-over land where the logging camps had cut the timber. They cut the stumps and brought them and used them. They're light, they call 'em lighter pine, whatever that means.

A few years ago, the church began to lean, and the congregation had to have someone come with cables come and straighten it back up, and you'll notice on some of those blocks, there's some wedges of wood that are used to put it back level like it was, that was one of the things that was done. If I'm not mistaken, the lumber was given to the church by Frost Johnson Lumber Company at Montrose, but my dad, Bryan Dowden, Sr. and Mr. W. T. O'Bannion, Sr., who was a descendant of the Beasley family, went with a horse, with a horse and wagon, or mules and wagon, went to Montrose and got the lumber and brought it to the church. I'm not sure who the main carpenter was, I think it may have been Barney Booty because he did a considerable amount of carpentry work in the area. He was not one of the pioneer families, but was related to them on my grandmother's side. I think that's how it really got started. This was somewhere in the mid-twenties, 1924 or 1925.

02:35

The church did not have a musical instrument at that time, and at one time when Frost Johnson had a logging camp out at the Red Dirt area, they had a church in the logging camp that was used, I think, by the Methodist and the Baptist on alternate Sundays. When the logging camp cut out and there was no longer a logging community there, the little reed pump organ that had been used was stored in the home of a lady, and mama called her Ms. Brady—I never knew her—and the understanding was that if there was ever a church established in the area, the little

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organ would be given to them, and it was given to this church. We used it until, it was until, like the '40s, late '30s, or '40s, and a piano was acquired. Daddy bought the little organ, and my sister and I learned to play hymns on it, and I still have it. I don't play hymns very well, but I can still do that, there's something special about it.

03:43

There was no electricity, as you know. We had little oil lamps that were hung on the wall with little metal reflectors behind them, and there was a hanging oil lamp in the sort of the center of the church, and on the piano, and one on the pulpit. That sort of takes care of the building of the church. It was a one-room church. We had some homemade pews at that time. The current pews were given to this church by another church that got some newer ones or some larger ones, I'm not sure which, but it was a one-room facility and when we had Sunday school, one of the back pews would be turned backward, and the children would have their Sunday school lesson back there, or go outside under the trees, either one. Then several years ago, the two small areas in the back were partitioned for some very tiny Sunday school rooms, but that was one significant change, and when we got air-conditioning, it was the place for the unit.

05:05

DL: When did you get electricity and air-conditioning?

GS: I'm not sure when electricity came to this area, but it was after WWII ended. You know so many things were at a standstill during that time. I would say the very late '40s electricity was acquired.

DL: You had told me before about a casual, not formal [seating arrangement] ...

GS: Well, we had talked about the arrangement of the pews in the church. Well, this side of the pulpit, there were two pews originally, and the older men sat there. Usually their wives sat right along here, and when the children were small, they sat with their parents. The other couples sat at random, wherever they wanted to. I remember my mother and her sister, and Ms. Roberts, who was one of the senior ladies, always sat in this area and we had to sit with them until we got a little bigger. The younger people sat toward the back, it was not really gender separated, but it was just a custom. This is the corner where they sat, and that was the way the church was then.

06:19

DL: The men that sat up in the front, were they deacons?

GS: The deacons that we had—my dad was ordained a deacon later. We only had one deacon for a while, and then my dad was a deacon, and Mr. O'Bannion was one, and he was from the Beasley family, and usually the deacons sat there, and the preacher may have sat in the pulpit, but mainly, he sat along the pew with the deacons. There would be only four or five.

DL: When the church started, was there a full time minister, and if so, who was that?

GS: We've never had a full time minister in my memory. Mr. Monroe Roberts, or Rev. Monroe Roberts I should say, was the pastor in the beginning, and he was here for several years. After him, we had Brother E. E. Dees, he was here, and usually, we had services one weekend a month, or, later on, when things got better, people had more ways for transportation, we had it two times a month, the first and third, like they do now.

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07:30

DL: What is the typical congregation number on the first and third?

GS: Now, there is not that many people who attend. The last time I was here, not on a special occasion, I think there were about twelve. I come sometimes—my sister and I when she comes home. I brought my mother as long as she lived, and then after she died, I go to church at Cypress, and I don't make it the second time, but as long as mama lived, I did.

08:08 [Murdock]: Do you want to go outside and take some pictures out there?

GS: Before we go outside, something about the cemetery. I think we mentioned in the interview about family cemeteries. I don't know if you remember, but long time ago, many times family members were buried in the community where they lived, and most of the family have a family cemetery. Now the Dowdens, on my daddy's side, had a family cemetery, and here, there's some more of the Dowdens are buried there. The Russell family, which was one of the pioneer families, have a family cemetery, and some of our family now are buried in other places. We don't have to keep that custom, but they had to because there was no funeral home services, there was no transportation, and people had to be prepared for burial, and buried where they lived.

DL: So, this cemetery that's attached to the church, that's just your family, isn't it?

GS: Yes, on both sides. Daddy's sister and then some of my mother's family—my grandfather on my mother's side.

DL: Do you have a time when you come out and clean the cemetery and redecorate?

GS: We try, I cannot tell a lie. Mrs. Greer—Martha Greer—I talked to about coming [today], she and her husband—she was a Russell—and O'Bannion, Denise O'Bannion and her son Austin, they do a lot on special occasions, usually in the fall around Thanksgiving, and we always have a special occasion at Easter time, when we have our Homecoming at Easter, and we rival the other families to see who can have the most descendants here [chuckles], and everybody freshens up the cemetery, and I cannot prevaricate, I freshened it up this week, so what I put out at Easter was a little bit limp when we came out, and if you're going to film the cemetery, I don't won't all those tulips doing this [drooping]!

10:28 DL: Who keeps up the church? I'm sure at some point it requires painting.

GS: I can remember when the church was first built, it was not painted. I can remember in my lifetime, I have some pictures of Mama and Daddy standing here, and the church is not painted. When I was a very little girl, only six or seven years old, was the first time it was painted, and then they painted it before my wedding, and that was special. They painted those homemade pews, they were not painted the first time, they painted them the second time, and my grandson, who was married here also, had one of those pews from this church. They were given to some of the people who wanted them. I wished they had not replaced them. It was a torture chamber to sit on, but they were special. It was repainted in 1948, I remember that, and about four or five years ago, they had to do some structural shoring up the building, but it was not repainted. As for as the upkeep, just those two families I mentioned, Ms. Russell and her sister, Ms. Smith and the O'Bannion family are very conscientious about seeing that it's always clean. You're never embarrassed to bring somebody and show them this church. It's always clean. We don't have much storage but it's kept well. I'm so thankful, first of all, I'm thankful for Jesus as my savior,

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I'm thankful for my parents that brought me up in the Christian faith, and this church that nourished my Christian faith, all those years, and it still does, even if I don't come very much.

DL: Now, you've kind of expanded that to be brought into Mr. James' church.

GS: I've gone to James' church for 67 years. We married in 1948, and since we've been married 67 years, I've been there. We still have our interest and feel for this church.

DL: You mentioned you got married in the church, and your grandson got married in the church, and those were the only two marriages in the church?

GS: There's only been two marriages here, our marriage and my grandson, who married here, about ten years ago if I remember the date, but it was a sweet wedding.

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PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: James Scarborough (Cypress Community)

Interviewed September 27, 2015 at Cypress Baptist Church, Highway 120, Cypress Community, by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 00:11:56
Transcribed 10/25/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: Mr. James, let's start with the history of the Cypress Baptist Church and how long you've been a member.

00:08

JS: Well, the church is about a hundred years old this coming year, or 2016. It used to be over on the riverbank by the school, and in '51 I believe, we moved the old church building over here where this building is. In '52 we built this new building and took the old one down.

DL: You told me that some of the materials came from ...

JS: Came from an old school, Natchitoches Parish school [at Cypress], and we tore it down, and used the material to build this church.

DL: In your lifetime, you've always been affiliated with this church?

JS: Yes ma'am. Since I was fourteen years old, I've been a member of this church. (Mrs. Scarborough added that Mr. James was ordained a deacon in the church in 1950 and both of their sons serve as deacons, one at Cypress Baptist Church).

DL: How have you seen changes? How many members did you have when you were growing up and how many do you have now?

JS: It started out we had two sermons a month, then we had Sunday school the other two Sundays. My wife and I both taught Sunday school during those years after we married. We've married 67 years. We've been in the church since then.

DL: Who was the minister when you started out?

JS: Brother Haley was the minister when I first started church, then we've had several. I don't remember them all. We've had quite a few.

DL: Who's your minister now?

JS: Brother Billy Shuggart; he's been here eleven years.

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DL: Didn't part of this church, you talked about your father having some participation in making this church, like the building?

JS: No ma'am.

DL: So, the material came from an old school.

JS: A lot of it did, yeah.

DL: Did you use any of the material from the old church?

JS: No ma'am.

DL: How far away was the old church?

JS: Oh, it was about half-a-mile.

DL: What do you do today in the church? What is your role?

JS: I just listened today. Well, I took the offering.

DL: But don't you also teach the children?

JS: Yes ma'am but I don't have any right now.

DL: What is the age range that you keep in the nursery?

JS: Preschool.

DL: So you keep all children, like from babies up? Where do you draw the line?

03:34

JS: Oh, about four; they move up about that age.

We had ... the original church over there was an old Cypress school; and then when they built the new school building, they gave the old school to the church, and it stayed there for years, about 1922 until we moved over here in '51. And we had church in the old building from '51 to '52. We built a new church in '52. Then we tore the old building down and built the new Sunday school rooms back there.

DL: Then after the Sunday school rooms you built this church?

JS: No, this one was first, and we built on the back of it.

DL: Tell me about the baptismal. You were telling me about how it was painted.

04:43

JS: It was a college student that did that, and he came and painted it for us.

DL: How often do you have a baptism?

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JS: We had one last year, I believe, two, we had two last year.

DL: Is that just children, or do adults come?

JS: Well, one adult came by letter, I believe, and we had one or two ...

Rev. Shuggart: One adult and one child.

JS: Yeah, one adult and one child.

DL: Rev. Shuggart was telling us about how you got the speakers—about how he got the speakers?

JS: Yeah, I don't remember just how he got 'em.

Rev. Shuggart: Came out of a nightclub.

JS: Nightclub? Well, they do pretty good.

05:58

JS: We'll go to the back.

Murdock: So, the pulpit and all the pews, they've been here all this time?

JS: No ma'am, we put the pews in in 1970.

DL: What did you sit on in the old church?

JS: We had folding chairs buckled together. This is one Sunday school room. We use it more when we have dinners on the ground.

DL: How often do you have dinners on the ground?

JS: Some people say not regular enough [laughs]. 'Bout two, three times a year.

06:54

DL: What's the occasion for having dinner on the grounds?

JS: Well, Easter, Christmas—we have a Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner at the same time, mid-November, December. This is our kitchen. We have a couple of bathrooms.

Murdock: The ladies like to cook here or do they bring stuff already warmed up?

JS: They warm it when they get here, but they cook most of it at home. And that's a storage room. It's full of first one thing then another.

Murdock: Now this room?

JS: A Sunday school room. My wife teaches the smaller ones at children's church.

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DL: What age group does she teach?

07:54

JS: Oh, through ten, twelve; another young lady teaches the older ones. She has a room over here. We didn't have tables to fit the kids, so we bought some furniture to fit 'em. You can tell this is a young folks' room with the colors, but the young lady that teaches this class does a real good job. She really does; she's a sweet girl.

08:56

JS: The nursery's over here. I enjoy those little fellas. I just love kids.

DL: How did you get started doing this?

JS: I was helping my wife, and I got used to those kids, and when they moved up, I just kept doing it; been doing it quite a few years.

DL: They help you with the toys?

JS: Uh-hum. I tell 'em, they put me back here in my age group [laughter]. Well, I try to teach 'em, read 'em bible stories, the ones that's big enough to understand. I think it helps; a lot of 'em never had bible stories read to 'em. I just enjoy it.

DL: Tell me how nice it is, how it feels to be affiliated with the same church for basically all your life, and a little bit about the sense of community.

09:52

DL: You raised your own children in this church, didn't you?

JS: Yes ma'am, they grew up on the back pew back there.

DL: I imagine it gives you a sense of belonging to be in this church for your whole life.

JS: Yeah, I love this church, I sure do.

10:46

DL: Tell me how often you have a revival and who all comes.

JS: We usually have a revival, most of the time that is in June, and we have quite a few visitors come in.

DL: Who preaches at the revival? Is it your regular preacher, or do you have people come in?

JS: We have people come in.

DL: How do you select those people?

JS: We just like different ones, and we schedule them and they come. Most of the time, we have a three day revival.

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DL: Do you have it on the grounds or in the church?

JS: In the church.

DL: And that image came from one of the revivals?

JS: I don't remember the picture too much.

[discussion about the painting contributed by a visiting preacher and how it glows when the lights are dimmed].

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Betty Shields (Oakland Plantation)

Interviewed February 5, 2015 at Oakland Plantation by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:22;20

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is February 5, 2015. I am here with Mrs. Betty Shields and we are conducting this interview at Oakland Plantation at the North End tenant cabin and one of the reasons we've chosen this space is because Ms. Betty is going to be talking about canning and preserving of food but also because this is where her husband grew-up. So, Ms. Betty could you tell us a little bit about, you know, yourself and Mr. Elvin?

BS: Sure, Elvin and I both grew-up in this area. Elvin grew-up in this house. He and his family lived here from about 1954 till about 1962 and then they moved away to other areas in this... Cane River area.

RT: Okay then, so we thought it would be nice to have this take place in a place where he grew-up. So, Ms. Betty, we're gonna try and do this canning process from the very beginning. And, so of course the very first thing you're gonna need is what you're gonna can – either fruit or vegetables. Today, what are we working with?

BS: Today we're gonna be working with figs.

RT: Okay.

BS: These figs would have been available during the late summer months. The children would usually pick the fruit and put them in buckets, bring them in to the parents. The mother usually and the daughters would process the fruit. They would, you know, pick through the fruit and throw away the bad ones. Pull some of the bad stems off the figs and the smaller figs are the ones that I grew-up with, learning how to can from my parents and my siblings. They are called the little Brown Turkeys, I believe, from this area – native to this area.

RT: Okay.

BS: Right now in my current backyard, I have those big green, native LSU Gold Figs. They are about twice the size of a full Brown Turkey Figs that we grew-up with. But that's what I'm going to be working with today. We would have to cut those big, green LSU Gold Figs in about four, three or four pieces, for canning those because they are much larger than the Brown Turkeys. So, that's what I am doing here today. I cut the figs, put them in the pot and put sugar in and usually you'll use about two parts figs too one part sugar.

3:10

RT: Okay.

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BS: And a little water depending on how much liquid you want in the fig preserves. So what I've done is chosen about two cups of figs and I'm gonna use about one cup of sugar. Put it in this pot and just cook it until the liquid is just about as thick as you want it. (There is a pot on the stove that is being used for demonstration purposes). Until it's like a syrup. You'd cook that down on this wood stove so you know we're dealing with wood here? That's what we would have been using. And, that would have been a slow process.

RT: Yes. So, you're steadily having to feed the fire and get it to the right temperature.

BS: Absolutely, so we would have to lift this... one of the (unintelligible) here (lifts an eyelet) and put wood down in here to make the fire burn faster if necessary. Put this back on and continue to stir until it was as thick as needed. (BS places pot back on stove). Also, in the meantime, we have a pot of water boiling on the other eye on the stove so that we could sterilize the jars.

RT: Okay.

BS: Then the jars need to be very hot and sterilized and also the lids and the rims.

RT: Because?

BS: Because, food might spoil if you don't do that. So, what we do is when the water is really, really hot and hopefully boiling ... You would put these in this container with the water. (BS places container in pretend hot water)

Continue to stir this until you're ready. (BS switches to the pot with the figs). Once you have determined that this is ready, you would remove the jar from the water with something. These days we use something like tongs.

RT: Like tongs.

BS: I use usually because it's like... Back in the day we probably would have used a piece of wire – twisted wire – something heavy piece.

RT: Okay and wrap it around...

BS: Wrap it around the jar rim and pick it up but they weren't using this. (Picks up the tongs). But, what I would do here is pick it up and place it over here. (Removes jar from hot water and sets on the counter).

This is another device that is currently used for canning that we did not have back in the day. (BS picks up a round-shaped device).

RT: Right.

6:05

BS: It's called a funnel. I usually... Now I place this funnel over the jar lid.

RT: Okay.

BS: And then spoon the hot figs into the hot jar.

RT: And it's very important that the jar is hot when you put the figs in it?

BS: Absolutely.

RT: Okay.

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BS: One of the reasons why is because you want the jar sterilized and another reason is because the jar will seal better. The lid will seal better if the jar is very hot and the lid is very hot.

RT: Okay.

BS: So, I'm going to remove this and just show you that this is what we would have done. (BS removes the funnel from the jar). I'll also put the mat under here because we probably would have had a mat back then to sit this on. (BS places a mat on the counter and then places the jar on top of it).

And just continue putting the fruit in the jar.

RT: So, so far the basic ingredients are just fruit, water, and sugar?

BS: Sugar, that's it. And you can see how delicious that looks.

RT: Um-huh.

BS: I would taste just a (inaudible).

RT: I could taste it already on some biscuits (RT laughs loudly).

BS: So, now that I have the jar full, you don't want to fill it up to the top, very top. You have to leave a little space there at the top - about an inch to a half inch.

RT: And you're leaving that space for?

BS: So that the fruit won't bubble up perhaps, you know, and expand within the jar. (Unintelligible)

RT: Pop up, okay.

BS: You leave the lid... place it on the jar with the finger, something to hold that lid down. Secure the rim in place by twisting it until it's tight. (She places one finger on the center of the lid to hold it in place, then screws on the top at the same time). And you got to sort of make sure it's tight enough so it won't be... have too much air get into the jar.

RT: Well, let me ask you about something else on that step. I kind of... when I was young my grandmother would ... and I remember her making some kind of little wax something that went on... Do you know anything about that? Or like a wax seal or something?

BS: Yes.

RT: Okay.

BS: Briefly I did remember that happening because they didn't have the lids that seal.

RT: Okay.

9:05

BS: Right now, they have what they call the "self-sealing lids".

RT: Okay.

BS: And it has that little rim around the lid. I can show you one of these jars. By the way this is a large jar that we would have used for mostly vegetables like okra and tomatoes to feed the large families meals.

RT: Okay, so they came in all different sizes?

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BS: Different sizes. (Shows a close-up of the lid with the seal). Usually what we had back then... I don't remember us having these smaller half pint jars back then.

RT: Okay, I'm looking at your seal and everything so I see that the way the lip is made there took the place of the wax?

BS: Yes.

RT: Okay.

BS: That wax was very, very early, during the very early period.

RT: Don't be telling my age now (BS and RT both laugh out loud). Okay, so now you got it in the jars and everything, at this point it's good to pass out? Does it need to sit so long or?

BS: This will last on the shelf, pantry, whatever, until winter. Usually it's done, you know, the canning is done during late summer or anytime during the summer months when the fruit is ready.

RT: Okay.

BS: And we would eat these during the winter months with biscuits for breakfast and so delicious.

RT: Okay.

BS: Now days we would either put those on the shelf, pantry shelf, or sometimes people would just put those in the refrigerator if they didn't want to go through this process of boiling because.... I need to back track a little bit.

RT: Okay.

BS: What we would do here is once we have put this in here (Picks up the jar with the fruit inside) you want to get it ready to go on the pantry shelf. You put it back in this pot of boiling water. Fill your jars up, and this boiling water is going to serve another purpose.

RT: Okay.

BS: You place the sealed jars in the boiling water. You want the water to be up to the rim and then you place the lid on and that's gonna boil for about 10 minutes.

RT: With the glass?

BS: With the glass. Yes. Of course you don't want to put too many jars in there at one time.

RT: Right

BS: [You don't] want to have the jars touching.

RT: Yeah, cause that'll make them crack.

BS: So, you let that boil now for about 10 minutes, it's called a "bath". You give them a 10 minute bath in water. And if you think it's like gonna boil over or something, you can move the lid.

RT: Okay.

BS: And, just let it sit there for about 10 minutes in that hot water bath, boiling water bath. Then you remove it again with tongs or something to be safe. You don't want to burn yourself. Let it sit and cool down, then put it on the pantry shelf.

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RT: Okay and can you explain a little bit more about that bath part? (Laughs). What does it do cause I'm kind of lost there.

BS: Well, it does a few things. Actually, it sort of cooks the fruit a little more also and it helps to make that lid seal better too.

RT: Some tricks of the trade ugh? (laughs)

BS: Tricks of the trade yes. And this water process is very important with different types of vegetables. Like, sometimes you don't cook all of those vegetables. Like first it's peppers. Those are things that I do now personally. You would hot-pack them in a jar, then put your vinegar in. The peppers are not done. They're not cooked at that point.

RT: Right. They're raw.

BS: Then you would put the top on, seal them and put that in the water bath and then you would cook that and let it boil there for about 20 minutes – a little longer. You check your jars. You can tell when peppers are about cooked. They will turn from a light green to a dark green in the vinegar and everything is, you know, good to go. Now, of course you have your pickling spices in there and everything.

RT: Right. Okay, but for this, this seems so simple like I could do that. My goodness, oh my goodness.

BS: You could do this. It is... it's very simple.

RT: Okay but when you.... Okay so there is a distinction, as you were just pointing out, between the fruits and the vegetables. And when you say your pickling sauce... is this something that you make up according to the taste that you want?

BS: Absolutely. You sort of try it a few times with the vinegar. Usually, it's like one part vinegar and two parts water and maybe a tablespoon of pickling spices. You let that... put all that together and pour it in the jars with the pickles, not the pickles but the peppers.

RT: The peppers right.

BS: Or the cucumbers. You can use peppers or the cucumbers, same process and then you pack them in the hot jars and then you put them in the hot boiling water to cook the vegetables. One of the things also some people did back in the day, usually I don't do this process right now with these figs...

RT: Um-huh.

BS: I forgot to mention this earlier...

RT: That's okay.

BS: They would cook the figs in this pot for about 20 minutes until the figs were just getting a little tender, with the sugar and the water and they would remove the figs from this pot but they would leave the liquid in here and continue cooking that liquid until it got thick. (Points to the skillet-type pot on the stove that was used to prepare the figs).

Then they would put those figs in hot jars, just the figs without the liquid and once this got very thick, they would pour the liquid. It would be like a syrup, more like a syrup. Pour the syrup in the jars with the little figs and then seal it.

15:29

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RT: Oh, okay. So, just a couple of different ways to do it.

BS: A couple of different ways to do it.

RT: Was this something that was ugh... you said the females mostly did this. Was this something that was considered an exciting time or was it just a chore?

BS: Well, it was... it was fun.

RT: Okay.

BS: I thought it was fun. We all seemed to be enjoying ourselves during the process. We got to eat all the figs we wanted and I love figs (laughs). And, of course we knew that it was also a necessity because the family was very poor and anything that we could preserve for the winter months was very important to feed the family, you know, during the winter time when we didn't have gardens. When it was very cold and everything. So, it was very important to save or preserve food for those periods when you didn't have the things available – fresh.

RT: Because all of this refrigeration stuff now, we don't worry about it as much.

BS: Absolutely.

RT: And what do you think about that? I mean the thought that maybe in another generation or two, people won't can at all?

BS: Probably, they probably won't simply because it's a process. That we used, I say back in the day. We learned about it from our parents. Right now, not many parents are passing this on to their children or their grandchildren so they don't know anything about it. I know my grandchildren don't know anything about this. So, you know, I'm just as guilty as everybody else in passing it on (laughs).

RT: And you know (Laughs).

BS: Right, and I know. But my grandchildren do... you know they have observed me doing this so you know it's not like they don't really know anything about it. They do know that I do it but they are not going to go in and help me with it. You know they just ...

RT: Or try it on their own.

BS: Yeah, I don't think they're gonna actually try this on their own.

RT: Right.

BS: But it is... it's a dying process I believe.

RT: I would even say art cause you can do it different ways and so whatever your way is... Yeah.

BS: So true. Different ways to do it for different people.

RT: And you learned from your mother and aunts or?

18:03

BS: Mainly from my older sisters.

RT: Okay.

BS: Yes. They, you know, were the ones who had to help with the cooking and all of that stuff. And, we sort of took turns. And, I was the youngest child so I had a lot of older siblings to

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do this stuff and I would mainly just watch. And they would let me, you know, get up there and stir a little bit, you know to sort of teach me a little bit.

RT: Here and there huh?

BS: Yeah, but I picked up enough so that I'm able to now to do it all on my own and I'm glad I had that experience.

RT: Do you remember the first time you ever canned on your own?

BS: I do.

RT: And what did you can?

BS: (Laughs). Actually, it was huh... I pickled.

RT: Pickled?

BS: Yes, I pickled some cucumbers and that was many years ago. (Laughs). The first batch did not taste very good. (Both BS and RT laugh). It took me a little while to get the process just right.

RT: Yeah, and that's what I was expecting which is why I asked you that. It didn't come out perfect right? (Laughs).

BS: No not perfect but you know that just goes to show you that you can't give up on the first try. You have to keep trying just like anything else in life.

RT: Right.

BS: Just because you don't succeed the first time, you know, don't give up because it gets better.

