

*Phinney  
4417 Evergreen Drive  
Woodbridge, VA 22193*

Oral History Transcript

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH  
DEWITT BATES**

Subject Matter: Recollections of Batestown  
In the Dumfries Magisterial District  
Prince William County, Virginia

by  
Tom Nelson  
for the

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Manassas, Virginia  
April 1984

Transcribed and Typed by Sally J. Borman, Manassas, Virginia

# THE DEWITT BATES ORAL HISTORY

## Recollections of Batestown



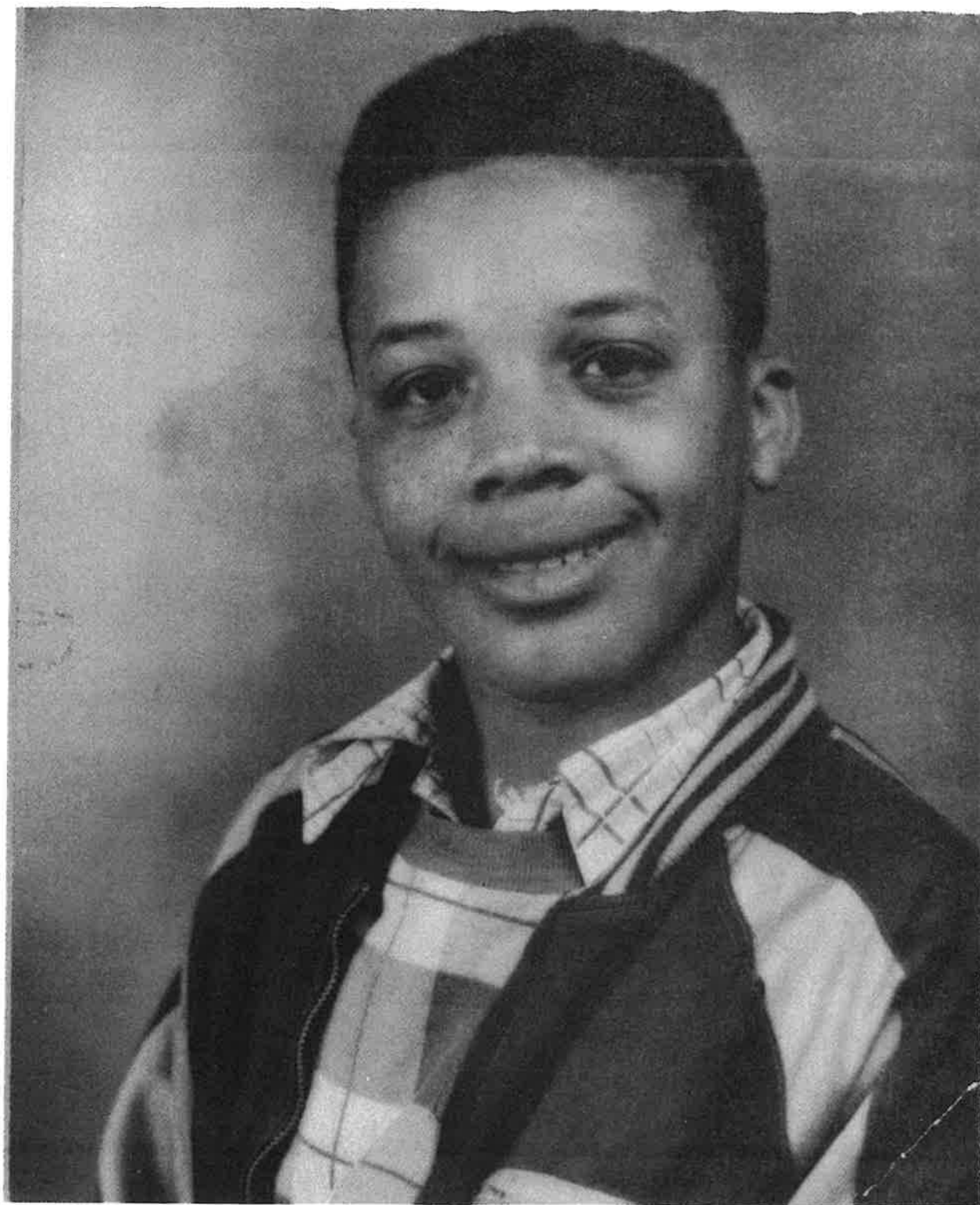
Dewitt Bates and Annis Medele Bates (his sister)  
at the Manassas Horse Show, Circa 1919