RT: I'm glad you're saying that because as I sat there and watched you in that process I... I can do that. And, I'm sure when I get home and try it, it's not going to be looking so easy or taste as good I'm sure. Yeah, okay so one last thing I wanted to do cause now that you've taken us through the process, of course the next step would have been to wait on those hot biscuits or whatever which would have been served in here at the table. (Indicating a dining table located in the adjacent room). I'm just gonna pan around here because the kitchen which is what we're standing in right now is actually just right here next door to where the eating space is and so here we have the table where everything would have been served right here in the cabin so. Alright, I just kind of wanted to get that so people can get a feel of what's going on.

Well, I sure do want to thank you Ms. Betty for coming out today and one of the things I like to end the tapes with a lot of times is I give people an opportunity to kind of leave a message, if you will, for their descendants that may see this tape 50 to 100 years from now. What might you say? It could be anything you want to talk about. Something that we've talked about today or just anything. What type of message would you like to leave for them?

BS: I think it is very important to pass on to the younger generation the things that we experienced as children because it is very important for them to learn how to do some of these things. Although they probably don't need to do them, it's just a good thing for them to know how to do them. We did it out of necessity. (Phone rings and tape is pause)

Second part of interview

0:00 - 0:50

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BS: But now it's not a necessity but it's something that's part of our history and we need to preserve our history anyway we can. So, I hope that others will, you know, perhaps think about teaching their children or grandchildren this process and pass it on and anything else you learned while you were young, as a child. You know, pass those things on to the future generations so they'll know and they'll be able to pass it on to their children and grandchildren. That's how we're gonna keep our history going.

RT: Alright. Thank you again.

BS: You're welcome.

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Interviewee: Shirley Small-Rougeau (St. Maurice)

Interviewed August 27, 2015 at Natchitoches Genealogical Society by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:50:19

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: We are here at the genealogical library located in Natchitoches, LA. We are interviewing Ms. Shirley Small-Rougeau and she will be speaking with us about many different topics, So, first of all Ms. Shirley, can we begin by you talking a little bit about where you grew up and that community.

SR: Well I was born in Shreveport in Caddo Parish. My parents lived on the border of Natchitoches and Winn parishes. My grandfather and his family owned a lot of property in Winn Parish but part of it was in Natchitoches Parish. I lived there until I was 9 years-old and then I moved to Miami, FL and stayed there until I went to high school here in Louisiana. I attended school in Grant Parish because we had a situation that many people are not knowledgeable of where there was no high school for African American children in most localities. So, either you traveled to our side of the Saline Bayou into Natchitoches Parish to be picked up by a school bus OR a school bus from Grant Parish was willing to pick the children up who lived on that line between Winn and Natchitoches. So, when I returned from Florida, I went to school in Grant Parish and graduated from that school which was then known as ... Just the year before I got there Montgomery Colored High School.

The year that I arrived, they changed the name to the J. W. Gaines High School after a gentleman who worked with the state [school] board. So, that was my story until I left to go to Southern University and never returned to live. I left Southern and went to Indiana University and never, never came back here to live until 2004. But, in my time, I saw plenty and I always returned yearly to visit family or just to come here, In fact I came many times just to come to this genealogical library to confirm some of the things that I thought I knew but then found I didn't. I was able to confirm a lot of that I believed so now, I'm the current President of the Genealogical Association. We are trying to bring the African American story, enlarged and complete story to the library and to put it out to our community. Because my own perspective on it is that it has not been done. I mean you [Rolonda Teal] have done more actual history on the area concerning African Americans that I know of at this time.

RT: Thank you but I'm sure that you have a lot more in your head than I could ever put on paper and that's why we are speaking now. (laughter). So what was the name of that little community that you grew-up in?

SR: Well, it really didn't have a name so to speak. My father purchased a large plot of land and he sold out parcels to different relatives and friends and they called it Smallville, but it was part of what is known now as St. Maurice, LA which was a part of Natchitoches Parish on the

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Rigolet de Bon Dieu side of the Red River. So, my dad and his brother probably were looked upon as the first African American businessmen in the area because my dad did contracting with, a lot of people know the T. L. James Company, and so the directors of T.L. James were like ... They called my dad Bubba. "Well Bubba, I need you to help me with these roads and railroads." They hauled cross-ties and hauled pulp wood and so on. So my dad said, "Oh sure. It sounds like a good idea but where's my contract?" He [T.L. James Co. person] was amazed. I mean what contract? [My dad] says "No I don't work without a contract." So he was the first African American contractor with the T.L. James Co. and then he brought in his brother and so on and so on. Rolonda, while we were talking and doing the project on the T&P [railroad] station, that sort of jogged my memory of the gangs who worked from this area, from my little area. The area that's called Trichel and Bayou Bourbeau which we commonly called "Bayouboubie." Everybody knows it as "Bayouboubie" but Bayou Bourbeau was a plantation and so people were sharecroppers because this was after slavery and some of it probably happened before slavery, but anyway... Bayou Bourbeau and Bayouboubie" were places where there were many sharecroppers and prior to that - slaves.

5:37

But, there were African American families that owned and still own lots of land and one of those persons was Gus, Augustus Bolden who was married to a relative of mine and he had a huge tract of land. He gave 4 ½ acres to build a school which became a Rosenthal School after they got it started because prior to that there were three small African American schools in the three churches – Mt. Pilgrim had a school, Choctaw Island had a school, and Gilgal was going to start a school and so what they wanted to do was make one large school for the children from each of those areas – Erma, Luella, and Bayou Bourbeau. So, Augustus put this together and he worked with the Rosenthal, Julius Rosenthal to make a three-room school. So, people look up on that area as just sharecroppers and workers or what have you but there were some very prominent people in the area.

My great-great grandmother, Lucy Strong, an African American woman owned property, 80 acres right there on Bayou Bourbeau and there were other families that did as well. So, no one knows this history. You know, everybody knows about the Graysons. Indeed my great-great grandmother Lucy was the mother of George Grayson and the name is recognizable. It's not the George Graysons who own the barbeque restaurant but they were related. So, those kind of connections brought us from slavery and sharecropping to a prominent place in those communities. I wrote a little article about Gus and nobody knows Lucy until we do our family reunions and the story of Lucy Strong comes out. Lucy was from North Carolina and a lot of those persons who came here to work on those plantations ... Some of them were slaves and after the Emancipation Proclamation, some acquired land grants on their own and some were given land by their "relatives" who were the slave owners. (This was said somewhat sarcastically). Others earned enough money to purchase small plots of land. Now there is one story I really want to share with you, Rolonda.

RT: Well, I would love to hear it.

SR: You've heard of the Choctaw Island Baptist Church?

RT: Yes.

SR: When a research study was being done on these churches, someone was so amazed that, astounded that Choctaw Island was organized in 1862. And I said well, "Why is that such an amazing story? Slavery was still going on and indeed it was but African Americans have worshipped in brush arbors and hidden cribs and barns and whatever forever. So they didn't say

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that Choctaw Island was built or constructed in 1862. It said that it was *organized*. Those people formerly got together and worshipped in their own way. They were not one of the congregations that the slave owner allowed to worship and have a white minister lead the congregation. They did it on their own and some of the worship, I'm told I can't speak as if I'm an expert on that, but I was told that their worship was a mixture of African and African American traditions. They had their home-made drums and they did the rituals that they knew from their own land and then what they had *learned* from the westerners.

RT: And this was Choctaw Island Baptist Church?

SR: Yes, Choctaw Island Baptist Church.

10:10

RT: What do you know about that? Do you know anything about how it became called that? Was there a large group of Choctaw Indians?

SR: Well, I don't think so. I don't think that they were located in that area. Most of those people came from North Carolina, Mississippi, and somewhere in Alabama. There were large groups of Choctaw Indians and you've heard of the maroon communities?

RT: Of course.

SR: Yes well, a lot of them came to where they were in Louisiana and Natchez, MS via the maroon communities. One of the things that always puzzled me about my grandfather is that he clearly was somehow part Indian and I found that out by doing my DNA.

RT: And he was what, your grandfather? Through the DNA, you found out that your grandfather was what Indian?

SR: That I had that strain of, for political correctness, I don't know if they want to be called American Indian because they weren't Native Americans or Indians (SR leans forward towards the camera as she discussed this part). I just call them Indians. So they found this in my DNA having traced it all the way back to Siberia. I don't even get the connection but it was [inaudible]. Anyway, I would ask my grandfather was it in the family that he knew we were part Indian and he would say that his mother was. I have no idea what my great grandmother's maiden name was. I just know that she was a Purvis by marriage. She came from Mississippi and everybody talked about her. You know, how she looked like an Indian. She taught her sons and her daughters those practices. My grandfather was a basket weaver. He could skin and preserve animal hides and make chair bottoms. All the things that he learned from his mother which she said she learned from her people [inaudible]. I cannot verify any of this. I'm not one to put it out there as fact because I can't verify it.

RT: Right. But these are the stories that were told to you.

SR: (Nodding in agreement) Yes, these are the stories that were told by my grandmother to her sons and they told them to us.

RT: Okay.

SR: My grandfather was her oldest son and he was quite a storyteller. Actually, he was a minister and liked to tell Bible stories. Those Indian stories and Ethiopian stories which is another connection that they told us about in the family lore. That they had connections to those

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persons who came from Ethiopia and not necessarily as slaves. Now I don't know that but it was an interesting story.

So I don't know that there were any Choctaws around that ... You know it's like the Tiger Island story. Now this island that we called "The Island" which is behind the Gilgal Church, was not truly an island but Red River ran across the back of it and the railroad ran in front of it. So, it was isolated so we called it The Island. Because they were kind of behind the railroad and in front of the river and enclosed in that little box. So, the Choctaw were, the members of the tribe, were settled in and around that area. So I imagine that that [island name] may have come from that. I don't know any history that connects that church with the Choctaws.

RT: I've heard quite a bit about Gilgal and have interviewed a few people that grew up on the island. Did you use to visit there?

SR: I did. (Nodding in agreement)

RT: Can you tell us a little about what made that a special place? Or was it a special place?

SR: (Laughter) I was gonna say. To *us* it was not so special because it was ... Well, in truth, the Gus Bolden that I was telling you about ... You know how we have our caste system and ... Those people on The Island were sort of looked down upon because they were all most, before the Emancipation Proclamation, they were slaves. Then they became sharecroppers. Everybody worked on, I believe it was the Aries. The owners were the Aries. In fact, Gus Bolden purchased his 14 year-old bride, his first wife from Mr. Aries who was a slave owner. So, we didn't think that they were in the same ..

15:29

RT: League.

SR: Class. Yes, yes.

RT: Okay.

SR: One thing that I was able to determine. I cannot put my finger on any person in my family going back that was a slave. Now my Guin connection which was my grandmother's family was brought to Louisiana by a gentleman whose name was John Gwyn Burr. That was his middle name. So I suspect that they took that name. He spelled it Gwyn but my relatives spell it Guin. He was one of the owners of the St. Maurice Plantation which most people here know about because it was in Natchitoches Parish when it existed. When they established Winn Parish in 1851 or 52, whichever is correct, we hear different stories. It was the oldest plantation on the Red River and it was a very elegant place and that is where my grandfather Mr. Thomas Small, grew up. He was 12 when he went to work there as a carriage driver and all the products that came to the stores that were located in that area came by riverboat. So he would drive the carriage to the river and bring things back to the Tedsley Store. He worked for the Tedsley Store. So, it's a very interesting history that's never been told.

RT: Yes it is. You're absolutely right.

SR: Because it became Winn Parish in 1852, that closed that chapter for many people because it was never ... No longer of interest to the Natchitoches Parish segment. But, if you know anything about St. Maurice Lane.

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RT: Yes, yes

SR: St. Maurice Lane was the connection from that side of the [Red] River to this side of the river, Rigolet de Bon Dieu to Natchitoches. So St. Maurice Lane was the dirt road that led from the ferry or boat or steamship that brought them across the river. Then when it became Winn Parish that kind of died down and they (community residents) did their own trade back and forth from New Orleans or wherever the boats came from. That's how a lot of the folk settled in that area because they came from New Orleans slave markets, I guess, up the river to St. Maurice. My Gwyn connection came up on a riverboat called the James Madison. That's how they got from New Orleans to St. Maurice but they came from North Carolina to New Orleans. (This story was told with a sense of pride).

RT: Wow! That is an interesting history.

SR: Well, they say there were about 20 people on the boat of us. Of course that made a very extended family of relatives. They married and met some other people from the other island, Choctaw Island, Gilgal segment where the Strongs' had a plantation. So that kind of extended the community. Now they still exist, the Nash, and the Gwyns' and so on. But we were all related.

RT: I would like to hear you follow up on that at some point because you're saying, you know, that... you would be one of the few people who can't find evidence of slavery, per say, in your family lineage. So, I mean that's even different. How you got here, your ancestors got here and was able to stay here.

SR: I guess in some way those persons who came to St. Maurice might have been slaves.

RT: Okay.

SR: But, they were not designated as slaves. They came from North Car... They probably were slaves.

RT: Yeah.

SR: In North Carolina. I can't say that. But, when they got here, they were not enslaved. So, I can't put my finger on anybody except for maybe my grandmother Molly Purvis who ended up with 500 acres of land ... You know people looked upon her as a sharecropping master, mistress because people lived on her property and farmed for her. You know doing the same thing, paying her a part of whatever they earned with their crops and living in her little houses. (SR motions with her hand as though the houses were scattered on the landscape).

20:22

RT: Oh my goodness that's a very different twist from what we've heard.

SR: Well, I've got cousins right here in Natchitoches who will tell you, "Oh, yeah we lived on the Purvis Place when I was growing up." (This statement is said with pride). And the Purvis Place was my grandmother's place. The highway 477 which runs through the middle of St. Maurice is kind of hilly, up and down. There's a hill that's called the Molly Hill because it split the property.

RT: Okay.

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SR: Her son, James Allen Purvis, gave 10 acres of property to the church, one of the churches there for a school, a church and cemetery that still exist today. There's a plaque in the cemetery acknowledging the Purvis family for having donated that property. Of course the school has been long (This word was emphasized) gone. It was a one-room school. My cousin Essie Purvis was the first teacher at that school. One of the first.

RT: Okay. Very, very good history there. You know you were talking about the Native American connection and we know that in this area there actually was a lot of mixtures of cultures and all...

SR: Yes.

RT: So, I'm glad to hear you talk about that native connection but I also ... I've run across the Prudhomme name showing up in the black community. Do you know anything about that or is that something you're willing to talk about?

SR: Well, I'm no expert on it at all but I can tell you that my good friend and Sorah is a Prudhomme. Her mother, Hattie, is 97 years-old and Hattie will proudly tell you, "I'm Miss Hattie Prudhomme." I know of another family, they're the Smiths and Julia Prudhomme was their predecessor and she, [inaudible] had a succession which was filed in this courthouse. (SR points in the direction of the Natchitoches Parish Courthouse. When her family members came here to the library, it just so happened there was a gentleman here researching for a company that was looking for oil. You know the natural gas product.

RT: Um huh.

SR: And he knew all about how to research successions and land plats and all that. So, he helped them out over at the courthouse and they were so excited. They came back and told me that their grandmother had, their great-grandmother had a succession filed in the courthouse and she was Julia Prudhomme. There are some black Prudhommes still living here in Natchitoches. They may have different names like my friend. She's now a Hamilton and there's a Prudhomme who works in the public library.

RT: Okay, that's very good to know. Very good to know. Actually, that's one of people I want to interview to get that side of the story.

SR: Now Marquita Hamilton and now if she doesn't want her name mentioned then we can delete it.

RT: Right.

SR: But Marquita came and she was doing ancestral research on the Prudhommes and others and I think she may have a lot of information on the black Prudhommes.

RT: Very good. That's good to know.

SR: Now this is interesting as well. I think that ... you're familiar with the Pratt Bridge.

RT: Yes.

SR: Okay when you turn that corner there, 8 or 10 nice little houses sits there on the river.

RT: Right.

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SR: The other Prudhomme family who are Smiths owned part of that property that was right on the river. They were saying to us, and they were researching it, that they feel that those builders went over their [property] line. That was very lucrative ... great property on the river that the Prudhomme-Smiths never really realized was theirs until recently when they did their family research for a family reunion. So, I think there is a lot of that going on Rolonda but people are not aware and so why are we trying to get people in here? African American people. Because there is so much information that we don't know about ourselves that we could find because we (genealogical library) do have some good records as you know.

RT: Yes, as I know right. (Laughter) I have found quite a bit of good things in here. I also wanted to talk to you a little bit about ... You can call it healing, Hoo-Doo, Voodoo or anything like that. I bring it up because the more I research this area, evidence of it shows up. What were the attitudes at that time and what do you know about it?

25:30

SR: Well, I know quite a bit. First of all my grandmother Josephine Perry-Small, was a midwife and she worked for a doctor but she was OUR doctor. We never went to the doctor she worked for. She delivered almost all the babies in the area herself, as a midwife. Everybody in my family up to the last three who were born in a hospital, were delivered by my grandmother. She knew every herbal healing product or ointment whether it was sassafras or sandalwood. Whatever grew naturally in the environment, my grandmother knew about it. She would mix her potions and this was the healing side but I also knew that almost everyone that grew-up in my time, believed in Voodoo. They believed that a Voodoo doll could control things that happened to you. You know if someone wanted to put a "haunts" as we use to call it, on you. Then they could do so by putting pins or whatever into these dolls. They also had Voodoo dust. They also had ... you know about the rabbit's foot?

RT: Right

SR: It's for good luck. It wasn't ... They weren't all bad but usually people used those things to get to their enemies or to do something to them. I knew personally of two who lived right here in Natchitoches but we are not going to name names.

RT: Right

SR: But every weekend, ya know we lived out so you had to come to town (SR emphasized this word) to get your staples and then drive back to the country. One of the rituals that most of the people had when they came to town ... It was like your horoscope. You had to go to the Voodoo lady or to the man and find out if you are gonna have a good week or if anybody was trying to put a haunt on you. So, when people became ill, a lot of times if they thought they had enemies they would say, "Oh Rolonda put a haunts on me. Look at these lizards in my legs." Or they say "There's something growing in my chest" It was probably just the diseases that we know about today but they felt that someone had done something -put Voodoo on them or something like that. And this was common, so common.

RT: So, did who you visit... was it based on gender women went to women and men went to men.

SR: (Shaking her head no) No, No. Well, the lady, if you talk to anyone here in Natchitoches today – African American, they can tell you because she lived a very long time and she still has family. She was a property owner with quite a bit of property on the lake, Cane River Lake. And,

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they just went because she was the better known and probably had better stuff than the gentleman did but she had been there a very long time. So people went to her.

RT: So they still know her, that name? The older folks.

SR: Yes, oh yes. You drop that name anywhere and they'll say oh yes I know her. Because my grandmother was a herbalist and a midwife some people looked upon her as a Voodoo lady. Even some looked at her as a witch because one of the things about my grandmother is that she was very thin and wiry, very fair [skinned], and long stringy hair. So, she might have fit the image of a witch but she really was a very sweet lady. Everyone knew her as a sweet woman but, "Oh you can go to this lady and get cured." Cause she did have cures but they were natural, herbalist formulas that she put together herself – her teas and so forth.

RT: Did you ever hear any family lore about how she learned how to do that?

29:50

SR: I didn't. I never did because my grandmother was the product of a mulatto slave woman, I guess she might have been I don't know. Again, I can't connect her and a Caucasian man who was paroled here in Louisiana after the Civil War and his name was Alexander William Perry. He and his three brothers settled here in Louisiana and their grandfather who was a major (inaudible). His name was Major, he wasn't a major but he was a questionable character. He bought and transported slaves between Texas and Louisiana. So, this great-grandmother was my grandmother's mother had ... (Interview interrupted by SR's co-worker)

Recording 1

00:00

SR: So, anyway, Josephine, the daughter of Jay Lyon Sneed and Jane, perhaps, was the one who taught her what she knew about healing and herbal potions and so on. But, I don't know of any connection that she may have had with any other race that might have used that. Because her mother was a mulatto and she had three different sets of children as I was beginning to tell you. Each of them having resulted from a liaison with a Caucasian man. Have you heard of the Goodards or ... (Interview interrupted by SR's co-worker).

Recording 2

00:00

SR: So, the first child she had was George Goodard, which translate to Gordon and some people say Guidon because there were three different spellings of the same name. So, she had that one child with Alexander Anthony Gordon. Then there second child, James Bonier, people know the name around here very commonly around here. But, she had one son James with Ralph Bonier. Then when she connected with my great-grandfather Alexander William; they had 10 children that survived. This story really kind of ... is how I got started in genealogy. I was in the courthouse looking to set-up my mother's succession and in doing so I came across this document on my father's side of the family designating all of the people, these 10 children, talking about George and James. And, Rolonda, the top of my head blew off because my grandmother and her siblings had gone to the courthouse to establish a succession for their mother who died in 1902. Well, the document states that they told them that they could not inherit because they were the issue, the bastards of, this is in the document, the concubinage

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between a (inaudible) who was black and a Caucasian male. So, bastards cannot inherit. So, they turned it around ... (Interview interrupted by a library visitor).

Recording 3

00:00

SR: So, as a result of this inability to inherit because they were those bastards, they called my grandmother's uncle and aunts to inherit their sister's property. Because you know they were legitimate. So that's what happened. However, some of them did want the children to get their rightful inheritance so they tried to give back. But as in every family there's a little culprit so he kind of cheated the rest of children out of their mother's inheritance because Alexander William had gone to the courthouse and written up a document deeding all of his property because of course she could not have owned property at the time, to her – to Jane Sneed. So, he asked the Clerk of Court to hand carry this document to Jane because if anybody found it in the courthouse they would probably destroy it because Winn Parish at the time was notorious for destroying documents. They had three fires, you heard about that?

RT: Um huh.

SR: So, anyway he did, he had quite a bit of property and his grandfather had property (SR motions with her hand to indicate a large area) everywhere – Texas, Louisiana, Georgia; they came from Georgia, the Perrys. And so, years later when it was determined – documented and in the books- that this woman had owned this property and that there was still more ... Suddenly all of these documents started disappearing from the courthouse including this one but thank goodness I made several copies of it and sent it around to my family so that we do have copies.

RT: And how common is that because I'm finding the same thing to be true. That once certain types of documents start to surface, they disappear.

SR: Disappear. Well, an interesting thing happened right here (genealogy library). This man was a Small as I am but they were from Mansfield in De Soto Parish and they too were left a legacy with a large grant of land. The papers were originally filed here in the Natchitoches Courthouse and he went to the De Soto Courthouse. (Inaudible) the books and the pages and so on and so on. They told him to come here because they (De Soto Courthouse) didn't have them anymore or they don't know what happened to them. So, they came here. Strangely, they were not in our books either. (SR makes this statement as though it is a great mystery). So, he could not make a connection. He thought that someone had told him that it was noted in the book that ... No slaves own land or no landowning slaves. That it was noted there that this man had owned the land and had deeded it over to one of his children who later had a bunch of children and he was one of them but today he has not been able to prove anything because the documents disappeared.

RT: I'm sure that's common.

SR: I think it's rather common because we here have acquired a number of the books from the courthouse and some of them are complete and some of them are not. So, we can't say that... well, on the other hand people come here and instead of copying what they need, they'll take the whole book or the whole folder.

RT: Um huh.

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SR: We have family folders in our files and sometimes they just disappear. So, we know that people are lazy or they just don't want to pay for the copies. (SR shrugs shoulders as though bewildered). We don't know what the problem is but books and documents have disappeared from right here (genealogical library). I mean you don't know exactly who or why but it does happen. So, it could happen in the courthouses as well. It may not be maliciously done but it could be somebody researching and just doesn't want to do what they have to do to get it so they just take the whole thing right out of the book. Abscond with it.

RT: Oh. Just to fast forward a little bit, I know that you are very active in many of the African American activities and things that happen. Currently I am aware of the new black history parade that they just recently, for the very first time had, and then also some work here around the train depot and trying to make it more, I guess ... significant for the black community. So, could you just talk a little bit about each one of those? Just whatever thoughts you have about that.

5:05

SR: Well, yes. I'm excited and very happy with the results we've gotten for the parade and you were in our first ...

RT: Very first one.

SR: Well, they had had them before but there was an attempt several years back to have a black or African American Chamber of Commerce and the two Benjamin-Small sisters were very instrumental in getting that started so they use to have a parade but it just took ... Ya know like everything else, it just fizzled out. So, Councilwoman Sylvia Morrow and the Black Heritage Committee here in town, resurrected the parade. And the first one was successful but of course we did not parade downtown. I think we had one block downtown and the rest was in the African American community. Last year we were able to acquire, I think maybe four blocks of Front St. (SR makes this statement with a sense of pride) for the parade and we had about, I think it was 104 units in the parade.

RT: Wow!

SR: I can't be sure about that.

RT: Right.

SR: But it was very successful. Five bands and you know pioneers from the community and different businesses. It was very successful and we're just really happy with that. Now, when you bring up the depot, that just stretches my heart strings because we've been through so many different engagements, I like to call them, trying to resurrect the depot. You know we have worked with the city, Cane River National Heritage Area. You yourself (SR points towards RT) had a project with them which we completed – right? Worked with you on that.

RT: Right.

SR: We did it in May 2013. You submitted it and we're still waiting for some results. Now there has been about ... They're telling us about 396,00 dollars made available for stabilizing, cleaning-up, and doing some projects at the depot. Well, I've just made some enemies because I simply asked in a council meeting if the Public Works Department would just go over there clean up, cut the grass because citizens, private citizens have been going to the depot picking up trash. One lady and her husband picked up three huge garbage bags of trash – individually and he came with his own lawnmower and cut the lawn. If indeed the City is going to engage their Public

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Works Department to clean it up before the stabilization process and all that starts, why can't they do that now? Why can't they do it, ya know, to get the place in a condition that people will really notice it? That's one of the things. I mean they pass by the depot and "what's that?" because vines are growing out of the walls and the end dock door is wide open. The back windows are wide open. People have been sleeping in there. I'm sure doing a little of everything in there. A man even had his own mattress in the depot.

So, um, we're not giving up. Now, there is a question of whether an African American Museum (SR emphasizes the word museum) is feasible or impractical. And I've been working with Elvin Shields (SR points towards Betty Shields who had joined us an observer earlier) and Ed Creighton, and some other people who are promoting the idea of the African American Museum and I'll share a document with you that Mr. and Mrs. Shields put together. And in looking at it I must say from the perspective of the "City Fathers and Mothers" that it doesn't really seem practical because I made the point to the mayor that this place (genealogy library) runs totally on volunteer steam. We have never been funded by anyone and we have copies. We sell books. We have memberships and whatever we have to do in order to keep it running. But, we have a very dedicated group of volunteers, very small. I think the youngest one may be 65 [years-old] and the oldest one about 87 65 [years-old], which we're not gonna be here forever but we don't see any younger people coming up to become part of this. And look at ALL of this (SR looks around the library at the shelves of documents). Where's it going to go? It'll become another depot or some universities and other entities will swoop down and carry this all off and some of the documents, books, and what we acquired, we PAID for dearly. We didn't have a lot of money but we bought them. Nobody gave them to us although people do give us a lot of things.

10:18

But, I suggested that if we found a group of dedicated volunteers who could staff the museum and also railroad museum. We didn't want it to just be an African American Museum because it is about railroading. And so we wanted to do something similar to what they've done in Marshall, TX and other places and make it a part of railroad history because it's very significant to THIS town as a railroad depot. So, we wanted to embrace that as well. So, we're not going to give up but I'm not sure we're going to win either. But, we would like very much to see it remain and be rehabilitated for whatever reason. But, certainly it is in the black community and we want it to be the significant part of the African American community that it is and was. So that's my latest information on the depot. We have a small group of people working. I mean there are other groups. I don't want to say that there are not others who are interested but I think that our job, our quest now is to get our African American community engaged in wanting to see that depot saved. And we want everybody to come. We're not asking just for African Americans to work with us. We want anyone who has interest and a desire to see that depot saved to come forth and some have. Some have already from other communities.

RT: At least getting some support, that's important. Is there anything I have not covered that you think you'd like to say something about?

SR: Well, ya know we are always tracking history or her story, I like to say, because some of the stories that are being told are about women and I think that there are women in this community and certainly A. R. Blount. His story has never been really told and I think that a lot of people believe that the school that was started at Ashbury United Methodist Church was the first black school or African American school. But, indeed A.R. Blount started in the First Baptist Church. It was located on Second Street, the African American First Baptist. He had a Baptiste, if you look at the original document, they talk about the Baptiste School. It was a year prior to

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Ashbury.

RT: And where was that located, do you know?

SR: Yes, it was where the current Summer Tree Apartments is located. Most people don't know this, there is a Blount Street. I think it's one block long (SR motions with her hands to indicate a short length) in the area. The church was there. The school was there. And, as is the case in many African American schools and churches, it just suddenly burned. But, they had wood heaters so that might have been the reason but the church burned and the school did as well. And then the two churches that came out of that First Baptist... First Baptist Amulet and First Baptist North Street are still contending which was first. Now we have ALL the documents of the court suit that was brought by the two groups out of the First Baptist on Second Street, African American First Baptist.

RT: Okay and you have those records so if anyone kind of wanted to go into that this would be the place to come.

SR: Yes absolutely. And, there's so much more that I believe that the African American community NEEDS to know about that's documented right here in legal documents, not lore, not hear-say but it's legal documents that are there.

RT: One last thing. I know what I wanted to ask you about and that is that Roque House that's down on the [Cane] river. How familiar are you with that history or ... not that you have to go into details about it but what do you see its role as being for the African American community and for Natchitoches?

SR: Well, Rolonda I personally feel that that house, as you've indicated before, should be the Pacale House.

15:09

RT: Um huh.

SR: You know we talk about some of the African-oriented buildings that exist here, Now, this man, as far as I know was an African American, and he built that house. The black, African American slash community ought to be up in arms to claim that house for its rightful place in the community. Yes, it's owned by whomever it's owned by now and Mr. Roque did own it at some point but when we go back to Prudhomme-Roquier or the Lemee, other people owned it after them but it kept the names of the original owners or builders. Why not this house? You know I think... I like the location on the riverbank. I want it to be there where everybody can see it. But, the real story needs to be told. It's on the plaque (There is a plaque in front of the building that discusses Pacale) but it's not as significant as if the house was called after its original builder, who was Pacale. So, we have not begun to look at that deeply but I think that's one of the things we do need to look at. You know, it's just like the Badin-Roque House or any other home that was built by someone, it carries their name – the original builder or owner. So that too should be looked into because we do have a significant history here but no one knows our story. *Our story*. His story, her story, our story. We need to somehow get people to recognize and celebrate the history of the African Americans in THIS community, this parish because it's parish-wide. There's stories all over the parish that have never been told. So we need to tell *our* story.

RT: Thank you for telling your story.

SR: Some of it anyway (SR smiles)

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RT: Yes, some of it, pieces of it. Thank you.

SR: You're very welcome.

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Interviewee: Mrs. Ginny Tobin (Cloutierville, Typo Plantation)

**Interviewed November 6, 2014 at Natchitoches Genealogical Library (Old Courthouse,
Second at Church Sts., Natchitoches, LA), by Dayna Bowker Lee**

**Time of interview: 01:12:12
Transcribed 2/20/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: I'm talking to Ginny Tobin. Today is November 6, 2014, in Natchitoches, LA. Ms. Ginny, could you tell me a little bit about your personal history, your family, where you're from, where you grew up?

GT: My family, my maiden name is Williams, and my family was from DeSoto Parish.

DL: Okay.

GT: My mother's family was from DeSoto and Natchitoches.

DL: Okay.

GT: They were Anders, Martins and Mims ... I grew up in Shreveport, you could say. We lived here when I was in the third or fourth grade. Then we moved to Shreveport and that's where I really grew up. I attended Byrd High School, and the Louisiana Avenue Grammar School, which is now part of the medical school.

DL: Right

GT: ... and I had two brothers and one sister—just have the one sister now.

DL: And what were your parents' names?

GT: My daddy was Jessie Grady Williams, and my mother was Ima Ruth Anders.

DL: And they were both from DeSoto Parish?

GT: No, uh, yeah, well, in a way. Yeah, mother grew up in Pleasant Hill.

DL: Okay.

GT: ... and daddy in Mansfield.

DL: Oh, okay. What brought them to Natchitoches for that year and half?

GT: He was transferred here for a job, he worked here for a year, then he was transferred to Shreveport in 1939, I think it was, we just stayed there.

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DL: How did you get to Natchitoches?

GT: I married a Natchitoches boy. He grew up here, and when he retired, his mother was living with us at that time, and she wanted to come back to Natchitoches, and he really did, too, so we came back, and we found a great big house down in Cloutierville, and that's where we lived.

DL: When you lived in Cloutierville, what year was that?

GT: Uh, '69.

DL: Ok. What was Cloutierville like then?

GT: Cloutierville was a real nice little village then. There were a lot of kids there, mostly teenagers actually. We had a really good club for the kids at church, and we had a little league park—we built it—I didn't, we didn't, but the community did, and the men played softball there, the kids played there. It was just really great, you know. A lot of activities for the kids, not like now. It's mostly retired people, or older people, hardly any kids there anymore. They had three grocery stores at that time.

DL: My goodness!

03:05

GT: Yeah, they had a garage, two garages actually, well three because Mr. Poché had one. Uh, what else?

DL: Did they have active cotton gins at that time?

GT: No, no.

DL: They had already closed?

GT: Yeah

DL: And what about Carnahan's store?

GT: It was one of the stores.

DL: And wasn't there another little store, kind of to the left of Carnahan's?

03:32

GT: Mr. Livingston's little store. Then ... actually we had four: Mr. Livingston's, Carnahan's, Spillman's, and Masson's, and the one on the highway. So, actually that was four stores they had, and of course, the post office was in town at that time until they built the new one on the highway.

DL: ... and then there was that little bank building, was that open at that time?

GT: No, well, it was but it was a bar [laughs], called Poor Boy's Bar.

DL: [laughs] How funny! So you came in at the tail end of the agricultural, what would be

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the high point of the agricultural area.

GT: Yeah.

DL: What did your husband do for a living?

GT: My husband was in the Air Force for 23 years, and then retired and came back here and he worked for Daray Motor Company for another 20 years.

DL: Your mother-in-law, she wanted to come back here as well? Was she from here?

GT: Miss Tobin was from Negreet, but they lived here all their married life.

04:42

DL: Okay.

GT: So you can say she was from here. Mr. Tobin was born at Kisatchie but they moved here when he was young.

DL: Okay.

GT: And uh, Ted's older brother married one of the, what was her name? Anyway they owned Typo Plantation. His younger brother worked for the post office for years until he moved to Texas.

DL: Now, you wrote a history of the church at Cloutierville? Is that right?

GT: Yeah, yeah.

DL: St. John the Baptist? Can you tell me a little bit about the history of that church?

GT: You want to see the booklet?

DL: Well, I do want to see the booklet, but I want you to tell me a little bit of what you know about it.

GT: Well, I know that Alexis Cloutier built it because he wanted to divide the parish, everybody knows that, and it didn't come to be. So he built the church, and he built the place for the priest to live, and he donated land for the cemetery, which a lot of people down there don't believe, but he did.

DL: Oh, really [laughs].

05:52

GT: And then, of course, when it was rejected, he sold the town, and reserved two lots, I think it was, for himself, one on the front, one on the back, and moved on down the river where he was living when he died.

DL: And where was that exactly?

GT: They called it Les Ecores, or however you pronounce it, it was down close to Monnette's Ferry, I guess, somewhere down in there.

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DL: Okay.

GT: Because they said it was below Cloutierville, but I don't know exactly where it was, and of course, he's buried up there in the cemetery at Derry because that's where his wife and son are buried.

DL: Was that Shallow Lake?

GT: Uh-huh.

DL: Which is no longer there—I did go out there, oh when was that? I was still here, so 2007 maybe, just before I left and there were a few, you could see the remnants of a few above-ground vaults.

GT: Well, there were only two vaults there. They were Derbannes, I think, and the iron crosses are gone, and I think, somebody told me there was a mass grave there. If there is or not, I don't know, but there is one in Cloutierville.

07:09

DL: Is that right? Is that from an epidemic?

GT: From the yellow fever.

DL: Alright, that would make sense, probably mid-nineteenth century maybe?

GT: I think it was around 1853, 1854.

DL: That's when the really, really bad yellow fever epidemic hit Louisiana.

GT: Cloutierville was kind of isolated at that time, nobody in, nobody out, and they didn't know what caused yellow fever, so as soon as they died, they just buried them, I guess, you know [laughs], everybody went in the same grave.

DL: Right. Well, I'm sure people were dying in droves; it was probably hard to keep up.

GT: Oh yeah, a lot of them died, yeah.

DL: At the same time ...

GT: I think the bishop, Father Martin, well, I guess he was bishop by then, wrote that Cloutierville had lost half of its population.

DL: Wow, really? That's a lot of people.

GT: Yeah, that's a lot of people.

08:09

DL: Well, when you moved there, about how many people were living there? You said that population was real diverse at that time in terms of age.

GT: Well, I don't know, I can't, I can't even guess.

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DL: But it was fairly well populated?

GT: Oh yeah, yeah, and they had one or two houses back behind there, down the little road where the school is. They had one or two over where they called Sugar Town.

DL: Now, where is that?

GT: That's over, the road going out into the hills, just before you make that middle curve there, there was a little settlement in there. Now, I think there was one house there when we moved there, but there had been several houses in there.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Like tenement houses or something.

DL: Uh- huh.

GT: And I think Mr. McCoy owned that.

DL: Oh, okay.

09:03

GT: The Monettes lived out there, and she said that was the best thing that had ever happened to them, when he tore that place down, you might say, leveled all the houses, and they had to move, and so, you know, they moved up on the highway, and she said, "That was the best thing that ever happened to us."

DL: Is that right? I know a lot of people see that as the disintegration of a lot of those communities. You know, it has its good points and bad points, but a lot of the folks you know, that I've talked to downriver have said that was when all our communities just splintered, and they kind of look at that as a nadir of culture down on the river.

GT: Huh, huh, well, you can talk to Cecile I think, Cecile Monette.

DL: Okay.

GT: I think you have her on your list too. She'd be a good interview.

DL: I'll make sure, because I don't think we've ever talked to her before.

GT: No, you know T-Frère, you've heard of T-Frère, all that?

DL: I know him, and I know who she is but I don't know her. I mean I don't know her well.

GT: Uh-huh, because I don't think she went to any of those meetings that T-Frère went to, you know.

10:23

DL: Oh, I'm sure not. Well was anybody, I mean was French still, if not commonly, was it still spoken?

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GT: Some of them spoke it but not in public, and Dr. Navarre I think his name was, he was at the School for Arts, Math, and Sciences, but I think Ricky Harrington called me to get some of those people together who spoke French and I went to each one of them who I thought could speak French, and most of them said, “No, no, I don’t speak French.”

DL: Is that right?

GT: So we had a small gathering in the church, and I guess word kind of got around, and uh, the next time we had a meeting, and he was going to video tape them, we had a lot. Some who said “I can’t speak French” came.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Because when they were growing up, it was a stigma, they weren’t supposed to speak it, you know.

DL: Of course.

GT: At that time, there were quite a few down there who spoke French.

DL: Is that right? Because T-Frère was the only one I knew, and then Ms. oh gosh, I’ve forgotten her name, she’s still living too—there’s another lady, but I’m drawing a blank on it right now. But there’s another lady that speaks French down in there.

GT: I imagine there’s several of them to speak French down there.

DL: Sure, probably so. Dustin’s been having those, Dustin Fuqua, at the park, has been having those French round tables that’ve been real popular.

GT: I’ve been to one or two of those.

DL: That’s a good thing to do, because it does bring people out and kind of reminds them of ...

12:00

GT: And I’ve told him about those interviews, and I think they’re up in the, [pause], I don’t know where they really are at Northwestern, but they’re up there somewhere. In the library, I guess.

DL: When were they done?

GT: Where?

DL: When, about?

GT: The ‘90s.

DL: The 90s? Okay. A lot of the things that get, as you well know, get archived, get archived forever [laughs].

GT: Get lost! [laughs] Yeah, I know.

DL: [laughs] Unfortunately. I know we’re all bad about that too, personal collections and

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things like that have a tendency to get stuck under the bed. I'll try to make sure we at least try to find where those are.

GT: And I told Dustin about it, too. I told him we did not know really where they were, in the Folklife Center, or the library, I really don't know.

11:52

DL: Okay. Well, we'll try and pinpoint exactly where they really are. Well, when you came to Cloutierville, was the little Derry chapel still there?

GT: No.

DL: It had already been torn down?

GT: It had already been torn down.

DL: And was Mr. Mat Hertzog still alive? I can't remember when he passed.

GT: I don't, [pause] yeah, I think he was because Chris Scruggs was working for him up there at the store.

DL: Chris Scruggs?

GT: Uh-huh.

DL: Was that a man or a woman?

GT: I gave Dustin her name too.

DL: Okay, good. And that was still—and I guess still is—a functioning agricultural concern? They say that Mr. Mat used to put up a statue of Saint Isadore?

13:41

GT: He had a gate there, and I don't know what happened to it. Somebody stole, I think, stole the statue.

DL: Is that right?

GT: It was there when we moved to Cloutierville, and also the little church that was right in the corner, on the river

DL: St. James?

GT: It was there when we moved there. Of course it's gone now.

DL: Right. Actually I found a picture of that in the Louisiana State Archives. It was a little bit different. It was from the early '30s, and the steeple in the front was, I can't remember if it was recessed, or offset, and then in the picture, the only picture I've only seen of it right before it was torn down, B. A. Cohen had taken a picture and the steeple was either inside or outside. It had reversed one way or the other, like they had either built around it, or pulled the front back, but it was obviously the same church.

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GT: The same church, because it was in that little area right there when you go around that curve.

DL: Uh-huh. I heard that somebody came around the corner and knocked it off its piers.

GT: Oh, I didn't know that.

DL: I can't remember who it was, several people told me about it, so I feel like it must be true, but someone took the curve too fast, and hit the church, and of course it had been abandoned for years, and knocked it off its piers.

GT: So that's why they tore it down?

DL: Uh-huh, that's what happened to it.

GT: I didn't know what happened, or why they did it.

15:06

DL: Were the two schools, the Catholic, what was it, St. Joseph and St. Mary, at Cloutierville, were they still ...

GT: They were already closed when we moved here.

DL: Both of them? Is that right?

GT: My daughter-in-law, Sharon Earhart, was in the last group to go to school there, and then they transferred to the public school.

DL: Is that right? About what year was that?

GT: In the '50s sometime.

DL: Oh, okay.

GT: No, wait a minute [pause], she was born in the '50s, so it had to be in the '60s, but I don't know the exact date, and I think that the school for the black children was open a year or two later than the white school.

DL: Now, that was, which one was which, St. Joseph's?

GT: St. Mary's was the white school, and St. Joseph's was the colored kids.

DL: Okay, so it wasn't separated by gender it was separated by race.

GT: Right.

DL: How interesting. Well, when you came, that would have been right after Civil Rights, and so there was not that, I had always heard that they had separated the congregation by color in the church, in the pews, in the seating.

GT: Not when we were there.

DL: Not when you were there.

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16:23

GT: Not when we were there, but our friends down there said that they had either to sit on the side, they had, the middle door of course, the big middle door, then on each side they had a door. They said they had to go through the side doors and sit on the side, and when they had the little picture shows down there in the hall, they had to sit up in the balcony.

DL: Is that right? I didn't realize there was a balcony.

GT: Yeah, well you don't know, the hall is not there anymore

DL: Okay.

GT: The old hall that Father Becker built back in the '50s.

DL: Oh, Father Becker, he was quite infamous, from what I've heard. I've heard lots of Father Becker stories. He must have been quite, quite the character.

17:06

GT: Well, from what I understand he couldn't be friends with two families at the same time, you know, two particular families, I'm not going to say who [laughs], and if he was friends with one, the other wouldn't, you know, and vice versa, and I understand that he had to leave because the people got a petition for some reason to get him out of town, and he wasn't allowed to say his last mass inside the church. They locked the church and he could not get in, and he said it on the steps out front.

DL: Wow.

GT: I was told that, and the lady said she was there.

DL: I believe it. I had heard he had got into an altercation at one of the, uh, he had part interest in one of the gins, and he had gotten into an altercation with someone.

GT: He may. Now they say Father Becker and Sam La Caze built the gin, but there were two men in Alexandria who had really the money into the gin, they owned it really. Father Becker might have had a share or two, and Sam La Caze too, but these two men owned the majority of the stock, and Father Becker ran it for them, is what happened. Now, he could have gotten into, I don't know, because he was well known for that, from what I understand.

DL: Well, that was just one of the many stories that I hear—that shortly before he was basically asked to leave, so to speak, that he had gotten, and I can't remember who it was that he had gotten into the argument with, but he had gotten into an argument with somebody, and it turned into fisticuffs in public.

GT: I've never heard that story.

DL: That may not be true, but that's what I had heard, and then shortly after, he was asked to leave, and the fact that he rode a motorcycle [laugh].

GT: He came into town on a motorcycle.

DL: It was quite scandalous [laughs].

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GT: Yeah, but he did a lot for that town, you know. He had the road paved, I think he put in, he made sure that they had sidewalks. He, uh, I don't know, I guess he built that parish hall, and had movies every Saturday for 'em. He, what else did he do? I don't know—he just, from what I understand, he did a lot for them, but he was so controversial that ...

DL: And a little bit contentious, from what I understand.

GT: Well, those people down there, he's not the only one they've been to the bishop about [laughs]. Don't you tell anybody I said that!

DL: That's funny. Well, they've been there forever, you know what I mean. It's the same families.

GT: He built that big parish hall for St. Joseph's School. He built that you know, and that's what they use for the parish hall today, the big building, and of course, they've renovated those smaller classrooms too now, I understand.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Yeah, and they use those, I don't know what for, but during the fair or something, I guess. So, Father Becker, from what I've been told, did a lot for that town, but his personality just didn't always jive with everybody.

DL: Well, you go into a small southern town and people are very set about how they want things done.

GT: Yeah, absolutely.

DL: And it's hard to bring change, and especially when you bring it with a cudgel.

GT: [laughs] Yeah, true.

20:50

DL: So, none of the gins were functioning when you moved there? And, I guess, wasn't Cloutierville like a river port on Red River?

GT: It was in the early days.

DL: In the early days, and then the river, that must have changed when the river shifted, jumped bank back in the 1830s.

GT: Sure did, and especially when they dammed up Cane River, see?

DL: That's true too, and that would've been, what, in the '30s, '40s?

21:19

GT: Somewhere I read that in one of the New Orleans newspapers, and I think it was in the '30s. They dammed it on both ends, you know., so that, Cane River down there always had water in it; it was never dry, but I'm sure it was not what it had been in the early days.

DL: Well, I know they had, I heard that they had river transportation into the 1930s or '40s.

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Well, it must've been when they dammed the river, whenever they dammed the river. And what was the purpose behind that?

GT: I think to keep this river up here in town, have water here, because there were times when they couldn't bring those boats up into Natchitoches, it would be too dry, not enough water in the river to float the boats, but I think that's why they did it, and now they're trying also to do something about it, to keep water in the river, because you know how dry it went two or three years ago.

DL: Yeah, when I was up here, it was that summer that was so relentlessly hot, I can't remember, was it two summers or three summers ago?

GT: It's been about three summers ago.

DL: It was so, so hot.

GT: No rain.

DL: No rain, and it was about 108 degrees when I got here, and I got out of the car, and I had gone over the river, and it was like beach front property [laughs].

GT: Yes, yes, it was [laughs]. Our dock, the dock was out of water, and I'd say about ten feet out from the dock was out of water, it was just dry.

DL: When did y'all move into town?

GT: 2000.

DL: Okay.

GT: Ted had leukemia, and we found out in 2000 that he had leukemia and he had to go to the hospital almost every day for blood work and all that, and it was more convenient, and when he passed away, he didn't want me to go back down there by myself. He said, "You'd be better off up here," so I stayed.

DL: Well it's a long drive. I mean, when we were living on Cane River at Isle Brevelle, it was a 25-minute drive every morning when I drove to the university, and it's not much if you're not facing traffic, but it goes fast.

GT: It does, it goes fast. He never minded it. He said, "I can get to town before those across the river can get across the river, from one side to the other."

DL: That's true, because the traffic has gotten very difficult with those two, as many people now living here, with those two little bridges.

GT: And every kid over 16 has a car, seems like, you know. Around 3:30 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon, until 6 o'clock, it's hard to get anywhere.

24:35

DL: It is. Well, how long ... you lived in Cloutierville from 1969 to about 2000? So tell me just as you experienced it, what changes you actually saw take place in Cloutierville.

GT: Well, for instance, as far as the farmers were concerned, they gave up the farming, and

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went to cattle.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Yeah, most of them did, anyway, and now they're back to the farming, but all the young people left because they had nowhere, you know, no jobs, they had to go somewhere and make a living, so they left. Uh [pause], I don't know.

DL: I guess there was a general diminishing of businesses, and the variety of, well restaurants and gas stations, and everything.

25:30

GT: Well, people were working here [Natchitoches] or Alexandria, Pineville, you know, and they would do their grocery shopping, or their shopping in those towns, and even go to Shreveport, you know, to do their shopping and all. And the little grocery stores, they, I'm sure they made a living, but people didn't depend upon them like they had before. It was sort of, if I don't have it, I can get it here in an emergency, you know, but they didn't do their grocery shopping, like for a week or so, in town, in Cloutierville, and I would say that was a big change, too.

DL: I bet.

GT: Yeah. I don't know.

26:21

DL: And people went from, when you moved there and they were farming, were they farming largely cotton?

GT: And soybeans.

DL: And soybeans? Soybeans seem to have come in, I guess, in like the '60s, starting to gain a lot of popularity?

GT: And then they started with the cattle, and then, several of them had the crawfish, you know, the Motts and the Carnahans, had crawfish.

26:47

DL: What about the people from the hills? Did they, like the Kisatchie area, the little communities up there, did they still come into Cloutierville a lot when you first lived there, to shop?

GT: They would come into the stores, but they had their own churches, you know, so they didn't come in for church, and of course they were all related, so you know, [laughs] they'd come in for that. Yeah, I'd say they did.