BY TOM NELSON

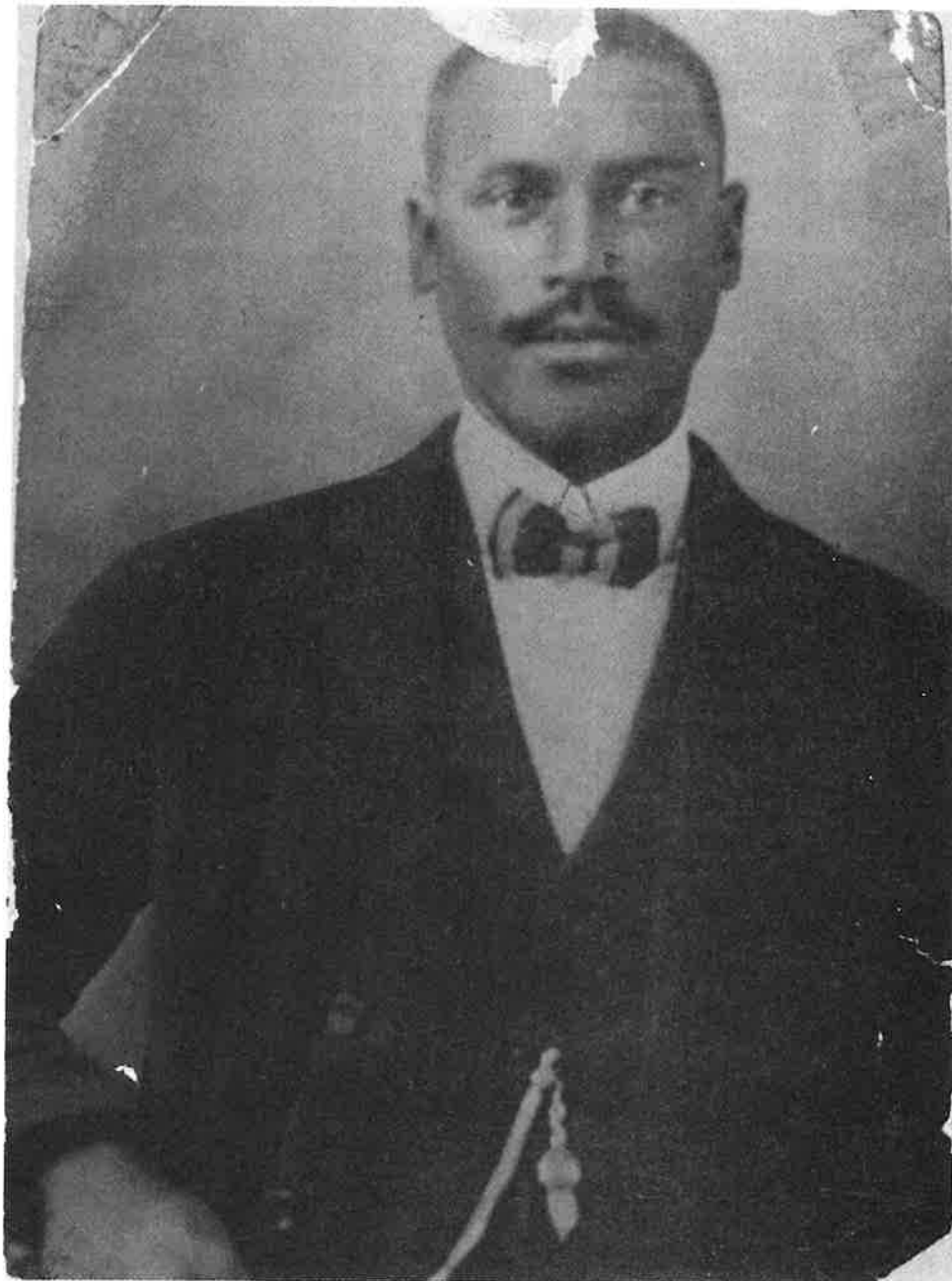
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION



Dewitt Bates and French Bates  
First Day of Sunday School  
Circa 1910



William Elsworth Bates  
Born December 6, 1937 in Dumfries  
(Son)  
Married to Sonya Reed Bates of Dumfries