DL: And kind of like Cloutierville, I imagine there were certain core families that were up in the hills like that. I know the Kerrys are one.

GT: And the Verchers.

DL: Verchers?

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GT: The Galliens, and let's see, who else?

DL: There were a bunch of the Bennetts?

GT: There was a big family of Bennetts ... Carnahans.

DL: There were a number of Carnahans up around Sang Pour Sang.

27:50

GT: Oh yeah, Anna Mae, and all those. Now what's happened to Anna Mae's little cabin?

DL: Well, that was Jacquite's, they called it Jacquite's cabin, the little Apalachee cabin. I actually heard from her not too awfully long ago, the daughter, uh, trying to think of her name. She emailed me. I still have a Northwestern account because I serve on committees, so I got a random email from her, saying both her parents were gone. I knew her brother had died—I think her brother died before her mother did, maybe. She was hoping she could do something with it but she was going to have to clear it with the rest of the family, and she wasn't sure if Northwestern wanted it, or whatever. Of course I had to disabuse her of that notion.

GT: She called me and asked for a phone number, and said she wanted to do something about the cabin, but I didn't know if she ever did.

DL: She emailed me and I copied Pete on my response because I thought he would have more information than I would, but I said I know Northwestern didn't have the money to move it but they might like to have it; but with budgets being the way they are for education, there's just no money for that stuff.

GT: Mr. Bennett wanted it, you know.

DL: Did he, Gilmer?

GT: Yeah, he wanted it, and Anna Mae told me that, she said he wants this cabin so bad, and I'm not going to give it to him. Where would he put it?

29:30

DL: Where would he put it? Well, he would take it out of context, and he's in real bad health now, both he and his wife. I keep up with them. We became pretty close when I was working on that Apalachee project. I talked to them as a matter of fact two weeks ago, and she was getting ready to go in for surgery, like knee surgery or something like that and he is not doing well. He has some sort of congestive heart thing; he has to go have his chest drained about every two weeks. He's bedridden, I mean not bedridden, but he's horizontal a great deal of the time because it takes the pressure off his chest. So, they're not in very good health, and they don't have any place to put it. Pete actually came up with a good idea, he told me to tell her to contact the Rural Life Museum, and I thought that was a really good idea, so, I put her in touch. I don't know if she ever contacted them, but I gave her the contact information, because that ... you know, there were a lot of stories, not just he but other members of that extended community, told me about people hunting them down to get that land because they didn't own it on paper. So prior to Kisatchie and the railroad coming through, and during that time period, from like the late 1800s to the, say, 1920s I think there was a lot of persecution from families that lived up there that wanted them off the land because they really didn't, I mean after the Chopins, they were actually kind of squatting, I guess you would say, on Chopin land, and it got sold through

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the years, but they were still there, and I think it became very uncomfortable, and the community fragmented. People left in the dark of night. It's kind of an interesting story. They were really the last of the Indian people around here, to be settled here as a group.

GT: Well, and a lot of those are gone now, too.

31:50

DL: Well, I went up to Gorum. I was doing the iron cross survey, and I went up to Gorum and looked at that little cemetery up there, and they used to have so many iron crosses, I mean, just everywhere, it was just like a field of iron crosses, and beautiful, the variety, you know, and by the time I got up there to document them, there was hardly anything. I mean, there were some that were left, but they were real plain. They were in people's yards, decorative items, but the cemetery in Cloutierville still has a good number of iron crosses.

GT: Yeah, oh yeah.

32:39

DL: And then, did the ones from Shallow Lake, I know some of the ended up at Melrose, but I'm trying to think if it was at Kate Chopin or it was at the church where I went in. Does the church have the two pretty statuary-type, they're figures, but they look like they were on altars or something, they're angels I believe?

GT: Those angels that were on the altar came from the chapel up at Derry, I understand.

DL: Is that right? I didn't realize that.

GT: That's what I was told, anyway.

DL: And weren't they donated by parts of the Cloutier family, or the Hertzog family?

GT: From Magnolia.

DL: The Hertzogs?

GT: The Hertzogs or Lecomtes.

DL: Okay, the Lecomtes, one or the other. I did photograph those, but they had a lot of the ... they had a number of the Shallow Lake crosses there.

33:30

GT: All those [iron crosses] from Shallow Lake, at one time, were in the Roque House.

DL: Is that right?

GT: And then after that, I think Carolyn Harrington had them for a while, and now who knows where they are now. I don't know what they did with them.

DL: I don't know either.

GT: I don't know if whether the state museum took 'em.

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DL: I don't know but I can find out. Yeah, let me make myself a note to get in touch with Karen Leatham at the state museum. [Twelve iron crosses from the Shallow Lake cemetery are now held in the CARI collections].

GT: Yeah, they were on display down there at the Roque House, and then Carolyn said she had them. I think Bobby DeBlieux or somebody asked her to take 'em.

DL: I think Bobby was the one who actually had 'em.

GT: Uh-huh, he was.

DL: What ever happened to his house?

GT: They're remodeling it.

DL: Who bought it?

GT: His daughters have it.

DL: Oh, they kept it, okay.

GT: At least one of them, and they have the front porch back up now. They didn't have for the longest time.

DL: Did it fall off, or were remodeling it.

GT: I don't know if it had termites or what, but they took it off, and they've replaced it. I don't know what they've done on the inside, and I don't know what they did with all his papers and stuff.

DL: All his papers and books, my goodness, he had treasures.

GT: He had a whole lot of stuff he wasn't supposed to have [laughs].

DL: He did indeed. He had a lot of documents he wasn't supposed to have [laughs].

GT: And a lot of 'em ended up down in New Orleans.

DL: And Baton Rouge [laughs], I know, I know. It was funny when I was working on my thesis and I would come in to the courthouse, the clerk's office, he'd be in there working, he always had like a little bundle, because at that time, you know, it wasn't very well policed [laughs].

35:54

GT: Uh huh, I know, and I'll tell you somebody else who had some, Nardini [laughs].

DL: Uh-huh. I have used a couple of things from Nardini, but you always wonder, you know, as you're reading it, there's a grain of truth there somewhere, but since you'll never see the document in its true form, you don't how accurate is the interpretation.

GT: Well, it's not very, because he told Ted, you know, these survey maps we have over here, they were done by a man named James Tobin—he told Ted that his grandfather got his land in Kisatchie because this man, James Tobin did all that survey work, and so that's how they got all

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their land out there. That's not true, I have the papers from Washington where he homesteaded it [laughs], so you have to take his work with a grain of salt.

DL: Uh huh. Well you know there's so many documents he quotes that are missing now, that are among the missing, and I mean, they're interesting, they're key documents in certain areas of research, and you just hunger to see them, because you just can't say with any veracity that there's any kind of truth in his interpretation of these documents.

GT: We asked ... well, a lady from Pineville called me and asked me to ask his wife if she could look at his papers for some research she was doing, and Mrs. Nardini said, "No, they're in a box in the attic, and I'm not going to get them down." So, then his son, you know, and his girlfriend had a store over on Bossier Street, and uh, we went over there, and he had reprinted those books of Nardini's, and we went and bought a set for the library, and we asked him if we could have Nardini's papers. He said, "Oh no, I'm going to finish my father's work one of these days so I need those papers." And I think they really knew that he had things he wasn't supposed to have, and they didn't want anybody to know that, that's what I think.

DL: Whatever happened to his son?

GT: He died, and what happened to all the papers, who knows?

DL: Probably got tossed.

GT: Or burned up. One of the men who was working up here said, "I'm going to go find that house, and I'm going to ask to go in and look in the attic." Well, the house was no longer there. It was a vacant lot by the time he got there. But we don't know what happened to Nardini's papers.

DL: Well, you know, there's a certain amount of folklore associated with that, I'm sure, and they may end up surfacing one of these days.

GT: Who know, who knows?

DL: Exactly.

GT: He could have sold them somewhere before he died, you know.

DL: He could've, because it never ceases to amaze me. I'll be looking through, like, the notarial archives, or the Historic New Orleans Collection, and it's like, "What?"

GT: Well, Dr. Lemon down there, we were down there one day, Ted and I, researching, and I asked him could we get an index of all the Natchitoches items he had, and he said, yeah, he would send us one. Well he did, and it's this thick [indicates 2-3"], and they're all from Bobby DeBlieux [laughs].

DL: [laughs] I'm not surprised. Well, you know, he was quite the character. So, who's running the Historical Commission now? When I was here, the last I heard, it was him and Sharon, Will James and Jim Herrin?

GT: I don't even know. Probably them without him.

40:27

DL: I guess. Yeah, he was quite the character. Well, when you were living there were living

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there, obviously Kate Chopin's house was still there. Who owned Kate Chopin when you first moved there? Was it already owned by ...?

GT: Mildred McCoy.

DL: Oh, she had it?

GT: Yeah. She had lived there as a child, you know.

DL: No, I did not know that.

GT: Yeah, she did. She lived in that house and she knew the importance of it, I guess you would say, and so she, she bought it. I think, I can't think of that man's name now that owned it at the time, but she bought it and turned it into the museum.

DL: She had a number of iron crosses too that she cut up and used for her signage.

GT: She had the slab from Alexis' grave, and his wife's grave, and his son's grave. Yeah, they're still in the yard, I guess. Somebody told me they would like to put them down at the church, but I don't think they ever talked to Father about it.

41:31

DL: Who, I guess Historical Natchitoches [APHN] ...

GT: The Hysterical Ladies [laughs].

DL: [laughs] The Hysterical Ladies, still have the lot?

GT: Still have the lot.

DL: They've never done anything back with it?

GT: Every once in a while, I'll get a call, or talk to somebody and they'll say, "Oh, we're going to do something with it, and we want you to come to the meeting." Well I made a few suggestions, but it never went anywhere. They didn't really want that place anyway.

DL: No, it just took away their attention from Melrose.

GT: Exactly.

DL: But it's a shame. My sister-in-law, now she's retired, but she came, my brother and sister-in-law came down from Kentucky, and she was an English teacher, and she made the pilgrimage. She came down to see the house, as much as she came down to see my mother, and we went out there, and it was like just like the Holy Land. Oh, she took pictures and pictures so she could send them back to her friends.

GT: When Mildred McCoy was there, she would have two or three school buses a day at a certain time of the year. They even came from Arkadelphia at the college there down there every year, and she'd have big crowds down there.

DL: Yeah, it was a treasure, and wasn't that one of the Cloutier houses originally?

GT: Yeah, yeah. Alexis built it.

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DL: Before he tried, before he left [laughs].

GT: Before he got mad [laughs].

43:03

DL: And there was another house, uh, I think the Rachals bought maybe, that was similar to that house?

GT: Now that was, uh, the postmaster owned it, Allen Vercher—the Verchers might have lived there before, but he was there when we lived there, he lived in it, and he told me, “My house is older than the museum.” But I don’t think it was, but he claimed that, he couldn’t prove it, you know, he just thought so.

DL: Well, it was equitable, it was very close, one way or the other.

GT: It was.

43:44

DL: And that house didn’t really have a name identity like the Cloutier house?

GT: Well, the Benoits lived in it.

DL: Oh, that’s where the Benoits lived?

GT: And it was used as a hospital during that yellow fever epidemic.

DL: Is that right? And that one’s still standing?

GT: Yes.

DL: And that, I’m trying to think who bought that, isn’t that...

GT: Naisie La Cour bought it.

DL: Naisie La Cour, that’s right. I didn’t realize that’s where the Benoits lived. Ok, that’s interesting. So that was the wife of Chopin during the Civil War, Dr. Chopin, she was a Benoit?

GT: No, I don’t think so. It’s been so long .

DL: Oh, I know, me too. I was thinking she was a Benoit.

GT: Let me think. No, I think she was, [pause] maybe she was, I don’t know, it’s been so long.

DL: I don’t remember, me too, me too, but I was thinking she was a Benoit, but I could be wrong. But somebody in one of those families at that time, I do remember that one of those women was a Benoit.

GT: You’re probably right about that.

45:08

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DL: I don't know. Was Derry itself, which is now pretty much the Churchmans in terms of farming out there, were there more families out there in that little area?

GT: No.

DL: Not at all?

GT: The sawmill was already gone, and the houses were gone, and no, there was nothing. They had the big store there, and they had the people down on Cat Island, which they still have over there, but Derry was pretty much over.

DL: It was already kind of past its prime?

GT: The railroad didn't go through there anymore like it did, and all that.

DL: It didn't? When did the railroad....?

GT: I mean the train, yeah but, the train

DL: But not the passenger train?

GT: Yeah, they didn't have a station or anything anymore.

45:58

DL: And that's [the depot] now down at the pecan place? Little Eva?

GT: Yeah.

DL: I know B. A. [Cohen] had it for a while. She had her little art shop there for a short period of time? But I'm glad it got saved.

GT: And I am, too, I am, too. I don't know who owns now.

46:18

[Interruption of interview]

48:25

DL: I wanted to ask you a little bit about Natchez too, because you would've had to pass through there pretty much every day if you were going and coming. So, Natchez, kind of like Cloutierville, was diminished by the loss of the railroad? Is that right?

GT: I think so. They didn't have that apartment complex, of course. They had the big store there on the corner, and they had the brick store there, it was, they had a little museum in there. He had some records too.

DL: Is that right?

GT: He did.

DL: Who was that?

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GT: Oh, I can't remember his name. What else did they have? They had the old store for the cotton, for the plantation, was a restaurant at that time.

DL: Oh, I do remember that one. That's where all the old men used to sit out on the front porch, they used to call it "the town council."

GT: Yeah, it was a good catfish place.

DL: It was; I remember that.

GT: And I don't know, they still had the old safe in there, and what ever happened to that, I don't know. That thing was so huge, I'm sure they had to have a crane to move it.

DL: I imagine so.

GT: It had JJ's [laughs].

DL: Which keeps saying they're closing it up. They had their going out of business sign off and on the whole time I lived down the river. They're still going.

GT: Still going strong. LaCaze, J. C. LaCaze's widow, she's 90, 91, or 92 I think, every Saturday is there dancing.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Not lately, she broke both her hips. She broke a hip, and then they found out the other one was cracked also. She probably cracked it first, you know, and then broke the other one, but I think she's back dancing again now.

DL: [laughs] Good for her.

GT: Can't slow her down.

DL: That's good, that's probably what makes her get to 92 [laughs].

GT: [laughs] Maybe to 93.

50:56

DL: My goodness. Well I guess it was the loss of the passenger service, I guess that pretty much took away all those little depots. Well that and all the agriculture, once the agriculture ...

GT: Well, there weren't that many people down in there then either, and I don't know why ... well, you know, a lot of these little towns lost their railroads, their section houses, and their people who were working, they lost a lot of that, a lot of those little towns, like Marthaville did, Robeline did, Derry—of course Cloutierville didn't have a depot, but all those little towns, and there was nothing there then, you know. You'd be surprised how many of 'em around in this area, there's one up around where my mother, it was more or less a sawmill town, but look at Pleasant Hill, they even moved the town when the railroad came through.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Because there's old Pleasant Hill, where the cemetery is, and then there's Pleasant Hill.

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DL: I didn't realize that.

GT: They called it Sodus and then they moved the Methodist church from the old town to the new town, where it is now, rolled it on logs and moved it.

DL: So, they moved it to accommodate the railroad?

GT: Right, so it, because they were just off in the woods. So they moved to the railroad, is what they did—just moved the whole town.

52:43

DL: So they had Montrose sawmill.

GT: And Cypress.

DL: And one at Cypress, and then the one, Weaver's, was that little ...

GT: At the four way, behind the four way, back in there, was a depot.

DL: Right, and the little town is still there, well the little ...

53:06

GT: Well they had that little road that's no longer there now, but that's the road that went through there, and back out into Bayou Cypre and all back in there before they built the interstate. There was a whole row of little houses along in there.

DL: Is that right?

GT: I don't think there's anything back there now, but a church, and one or two houses. I don't know how many are left.

DL: Well, if you go 120, it's exit 120 where you go that way or that way, and if you go to the left, then you go through where the Weaver's had their place, you know, like there was a Weaver, I don't know, a sawmill. Was he involved with Montrose? Was the Weaver family involved with Montrose sawmill?

GT: I don't know that. But you're talking about the four-way here?

DL: I'm talking about, if you get off the interstate, on Exit 120 and you go to the right, and you're at that Exxon station that's on Hwy. 1, and if you go to the left, you're going towards like Flora?

GT: Oh, yeah, you're talking about coming from this direction.

DL: Coming from the south, going north.

GT: Yeah, okay.

DL: And if you turn left, then you go toward Flora, well maybe that is Flora, where he had, and there was the Weaver's store, and all that.

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GT: That is Flora, and the sawmill was there.

DL: Was that a different sawmill?

54:25

GT: That's been documented too, uh, I can't remember her name anymore either but she wrote a little history of that, and I think we have a copy of it.

DL: So there were at least three sawmills within about 5 miles ...

GT: There was another one down here south of Cloutierville.

DL: Is that right?

GT: Yeah, it was at Galbraith. So there was Galbraith, Derry, Montrose, and Flora, four of 'em.

DL: Wow, within about 20 miles, and they were logging just anything?

GT: I guess.

DL: Hardwoods? I mean, this isn't a huge pine area, so it had to have been like bottoms hardwoods.

GT: And cypress, a lot of cypress, I'm sure.

DL: I guess so, it just doesn't seem to be enough to support four sawmills.

GT: In these little swampy areas, you got cypress.

DL: That's true.

GT: Like on the river down here, you know. You wonder, though, where did they get all that lumber

DL: Well yeah, you would think it would be played out fairly quickly. I guess that all went down in the '30s?

55:42

GT: Well, you figure they had to hand saw it, they had to drag it out, float it out, and so there wouldn't have been as big a volume as there is now, when they can go in and cut truck loads at one time. But they couldn't do that back then, they had to haul it out by oxen, like you say, float it down the river, you know, or something.

DL: Yeah, that probably would have played out somewhere in the '30s? You know they were telling me on Isle Brevelle that there, you know there's nothing on Isle Brevelle now except a couple of little camp houses back there in the woods, but that there were houses all back there, and you know, that's those long lots, and it was at the back of the lots, and when the sawmills closed, they just moved the houses up to the front, to the river.

GT: It's changed, I mean people who lived here even 20 years ago, you know. You look at what's built in front of the church now at Isle Brevelle, all those big houses down in there.

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DL: Yeah, the character of the river has changed, you know, that part of the river that I'm the most familiar with, has changed quite a bit, and I mean, all the little dance halls, which weren't, I think only one of them was open when I first moved here, and that was Wood's Hall, and that stayed open off and on for a while, but they were still standing, and they're all gone except for Wood's.

57:25

GT: There's one or two. I think there's one down there not far from the church, but it's not open, I mean the building is there, but it's ...

DL: I think they called it the Friendly Place.

GT: I think so. Frenchie's used to be down there.

DL: And the Roges, wasn't that the Roge family that had that originally?

GT: Frenchie's? I don't know.

DL: It seemed like Mr. Edgar told me that his father, grandfather started it.

GT: I wouldn't be surprised, but I just don't know though. I just remember it being there.

DL: And it was still there standing? Was it open?

GT: I think so.

DL: I've seen a picture of it from the '30s.

GT: It was there in the '50s, because, and that was a gravel road then too. We got married in '50, and long about then we'd go visit Sam down at Typo and we went by there one time, and Ted said that's Frenchie's, that's where Sam goes all the time, so I'm sure it was still open then too, '51, '52, along in that time. It might have closed right after but it was still open.

DL: Spell the name of that plantation you keep mentioning.

58:52 GT: T-Y-P-O

DL: Typo, like a typographical error. And where was that located exactly?

GT: You know where the old gin is on the river there? From Bermuda, it was at Bermuda, you come across the bridge, from [Oakland], from the plantation side, and turn right. Well the Williamson house is to the left up in there, you turn right and you come down, the old gin is there. Sam built that gin. The old house is right before you get to the gin. It was a beautiful old place; it had a three-room fireplace.

DL: Is that the one that they've had something parked in front of, like farm equipment? It's just about to fall down?

GT: Yeah.

DL: So, that was the Typo plantation? And whose family owned that?

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GT: Sam and Marsha Tobin, and she was a Cockfield, it was a Cockfield place to begin with because her father had had it before.

DL: And that was Ted's brother?

GT: Ted's brother was Sam. But it was such a pretty old place.

DL: And had a store in front of it.

GT: Yeah, it sat back, and the store was on the corner there. Then somebody named Postwhistle or something like that, bought it, and I don't know who they sold it to. Well Edgar Roge owned it for a while.

DL: He owned almost half of everything out there at one point or another.

01:00:29

GT: He did, he owned the house where Dr. Albert is now too for a while. He probably sold to Dr. Albert.

DL: No, that was Henry Earl Metoyer.

GT: Oh, well, then he must've sold it to Metoyer.

DL: Yeah, I think he sold it to Henry Earl, because Henry Earl had it for about at least ten years.

GT: Well, Edgar was sick for a long time, and he got rid of a lot of stuff you know. Dr. Albert told me that house was haunted. He said they hear people on the front porch, and they look and there's nobody there. They'd be downstairs and they'd hear somebody walking upstairs, and there's nobody there. Finally his wife told him one night, "If they walk across that floor one more time, I'm leaving", they never heard it again [laughs].

DL: [laughs] My goodness. Yeah, Mr. Roge bought and sold almost everything down there at one point or another. He had a lot of property. He was a character.

GT: He was, he was.

DL: Is his brother still alive?

GT: I don't know.

DL: I knew his brother, drawing a blank on the name, I remember meeting his brother.

GT: I think he is, but he doesn't live here.

DL: Oh, okay.

GT: There's one of the Roges anyway that Sharon talks about, but they don't live here.

01:02:09

DL: So your brother-in-law and his wife still lived in that plantation house?

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GT: No. [laughs] She had an affair with the overseer, and she left Sam, and married the overseer, and Sam stayed in the house, but he didn't live in the house. When she left, he moved into the overseer's house, and that's where he stayed for the rest of the time he owned that plantation. But we went into that house, and looked, you know, he showed us around. It still had everything in it, and even clothes, and all that.

DL: Did they purchase that, or was that from her family?

GT: It was from her family, but when they sold it, it was half and half, and he went to Arkansas, uh New Orleans, then Arkansas, and she stayed here.

DL: So, it had an overseer's house and it had a store.

GT: It had little houses all the way down

DL: Like tenant houses?

GT: Well, there's only one left now, and he built two or three of those cinderblock houses, several of those cinderblock houses, I think there's only one left now. The property went down to that, there's fence row of trees, and the property went that far, and then over across the river where Edgar is, and all down in there to the river, and then, as far as I can remember, back to the river the other way. It was a big place.

DL: That was a beautiful house at one time. When I moved here, it was in fairly good shape.

GT: It really was, and the last time I was in it, they had put up paneling, and covered up that fireplace, and I thought, you know, that's so unique, who had heard of a three-room fireplace. You hear of double-room fireplaces all the time, but a triple-room, a three-room? And then they covered it up.

DL: Oh, my goodness. Well, they weren't using it for what it was supposed to be used for anyway. It ended up being used for storage, you know. I'm not surprised they didn't have hay in there or something.

GT: They probably do.

DL: What a shame; that was a beautiful house. What year did they sell it, or thereabouts?

GT: Uh, '60, around '60, '61, somewhere in there, or '62 maybe.

1:05:24

DL: I only have a couple more questions back to Cloutierville. Those backriver areas, there's what, Old River, and isn't there another kind of ...

GT: Bayou Derbanne, and Old River, and Nid Aigle, they called it

DL: Was there a lot of people that lived back in there?

GT: Yeah, oh yeah. Well it was just like now, you know, they've got to go... somewhere else to make a living.

DL: What were they doing for a living back then?

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GT: That's when they were farming. Most of those people were share, well not sharecroppers but they worked, working the land for ...

DL: On a share, yeah, tenants.

GT: Yeah, kind of, that's what you might call 'em, and when they went to cattle, they didn't need as many people.

DL: Well, that and mechanized farming.

GT: Yeah, and so a lot of those people just left, but a few stayed, and worked, and kept on. I guess some of the people that had been there, some of the older people maybe, a lot of the young people left. And then when WWII, I think that took away a lot of the people too, because they got their education paid for, and all that, and then they went other places.

DL: They weren't depending on agriculture anymore.

GT: No.

DL: I know there was a huge exodus from the Creole community, and I'm sure from the African American communities as well, with the war because all of a sudden they were offered opportunities ...

GT: That they never had before.

DL: That they never had before, exactly, like they were caught in kind of cyclical, you know, cradle-to-the-grave kind of existence.

GT: Yeah, and they depended upon somebody else for their livelihood, well, in a way, yeah. They worked hard but they were dependent on somebody else for their livelihood, and after WWII, that was not true anymore, and they got out, and had their own lives then. So the whole area changed in a way.

01:07:37

DL: Yeah, I imagine. So now there's the Benoit house, and the little bank building still there, and the little store to the left of Carnahan's—did that burn when Carnahan's burned?

GT: No.

DL: Okay, so that one's still standing. So that's about it for historical architecture?

01:08:01

GT: No. The Brossette, which is, I think, next to the Benoit house. That is a log house, so they tell me, put together with pegs and all that, but it's been covered with boards.

DL: Oh, okay.