**James West (father-in-law)  
born in Stafford County  
Worked in Dumfries Ore Mine**

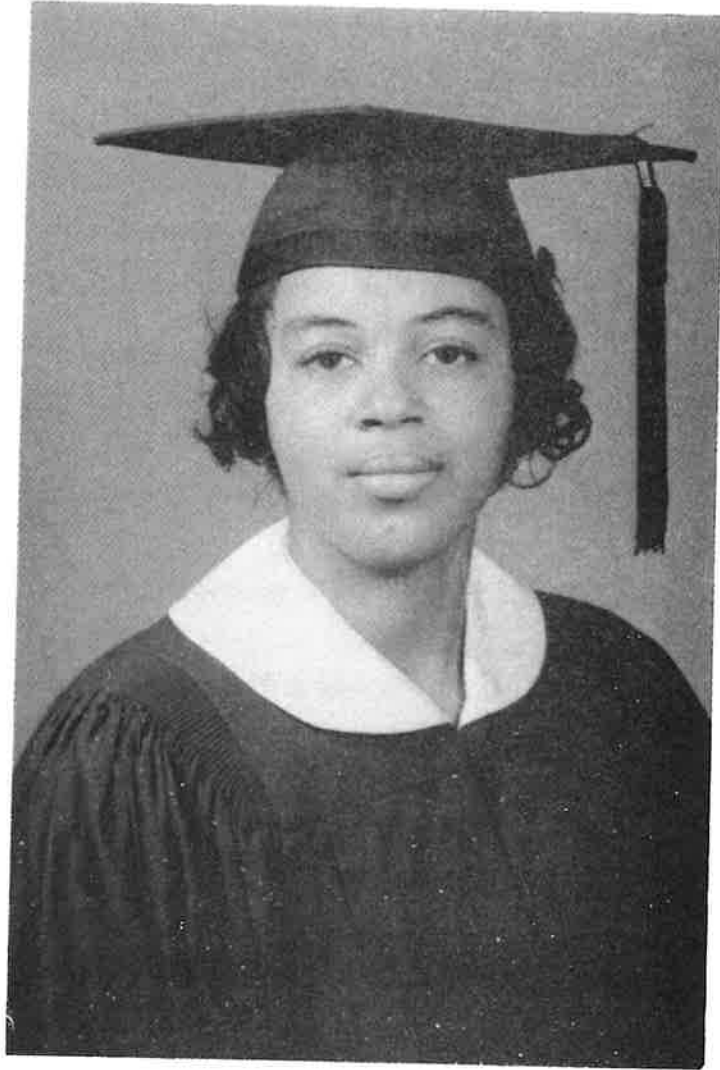
**Married to Ethel Bates West of Dumfries**



**Raymond Johnson  
Born in Dumfries  
(1st Cousin)**

**Worked at Dumfries Ore Mine  
Later Moved to Pennsylvania**

**Brother of Dan Johnson**



**Annie Medele (Bates) Buchanan**  
**Born March 20, 1946**  
**(Daughter)**

**Graduated from: Jennie Dean High School**



**Mr. Bates and Mr. Roger Davis (cousin)  
1966**

**Worked approximately 6 Years at Triangle Elementary School**



**Mr. and Mrs. Bates  
April 1984**





Back Row: George Porter (Married to Mary Bates Porter), French Bates (brother), Dewitt Bates, Robert Bates (cousin); Second Row: Emily Lindsey (cousin), Ora Bates (step-mother), Annie Reed; First Row: Catherine Bates (half-sister), Mary Bates Porter (cousin), Dewitt N. Bates (son)

A Chorus Day  
Little Union Babtist Church  
Dumfries (Circa late 40's)

## Obituary of W. E. Kendall, Who Raised Mrs. Bates

### W. E. Kendall, 90, Dies; Dumfries Native

William Edward Kendall departed this life suddenly on Friday, Nov. 10. He was born Oct. 22, 1871, the son of George and Martha Bates Kendall, and he was a life long resident of Dumfries. He was married to the late Martha A. Carry and later to Pauline Daggs Kendall.