GT: Mr. Freed Brossette lived in that house when we there. It doesn't look like a log house, but they say it is. Amanda Chenault told me that.

DL: Interesting. Does somebody live there now?

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GT: I don't know. It was owned by people from out of there. They could have it rented, I don't know.

01:08:50

DL: Okay, and then there was a Mr. Poché that used to live there? He was quite a character too.

GT: Oh, yeah. He was.

DL: And didn't he have an old house?

GT: He had the, I think it was a filling station; it was right across the lane from the bank. He had a filling station there, and he lived in the back of the building. And then he had that big place across the river, right next to the post office, and that was his garage where he did repairs, and kept his wrecker. He had an old wrecker, I don't know how old that thing was, but he could move things that the modern trucks couldn't move, you know, and everybody called Mr. Poché.

DL: He was quite the character too. I went to talk to him, I'm try to think what I talked to him about. I had a specific purpose in mind when I went there. Oh, I was talking to him about the crosses and the cemetery, that's when I was doing the cemetery survey, and he was quite a character. He had all sorts of stories.

01:10:02

GT: Oh, yeah, I'm sure he did. Well, James Perrier said his grandfather made a lot of those crosses, and he said he could always look at 'em and tell which ones his grandfather made. Now, if that's true or not, I don't know, but that's what he said.

DL: James Perrier, now is he from Cloutierville?

GT: Yeah, he grew up there. He owned the bank building, that family still owns the bank building.

DL: Is he still there?

GT: Oh, no, he's dead.

DL: And he said his grandfather made the crosses?

GT: His grandfather made some of the crosses. His grandfather was a blacksmith.

DL: How interesting, because it's almost a dead art now. It was interesting, when I was doing that documentation, I started looking at the European tradition, and you would think there would have been, like a pretty big lag in timing when popularity waxed in Europe that by the time it got here, but not at all, not at all. It was amazing, you know, the crosses in the church, the earliest ones we can find are from the late 1780s-ish, that's about when they gained the height of popularity in Europe. So it wasn't like there was a whole bunch of iron crosses that got lost, which is what I figured, that that was a tradition that came with them, but no, it seemed though, there's a place in France, it's called Gers, and that's kind of like the apex of the tradition, and the height of the popularity started at about 1780s, and went up through the nineteenth century.

GT: Robin Miller told me, you remember Robin Miller?

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DL: Uh-huh.

GT: She was in California, and she saw an iron cross out there from Cloutierville.

DL: Is that right?

GT: That's what she said.

[interview ends]

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Arthur Welch

Interviewed February 10, 2015 at the Natchitoches Genealogical Society by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:38:46

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is February 10, 2015. I am here to interview Mr. Arthur Welch. We are at the Genealogical Library here in Natchitoches. Mr. Welch, if I could start off with you just giving us a little information about your growing up here and who your family is.

00:25

AW: Well, I grew up in Natchitoches, actually grew up on my dad's farm which is about 2 ½ miles west of the city, and I stayed with my uncle and his family when I went to first grade, but by 2nd grade I started walking to school and I'd walk to school every day, 2 ½ miles to school. Back at that time it was Natchitoches Parish Training School. I graduated in 1950 and went over to Houston, Texas to live with my aunt. I was going over to a brand new school called Texas Southern. Anyway, thinking it was somewhat like Grambling, you'd go down, you'd sign up, pay your money and go to school...well, it didn't work that way, so I started working in Houston waiting for the next semester. Next semester came, I was enjoying myself, having so much fun, so I said I'll wait for the next semester. The Korean War was going on at the time so I was drafted. The day I was drafted the Air Force recruiting office I had been talking to him if I didn't get drafted I wanted to go in the Air Force, I didn't want to go in the Army. He did come tell me that I had just been drafted so that Friday night I was drafted and I was inducted Saturday into the Air Force and went off to Lackland Air Force Base, spent my basic at Lackland and did my training at Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, and was stationed for 42 months at Spokane, Washington.

Discharged from Spokane, I had purchased a duplex in Los Angeles so of course we moved to Los Angeles to live. It was about a year after I started working at, I think, North American Aviation, I started going to school at nights. Took me 6 years but I finally finished and became a manufacturing engineer, although it was not offered at the time. My training was in mechanical engineering but I spent a lifetime as a manufacturing engineer and it involved management. The sort of information that I'm talking about you'll find in that write-up. (RT was furnished with AW's resume). I worked for Rockwell which became Rockwell International and it was North American Aviation, then it became Rockwell International. For 23 ½ years ...I started off as a trainee in the machine shop and when I left the company it was after President Carter terminated the B-1 program. I was director of operations for Los Angeles and Abilene Texas, so I was manufacturing for the B-1 and the Space Shuttle, had the responsibility for producing those components needed for [unintelligible].

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During my career, in the early part of my career, I was heavily involved in the Apollo program. Some problems had been encountered in Houston was the escape hatch not opening. There was three astronauts got killed in the process, there was a quick redesign of that and I was a programmer at the time so some of the components just was not designed correctly, couldn't mathematically define them so I was able to determine what the engineers were really looking for. But in the process of all this I did receive the citation from NASA for helping put the first man on the moon. But I went on in management as I mentioned earlier, but at that time President Carter terminated the B-1 program. I was directing the operations for southern California to Texas. At the termination of the B-1 program, one of the vice-presidents I had known for some time was at the Northrup Corporation. He insisted I come over and help with the F-18, it was a new program that they had; I stayed at Northrup for about 2 ½ years. An outfit in Chicago, International Harvester, had a science and technology laboratory and they kept after me to come and work at the laboratory, wanted to develop some advanced manufacturing systems for producing trucks and tractors. So I went to Chicago; that was one of those decisions that you say they made an offer you can't refuse, but it's cold in Chicago. After Harvester had its problems, I was recruited for consulting. But by that time I was managing all of Harvester's technical systems worldwide. And I was recruited into consulting, I worked for a company by the name of A.T [unintelligible]. I was director of consulting practices for North America, and it was then I decided to move out of that cold country. One of the principals at Kearny decided to start our own business in consulting so we did. But I moved back to Natchitoches and all I needed was access to an airport.

In that assignment I was vice-president and chief technical officer for the company and I did that for about 18 years, consulting for an awful lot of Fortune 500 companies. I did consulting for the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, even had an assignment at the Treasury Department. Most places I had a consultant, I could always get a little souvenir to take with me but, I couldn't get a souvenir out of the Treasury Department.

RT: [laughing] I bet you couldn't

07:07

AW: So anyway, close to 1990 I think it was, my wife mentioned to me that our sons beginning to act-up, slamming doors and talking back; we had two kids then, always in trouble. Didn't want to raise them in Chicago or take them back to Los Angeles so I decided to move here to raise them. Anyway, they were approaching their teens or in their early teens, acting up, so I decided to come home and spend some time,. It was my work kept me out on the road most of the week and I would come home on the weekends. So I took a job with the Natchitoches Parish Police Jury as the planning director. Quite a few things I was able to accomplish, ordinances that are currently in operation [unintelligible], the geographical information system in place, I did that; and this building was one of the projects I had – the feasibility of converting this from a courthouse to a museum – successfully, I might add, it has been successful. Went back into consulting for 10 years, in 2002 I retired for the third time, this time it stuck.

So I've been retired since 2002, but I haven't been successful in telling people “no” because I have been so busy, in all these volunteer things: Right now I'm on the board of directors for the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts, also one of the commissioners for the hospital, also a deacon at my church, on the church council, just keeping busy.

RT: Yes, it seems like you are indeed very busy. Right before we started recording, you were talking about this house you've built since you've been here in Natchitoches.

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9:34

AW: Before I came back I had been working on a design for a house for about 5 years, I don't know quite what prompted me to build a round house, but it was intriguing to me. When I worked at Northrup, I did a wind tunnel test on the configuration to see if it would stand up to hurricanes. The figures I got said it would stand up to a 300 mile an hour force against it because it is round. You put force on direction, the opposite direction you get the forces. It's like trying to squeeze a ring.

That was all good until I think it was Hurricane Andrew came, back before I built the house, Hurricane Andrew came through Florida and tore up things and it had some remnants coming up the Mississippi River, the Red River... one of them. I went home and I'm standing there looking out the windows and I'm noticing all those big pine trees really rockin' and rollin', it occurred to me well the house might stand but the pine trees might break and come right through this window.

But I did build a round house. It's two stories. The upper story is larger in diameter than the lower story. Half of the lower story, of course it was built on the ground, but I needed some backfill, so I had a fish pond dug and got the dirt out of the fish pond as backfill around that lower portion. The walls lean out on the upper story at 8 degrees, there's 32 windows in the house and most of them are 4-by-5s. I can sit in my bedroom and look out across the rose bushes – tranquility, tranquil for me.

It has a 27½ foot dome, plastic dome, over the center of the building, all the rooms are around the 40-ft courtyard as I call it. The living room, family room, bedrooms all around. The lower story I have the garage, half the lower story is garage, workshop, utility room, office, guest bedroom, bathrooms and things on the lower story.

But that 40-foot diameter room in the center upstairs that I call the courtyard, directly below it is a 40-foot diameter room also that I call my party room. The kids at the party had a lot of fun growing up, I've thrown adult parties in it. Pretty good size, 40-foot diameter, I've 200-250 people out there at different times. And we just enjoy out in the country. I've been very busy since I've moved back to Natchitoches, that's for sure.

12:53

RT: It seems like you have, I can't see where you have time to catch your breath. One of the things I'm really interested in, I believe that young people, especially African American, minorities, limit themselves in their career choices because they don't feel that they have other choices. Can you speak a little bit perhaps about what kind of training needed to be an engineer like you were and what are the possibilities of jobs?

13:25

AW: Well, my engineering, I think my gift of that type of career, stemmed from when I was a very small boy. Curiosity was embedded in me. My momma would leave the house, go to town shopping or something and I would get one of her appliances and I'd take the thing apart just to see how it would work. My challenge was to make sure I got it back together exactly as it was supposed to be, because if I had messed up something she had worked for, I know I would have really got it. I had an old motor scooter I used to hop up, I had that thing where it's run 65 miles an hour with little bitty wheels.

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But, my foundation came from when I was in high school taking wood work. I had a professor by the name of Cross who taught mechanical drafting. Professor Emmanuel taught woodwork, I learned to blueprint and I learned how to make things although it was in wood. When I got into aerospace industry as a machinist, converting from wood to metal was not that difficult and I did know how to read blueprints so I was well ahead. But I would look at the engineers, they were guys would come downstairs with their white shirts on and ties, I said that's really what I should do, I shouldn't be working on a machine all the time. But I did have the GI Bill and the company paid a great portion of my tuition so I started school and finally became a mechanical engineer, but by that time I was a supervisor in the machine shop so really management was the direction that I went but I was also a programmer at one time. I programmed American Control (?) machines. So I had a technical career and a management career that paralleled throughout my life and I've been involved in managing technical people but I've been the technical resource.

15:50

So the thing that I tell young people all the time, find your purpose, and knowing your purpose is many times as difficult, not everybody knows exactly what they could or should be doing but I tell them to find their purpose in paying attention to what you like to do – somewhere in there is your purpose. I was talking to a young fellow some time back – asked him “what do you want to be when you grow up?” He said “I want to be an NBA star.” I said – he was in the 9th grade – “do you play basketball?” and he said “no”. He was about four and a half feet tall, maybe a little taller, and I said “you're not going to be an NBA star”, because he was 16 years old. I said “but maybe you should be something involved in sports. Maybe you want to be someone that a lawyer who helps sports people, maybe you want to be a scout, something in the area. So don't limit your thinking to just being an NBA star because if that fails, what are you going to do? But you've got to go to school to develop that, so keep your mind focused on the future because you're way too young to think it's all over now, you're just getting started. But get your education and develop your gifts that God has given you and that will take care of you. If you don't do that, you're going to be running around the streets like a lot of other people you see. But your education is the most important thing – develop that gift you've been given.”

RT: And so for mechanical engineering, the strong focus should be in math? Got to have the math.

17:45

AW: Yes. I was pretty good in math in high school, of course when I got to college that was after I had had four years in the Air Force, I surprised myself at the degrees I was getting. So I saw my old homeroom teacher once after some years after that. I was talking to her about after I got to college, I started getting good grades, and she said “well, you finally decided to focus and do what you were supposed to do – you applied yourself.” So I guess that was it, because in high school I wasn't doing a whole lot of ‘applying.’

18:20

RT: You know something, I'm making a connection here and you had discussed briefly about the book that I had put out on Natchitoches Parish, and on the cover is your image

AW: Yes.

RT: Can you talk about that a little bit and what was going on at that time

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AW: That was 1949, that parade was the parade to the homecoming football game. The parade left the high school which was where the Jeremy Thomas complex is now. It came out to Amulet, down Amulet to 5th Street, 5th Street to Church Street, Church Street down across the bridge, Williams Avenue to Scarborough Avenue and then at the end of Scarborough Avenue, we all ended at a park. That was where we played football.

19:16

AW: That particular day was homecoming day and I played trumpet in the marching band and I also played trumpet in the orchestra which was the dance band...and I played football. Myself and one other guy, we would play football for the first half of the game and about 5 minutes before half came, coach would pull us out and we'd go to the dressing room and change out our football uniforms into our band uniforms. During halftime we'd march and play and then get out of that band uniform and get back into our football and play the second half and then that night we'd play for the dance.

RT: You were always been busy then. There was another image in that book I've really been trying to find out about it and you might be the person that can help me. There's from that same parade, there's a float and on it are two young men and with cars...like an old Chevy or maybe something like that. I was always told that the two guys on that float, one of them actually went to work for Ford Motor Company or something and helped design vehicles. Do you know anything about that?

AW: No, but I know the two vehicles that you may be talking about. One is a '49 Ford that was parked and it's in one of those pictures...that was L.P. Vaughn's car. He was a barber out in Berkeley, California and he had come back to Natchitoches and started back to school, 'cause he hadn't finished. That was Professor L.P. Vaughn's brother, Paul Vaughn L.P. Vaughn's brother and Dr. Jackson who was at Grambling, he started back to school. But that was his old Ford (it was new at the time) and of course L.P. Vaughn went on to be the principal of the school named for him now.

RT: Ok, alright. I sure would like to find someone who knows about the guy that was supposed to have designed some of the earlier vehicles, then for the company.

AW: It may be but I don't have any information on that. I think one of the other cars that was in that particular image was an old car that Overton Owens had. Overton, of course, stayed here in Natchitoches, had a band for a good number of years.

RT: The Serenaders, or something like that.

AW: You know anything about the Serenaders?

RT: I just know what I've heard.

AW: Well, I'm one of the original Serenaders.

RT: Really?! Oh my goodness!

AW: There's an individual that you might want to set up an interview on. His name's John L. Lewis.

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RT: Johnny...

AW: John L. Lewis

RT: Okay.

AW: He was our lead trumpet player for the Serenaders while we were in high school. John L. went on to have a lifetime in music. He ran a band in the Seattle area for a good number of years. The State Department tapped him once to go to China to help spread jazz in China.

RT: Wow, is he here in the area?

AW: He came back in November because there was a program at Northwestern where they were paying tribute to the Serenaders. So I called him up and he came back and he's been here since then. He's going back to Seattle in March, but if you would have an interest in...

RT: I certainly do.

AW: His background, you can go in and look up John L. and his quartet and bring up a lot of information on him and a lot of big bands and if you want to see him, his sister's name is Rosetta McDaniel and he's out there 'til next month.

23:10

RT: Wow, that is really good to know. I'm glad Northwestern acknowledged the existence of that group, and are paying tribute to it, because I'm sure that was rough. I think I interviewed someone once before who was a member of that group, and I just remember talking about traveling at night and then trying to get back...

AW: Oh yeah, it was interesting. The Serenaders was a result of Professor L.C. Vaughn's doing. Across the street from where Ben Johnson's funeral home is... where head Start Center is, there used to be a building that he used for a recreation building. L.C.'s kids would have an old record player and some scratched-up records we'd play. The kids would be trying to dance to it. They had a piano in there, kind of beat up. But one day the kids were up there playing and Professor L.C. came in and it was after he had come back from the Second World War (because all our teachers got shipped out during the Second World War) but he had come back to get his Master's at Columbia. But he saw the kids trying to dance, so he got on the old piano and started playing, and that sounded pretty good. He did that again and one of the young fellows that had been in his band prior to going to the Second World War, his name was Richard Blount. Richard was a trumpet player so Richard had an old beat-up trumpet so he played trumpet and L.C. on piano and the kids really had a good time. So I think from that, LC. thought it would be worthwhile to try to get a dance band together and he did and we played from the Arkansas border all the way down deep into the southern part of the state, I remember playing at St. Martinsville. But he started that band and pulled the best students he had out of the high school marching band. And at that time we were youngsters, teenagers, we played at dances for night clubs, we played for white, black, whatever, we played for school proms, we played for about everything, and my mother and my dad didn't have to pay money in my last few years in high school because I made money playing in the band. But that's what happened and a few of the original band members went on to have a career in music. Emil Dixon ran a band in Houston for some 45-50 years. [Unintelligible] he went to the University of Kansas to the school of music and he was the music teacher there in Kansas City.....

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RT: Can you say that again, that name...

AW: Spiller, it starts with an "E" but we called him Spiller. When he retired from the school system in San Francisco where he was a music teacher, and I mentioned John L. to you, he went on to have a career in music, Overton he had a fairly lengthy career in music, "Dr. Drip Drop"

RT: Is that what they called him?

AW: Overton was our blues singer. Overton would sing so hard, he'd get to perspiring, water would be dripping off him, that's why they started calling him "Dr. Drip Drop."

26:57

RT: Ok, that's funny to know. Ok, so you said when you were growing up here in town, or...

AW: No, we moved to town when I was 13. I started high school, mom and dad bought a place in town and they moved. It was good I didn't have to do all that walking, at least not as far. But from 13 'til I was 18, I left the day after my 18th birthday. I headed off to Houston, I only came back for visits to visit my mom and dad. After that time, and in 1983 when I decided to move back here my mom was still alive, so I had 6 years that I lived with her and then I moved her into that house that I had built. She had a nice time out there with the grandkids, so I was appreciative of that. My dad died about 1964, he had been dead for a good while before I moved back.

28:04

RT: And how do you ethnically self-identify?

AW: I'm American. I am what the melting pot turns out to be. My dad's dad was Caucasian. When I was doing the feasibility study for this old courthouse museum, two of the ladies (one of them in there now) was on my committee. They kept after me to come check my genealogy, well, I did. I found out that my grandfather was born white. His daddy owned the Live Oak Hotel where City Hall is now. But I found later on in the census he was classified as black. He married a half-black, half-Indian woman – half Choctaw – my grandmother. So I've got, from what I understand, the Welches was Irish descent, so I've got Irish, Indian, and African mixed up in me. I classify of course as African American but I say I am American. I am the mixing pot that...

RT: That is American. I understand that, so you talked about – and that's great about the Choctaw connection – none of the things I've been doing in this series of interviews are asking people about those Native American connections and what they know about them. Do you know anything else about that?

29:47

AW: The only thing I know about is that my grandmother, I don't know if she was half or what but she had one daughter by the name of Laura. I remember Aunt Laura could sit on her hair, it was very coarse, black. She had some children. I know I remember all them basically the same way, straight, long black hair, very black hair. 'Course they weren't dark-complexed but they had high cheekbones, very much resembling to Indian, what you'd think an Indian would look like. That's about all I know about that because as I see by the history of this place, the Choctaws were moved out of Natchitoches and taken up to Oklahoma.

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RT: I mean everybody went. And so you said that was your great-grandfather then?

AW: Grandfather

RT: Grandfather, and what was his name?

AW: His name was William.

RT: William

AW: William "Billy" Welch

RT: William "Billy" Welch

AW: He married a woman named Mary, so it was William and Mary...

RT: William and Mary, that's pretty good.

AW: Ironically, his mother's name was Mary, his dad was Joseph Welch, he was the one owned the Live Oak Hotel.

RT: That's something. I saw on your bio there that you're actively involved in Asbury...is that a church you've joined since you've been back or you had always been involved...

AW: It's actually First Baptist.

RT: Oh, it's First Baptist, I'm sorry, Amulet, ok, yes sir...

31:43

AW: I mentioned we moved to town. I had some friends and we all ran around together. Well, we were having a revival at the church one time, I went to church with them, and I wound up joining the church at something like 14 years old. That's been my church pretty much ever since. It was the one closest to where I was raised at. In her later years, I got my mother to join that church with me. I didn't know it, but my dad and all his family were First Baptist North Street, but nobody told me that so I. In all the years I was away, I never did move my membership and Miss Prudhomme and my mom would get after me every year and make me send money for different projects they had, and when I moved back here, I went back to my church. I had left the church, ventured off into different other denominations because I was curious, wanted to see what was going on, all the spectrum...then I went back to the church where I am now.

32:52

RT: I am so glad to hear you mention the name Prudhomme, there's a group of folks I've been trying to find to interview and so far I've been unsuccessful. But I know they were there, I've seen the name on the cornerstones of some of the church buildings and things like that. Do you know of any black Prudhommies?

AW: Yes, Gracie (?) Prudhomme was black, she was married when she came up with the name. She had children, they were all Prudhommies.

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RT: But in town now?

AW: I don't know about now.

RT: Ok.

AW: These were people that had died off. I had recollection of people when I was young but it's all gone now.

RT: But this is really good, you're calling out all kind of names. You're remembering better than you think maybe. Ok, one other thing I've been hearing in some of the interviews, that it was pretty common for people to come into town on the weekends to go see the seer, the seer lady or the seer man? You don't know anything about that? You know it was like they'd tell them about haunts and things like that.

AW: I had an uncle who was the seventh son who professed to be a fortune teller and pretty much made his living that way. His name was James Scarborough. That's J.W.'s daddy.

RT: Oh, J.W.'s daddy, yes I know Mr. J.W. very well, ok...

AW: James Scarborough, he was 99 years old, didn't quite make that 100.

34:36

RT: Wow, that is something. Ok then, I think they were saying it was someone here in town, too, a lady everybody came in town to see

AW: Maybe, I don't know

RT: You don't know, ok, just checking. You know the kind of things you don't hear a lot about, but someone might have a little extra information about...

AW: No, I don't know about that...

34:58

RT: So I'm going to wrap this up and I've been ending all of the tapes with giving the interviewer a chance to just express something they may want to express, it might be a message you want to leave to your grandchildren or think about some descendants that might look at this tape 50 years from now. Is there some message you would like to leave or something you'd like to say?

AW: Well, let me ask you a question.

RT: Sure.

AW: Have you been out to see the LNC monument yet?

RT: No, I have not. I didn't know about the LNC monument until the other day when I interviewed someone.

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AW: Okay. I worked on that for 14 years, I designed the thing and I ramrodded it for 14 years until got it built. We tried to capture the history of the three schools that were located on that particular site, which is the site it is built on, which was the foundation of black education in Natchitoches Parish. The very first school was Lincoln Institute, the “L”, the next school was the school I went to, Natchitoches Parish Training School, which was the “N”, and the end one is Central High. Central High and Natchitoches High combined when integration came about and now we have Natchitoches Central. That is something I would say 50 years from now if there’s anyone interested in who Arthur Welch was... there’s some markers out there at that monument, and hopefully that black granite will stand the test of time.

RT: Yes, I’m sure it will.

AW: That is if nobody tears it down. There’s Historic Natchitoches and there’s all sorts of historic...I kept wondering why there’s nothing that shows that something happened here that involved black people. I was chair of the Tourist Commission for a good number of years and I noticed that there is very few blacks that come to Natchitoches as a tourist destination. I think the last thing that blacks are interested in is coming to look at those plantation houses – that’s not the thing. So I thought it would be simpler... I could do that might be that might be of the level that might attract someone so that’s when I started working on that monument. I made a model of it in the year 2000. I chaired the LNC Reunion. I presented the model to people who were in attendance, they accepted it, “Let’s do it”. Many of those have gone on but this past year, we did the final unveiling of it and finished paying for it too, so it’s paid for and finished at the same time.

RT: That’s great, ‘cause I’m going to have to go see it...like I said I just found out about it from an interview about a week and a half ago.

AW: Good, it’s something that is worthwhile and it has meaning – the monument – the company that built it has submitted it for a national award, as its beauty [unintelligible] but its significance and purpose. So, hopefully we’ll be accepting it.

RT: Oh, that would be wonderful. The city could stand that recognition too, that community especially, yes. Thank you Mr. Welch.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Leslie Vercher

Interviewed January 28, 2015 at Mr. Vercher's home in Natchez, LA by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:05:17 (recorded; discussion continued after taping)

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is January 28, 2015. I am at the home of Mr. Leslie Vercher. Mr. Vercher is associated in many ways with Magnolia Plantation. He has worked previously with the Cane River National Historic Park and so we're going to be speaking with him today just very briefly about his association with Magnolia but more so about his understanding about the horse culture around here. So, Leslie if you would, very briefly, if you could tell us who your parents were and what time period you lived there at Magnolia.

LV: You didn't say nothing about no parents.

RT: Well, just whatever you can think of around... like what age were you when you left or something like that?

LV: I was about... I guess nine, I guess.

RT: About nine. And your parents were?

LV: Ellis and Leola Vercher.

RT: Okay then and you left at age nine because of what? Just moving? Forced to move?

LV: Naw, better living.

RT: And where did you move to?