Survivors are two daughters, Mrs. Genevieve Tuell of Triangle and Mrs. Hannah L. Gaines of Dumfries; a brother, John Kendall of Dumfries; foster daughters, Mrs. Gladys Bates of Dumfries, Mrs. Peggie C. Mason and Mrs. Louise Mallroy both of Washington; a stepdaughter, Mrs. Helen Bayard of Washington; 15 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren, eight nieces, four nephews, and other relatives.

Mr. Kendall was a member of the Little Union Baptist Church, Dumfries, where funeral services were held on Tuesday. Interment was at the Hardin Hill Cemetery. The Rev. A. A. Booker officiated.

From the Bates Family Bible

Births

**Dewitt Bates Senior December 25, 1905**

**Gladys Bates August 12, 1912**

**Dewitt N. Bates Junior December 19, 1935**

**William E. Bates December 6, 1937**

**Annie Medele Bates March 20, 1946**

**Jean Marie Bates July 1, 1955**

**Tonya Bates June 29, 1962**

**Craig Bates September 9, 1960**

**Anton Tyrone Bates July 2, 1973**

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Subject: Dewitt Bates  
Interviewer: Mr. Tom Nelson, PWCHC  
Taped at: Prince William Hospital  
Date: April 4, 1984

I INTERVIEW

N: Tell us your whole name and where you live.  
B: My name is Dewitt Bates, and I live on Mine Road in Dumfries.  
N: And when were you born?  
B: I was born in nineteen hundred and five.  
N: What day?  
B: The 25th day of December.  
N: Right on Christmas Day.  
B: On Christmas Day.  
N: What are your parents' name?  
B: My father was named Robert Bates, and my mother was named Fannie Bates.  
N: Were they born in Prince William County?  
B: Yes, they were born right here in Prince William.  
N: Mine Run is in Dumfries; were they born off Mine Run, or were they living somewhere else?  
B: Well, my father wasn't too far from there, but my mother...she lived back about a couple miles from the mine. See, the mine was...  
N: What kind of mine?  
B: They call it Mine Road. The reason they call it Mine Road was because there used to be a mine up above.  
N: But, what did they mine?  
B: They called it Cabin Brice Mine.  
N: What were they digging for, slate?  
B: No. Ore.

N: What kind of ore? Iron ore?  
B: No. Ore to make...  
N: Metal?  
B: Yeh, to make copper.  
N: Copper ore.  
B: Yeh. They made copper out of it.  
N: Okay. You live in an area where I've heard it called  
Batesville, right?  
B: Batestown.  
N: How did Batestown get its name?  
B: It got its name, Batestown, because it was the first  
settlement that settled in that area up there on Batestown  
Road, they called it.  
N: When did they start settling there? Just after the Civil  
War?  
B: They started settling there directly after slavery.  
N: After slavery. How did the people get their land?  
B: Well, my grandfather had 35 acres give to him...slave land  
they called it.  
N: Do you mean the government gave it to him, or did a  
property man give it to him?  
B: The man that owned it...the property.  
N: Gave him the property?  
B: Give him the 35 acres, because he owned all that land back  
in there.  
N: Do you remember his name...the property owner...they  
called him the Master or whatever?  
B: No. I really don't know.  
N: Did he have a house in that area?  
B: Yeh, yeh.  
N: It's still there today, or is it...  
B: No. I think it burned down.  
N: Burned down.  
B: But, my father's grandfather... See, the Bates' were  
free-born people, but he worked for different people, you

B: know. I had an aunt, my grandfather's sister, she owned from where his land on up... They have 40 acres now that was give to them.

N: Not the 35 acres...another 40 acres?

B: Another 40 acres of land was give to them.

N: To build a house on it? Did they live in the quarters they used to live in when they were...like it was a slave quarters?

B: They had an old log cabin that they...

N: Was that part of the land and housing that the master owned?

B: Yeh. Right.

N: So, they actually lived on the land that they were slaves on and lived on before they were free?

B: Right. My grandmother...I mean my Aunt Mary Bates...she was Bates too...and, they give her this land. And, while she was working for these people, the children give her education.

N: The children of the owner...

B: Of the owner.

N: Taught her to read and write?

B: Taught her to read and write.

N: Alright. Now, you say that's your aunt.

B: Yeh.

N: Okay. Your parents then were slaves when they were small children, right?

B: Far as I know back, they never was slaves.

N: They never were, but their parents were.

B: Yeh. Some went back that they were slaves, but as far back as we know...

N: Okay. As you grew up, where did you go to school, or did you?

B: Yeh. I went to school up at... We had an old school way up in the woods...way up the road up above.

N: Was it a public school; a county school? Do you remember the name of it?

B: Yeh, it was a county school.

N: Do you remember the name of the school?

B: Even at that time, I don't know whether it had a name.

N: What kind of school was it...like a one-room and everybody in the same class?

B: Yeh, it was. Everybody was in the same room, but different classes. We had the first grade to the sixth grade, I think it was.

N: Did somebody come by and teach you?

B: One teacher taught all those classes.

N: White or a black person?

B: Black.

N: A black teacher.

B: A black teacher.

N: Were they all blacks in the class?

B: All blacks in the class.

N: Okay. Was that the only school you were allowed to go to? You wouldn't be able to go to a white school?

B: No.

N: It was all segregated.

B: This here has all started just lately. I was working in the school when they could go together. I was working in the Triangle School.

N: How much schooling did you get?

B: I didn't get no more than fifth grade.

N: Fifth grade, because that's how far... What sort of job did you do when you got out of school?

B: Well, the first thing I did when I got out of school, I took my father's team and I hauled lumber.

N: A team of horses?

B: A team of horses. I hauled lumber; I hauled pulp wood.

N: Where would that wood go to?

B: Oh, that was all over the place.

N: I mean, where did you take it to?

B: I hauled it so many different places. One place I...the last place I hauled, at least I had my own team then, because my father turned the team over to me...

N: A team. When you say a team, how many horses?

B: Two horses.

N: Two horses make a team.

B: Yeh. I hauled wood down to Cherry Hill...hauled it down to the railroad station so...

N: Cherry Hill?

B: Yeh, so they could load it on the cars.

N: Okay. This was wood, just for...lumber wood that you were hauling out, that was the kind of wood?

B: Well, they made paper out of this kind of wood.

N: Pulpwood?

B: Pulpwood, yes.

N: Okay. How many years did you do that?

B: I did that for 15 years...hauled different stuff.

N: After school, so you were fairly young.

B: Right. I done a lot of plowing. I plowed for all people all over this...all around.

N: Hand plow with horses?

B: What?

N: With horses you plowed?

B: Yeh.

N: No machinery?

B: No. I didn't know what machinery was. [Laughter] What kind of crops were being grown, and what year are we talking about? 1920s?

B: Well, I guess somewhere along in there.

N: What kind of crops were being grown?

B: Well, mostly around this area it was corn. A lot of people had wheat, but mostly I raised was corn.

N: Did you grow your own crops for your own house?

B: Yeh.

N: And, you got married. When did you get married?



B: Oh, I was 26 years old when I got married.  
N: Were you still hauling wood when you got married?  
B: Yeh. I still had my team.  
N: What's your wife's name? Is she still living?  
B: Yeh. Gladys Bates.  
N: Gladys Bates. Is she a long-time resident here too?  
B: Yeh. She was born and raised right along with us.  
N: Did you get married in a church in this area?  
B: No. I got married in Alexandria in... Our pastor, at that time, his name was Reverend Stokes, I went up to his home, and I was married in his home.  
N: In his home. Is he still living, or is he dead?  
B: No, he's been dead...  
N: He's been dead a long time. Did he have any churches in our county?  
B: Yeh. He was the pastor at our church.  
N: Your church? What's the name of your church?  
B: Little Union Baptist Church.  
N: Okay. And, that's on Mine Run?  
B: On Mine Road.  
N: What kind of church is that?  
B: It's just a baptist church.  
N: A baptist church. A one-room baptist church, or did you have lots of rooms?  
B: No, just one room and a basement.  
N: And a basement.  
B: Right.  
N: When was that church built? Was it built while you were...  
B: Yeh. This here one was just built about seven years ago.  
N: The new one.  
B: The new one.  
N: The old one was...  
B: The old one, that was built in nineteen hundred and three.