LV: I think we moved from there to ... you bringing my memory too far back. I think we moved to Melrose.

RT: Melrose and what y'all worked there as sharecroppers or what?

LV: Yea.

RT: You worked there as sharecroppers and so what you stayed at Melrose until you were grown?

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LV: Naw, until I was about 11 years old.

RT: And then what happened after 11?

LV: Moved to Alex[andria].

RT: Alex, better jobs and stuff again?

LV: Yea, better living.

RT: Better living. So, when did you come back here?

LV: (He hesitates as if trying to recall). Now see if you wouldn't be so smart mouth we could have went over all that on the phone if I'd known you were going to be asking me all that ...

RT: Well, roughly. You don't have to be exact. Just around... I mean you were well grown? You were married by then?

LV: Yea, I came back here when I was, I guess 25 or 26.

RT: And, what brought you back though?

LV: My wife was down here.

RT: Oh, okay so you came back for family?

LV: Um huh.

RT: Alright, now, I know that you've been interviewed may different times from different people so we're not going to dwell so much on the Magnolia stuff in that respect. The sharecropping days and all but I know that your father, I believe, if I remember trained horses there at Magnolia. Is that right?

LV: My grandfather.

RT: Grandfather, grandfather. Okay, can you tell us a little bit ... what was his name and then a bit about him?

LV: His name was John Vercher and I don't know too much about him.

RT: Okay, you didn't know much. Is that off your father side?

LV: Right.

RT: Yes, okay but you knew he did the horse training?

LV: Right. Both of my grandfather's did. On my mamma's side too. They did horse training.

RT: Was it always for Melrose or for anybody?

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LV: That's for Magnolia.

RT: I mean Magnolia. I'm sorry I mean Magnolia but would they do it for anybody or just Magnolia?

LV: Naw, just Magnolia.

RT: Okay, so they were just hired specifically by that family?

LV: Yea.

RT: Okay, you didn't learn any of that stuff from them? It wasn't something that was taught or you just wasn't interested?

LV: Naw, I wasn't interested.

RT: Wasn't interested okay.

LV: I ain't rode a horse til today.

RT: (RT laughs). Okay then, but you do know now about some of the riding clubs and stuff in this area right?

LV: Yea, I guess. Turner got a riding club.

RT: Okay, Mr. Turner.

LV: Uh hum.

RT: And, anybody else here now that still has one?

LV: Not that I know of. They have some but that's the only one I go to.

RT: Oh, okay than. And, that's Mr. Turner that lives right over this way somewhere. Yea, right up the road going by Oakland.

LV: Past, I mean right before you get to Oakland.

RT: Right. Okay then. So what are some of the traditions with the riding clubs? What do they do?

LV: They had horse races and stuff like that from what I can understand. Like on Sundays.

RT: Okay, just racing any time or is it a weekend thing?

LV: It's a weekend thing they did. You know, a get together.

RT: And how often do you go, every time, almost every time?

LV: I never went nar time. I wasn't old enough. I was small when all that was going on.

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RT: So, you're saying that those clubs don't happen anymore now?

LV: Naw, not like that. Not when they was having down on Magnolia. That's something that they did.

RT: Oh, okay. So when they were having it at Magnolia, people came from everywhere to attend or just local folks?

LV: Mostly everywhere yea.

RT: And so it was betting and stuff going on then?

LV: I don't really know. No I wouldn't know about that.

RT: Okay, you were too young?

LV: I guess just like the trail rides now, I guess that what that was back then.

RT: Okay then it just changed a little bit.

LV: Yea, yea.

RT: Alrighty then. Do you know anybody here in the area that maybe you can recommend to me that still trains horses or works with horses?

LV: Naw, the only man doing it here was Edgar Rougeau and he died a few months ago.

RT: Oh, okay and that's about it then huh? So, right now if anybody is going to ride a horse, race a horse or something... they are training them themselves?

LV: Yep, they train them themselves. Train themselves how to ride. Yep.

RT: Alrighty then. Is there anything else you'd like to share Leslie about your work at the plantation when you were there at the national park? (LV shakes his head to indicate no). Okay then well thank you very much.

[After the interview ended LV talked about his father's relationship with Mr. Herzog the owner of Magnolia Plantation. Leslie stated that his father had a good relationship with Mr. Hertzog and that it was unusual for that day and time. Leslie said he rarely talks about that because he feels most folks only want to hear that there was bad relationships between workers and plantation owners. Leslie went on to talk about how if his father's car broke down on a Saturday, then he would tell Mr. Hertzog and would get a new car by Monday. He said his family was sad when Hertzog died.]

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Cane River Creole National Historical Park**

**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Bertha Lee Wardworth

Interviewed April 14, 2015 at the Wardworth Grocery Store by Rolonda Teal

Time of interview: 00:26:35

Transcribed [R. D. Teal]

[Signed consent form]

Note: ... indicates speaker's pause

00:00

RT: Today is February 13, 2015. I am here at Wardworth Grocery in Natchitoches, Louisiana. I'm going to be speaking with Mrs. Wardworth who is the owner of the store?

BW: Yes, yes.

RT: Okay and we'll begin from there. Can we start with you just giving us your full name please?

BW: My full name is Bertha Lee Howard Wardworth.

RT: Okay, and you've lived here all your life? Is that right?

BW: No

RT: No? Can you tell us about that?

BW: I was born down on Little River behind Cloutierville, Louisiana.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Okay I don't know that. I don't remember that but that's where I come from. Then we moved to Marco (LA) and that's where I grew-up down in Marco.

RT: Oh Marco okay. I've never really talked to anybody that grew-up in that area.

BW: Yeah, it's going down toward Alexandria. You know where it is, don't you?

RT: Yes ma'am. I do.

BW: That's where... I grew-up down there.

RT: Okay, now why did you guys move down there? Do you know?

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BW: Well that was home. We were on Little River and we just moved out there. That was just home.

RT: Okay. I was wondering... some people might have moved because of sharecropping or they moved 'cause family members were there.

BW: Huh, we sharecropped now.

RT: Oh you did?

BW: That was the deal back then. You know we was staying on somebody else's property and in their house and what you sharecrop...you pick cotton, pick pecans and all this stuff... sorghum [inaudible] from when we were real young.

RT: And so how long did you stay down there in Marco?

BW: Uh, I stayed down there until I finished high school. And then when I finished high school one of my teachers wanted me to come and live with her to take care of her children. And that's when I come on up there on Melrose [Plantation] and lived with one of my teachers, Ms. Jones.

RT: And she was on Melrose?

BW: Um-huh. That's where she was and that's where the school was, St. Matthews School was up there. See, that's where I graduated from, St. Matthews. So I knew her from there because she was my teacher. And then she wanted me to come after the lady she was living with left. She wanted me to come and just live with them and help raise her children. So, I stayed there for... I don't know probably about three years.

RT: Okay. What was that like living down there at Melrose and around that area?

BW: Oh just fine because I was going down there all the time when school was in season.

RT: Okay, so you knew everybody?

BW: Yes, yes I knew everybody.

RT: Okay, and now your family then... what is the history around them. Did they come into the area from somewhere else because Wardworth is such an unusual name.

BW: No, that's my husband.

RT: Okay that's your husband.

BW: That's my husband. It was up there at Bermuda. He was born and raised up there at Bermuda, Louisiana.

RT: Yes Bermuda. Yes ma'am.

BW: Okay that's where he came from.

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RT: So what was your maiden name then?

BW: Howard.

RT: You were a Howard.

BW: Yes.

RT: Okay, I've heard of that name. Okay, so you move up here then into Natchitoches and at what point did you decide to open up this store?

BW: Okay, I'll start from the beginning. The first store, my husband opened it. He graduated from high school in 1954 so he opened the first store [inaudible] in 1955. It was... We called it Pan Am like you going towards [inaudible] you would cross the tracks in those houses across the track over there.

RT: If you're going towards what way now?

BW: [Inaudible] going towards Natchez, LA, well you got to go across the track, well that's the first store was over there.

RT: Okay.

BW: He built the first store because then you could build it on your property. You didn't have to [inaudible] on the end of his property, he built it there.

03:32

So, after we got married, I was helping his mom with that store and then this, not this building but the little lot right that little space right there where the cars are parked.

RT: Next door.

BW: Yeah, that's where the store was.

RT: Okay.

BW: And we stayed there for, I don't know how many years, three or four years I'm not sure and then that's when this came for sale. So, we bought this spot right here. And, that's where we started.

RT: Okay, and you have been in business here for how long?

BW: We opened this store in ugh '68. It was the Monday before Thanksgiving in 1968.

RT: You remember exactly (laughter from RT and BW)

BW: Yeah so my husband he was working at L. M. Johnson at the time so we didn't... He didn't quit his job. I just ran the store. The children, after school, they would come and help and my grandson would come and they would help and all this stuff, at least my son. And then after

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we stayed here a while, he said I think this store will be able to, you know, take care of us. So, he resigned from his work and then about, I can remember about seven months just me and the children [worked]. And then he quit and that was it.

RT: And it [the store] was able to support your family?

BW: Yep it was.

RT: So how hard was it trying to start a business in the 60s?

BW: Oh, it was... I don't think... It wasn't hard because he knew about business. [Inaudible] So it really wasn't that hard. I had the children here. Like I say the children would come in and then you could hire children. And they would come in and they would help me. Some of them were so short they would have to get up on a milk carton to look at the scale. So, I would teach them how to read the scale. Taught them how to do the cash register, you know and we went from there.

RT: So you've always had the meat market part of the store?

BW: Um huh.

RT: That's always been there?

BW: Um huh always been there.

RT: So, like in terms of today, if this store wasn't right here in the community... what do you think, what would they have to do?

BW: I don't know.

RT: How far would they have to go?

BW: They would have to go back to Brookshire's [Grocery Store]. That's the closest one. So you see they glad as hell. Thank God it's here they say. Just come right here; they can walk. A lot of them right here in the community, they can walk.

RT: Right. And what kind of changes have you seen in this area since you've been? I know you've seen some. You know, maybe in terms of what buildings or people that were here or something like that.

BW: Well a lot of the people that were here when I came {inaudible} but they're gone now so sometime I just be sitting down thinking about how many that was here when I first came here and now they gone but their children are here. So, I know their children and sometimes their grandchildren because, you know, they were just little... They weren't even born. A lot of them weren't even born when I came here.

RT: Okay. So, you're getting to see generations.

BW: Right. And they're right here. They still come and they'll tell me about when they was small [inaudible] with a note from their mom and all this. So, I just enjoy them.

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RT: So, who helps you to run the store now, daily?

BW: Ugh, my grandson out there (points outside the door towards cash register) Darryl Gasoway. He came down one night and uh I was here at the store. I was thinking maybe I had to lease it out you know after my husband had died. And he say uh, "Give me a key." I said, "Okay." He said "I want to put my clothes in the car. I said, "Alright." He said, "I come to stay." Just like that. I didn't ask him and he been right here ever since. Yea, been right here ever since.

07:16

RT: Alright. So, it's a family run business.

BW: Um ugh. Right yeah. Um ugh.

RT: Yes ma'am. Is that something you want to see continue on like even after you're gone?

BW: Yeah, that's what I'm telling him. I don't want to ever sell it because I got the grandchildren, a God-grandson so just keep it. Let it go on, just keep it in the family. That's what I want to... That's what I want to do. Cause people ask about buying it but I didn't want to sell it and I said I might have to lease it but after he (grandson) came down.... So...

RT: That takes some of the pressure off?

BW: Oh yeah, I don't have nothing to do. I'm just here really. (Laughter from BW and RT). But that's what I told him. Just keep it in the family. Just keep it here forever.

RT: So, what are the store hours?

BW: We open from 8:00 to 8:00.

RT: Wow.

BW: That's Monday to Saturday. But now on Wednesday nights I close at 7:00 so I can get a chance to go to Bible Study. So I use to have another lady, she was working here and I would. You know she would stay and I said well that's not right. She missing her Bible Study for me to go to Bible Study so I just started closing at 7:00 on Wednesday nights but all the other nights is at 8:00.

RT: And then closed on Sundays?

BW: Un-uh, but now my grandson and another guy that works here, they wanted to open two days... two times a month. I said well if y'all want to do that on Sundays from 9-12. So they do that.

RT: Oh yeah cause a lot of people on Sunday mornings trying to get stuff to make that dinner.

BW: Yeah. (Laughter from RT and BW). So I said now if you all want to do that it's fine with me so they done it so whatever you want to do as long as you do it. So, I don't really have to be here but I just come to keep from being at home by myself, you know, since my husband died. I just comes.

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RT: Yes to stay busy.

BW: Yes

RT: Yes ma'am. Have you ever had any problems here, somebody trying to rob you or anything like that?

BW: Uh, I've had a lot of problems.

RT: Really?

BW: Breaking in. They was breaking in before my husband died. They must be had broke in about, I don't know, maybe about 2 or 3 times or more than that. And since he been dead I guess maybe 3 or 4 times. Maybe more.

RT: Why do you think that is? Have things changed because he's (her husband) not here or?

BW: No they did it when he was here. They broke in then. I guess it's just sometimes people just do things. I guess they don't think you know. And they just break in places. They do it at other places but you know seem like here they wouldn't do it because I know all of them.

RT: Right because you in the community.

BW: But they still do it. I had one, I think it was in July got broke in. [inaudible] And then I think it was a month later. They didn't break in but they come and they broke the door. I had to buy another door.

RT: So, it's steady costing you.

BW: Yeah it costs. It cost. I guess people don't think that way you know. That it's gone cost when you tear up something of somebody.

RT: Right.

BW: And it's not right.

RT: No it's not.

BW: That's the point. It's not right. The way I feel about it, how would you feel if somebody would do that to you.

RT: Okay. After you've been working all day or whatever.

BW: Yeah, that's right. [inaudible] they do that too I guess. I know I hear on the news they be doing all that. But you don't do that because think about if that was me. Would I want somebody to do that to me? You know that's the way I feel about it. I'm old and that's the way I feel about it.

RT: You're right. It's fair play though.

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BW: Yeah, yeah, seem like back in the day you didn't have to worry about nobody breaking in your house. Your neighbors right there. They was gone look after you and everything. There was no breaking in houses and locking no doors and all that. You didn't have to do all that.

RT: And somebody was gone see you in the neighborhood.

BW: Yes, but see now sometime people don't know their neighbors.

RT: That's true.

BW: No they don't.

RT: So, in that way the community has changed a lot too then.

BW: Yeah, in that way um huh. Like I say I been knowing them all the time, they still right here with me.

RT: Okay. Well, let's switch up a little bit. I'm trying to make connections between African Americans and other groups.

BW: Um huh.

RT: Like a lot of times people will say ...

(Interview interrupted by a store customer)

RT: A lot of times people will say we have Indian in our family. Have you ever heard that in your family and do you know which group?

BW: (Shakes her head to indicate no).

RT: Nobody ever said that. Okay.

BW: No, no I ain't never heard nothing about that. My family didn't.

RT: I guess they didn't then. Not everybody but a lot of blacks will say that.

BW: They will?

RT: I've been trying to figure out – do they know. Sometimes they'll say, "Yeah I heard I was Choctaw" or "I heard my ancestors were..."

BW: No, not to my knowledge

RT: Okay, no problem. Okay, another thing we're looking into, it's a little controversial but we know it exist because people have been talking about it, that there use to be a seer lady here and a man. I've been told that people would come in on the weekends and go to see them and have like their fortunes told or whatever for the week. Did you know anything about that?

BW: Oh stuff like that.

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RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Yes, I pass by [inaudible] when I'm going to my house but I never believed in that.

RT: So, you didn't know anything about that happening here in town?

BW: No, I did not know anything about it no. Like I say.... Somebody (interrupted by noise in store) say they have somebody up here that do that and I pass... when I'm going home I pass a house, you know, where the hand, Palm Reader or whatever it's called.

RT: Oh that that's up there on the highway. They got that big sign a white sign with the red palm.

BW: Um huh. Well I pass by that place going home.

RT: Oh, okay. Well no, they were saying like back in the day a little bit that was happening here in town but you didn't know anything about that.

BW: No.

RT: Yes ma'am, yes, ma'am.

BW: You know it might have been but I didn't know nothing about it.

RT: Okay, what church do you belong to?

BW: I belong to... I kind of got two, my home church where I been all my life is St. Davis down in Cloutierville and my pastor is Reverend Richard Glen and St. Paul in Bermuda, I'm like a guest member there. And Rev. Leo Walker is the pastor there, so I go there.

RT: Yes, he's been there a long (emphasis on word long) time as the pastor.

BW: Yeah a long time. I was going there before he came in.

RT: Oh really.

BW: When I was [inaudible] I would go to church down there.

RT: Yes, and so your home church, do they have the mourning bench still at your home church?

BW: Yeah, you know like they use to sit on, um-huh.

RT: They do? Okay because I know it's kind of dying out at some of the churches.

BW: I know, I know but we still have it.

13:25

RT: And that's ...

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BW: St. Thomas does it.

RT: Oh St. Thomas does. I didn't know they did. And I know Gilgal Baptist up here on Island, uh Choctaw Island I think. Up through that way, they have it. Okay. Alright so you guys still practice it as well.

BW: Yeah, um huh.

RT: How important is that ceremony to you or to what you think it does for the community?

BW: Well (extends the word well), the children, not just children cause you got grown-ups too, go and they can preach and talk to you and tell you what you're supposed to be doing and everything.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Teach you to read your Bible and those things and I think it's [inaudible]

RT: You think it is, okay?

BW: That why I think Bible Study is important too because things that you maybe don't understand, well you can ask and somebody can tell you. Or maybe somebody else in the church might know and they can tell you. But you can ask questions.

RT: But if you don't go, you don't know right?

BW: That's right. You can read it but you might not understand but if you go you can ask somebody and they can tell ya.

RT: Yes ma'am, and another thing that's kind of been coming up when I'm talking to people is... They're talking about, you know, how the black church is just kind of, you know, you don't have a lot of members anymore...

BW: We don't have a lot of members.

RT: At which church – both of them?

BW: No at St. Paul we have a lot of members there.

RT: Okay that's what I thought.

BW: Oh yes. At St. Davis we don't have very many members because like I say we are in the country and a lot of our members have moved and the older ones have died. And you know the younger ones be done gone out of state and different things so we don't have very many but we still have church there.

RT: Okay then, where one or more is gathered

BW: Two, you be in the midst. (Laughter from BW and RT).

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RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: So we still have it. Still down there in Cloutier[ville]. I go down there every Sunday. We have Sunday school every Sunday, but on the 2nd and 3rd I go to Sunday school down there and then I come back to St. Paul for church. The Sunday coming up we have our Communion at St. Paul so I'll be there.

RT: Oh yeah for Communion. Yes ma'am. Okay. Yeah. So, I kinda wanted to talk about that and then... Do you know of anything about Cat Island? Down there (RT points in southerly direction). You know Cat Island Road and all that comes out...

BW: You talking about where they call it Creole...

RT: Well, it's kinda over in that area but it's off of Highway 1 and you'll see the sign from the road it says Cat Island. The road really just kind of makes like a "u" shape and come on back out. It's an old river... the road that used to follow the river down there. They say that's how everybody use to travel. Following that road along the river. It's called Cat Island Road.

BW: (Shakes her head to indicate no).

RT: So no you don't...

BW: I lives...

RT: You've probably seen it.

BW: But I can't remember all about it.

RT: Yeah, I was just trying to find out a little bit more about that community because we know that a lot of blacks lived over there on that side and Creoles. They were all mixed-up in there, on through that section.

BW: Oh, that area...

RT: A lot of houses right down along the river.

BW: Down in Cloutierville them old houses, buildings and all .

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Oh, okay, yeah, I just pass there all the time. Pass by there.

RT: But didn't know much about it?

BW: They had them old houses. I thought some of them old houses are still down there.

RT: Yes ma'am, yes ma'am.

BW: Um huh.

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16:34

RT: Okay, do you know anything about the Roque House that's right down here on the river. That brown that sits right down, you know, where you can park and watch the water. It's a big old building there. It's a house and they call it the Roque House. You don't know anything about that building? You can't put it in your mind huh?

BW: I can't do it right now.

RT: Okay then no problem.

BW: What you do. You can sit down and look at the river bank?

RT: Yeah, you know when you coming down Front [Street] there.

BW: Front Street.

RT: And you can go down and get down close to the water.

BW: Oh I understand what you talking about.

RT: Yes ma'am. It's a big old house over there. Yes ma'am did you know that was built by a black man?

BW: I think I heard that.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Cause they use to have a statue somewhere...

RT: Oh that's that Good Darkie statue you talking about that they moved out.

BW: Uh yeah.

RT: Yes Ma'am, no he didn't have anything to do with that.

BW: Oh okay, okay.

RT: And the only reason I was asking you about it is because I am trying to make people more aware of... that building was built by a former slave who bought his freedom but we [African Americans] don't know that in the community. You know we don't realize that that's important to us.

BW: Yes it's important.

RT: Yes ma'am, so I was just asking to see did you know anything or had heard anything about it.

BW: No.

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RT: Okay. Alright now in terms of helping young folks, because you started a business here. It's been a successful business all these years... what kind of advice, you know, would you give to folks that's wanting to maybe do what you did?

BW: I say you just got to try. You can't say well I can't do this, I can't do that but you have to try. You never know until you try and then somebody may be there to help you that can talk to you. So, you don't just say well I can't do that and leave it alone. Cause if we had did that, my husband would never have started in the first place.

RT: Yes ma'am, just give it a try huh?

BW: Yeah, you have to try. What they say, how that song go. Something like if you don't try you can't do it or whatever. But you have to try to do what you can.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Don't be so [inaudible] or something like that.

RT: I know what you're saying now. I've heard that.

BW: Yeah, yeah. So, that's about it so.

RT: Now you told me someone had come and done an interview with you before and out it in the paper and...

BW: That's it right there. (BW points to an article tacked to the wall behind RT).

RT: Oh, "The Messenger". It says dated July 10, 2012. There're some wonderful pictures here and everything and then a short write-up and all.

BW: Yes.

RT: Uh, what would be your legacy if you had to just say this is what I want the community to remember me for?

BW: (Long silence) I guess I would say fussing at these children. (BW and RT laugh). But, I don't know. I guess I always did that. I would be talking to them and trying to tell them how to do and go other places, you know. How to act when you go there and stuff like that.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: And that's what I be sitting here doing. They say Mama [inaudible] just fuss about and I say no I'm not cause I would hate to go somewhere and see somebody that I've been knowing all they life acting-up in a place. So, I be just talking to them.

19:44

RT: And so if you were to go right out your store and walk down the street and 10 people passed you, would all 10 of them know you?

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BW: Probably would.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: Cause some of them say Miss L.B., some Miss Bertha, or you know, some say Maw-dear, you know whatever.

RT: Okay.

BW: Yeah, yeah Auntie or whatever.

RT: Okay, so you definitely are a figure in this community?

BW: Yeah, I think so cause I say I love them all. They just right here with me. Don't you do this, you go sit down. I'll get that. You know.

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: And they just right there for help. That's the important thing when people can come and help you, you know.

RT: I could tell even as we were interviewing and the lady made sure she spoke to you on the way out.

BW: Yeah, cause sometimes I say y'all just knock on the window or whatever and I raised up and talk to them. Cause I been knowing, like I say, I been knowing them for so long. All they life.

RT: Okay, is there anything that you would like to add? Maybe about the community, something you've seen, something you don't particularly like, seen now or anything like that? Cause I like to think about this in terms of like right now your grandson is here with you.

BW: Yes.

RT: But, imagine 50 years from now, 75 years from now somebody pulls this tape and was listening, one of your descendants...

BW: Um huh.

RT: What are some things you would want them to know, maybe about this city or your life or your husbands, or something like or their great-great grandparents or... Yes ma'am.

BW: Oh, let's see. I guess I always [inaudible] I hope they do. Just remember how that how your parents, grandparents, and your aunts and uncles would talk to you and tell you how to live. Tell you how to do and how to treat people. That's, that's always... we all could do that. I know we all can't do everything but just talk to people. You don't have to fuss or anything but just stand there and talk with them. Yeah. Cause like I say I do it with the old people.

RT: So, just be kind to folks.

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BW: Yeah, yeah, that's what I think it's supposed to be say love one another. How can you love God whom you've never seen and you looking at some of these people you see every day and you don't, you can't love em?

RT: Yes ma'am.

BW: "I don't like them" – what? You might not like something that they do but that ain't got nothing to do with you hating a person.

RT: That's right.

BW: Talk to them about it if you can.

RT: Okay, and then I want to ask you this. This is kind of like um... leadership on the black community. Who do YOU identify with as leaders in the community? If you really wanted to see something happen or you think they could really go and talk to folks, who would that be?

BW: I would think your pastors in the area.

RT: Okay.

BW: Because, ugh, we have a lot of churches here and I think you could go talk to your pastor about some things. Or even if it's not your pastor, another one you could go and talk with them about things. Tell you, tell you some things maybe you don't even know.

22:45

RT: Alright.

BW: Go and talk to the pastors and maybe some other people, you know, you could talk to.

RT: Yes ma'am. So, just right from here... for example you have powerful people like um, Ed, Mr. Ed Ward...

BW: Uh, he's good.

RT: Mrs. Sylvia Morrow, and all those... are those names when you say community leaders that come to

BW: Right, right cause they are...