N: Before you were born.  
B: Before I was born.  
N: And, it's been torn down to build a new one, right?  
B: Yeh.  
N: Are any things saved from the old one?  
B: No.  
N: Everything's gone?  
B: I don't know why that they wanted to tear it down so quick.  
N: Was it in bad shape?  
B: Well, pretty bad...not too bad either. It could have been used for something.  
N: Did they save any of the records, an old history? Did they save some of those?  
B: Yeh, they got some of those.  
N: Are they at the church?  
B: It stays at the church.  
N: Do they have pictures or anything of the old church around? Have you seen any old pictures?  
B: Let's see. I don't know whether they've got any pictures of the old church or not. I know they have of the new church.  
N: You used to go up and down the roads in Prince William County. And, you mentioned one time...you mentioned about helping to build Route 1.  
B: Yeh, I helped to build the first concrete road that come through Dumfries. The first work I ever did on the highway, I helped them build a bridge right there where what they call Norman Ginn's place corner.  
Where's that?  
B: That's right in Dumfries.  
N: What's there now in that place? What's the building that's there now?  
B: It's the big building sitting in there now. Right off Dawson Road. And Mine Road goes up here, and the highway going around this way [gesturing].

N: Right where that little bridge is.

B: Yeh.

N: So, you helped build that road there. And, before that was a hard road...

B: Hardtop road.

N: It was just what?

B: Yeh. My daddy helped build that hardtop road.

N: What was there before then...before the hardtop...just gravel?

B: Just an ordinary road.

N: A gravel...

B: Just a road cut around through the woods in places.

N: All the way down to Arlington?

B: All the way. From Alexandria all the way to...

N: Past Pohick?

B: Yes, sir.

N: And, then you go down by the bridge down by Occoquan?

B: Right, right.

N: It was still all gravel and dirt?

B: It was still all gravel.

N: It came through Occoquan back up to where Route 1 is now.

B: Right.

N: And, there were trees near the road.

B: Well, that's the one that went around through Occoquan.

N: Oh, that was Route 1.

B: Yeh.

N: And, it wound all the way down. Was Route 1 a straight road through? Like, it's straight now down to...

B: No, no. It wasn't straight. No, indeed, it wind all around.

N: What were some of the shops that you remember when you were young? Do you remember some of the names of the stores that existed?

B: Yeh. There was about three stores in Dumfries. And, one of them was run by Ratcliffe.

N: Jack Ratcliffe?  
B: No. That's his father.  
N: His father. What kind of store was that?  
B: It was just a grocery store where you could go buy...he had pretty much all kinds of things...all kinds of canned goods.  
N: Is that where everybody did their shopping?  
B: Yeh. Everybody did their shopping there. He was the richest man that was in that area. Then his daughter, she built her a store in above that. She got enough from him...see, she worked for him until she got enough from him to build her a store.  
N: Was she a white?  
B: Yeh, all white.  
N: This was Jack Ratcliffe's father.  
Right.  
N: So, what kind of store did his daughter have?  
B: She built a big store.  
N: A grocery store?  
B: She had the house and the store all together.  
N: Where is this located?  
B: It's located right there in Dumfries.  
N: Is it still there today?  
B: No. And then right across from her was another store. A fellow by the name of Bob King.  
N: What kind of store was it?  
B: Well, all of them were kind of...we called them grocery stores.  
N: Kind of general stores.  
B: They go and get most any kind of stuff. Some of them sold clothes, some shoes...  
N: In the same store?  
B: In the same store.  
N: Well, wasn't that a little competition for Mr. King to sell, when Mr. Ratcliffe and his daughter... Didn't they take all the business?

B: In fact, everything worked out alright.  
N: It was about the same kind of store.  
B: Some would go to this store...  
N: Where did the Bates' go?  
B: We went to Mr. Ratcliffe's.  
N: Why did you want to go to there? Why didn't you want to go to the King store?  
B: I don't know. I never did go to the King store much. I didn't care much for that store. [Laughter]  
N: Did they have better prices?  
B: Oh, he was too rapid. He was a rapid old fellow. He didn't do too much business, but he was too rapid. His wife done more business after he died.  
N: [Unintelligible words], way, way back.  
B: Yeh, way back.  
N: What kind? Just any kind?  
B: I can't remember nothing no more about the father. See,...I don't know just about why it was there, but it was a big market, and they'd bring stuff in on boats.  
N: [Unintelligible words.]  
B: Yeh.  
N: How old was he then? Was he 80 or 90 years old?  
B: He was in his eighties. Oh yes, he was way back...  
N: [Unintelligible words.]  
B: I think he was born sometime around... He has a brother that was born when he was four years old.  
N: Do you remember much about the Weems-Botts house?  
B: Yes, indeed. Two old ladies used to live in that house.  
N: Were they white or black.  
B: They was white...all white lived in Dumfries. At that time, nothing but whites. Batestown was nothing but blacks.  
N: Was that the only black community in the Dumfries area?  
B: Yeh.  
N: [Unintelligible question.]  
B: Oh, yes.

N: When you'd get to go into the white neighborhoods, such as Weems-Botts, how did you associate with them?

B: Oh, I used to work for them a lot. I did everything in Dumfries. I would come home with a fellow by the name of Jack. He was a blacksmith; he owned his shop there in Dumfries. My cousin was working down there and he wanted somebody to weed his cornfield. That was the first work that I'd done to earn money. And, this was before...

B: Oh, that was before...

N: [Unintelligible words.]

B: Oh, yeh. Right. [Unintelligible words.]

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Seventy-five cents a day.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Oh, yeh.

N: Working hard like that, what started you going to church? Your parents...did they take you to church?

B: Oh, yeh. I've been going to church all my life. That's the first place I remember going to...the Sunday School.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: I was brought up in the church. My mother [unintelligible words]. And, she had me to church when I was a baby... before I can even remember! But, the first time that I remember going to church, my family bought me a suit of clothes.

N: A whole suit?

B: Yeh, with knee pants.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Well, nobody could at that time.

N: Going to church [unintelligible words].

B: Right. I put that little suit on, and my brother...my brother was ten years older...I put that little suit on, and man, I thought I was somebody!

N: Why is it so important [unintelligible words]?

B: Oh, well, at that time, you didn't have to worry about food. You growed your own food. I'll tell you the truth, I had so much food, you couldn't give it away...beans and corn, and stuff like that.

N: [Unintelligible words.]

B: [Unintelligible response.]

N: [Unintelligible words.]

B: Well, when you got through eating, there wasn't much left, you know. They would...

N: What did you do in the winter?

B: I don't know how that they paid the heating bill, but, when you got through eating, there wasn't nothing left.

N: [Unintelligible words.]

B: Now, sometimes, I have seen some... If they have anything left, if they have a well, they put it in a bucket and put it down and rest. And, I've seen milk in a well that way.

N: [Unintelligible words.]

B: Then, finally, they would get a icebox. They'd get a piece of ice.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Yeh, we made one one time. We took a great big box and put the ice inside. Yes, Sir. I'll tell you, the old people, they come on, but they had a good time though. Man, on Saturday, my daddy played banjo!

N: Oh, he did? On Saturday night?

B: Every Saturday night he was [unintelligible words], grab that banjo and he'd be gone til Monday morning.

N: You mean all the neighbors would come?

B: Yeh. They'd get together, you know, and they would...

N: Would they sit outside?

B: Yeh. They'd sit out in the yard or somewhere, and they would dance!

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: [Unintelligible response.]

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: They had their's to themselves. [Unintelligible words.]  
Yeh. I went down to Dumfries one night, [unintelligible words], and we come through there, and they were having a party.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Yeh. And, so, we pulled off to stop and listened at their music. They told us to come on in here.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Yeh. [Unintelligible words.] Of course, we wouldn't let on...like, what in the hell are you talking about! That was the first time I ever goed to a party.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: They made us come in there. Yes, Sir.

N: There wasn't any violence?

B: "Come on in," they said. "Come on in here!" And, we didn't want to go in, you know, but they kept on asking.

N: You weren't scared?

B: No, no.

N: What happened then?

B: [Unintelligible response.] She was a regular clown. That's what they called her; she was a clown.

N: You went to their party. Did you notice any difference?

B: I didn't see too much difference.

N: Did they dance?

B: Yeh, they danced.

N: Was somebody playing guitar or something?

B: Oh, yeh, they had banjos and a fiddle.

N: How long did the party last?

B: Oh, I don't know how long. We didn't stay there too long.

N: [Unintelligible words.] What happened on Sunday?

B: Go to church on Sunday.

N: [Unintelligible question.] Did you stay awake?

B: [Unintelligible words.] We did the same thing on Friday. They'd party up there, and the next Sunday morning, you'd see them going to church.



N: [Several unintelligible questions.]  
B: [Several unintelligible responses.]  
N: [Unintelligible question.]  
B: No, he sold it.  
N: He sold it?  
B: They sold it. Some of them made money. [Unintelligible words.]  
N: [Unintelligible conversation with Mr. Bates.]