RT: In the front, in the forefront.

BW: Yeah, um huh. Ralph Wilson down the street.

RT: Ralph Wilson, yes Mr. Wilson. Okay, I'm just trying to see if we're on the [inaudible] when you say community leaders... somebody else might call another name so.

BW: Yeah, they could but like I say I know them cause you know...

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RT: Yes ma'am. Okay, and one last thing. Can you tell me when you were growing-up, being out in the country and coming to the city and just not having... Who were your mentors? Who encouraged you or who did you look up to?

BW: (long pause). I guess I want to say Rev. Carter.

RT: Rev. Carter, okay.

BW: Long time ago when I was small, Back in those days, your pastors like didn't have cars so they would come and live with somebody in the community, you know, for to go back and forth to church. So, he used to come and stay with us. And [inaudible] live until Revival was over and take, bring him back to town.

RT: Oh, okay. So, you remember him staying with you?

BW: Oh yeah, yeah. We'd be out in the field picking cotton or whatever and he would be at home in the house studying his Bible or whatever he had to do.

RT: And so that was only during Revival time?

BW: Yeah.

RT: Okay.

BW: Cause you know they had to stay so many days.

RT: For 2 weeks or so? Alrighty then.

BW: See now most of em... they have their own cars so they just drive back and forth and then like I say with your pastors and your teachers was basically that way. Your teachers would stay with you because they was up in town. Okay, when they come down way down in the country with no car... so they just live with some... the teachers live with some family down there. So you had teachers living in the house with you too.

RT: And let me ask you this right quick. I keep thinking about things as you are talking. (BW laughs). When you were born down there in the rural area, was there a midwife or did they bring you to town.

BW: Un huh, um huh, a midwife January 12, and it was freezing and we got the midwife.

RT: And what was her name? Do you know?

BW: I can't remember her name but I got my Birth Certificate at home.

RT: Yes ma'am. Just trying to see.

BW: They ain't told me all that.

RT: Yes ma'am. Yes indeed, how nice it is to go to the hospital these days (RT laughs).

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BW: And now they go and some of em would say, “well, it’s not time for the baby to be born yet.” Or “The baby’s been there too long. We gotta go on and take it.” And to me, the baby’s gonna come when it’s time to come. It ain’t gone come ahead of time and it ain’t gone come after time. It’s coming when it’s time. But, that’s the way it is now.

25:43

RT: Things have really changed.

BW: Yes it really has.

RT: Yes ma’am.

BW: You don’t know nothing about all that kind of stuff now.

RT: So, there’s a lot of tourism and stuff coming into Natchitoches now, you know, and they’re trying to get... make it a retirement community, bring a lot of folks in and stuff like that. What would you say to encourage black folks to come to Natchitoches?

BW: Well, I like it because it’s ... I mean I guess it’s large but it’s small you kind of know basically a lot of people. So it could be nice, you know, in a small town and I think we here try to help one another. I think it would be nice.

RT: A nice place to come and retire then?

BW: Yeah, yeah. Sit back and relax.

RT: Alright, well thank you so much. Is there anything you want to add?

BW: No, that’s about it.

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**PMIS 189964 A
PEPC 53382**

Interviewee: Loletta Jones Wynder (Cane River)

Interviewed January 27, 2015 at the Creole Heritage Center, NSU, by Dayna Bowker Lee

**Time of interview: 01:32:51
Transcribed 4/2/2015 [D. K. Greer]
[Signed consent form]
Note: ... indicates speaker's pause**

00:00

DL: Mrs. Loletta Wynder, today is the 27th of January, 2015.

00:13:80

DL: Ms. Loletta, let's start out with the basics. When were you born?

LW: I was born September 13, 1949.

DL: What were your parents' names?

LW: John L. Jones and Almeda Rollins Jones.

DL: Tell me a little bit, you were telling me a minute ago, about your blended family?

LW: Oh, yes, it is a blended family. I know now they don't say extended anymore, it's called blended, and when I say I have a blended family, it's a blended family. My mom and dad got married, daddy had three children, and my mother had two children. My mom's from Caddo Parish—Shreveport—and she had been married before, and she had two children, a boy and a girl. Daddy had two boys and a girl; and they got married in '47, 1947, I was born in 1949, and from there my mom ... it was five children that came into the marriage. Okay, my mom and dad together had 13 children. So, it was 13, plus the five, was a total of 18 children.

DL: My goodness.

01:40

LW: But it doesn't end there. My mom's two children, my mom had the two children, okay, we all lived there, and I really don't remember a lot about my dad's three children living in the house, Oreatha, and John. L, and T., but I do remember my mother's two children, Ada Jean and Joe DL. I remember them being in the house. My mother's daughter, Ada Jean, she had four children, and I got married in 1968, and prior to my marriage, I got married August of 1968, that same year, in March, my mom's son was killed in a car accident. He was living in Houston, and he went out, he worked for Goodyear, he went out to go fix flats on trucks, and a drunk driver came through, and he was killed, that was March. Okay, I got married in August, he didn't have any children, but I got married August of '68, and then November '68, my mama's daughter was killed in a car accident. As a matter of fact, it was four people. That was a drunk driver too, and

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it was four people at the same time that got killed. Her four children, my mom and dad brought them into the household. I had just got married but everybody else was still there. So that was an additional four children that went into that same household.

DL: My goodness.

LW: They raised the four children along with the rest of everybody.

DL: So basically there were 22 children all together.

LW: And some of them were born, I have brothers ... I have two brothers that were born in the same year. I have one, Nathaniel was born in January '58 and Michael was born December of '58, and then I have some that's like 11 months apart also, maybe born in one year, like, they catch up with each other.

DL: It was just stair-steps.

LW: Oh, yes.

04:15

DL: Where's your earliest memory of growing up? Where did you live?

LW: Down Cane River.

DL: But where?

LW: You know where Isabel Arceneaux lived? [Walter Delphin place, 1916 Hwy. 484]

DL: I do.

LW: Okay, we lived right next door to them. In that big curve, there was a house there, and we all, growing up, that's where we lived, and I remember when I was like in the first grade, I believe, our house caught fire and burned. My dad was working as a sharecropper for the Roques, and so after that house burned, they moved another house into that same spot, and we went back into that house.

DL: Was that land where your house was, was that owned by the Roques?

05:11

LW: It was owned by the Roques. They owned a lot of property down there, and we weren't the only ones that were sharecroppers for them, but my dad farmed, and my mom. Between our house and the ... it was Delphins then, Isabel Arceneaux now, she was a Delphin, there was just a big field in between the two houses, and this is the property that daddy farmed. He farmed that in cotton, and there were pecan trees there where we picked pecans.

DL: About how many acres?

LW: I really don't know. I just remember it being a big place, I never thought about it in terms of acres, but I know it was just a big place.

DL: The crops that he grew were cotton, and then y'all had pecans around like the edge of the

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fields?

LW: Right, the front part was pecan trees, and then had the cotton in back. He drove the tractor, he planted it, then we had to hoe the cotton, and pick the cotton in bales, and all this stuff, and we picked pecans, and he would pay so much per pound. Funny part of it was, my husband laughs at me all the time, but I never did a lot of farm work. I mean, I would pick pecans; that was it, but as far as the cotton and all of that, me being the oldest, I became the babysitter. I had to take care of all my brothers and sisters. My daddy and mom farmed, did the farming in the field, but I took care of my brothers and sisters. I cooked, I washed, I cleaned, I ironed, that was my job. I guess that's why I've always been ... taking care of everybody, because that's exactly what I had to do, take care of them.

07:30

DL: So everybody, if they were able, up and able except for you who babysit, all the rest of the kids worked alongside your parents?

LW: Yeah, uh-huh. There was one standing rule in our house. See, my mom was from Shreveport, Caddo, and she went as far as the ninth grade and she quit. Daddy, I think, was like the fifth, sixth grade but there's one standing rule, you had to go to school. We were not, I think, we were, basically, almost the only family that was like that. When school started—school was always starting late, or whenever school started a lot of the kids were not able to go to school right away because they had to help the parents pick the cotton, you know, pick the field—but it wasn't like that with us. That rule, my mom and my dad, whether he agreed, I don't even know if he agreed or not, but it was my mom's rules, you're going to school, if you do anything else or not, you're going to school. So, we went to school.

DL: Did you go to St. Matthew's?

08:45

LW: Went to St. Matthew. I went to St. Matthew all the way 'til I got in the ninth grade, and then, I was transferred to St. James in Alexandria, St. James Catholic School. It was just kind of ironic, like I said, the rule was you're going to school, but I was going to St. Matthew, and then when I got into the sixth grade, back then, they were giving these standardized tests or whatever, I took my tests, and the scores showed that I should've been in the eighth grade, and so, as a result, I went from sixth grade, skipped seventh, and went straight to the eighth grade. So when I finished eighth grade, and got to go to high school, my daddy—I was twelve—Daddy said, "You're not going to no St. Matthew High School at twelve years old!" I was going to school, but no, twelve years old? Uh-uh. You're not going to St. Matthew." Daddy was kind of a protector. So, he got with Marie Roque, Collins Roque, Earl Roque, and Emmett Roque, and Emmett was the father and those were the two sons, and Earl Roque's wife, Marie Roque. Most, down there, a lot of the Creoles didn't go to St. Matthew

[interview interrupted for Mrs. Wynder to speak to CHC staff]

10:49

LW: Daddy said, "Let me get with Marie Roque," he said, "I'm going to talk to Ms. Roque," because most of the Creoles down there—they weren't called Creoles, basically at that time, they were either called Frenchmen, or mulattoes—they would, a lot of the kids didn't go to school down there, especially if they went to St. Joseph, which is down there at the church, and then when they got into high school, they shipped them off to other schools away [from Natchitoches

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Parish]. St. James was one of the ones they went to, and Holy Rosary, I think that was what it was, it was several of them they would send their kids off to. So, daddy got with her, because she was taking Consuela and her children, they were going to St. James in Alexandria, and daddy's sister lived in Alexandria. So, he got with her, and asked her about taking me to St. James also. [sighs] But never the less, he said, "You can go stay with Sister,' his sister, "You can go and stay, and go to school down there.' So, that's how that began.

12:15:60

I went with her down to register with her daughter, road in the truck with all the family, registered and got everything, and I ended up transferring down there, and I stayed with my aunt, and I would come home sometimes on the weekend; but other than that, I stayed down there and I went to school. I only did the one year, because I had ... his sister ... I was ready to come back home. My aunt, she didn't have any children, she was married, but they had no children, and I was ready to come back.

DL: Where did you go after that?

LW: I went back to St. Matthew—then I was in the tenth grade.

DL: But you were a little older.

LW: Right, I was in the tenth grade that year, and at that time, one of the times I came home on the weekend, we couldn't find them, we couldn't find my parents. For some reason, which I've never been able to figure out, daddy just up and moved, and came to Natchitoches. My aunt, daddy had a, we had a phone, but my aunt, they had a phone but it was long distance, so we weren't calling back and forth, but we had to, I think we ended up going to my sister, Oreatha, 'cause Oreatha was living down there. She was married, and she lived down there, and she was the one that told us where we could find them, and so that's how I ended up finding where they were, but daddy just, it's a mystery to this day why, he just up and moved and came to Natchitoches.

14:06

DL: What did he do for a living once he got here?

LW: He started working at the Natchitoches Parish Hospital—not where it is now, at its current site. I think it was up on Washington Street. He started working there, he got a job there, and that's where he started working.

DL: Did your mom work?

LW: After they moved up here?

DL: Uh-huh.

LW: No, just in like private homes, and working in people's houses, and stuff like that. That's all she did, but she had all those kids by then, and so she was basically at home.

DL: Were you raised Catholic?

LW: Not totally. When we lived down Cane River, my dad was staunch Baptist. My mom came from Shreveport, and she was Methodist, but there was no Methodist church that she could

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really attend down Cane River, but some of the, she still tried to follow her Methodist training, which was similar to Catholic. We were brought up fasting, and abstaining, and celebrating Good Friday and Easter holidays, all, you know, kind of parallel, the same thing, but I never... Now, my sister, which is my mother's daughter, the one who was killed in the wreck, she was baptized at St. Augustine. Belle Arceneaux was her godmother from down there, and then that really kind of sealed me with being Catholic also at that time, and when I went to St. James, I was baptized at St. James, and confirmed at St. James, and then when I came back home, all my brothers and sisters, the whole shebang—we had this the station wagon, we had this white station wagon—and I started going to St. Anthony, and all of us, we all went to St. Anthony.

16:31

LW: And then my brothers and sisters, and then my young brothers and sisters, they went to St. Anthony school. They went to school there, but I was in high school at St. Matthew, but they went to St. Anthony school until, what was it like, sixth grade, something like that. Then my brothers were recruited for St. Mary's, and they went to St. Mary's and played football, and Chris Maggio and James Lilley, I mean, it just a whole bunch of 'em that played football together, and they basically lived at my parents' house, a lot of them. To this day, they always, they know my parents and everything.

DL: But you continued to go down river and go to St. Matthew's? After you lived up here?

LW: Yes.

DL: How did you get there?

17:32

LW: On the school bus, and some of us, some of them went to St. Matthew, period, because you know they closed St. Matthew; but we would get on the bus, just my older brothers, and we would go to St. Matthew down there, and St. Matthew, had just gotten to be ... I don't know. You know, living on Cane River was, in some ways, was bad, and some ways were not. I think because, what I said, "Daddy don't take no mess," we didn't have it quite as bad as some of the other people from down there, because daddy stood up, and daddy would say, I remember one of the guys, when you get on the bus, you know, have the seat, and more than one person could sit on the seat ...

18:36

LW: ... okay, that could get to be a problem, you couldn't sit with nobody else because they didn't want you sitting on the seat with them, and this, I remember, name was Marty. He would bother me every day, he would bother me, pulling my pigtails, because I had thick long hair, and my mom—the kids used to laugh at me anyhow, my mom's from Shreveport, and she knew how to French braid it, and she would part my hair, and she would give me two French braids, and they would be hanging down—and he would pull my pigtails, anything he could think of. And if you'd sit on the seat sometimes, they would push you off the seat, you know, 'cause you couldn't sit with them, you know, the Frenchmen, 'cause they didn't want you sitting next to them, and he did that. And I got off the bus this one particular time, and I was upset and crying. That next morning, when I got out there to get on that bus, daddy was standing right there, and he looked at Marty, and he told him, he said, "If you mess with her one more time" The bus driver didn't have to say a word. Trust me, he didn't mess with me anymore after that. He did not bother me because daddy said, "Uh-uh, this is not gonna happen." But you have a lot of that, but, you know, the parents didn't try to stand up for you, you know, because, a lot of the Frenchmen, as

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they were called back then, they didn't get along with themselves.

20:34

LW: Where we lived, like I said, it was a deep curve, coming from Belle's house, there was this deep curve, and you go around, and they had cars, and they'd be driving, and I was so glad that time we did have a fence in the front, our yard was fenced in. They'd be driving and drinking, shooting, and cussing, especially on a Saturday. We weren't allowed to even go out the yard. I remember, I didn't know nothing about CB radios, but they had all these cars, and they had, like, put radios in 'em, and if some of 'em were over at Bubbá's and if they start fighting over there, they'd get on the radio, and you could hear 'em, and they would call, and here they'd go, and the next thing you'd know, somebody would be either shot, cut, it was...

DL: And those are the French families you're talking about?

LW: Uh-huh. They didn't get along among themselves. There was more shootings, and killings, wrecks, and ending up in the river.

21:55

DL: You said earlier that there were bad points and good points about growing up on Cane River. What were the good points?

LW: I guess, just family. We didn't hardly go a whole lot. Daddy had a car but we didn't go a lot. I just enjoyed family, and we would, my brother and I—my brother that is next to me—we'd walk and we would either go to Roque's store, or we would go down to Sonny Jones' store. If we needed something from the store, we'd go and get it. I remember going into Roque's store, and they had the cookie jar, you could get cookies two for a penny, and things like that. That was some of the fun times, and going to school, like I said, a lot of times it would be okay, but then, I guess what I would call the public area, because you didn't, you weren't able to associate a whole lot. You'd have to kind of "stay in your place" type thing. You know, and they, like I say, a lot of things we didn't have to deal with, I know some families, like the Porters, the other Jones that we were not related to, and the Gilleys, and all these different families, they had a lot of problems, and right now, a lot of them don't even talk about it; they won't even talk about it. Because I remember talking to this one lady who was a Porter, she said, "That's stuff I just want to forget about. I don't even want to deal with it." And they don't.

23:59

DL: What you're talking about is really more between the Creoles and the African Americans than it was between the whites and the African Americans?

LW: Exactly, and when we were in school, like, we would always have what's called assembly, which is every Friday, and every class had a Friday, and you put on a program, every class, first, second, third, you know, and that was, but you sit on right side and they'd sit on the other. The principal at St. Matthew during those days was Noble Butler, and his wife was also a teacher there, Mrs. Butler, and there was a difference in the way that they treated, you know, everybody. When there were programs, only certain people were on the programs, and others were not, and you saw it, but then after I got in high school, I didn't know that there were others—Frenchmen, Creoles—that were being treated almost like we were because their parents didn't have anything more than what we had.

25:30

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DL: So, it came down more to class more than it did race, so to speak.

LW: Right, because one of my best friends [was French/Creole], her parents were sharecroppers also. They worked for Sam Jones and she didn't have no more than I did, so we kind of bonded together, and she would be with me and that was all the way through the rest of high school, because she went to St. Joseph, but this was after high school that we kind of got together. I will tell you an incident that happened, and then maybe you might can really understand. I will never ever go back to St. Matthew.

26:28

In our senior year, at St. Matthew, graduation, I mean, like the kids do now, you know, they just come in walkin' any way they feel, but no, this was a solemn, spiritual event. When it's time for graduation, Sunday was baccalaureate, and I mean, like the kids do now, oh, no, you practiced. We would have to practice, we'd start practicing two or three weeks before, and everybody had to be in sync. You marched in, and not just walkin', you marched in and you stayed in line, and you went, I mean, it was always a beautiful ceremony.

27:14

So, we had baccalaureate, then after baccalaureate—and it was in the gymnasium and parents came and everything—on Monday night after baccalaureate, we would have what's called “class night,” and everybody had to dressed exactly alike, especially the baccalaureate. You had your cap and gown, and everybody had to have white shoes, and at that time, we would have to come to town, they would pick out the stuff, and then your parents, you'd tell your parents how much it was going to cost, and everybody, they would come, you'd have to try on the shoes, try on the dress, because everything was alike. Class night, you picked your class colors—ours was pink and aqua—and everybody had on the same thing. You had these pink suits, no, they were aqua suits, top and skirt, and you had the pink bows, you had the pink shoes, and that was the night that they did like all of the jokes and whatever—what you going to leave to this person, based upon how you were, your personality, and stuff like that.

28:25

So we had class night, that was Tuesday, Wednesday, we were practicing for graduation—graduation was Friday night. Thursday morning, we went to practice, which was to be our final practice, and here comes Mrs. Butler, and she told our class sponsor, Mrs. Luella Porter, Clifton Blake's sister—I don't know if you know her—and Mr. Lutrell Payne, he was Mr. Lustrell Payne Jr.—he was the son of Mr. L. A. Payne—that was our two class sponsors. She came in and she told Mrs. Porter—we were in the gym getting ready to practice—that she had a student that she felt needs to graduate with our class, and she wanted this student, because this student was an 11th grader, and she had enough credits to graduate. No big deal, at least it wasn't supposed to be. She wanted this student—at that time the valedictorian and the salutatorian led the class; they marched in first and then we marched behind them—she wanted this student—now we've already had baccalaureate, we've already had class night, we've already practiced, we're getting ready to graduate—she wanted this student to come in front of our valedictorian. Mrs. Porter wasn't too keen on it, but we went on into the gymnasium, and then she brought this student and put this student up front, and we as a class, didn't like that. Graduate, yeah, that's fine, but not march ahead of our, you know. Oh, Lord have mercy!

30:28

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This student was, at that ... now, in 1966, she was basically Creole then, you know. Oh, no, we did not want that, she could graduate, yeah, but not take over. Oh, and she, she's gonna do it. I mean, she [Mrs. Butler] was just cursing! "Butler, you better come on in here, and get these crazy students!" Because she is gonna do this. They wanted her to march in front, and be recognized because she had enough credits to graduate. Okay, and that's what happened, she was in front. Now our val and our sal were not Creole. Okay, she [Mrs. Butler] wanted, "Well, y'all tell y'all's parents when she is called up ...,"—she was gonna be called up ahead, you know, and they had already their speeches together and all. She wanted to take the speech away, but that didn't happen. "We're gonna call her up special, and y'all's parents had better stand up and give her a standing ovation, and all." We were very upset, and our class president, we went back to the room, and we talked, and he said, "Do not tell your parents; do not do this. Do not, okay, we can't do anything about it," and Mrs. Porter said, "Please, y'all, be calm, okay?" Graduation happened and they did that—not a parent stood up—and oh, you could just feel the tension in the room.

32:29

Okay, Monday, after graduation, at that time you didn't get your diploma, you had to go back the last week of school. We went back the last week of school, and on Monday, we went to homeroom, and everybody was still kind of upset about it. Mrs. Porter said, "Okay, y'all just go on to class and just stay calm." Well, that's exactly what we did, went to class, and first class was Mrs. Butler, and she lit into us and stuff. One person said something, and, Good Lord, she went down that hall, hollerin' for Mr. Butler, and she called us all kind of names, and told him, said "You better come and try to get 'em out of here, 'cause they're all just as crazy!" So Mrs. Porter heard the commotion and she said, "Y'all, please just come back to the classroom," so we went back to the classroom, and he came in there and he told us, "Y'all just as crazy as y'all want to be!" said, "I want y'all,"—he'd thrown our diplomas in there—"Y'all get these diplomas and get off this ground, and don't y'all ever show y'all's smilin' faces around here again!"

33:41

DL: Were they [the Butlers' black, or were they Creole or what?

LW: They were more white than anything. Now, here's the kicker about it. I didn't tell you who she was. I came back in contact with her when I started working here. She was on the board here, but, you see, she really didn't know me. She'd seen me, and she hadn't seen me since we graduated in '66. Janet had me calling the board members, she said, "You ought to know Barbara." I said, "What Barbara?" She said, "She's from down Cane River," because she would always be, Janet was always telling me about somebody from Cane River, and "you ought to know this person, this person..." I said okay, she said, "Well, call 'em and tell 'em about the board meeting." So, when I called Barbara Decuir, she was bubbly and going on, she said, "What's your name again?" and I told her. "Where you from?" "I'm from Cane River," and I knew who she was because Janet had told me her family name, but she had seen me at board meetings and stuff, but...

35:10

You know, when I first started working here, people, they didn't pay me no attention, you know, the board ...

DL: You were invisible.

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LW: Exactly, you know, I was there, just taking notes, and whenever they'd ask Janet something that she didn't know, I'd write it down, and do this, you know, so she could have the answer and all this stuff. They couldn't tell you what my name was from that trash can over there. I was just a nobody, they didn't pay no attention to me, but Barbara said, "Where you from?" "I'm from Cane River." "Cane River? What's your maiden name?" I said, "Jones." "Jones? Oh, Lord yes," she said, "Have you got any children?" I said, "Yeah, I've got two daughters." "Oh? What's their age?" So I told her. "Oh, Jones, we've got to get together! I've got two sons! We've got to bring them together!" She still didn't know who I was, you know. She came to a board meeting, and I was sitting there, she figured out who I was, and it was like I had leprosy.

36:35

But then, let's go back. When she had graduated from St. Matthew, she had studied eleven years. She was sixteen years old. I was sixteen years old. I had enough credits to graduate, and I had only been to school eleven years, just like her. I had a perfect attendance from day one except for one year out of my eleven years of school. That factor didn't mean diddly and I was third in my class, but none of that mattered. The only thing that mattered was that she was Creole and that was all.

DL: What was her maiden name?

LW: Conant.

DL: And she was Teresa's sister?

LW: Sister, exactly, but you know, that's the way it was. I didn't mean nothing, but the fact that she had enough credits, and she can graduate.... I was sixteen just like her, I only studied eleven years of school, just like her, and I was third in my class, but that didn't matter, and when he said [Mr. Butler] for us to get away from there, I've never ever been back.

DL: So when they started the St. Matthews school association, where they wanted everybody to go back, and open up the doors to St. Matthews again, was not something you got involved in.

LW: Never ever, from the day I left, that was it for me; never ever went back, don't have any desire to go back. St. Matthews, like I said, those weren't some of the best years of my life.

38:43

DL: Was it that way in grade school too, or just high school? Because you said you went to St. Matthews then too.

LW: Well, you see, in grade school, didn't have a lot of Creoles.

DL: Okay, because they were going to St. Joseph's?

LW: Did not have, and we had teachers that were Creole, and at that time, they were okay. We didn't have too many problems, but not all of the teachers were Creole either, and so, we didn't have to deal with that, because I was there when they opened. I don't know how familiar you are with St. Matthew, but that new part that was at the back, back there. It had different wings, and everything? Oh yeah, I was there when they opened that. When I went to school there, it was a wood frame building. They even had the health clinic there, and the nurses would come down and give shots, and I remember the little cube of sugar.

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DL: For polio?

LW: Yeah, and that was done there, made sure you had your immunization and that was in that old big, old wood frame building, and then they built the other part over there, and I went to school at that point; but it wasn't a whole lot of Creoles that went to school over there. It was mostly the people from in the community on the river and everything that went to school there.

DL: So it wasn't until St. Joseph's, well I guess they finished St. Joseph's, what, about the same time you went over to St. James', right?

LW: Uh-huh.

DL: So, then they would have gone there for high school.

LW: Right, some of them went, some of them, their parents shipped 'em off, you know, so they did not go.

DL: But the ones that stayed here went to St. Matthew's until they opened up St. Mary's.

40:45

LW: And then, when we moved to town, the same thing happened with the kids up here that were Creole. A lot of their parents sent them to St. Matthew, that's why we had the buses really, because we were bused from up here back down there, and that took care of bringing a lot, and that's how I came in contact with a lot of Creoles up here from St. Anthony, because they started going to St. Matthew rather than going to Central High. There were some that graduated from Central, but a lot of them went to St. Matthew.

DL: Wasn't there another high school here for African Americans in town?

LW: Central.

DL: It was Central? That was pre-Natchitoches Central?

LW: Right, it was Central High, Central High Gophers.

DL: That was over around Fifth Street somewhere?

LW: Over, Ben Johnson Auditorium, that area right there, where the Ben Johnson Auditorium, and then Mr. Martinez was instrumental in getting what was called the Central Area Trade School, which Central was here, and he went and fought to get the money to build a black trade school, and it was Central Area Trade School. He was the one that was instrumental for that.

42:25

DL: You had already graduated then, when civil rights opened up the schools here?

LW: I graduated like the year after, or something like that. Yes, because a couple of my classmates went here. When I graduated, I wanted to go to college, but my parents just didn't have the money, and so I started trade school, and where I went, I didn't go to Central Area, I went to, what at that time was the white trade school, which is where the Louisiana school is right now.

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DL: Oh, okay, the old trade school?

LW: Uh, huh, that's where I went, and I to trade school there and I didn't have too many problems there, but I didn't go to Central Trade school, I went there. As for as Cane River, my daddy did have some problems down there, and my sister, and my brother. I do know that there was, I know you know Wood's [Hall]. Now, my brother and my sister, they looked more Creole than anything, and my brother played the saxophone, and my sister would sing, and they kind of played with some of the bands that were down there, and my daddy talking about how he wanted to hear Oreatha sing, and my brother, Junior, play, and so, this one particular time, they were playing. They were going to be able to go and play at Wood's, and Daddy wanted to go and hear 'em, and when he got to the door, they let them in, but they wouldn't let him in. He was not allowed to go in, and that was another turning point, I think, for my daddy. He wanted to go hear 'em but, uh-uh, that wasn't something that he could do.

44:40

Oreatha was telling me one time about how she and it was a couple of people that she associated with up here right after she graduated from high school, they decided to do a sit-in at Wood's, and they went, but they would not let them. I think that was right after that place [their house] burned down. I said, "Oh, Oreatha," but they, because one of them, one of the guys, one of the guys, his name was George and he was, she told me, he was black as the ace of spades, and, I hate to call these names, but, you know, they all went as a group, and they were going to see what happened, and it was a time. She said they would not let them come in at all, and I know they wouldn't let Daddy go in, at all. It was so much....

DL: Were some of the Creole families—it seemed like, you were saying a bit earlier about your sister, about how Ms. Belle and different people stood up for her at different times—were they a little bit less ..., seems like Myra Friedman, I remember Ms. Myra telling me stories about, you know, getting on to Creole kids about trying to draw color line, and how upset that used to make her, so it seems like there were some Creole families or Creole people down there that tried to get away from that racial divide.

46:48

LW: Mrs. Friedman and Mrs. Dupre. They were both teachers at St. Matthew, and I would have been in Mrs. Friedman's class if I would have gone to the seventh grade. Mrs. Dupre was one of my teachers, and as a matter of fact, Mrs. Dupre is my godmother, and they tried to stand up, and they would, you know, get on to the kids and try to keep things from happening like that. Mrs. Friedman, Mrs. Dupre, Mrs. Gertrude Chelette was another one, and Belle and those lived right next door to us, and they were really, really very friendly. I can remember walking, 'cause she was my sister's godmother, and we didn't have a TV, and we would walk across the field, when they finally got a TV, we would walk across the, ... in front of the pecan trees, to their house, and sit and watch TV at night sometimes, me and my sister, looked like it was always a scary movie, and we would have to walk back home after that, but they were really, really good, and then there were some that just made that difference, and as I got older and I went back, after I was grown, there was some that I talked to, trying to figure out what happened with my family, and you know.

48:43

They were really, they talked about my dad and how he was treated as a sharecropper, and I was even told that the property that we were on should really have been for Daddy because

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he earned it, and they said that the Roques should have given Daddy that land because after all those years of farming on it, he really should have owned it. I don't know how he didn't own that, but that's something I would really, really like to find out about because my dad's family, that was the only place they lived. His family was from Cane River, and we were from Cane River, and that was the only thing we ever knew. We grew up down there; we lived our life down there, school down there. Our culture was just as theirs was. My mom was Methodist, so our culture was the same as theirs, and it's just a part of my life that, I don't know, you'd have to be able to live it, to actually be there, and, you know, understand how things were.

50:29

As far as St. Matthew school is concerned, that's why St. Matthew was never, uh, they never bothered St. Matthew when it came down to integration, because they already, they thought St. Matthew was already integrated, because when Superintendent Graham and all them would come down, you know, different programs and graduation, they would see the division, so, you know, the school's already integrated, so it was never bothered.

51:01

DL: So where, since your mother was Methodist, and you father was kind of a lapsed, sounds like a lapsed Baptist, if someone died, where did y'all bury them, what cemetery did you use?

LW: My dad was a member of St. Paul.

DL: St. Paul?

LW: Baptist, and my mom had a baby that was stillborn, and it's buried there, and then I had a brother who had meningitis. Lloyd must have been four, three, four, five years old. First funeral I can really, really remember, and he's buried in that cemetery, and now, my mom and dad and all them. Yeah, that's where they're buried.

DL: But he didn't necessarily go to services. Did he go to services there on Sunday?

LW: At St. Paul? Yeah, not all the time.

DL: Or just occasionally?

LW: Yeah, until his older years, yeah, he would go occasionally, but that was his family church.

DL: What were the burial traditions, like you said for your brother?

LW: It was a funeral. Winnfield Funeral Home, I'm sure it had to have been, but I remember going, and it looked like it was in a house.

DL: That's what I was wondering, if it was held in..., if there was a viewing or a wake.

LW: Yeah, and the casket was small, because he was young, and it was opened fully, and I can remember him having on, like, a little set, and it looked like it was, it was short, and he had, he didn't have any shoes. He had socks on, but the whole thing was totally open, and that was the first time that I can remember ever going to a funeral, and being able to remember that, but the casket was so small, and he was buried out there at St. Paul, and there was a slab put on it, I remember, but now we have not been able to find him, at all.

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53:42

I was looking at this. My mom—that was another thing about Cane River—even though my mom was not from Cane River, my mom had a ninth grade education. My mom was very, very smart, and she, anything people needed read, didn't know what it was, they came to my mom. My mom read everything. My mom filled out papers for everybody. My mom took care of all this, especially like the census papers, and stuff like that. She did a whole lot of that for people, but she wrote down everything. I have a purse, and everything, she wrote it down. This is her writing, right here, that I found in her purse. This is a list of when everybody was born, all of the children, what year and everything, when she was married. I was looking at it, I found it this morning and I was kind of, ... one, two, three, all eighteen of us right here. The last child was born in 1962 and he was one stillborn, and they, and I know they did take the body to bury it. I don't know if he lived, it's been a long time, and I don't remember, but he was born in '62, and I graduated in '66, but I do know that the body was taken to be buried, but that was the last child my mom had, and my mom was born in 1925, but that was the way the burial was done at that time.

55:38

Another thing about my dad was, he protected a lot of people from down there. I can remember this one particular Creole family, this man and his wife that lived next door to us, and he was one of these women-beaters. He would beat this poor woman, and she wasn't no bigger than this. We were standing down on Cane River, and many a days she ran away from him, ran up in our yard, ran up in the house, and I can remember her cowering down behind the bed, and telling daddy, "Please don't let him," and Daddy told him, "You go on back 'cause you're not hittin' her no more." Dad, he's done that a lot. He [the neighbor] would beat her, he would beat her, Daddy'd say, "You not puttin' your hands on her no more," but he respected daddy, he never tried to do anything to daddy. Daddy would just tell him, "Go. You ain't fixin' to do it no more," and she would be so scared, she would be so scared. She lives in my neighborhood right now, and I'm sure she doesn't remember that, 'cause she really doesn't know what happened.

DL: She probably remembers it, but she probably doesn't know who you are. I'm sure it made a huge impression on her. Do you know anything ... you were, what, twelve when you went off to school?

57:13

LW: Uh-huh.

DL: And you kept the kids when everybody was working, but do you know what kind of share your father, what type of arrangement he had with the Roques, like in terms of a share; how much of a percentage went to him, and how much percentage went to them?

LW: Only what he would say at the end of the year, around December. I can hear him and mom talking, "Didn't break even, didn't break even." I can never remember him saying that they broke even, and now I realize that breaking even, when he finished at the end of the year, he owned them money, rather than them owing him money, and that's exactly what it meant.

DL: I was talking to Ms. Glo Jones last week, or the week before last, and I asked her about the percentage, because I'd heard, like, quarter share, half share, you know? And she said, "Oh no, it was a quarter share," and I said, "Oh, then you got a quarter of their production?" She said, "No, they got a quarter of their production, we got three-quarters."

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LW: And see, Daddy would go to the store, and buy, you know, they had clothes and shoes, and Daddy would go and buy. At the end of the year, I heard these words I can remember: "We've got to settle up." Then I didn't really understand, they had to settle up at the end of the year, and we were always in the hole, no matter what, always in the hole.

DL: Well, with a house full of kids and mouths to feed, and the necessities, and the vagaries of agriculture from year to year.... Do you remember floods when you were growing up?

59:22

LW: Not really, because they had to irrigate the cotton to keep it from burning up. They had these things, and they would pump the water from the river to irrigate the cotton.

DL: I think the last big flood that I know of was 1945, but that was before your time, but it was flooding from the back swamp forward, instead of from the river back.

LW: I remember the irrigating, because I can remember standing in the water. The water would be shooting out this hole, and my brother, Bennett, we'd be standing out in the water, letting it swirl around your feet, you know, and playing with the water, because they were pumping it from the river and irrigating the cotton to keep it from burning up.

01:00:37

DL: Did your dad, do you remember what he used for putting on the cotton, like poison?

LW: The only thing I remember is they had the crop dusters.

DL: Okay, so that was when the crop dusters were coming?

LW: The crop dusters would come and put this stinky stuff to kill the weevils, boll weevils, they'd have to kill the boll weevils, and they, that's what happened. They'd have to hoe the cotton, cut the weeds, make sure everything's alright.

DL: Where did they take it to be ginned?

LW: Lambre's gin. You know, working here at the Creole Center, when I first started working here, a lot of stuff I remember from Cane River, I had to get rid of it. I had to put it, like I always say, I had to put it in the recesses of my mind, in the back part, and never bring it forward, because some of this stuff, if I brought forward, I would've walked out and never come back. I remember Terrell Delphin, when I was hired, I know that he knew that my life on Cane River was not the very best times of my life. I know that he realized that, because when he came in and saw that I had been hired, he came in and said, "I'm so glad to see you." I knew who he was and everything, but to having a big conversation with him, I never really had no reason to have one, but I knew who he was, and see, they lived the other side of the river from us, and I didn't have a lot of contact with them. Now, Belle and Shine, which is still the family, I had contact with them, but he would always come in and he would always say, "You alright?" "Yeah, I'm fine." "You sure?" "Yeah, I'm fine." "They treatin' you right?" And I said, "Yeah." "Are you sure?" I'd say, "Yeah, I'm good." "Okay, that's what I want to hear. Where's Janet?" Not a time that he came into that office, because I know in the back of his mind all this stuff was going through his mind, and he was about trying to make a change.

DL: To bridge that gap, that cultural divide you were talking about.

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LW: He really was, exactly, and like I said, he's the only reason I'm still over there. He's the only reason why I'm still over there, because I could've left here a long time ago, and the funny part of it is, my background, my history, my knowledge, that's why Janet hired me.

DL: Your culture.

01:04:35

LW: Uh-huh, that's why she hired me, because I think she needed somebody to help with the bridging of that gap. It wasn't nobody I didn't know on the river, I knew 'em all, you know, and she didn't. I mean, Oswald did, now, but Janet just really didn't know because she wasn't from here, and she would come in and ask me, "Do you know such and such?," and then I would begin to tell her, then she would, I could tell her who it was, and who donated to her, and who to contact. She used my knowledge to help her in many ways, and a lot of things I could tell her she didn't understand that I was from Cane River, she didn't understand the things that I had gone through from down there. She could never, ever understand that. Who's the senator or representative's name?

DL: The man or the woman?

LW: It's a man.

DL: McCreary?

LW: No, not that, I can't call his name now, but anyhow, he was related, his grandparents were from here. He's a Muslim [convert]; what was his name? And we tried to get him to come. Somebody had given her his name, and she called me and she asked me—oh, I can't call this man right now for nothing in the world. Anyhow, somebody had given her his name and she called me in and asked me did I know him. I said, "I'm not sure." She said, "They tell me his grandparents are from Cane River." That's the same year she wanted me to get in touch with Nancy Pelosi, and I was trying to get in touch with her because she wanted her to come to the Chicago conference, and I was trying to get in touch with her, which I finally did, but her schedule wouldn't permit it, but anyhow, she said, "His grandparents, they tell me, are from Cane River." I said, "Who are they?" She said, "Some Balthazar." I said, "Balthazar?" "No," she said, "Martinez." I said, "Martinez?" She didn't say Mar-ti'-nez, she said, Mar'-ti-nez. And I said, "Mar-ti'-nez?" "Yeah, they tell me that's his grandparents." I said, "Are you trying to say Mar-ti'-nez?" She said, "Maybe that's what it is." I said, "Yeah, I know the Martinezes. His mother is their daughter," I said, "Are you talking about Doris Martinez and Frank Martinez?" "I don't know," she said, "but his mama is from here." I said, "You've got to be talking about them, that's all," I said, "Mrs. Martinez was a Balthazar, she was Boo Balthazar's sister." "Maybe that is the family." I said, "Well, they have a daughter, her name was something like, Clyda, Cora, or something like this." She said, "Let me see;" so she got on her computer, "Yeah, his mother's name is something like that, she was from New Orleans." "But it's gotta be," I said, "it's gotta be Ms. Martinez." "What do you know about her?" "I know everything about her," I said. "He [Mr. Martinez] is the one that was instrumental in getting Central Area trade school." "It can't be the same," she said. I said, "Yeah, and he passed away," I said, "if I'm not mistaken, he was killed, a tractor turned over on him or something like that," and I said, "his wife, Mrs. Martinez, and you know what? Now that I'm thinking about it, she's the godmother of my sister's [inaudible]," but she said, "Oh, this can't be the same person." I said, "I'll tell you what, when I go home for lunch, I'm going to bring you proof back that it is." Get home for lunch, get my mom's purse where all this stuff in it, she had every baptismal records from my brother's, my sister's, my nieces.... I pulled them out, Doris Martinez, Doris Martinez,

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I pulled four, I said, "Is this proof enough for you?"

01:10:03

She didn't want to believe, but you know, it's a lot of things that, I mean, I might not say a lot, I sit there, I do my work, but that's why she hired me. Then, now, this man's name came back up again, because she said, "See if you can get him." So, I put together a packet, I put together a packet on his grandmother, Ms. Martinez, because I had her, and name was on the program, I had her funeral program, it might be in here, it wouldn't surprise me, with his name on it. The baptismal records from my niece and my brothers and my sister, I put a picture of his grandfather, who was instrumental in getting the Central Area school, I put all this together in a packet, and I sent it to him, asking him to contact her because she wanted to give him, no, she wanted to recognized his grandparents, and wanted him to come to accept the Creole People's Award on their behalf. Haven't heard from him to this day.

DL: You're kidding!

LW: He was Muslin, he was in the news. Okay, the name came up last year. Dr. Webb's office, Pam called and said they were trying to find out if we had any information on him, because they wanted to recognize him. So, I proceeded to tell them that we had sent them all this information about his grandparents, and still haven't hear anything from him today. You know what, they dropped it.

DL: Where's he from? Where does he represent?

LW: I've got it over there in the office. I just can't think of what his name, just can't think of it right now, but I'll get the name and let you know, but it was the same year I made contact with Nancy Pelosi and her office for Janet. I think it was Chicago where we had the conference, but it's over in the office, and I have the packet I sent to him with all this information. Then I found his mother in our St. Anthony's church book, she was queen of one of the, uh ...

DL: So, he converted to Islam, probably in college, interesting.

LW: But that was some of the stuff that Janet would, you know, because there was nobody that I didn't know. You know, I've always been like that, nothing to say ... nobody knows nothing about where I'm from, what I do, where I came from, about my family, uh-uh.

01:13:36

DL: So, it was a real layered kind of a society down there. It doesn't sound like you had a lot of interaction with white folks down there.

LW: No, no, no.

DL: So, your prejudice, racism, was from the Creole side?

LW: Exactly, and that's what we had to deal with.

DL: And it was the same prejudice that the "haves" ...

LW: ... against the "have nots" ...

DL: ... against the "have nots" that were Creole?

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LW: Exactly, and I do believe that's why my brother in up marrying the Roque girl, because I think it was just to ... "I can show them" kind of deal.

DL: To make a point?

LW: And at Ms. Marie Roque's funeral, she was still carrying the Jones name, but it was something that was never, ever accepted! That was the biggest scandal on Cane River. It was the biggest scandal.

DL: I bet, but they were already, both of them were already living in California at that time?

LW: Uh-huh, but they have never, ever acknowledged that, at all. That was something that just wasn't supposed to happen. That's why I said I would really like to write a book about my life, never done anything spectacular or nothing too interesting, but people are always writing books about Cane River; but some of 'em, it's speculation, too. But having been there, lived it, saw it through my eyes, my family, my mom, my dad, it would be something that would be very interesting. *Through Brown Eyes*, that's my book title. My brother just called me the other day, "Okay, when are going to get started?" He's already published three, and then I have another one that's published two, and they're waiting on me to tell 'em the story about our family. I told 'em we'd get there, but it's going to take a lot of ... I'm going to have to bring it back, because a lot of things I've really forgotten, I've just put it out of my mind.

DL: You've just pushed them away. Yeah, the Indian people call that, they put it away.

01:16:49

LW: Especially when I started to work here, I had to do it, because I've had to deal, I've dealt with prejudice from people, going to these different conferences. I've had to deal with it also and especially when I say, "Don't I know you?," you know. Barbara, when she realized who I was, she never said anything about putting her sons with my daughters. It was funny to me, and I had a chance to talk to her husband once, and because he wanted to purchase something, and I went to the table when we had this sale, and he was asking questions and this and everything, and he said, "You live here?," and I said, "Yeah," and he said, "I wondered, because I've seen you at the different meetings." I said, "Yeah, and as a matter of fact, your wife and I graduated together," I said, "I doubt if she'll remember." He said, "You St. Matthew?" I said, "You can ask her about it." I'll never forget that.

DL: Well, Ms. Loletta, I appreciate you talking to me. It's an interesting insight and a different layer of what went on down there, and what life was like down there, and it looks like in some respect, some people have maintained the same kind of ability or desire to bridge that gap through time, but it still hasn't been totally done yet.

LW: It really hasn't. You still have that prejudice sometimes, and one of the other things is that, I've learned that Creoles are still caught in the middle, they're not totally accepted in the white community, most of the time, and now, because of the all the problems, they're definitely not accepted in the black community. They're still in the middle, kind of figuring out where we're going to go, and what we're going to do, and with the younger generation, there's this younger generation you can find some Creole girls that will not date Creole boys, they're only going to date black boys, you're going to find a lot of that. You're also going to find, that's all they want, but the older generation a lot of them, they still look unfavorably on this, and it happens a lot. Even now, trying to find where you are, and where you want to be, and the older generation, a lot of them haven't really ... oh, they may say, but there's still that little glimmer

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that's back there that tells you, you better stay in your place, and it's still a lot of that, I still see it, especially in the dating, and now you see so many ...

Tamika, my youngest daughter, married a Creole young man, from Cane River; his family's from Cane River, and when his grandmother passed away, she said, "Mama, you've got to go with me." So, I went to the wake, which was here at Winnfield Funeral Home, and she said, "I'm going to show you something." One of his cousins had a set of twins. One of the little boys was almost totally white, curly hair and blue eyes, and his twin was totally opposite, and you see a lot of that, and it makes it hard on the children to figure out where you want to be.

01:22:14

And I will say this, when I went to Chicago for the conference, it was two things that happened. Tamika, when I travel and go to conferences, my daughters would always go with me, they pay their way, because they volunteer and help me. Well, Tamika was sitting at the table in Chicago, and they had all these publications on the table, and there was this one book there which was St. Anthony Catholic book here, which was one of the older ones, 50th anniversary of the church. This lady was looking through it and Tamika was sitting there because she was the hired help helping me; the lady was looking through it, and Tamika said, "Wait a minute; what book is that?" "Oh, you wouldn't know this book because this is a church book." Tamika said, "That looks like my picture." "Oh, no, you wouldn't be in this book." So Tamika got up and she went over, "That's St. Anthony's book." "Yes, that's one of the publications." She said, "That's my picture." This was an older picture, it was different because she was young then. She said, "That's not your picture." "She said, "Yes it is, and that's my mom!" Lady didn't want to believe that.

Then Tracey was making this speech, and her speech centered around ... there was me, Tamika, Markita—I mean, we were all from here that went out there—Markita's mom, and we were back there, working our rear ends off because they were supposed to have volunteers, but there wasn't none. We had to work, and she was giving her state of the union speech so to say, and she was talking about keeping Creole pure, and I'm back there, listening to this, "We ought to have our own products, we should have our own store to go into to buy hair products. We need to have our own stores for our own facial stuff, and we need to keep the Creole bloodline pure, and we need to make sure we marry into our own, so that we can keep the names Metoyer, and Rachel and all these names pure, and not bring in anything else, because that's what we need to do. We need to have our own dating service and not date outside of our race."

I'm sitting there listening to this, and my blood boiling, and I'm doing all this work, and you're out here, your plane ticket paid for, your hotel room paid for, just like mine. My daughter and Markita's mama out here helping her, and they had to pay for their own ticket because the center couldn't pay for it, and they're the ones here working their rear ends off, and she's going on and on about keeping it pure, and don't marry outside your line, and all this stuff, and if your birth certificate doesn't have Creole on it, you need to call the department of whatever, and get them to change it. This was at a conference.

DL: I'm willing to bet there's a lot of Creoles in Chicago that married African American people.

01:26:33

LW: Wait until I tell you what happened. She and Tamika, the same age, she and Tamika went to school together, partied together, she and Tamika had slumber parties and she's at my house. So we listen at this, okay. We got back to Natchitoches, the phone is running out with messages. Had this one lady on the phone, said that she was wanting to talk to the lady who was telling, so

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she could tell her who to contact so she could get her birth certificate changed. This lady here was in her 70s, and it had colored on her birth certificate, and she didn't want nobody to see it. She wanted to demand that they change her birth certificate, and I'm telling myself who's going to see her birth certificate at 70 years old? Who cares what's on her birth certificate. "Tracey, this lady wants to talk to you." She refused to call her. I said, "Well, you're the one who said it." She refused to call the lady, and that lady, she called and she called.

There was a second person who called, and I got to talk to her. "I was at the conference, and I was calling, you know those shirts you've got with the names on the back?" "Yes mam, I sure do." "Well, I want you to take Washington off the names." "Take Washington off?" "That's right. I was at the conference and we've got to keep those names pure." I said, "Mam, I can't take the name off the shirts." "Yes you can, because you see I put it on there by mistake. My maiden name is" ... I forgot what it was ... "Washington is the man I married, and I shouldn't have put that name. I should've put my maiden name, and I want y'all to take it off." I said, "Mam, we can't take the names off." "Well, I want you to stop printing that shirt; don't make no more." I said, "Mam, we can't do that; we've already got the shirts made." "Well, who can I talk to about it?" I said, "Mam, you can only talk to me." "Well, we need to get that name off." I said, "Mam, I'm sorry, but the name can't ..." "Well, that's not my name." I said, "Well, I tell you what we are going to do. From this day forward, don't claim Washington on that shirt as your name, you claim your maiden name, because there's somebody else around here that is a Washington." "Washington is not a Creole name." I said, "Mam, you don't claim it, but I guarantee it that there is somebody else who'll claim it and be happy to do so." She almost started a war. But it's things like that that keeps, you know, disturbance, that's not bridging the gap, that's separation of powers.

DL: Right, and there's a certain cultural pride that people feel, you can understand that, but then it takes a step across the line, then it becomes, what you're talking about, a cultural divide.

LW: It is, precisely, and that cultural divide is not what Terrell Delphin was all about, and we take away that, and that puts a bad image on the center and what it stands for, and where it needs to go.