END OF TAPE I

[SIDE 1]

B: I want to tell you about the first car I seen.  
N: Yes, that's what I'd like to hear.  
B: My daddy was hauling wood. Now, this fellow that I was telling you...the Ratcliffe that owned the store...  
N: Jack Ratcliffe's dad?  
B: Yeh. My daddy was hauling wood out in the woods, see, and, so he was coming over to pay off that thing...a pile of wood my daddy had cut. I had heard my daddy talk about it...he had seen it before. So, after awhile, I hear something coming...acha...acha...acha...acha...acha. And, that thing was coming! I got halfway scared to see it coming down through there with no horse or nothing.  
N: The car?  
B: Yeh, the car. That's the first one I'd seen. And, he come on down with that thing. Man, it was just a cackling, you know.  
N: Ratcliffe's car?  
B: Ratcliffe's car.  
N: He had the first car?  
B: He was the first man that bought a car in that area...the Dumfries area.  
N: Was it like a Model-T?  
B: Yeh, yeh.

N: Going down that old road.

B: Yes, sir! Those wheels on there...it had great big old wheels on it. He wasn't going over about ten miles an hour. But, the old road was bumpy down through there, you know. And, he was sitting there just [bouncing gesture]. He looked like he was scared of it.

N: Would all the people in the neighborhood go down to see it?

B: Oh, yeh, a lot of them did. They wanted to see it; they'd never seen no automobiles.

N: Did he park it at the store?

B: Yeh, he had a place for it.

N: Did he lock it up?

B: Did I tell you what happened? He drove that car to Florida!

N: Same car?

B: Same car.

N: Ten miles an hour to Florida?

B: All the way down to Florida...him and his wife. They come back and he'd put it in the shed. Don't you know, my daddy, the first car he bought was that car!

N: Bought Ratcliffe's car?

B: Yes, sir!

N: What did your dad do? Drive around in it?

B: Oh, yeh!

N: Do you remember what he paid for it?

B: I don't know. Well, I'm honest. He didn't have a hundred dollars.

N: What did your dad do?

B: Well, he was working at Cherry Hill at that time.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: Yeh. He used it to go back and forth to work. He had a time learning to run that thing.

N: When did you first get to ride in it?

B: My uncle, he had done bought him a car, so he come up to learn my daddy how to drive the car. So, they'd go up and down the road, up and down the road, up and down the road.

N: You hadn't been in it yet?  
B: Yeh, I was in it.  
N: Where'd he take you? Were you scared?  
B: No, I thought I was riding a chariot.  
N: Did you have to wear some glasses, or did you just sit in there?  
B: Just sit in there, you know.  
N: Beep the horn?  
B: It had an old horn...beep-beep, beep-beep.  
N: Did anybody come out and watch you?  
B: Yeh, they come out to look at it. Yes, sir, Uncle Bob done bought him a car! Everybody called my daddy Uncle Bob.  
N: Were you the only...people weren't very well [unintelligible words]. Did he buy the car?  
B: He was the first one down there that I know of that bought a car...a brand new car. He bought a brand new car!  
N: How many cars...  
B: He bought a Ford too, but this one was older as this car was. But this one had a brass radiator.  
N: Brass radiator.  
B: But, his had a black radiator.  
N: How many people...at that time there was lots and lots of cars, how many people...  
B: Well, at different times somebody would get one.  
N: You had the right of way, didn't you.  
B: We find a horse, and whoa!  
N: Was that because it was scared?  
B: Well, we'd just pass the car, you know.  
N: Did you stop and let a car go by?  
B: Yes, sometimes on the side.  
N: How about gas stations or service stations?  
B: I don't know how that they, at that time, I don't know how they got gas, but there was a filling station by the time my daddy bought his car, right there in Dumfries.

N: Was that near the...

B: Yeh. In Dumfries where that road runs together, right back down below there.

N: Is it gone now? Is there anything there now?

B: Yeh, the garage is still there. I think he still works in it!

N: Is it a gas station?

B: It was a gas station. But, I don't know whether he can sell gas now. He was the first one.

N: The building that's there now [unintelligible words]...?

B: The building's there now...what he had.

N: [Unintelligible question.]

B: [Unintelligible response.]

N: Was the road concrete?

B: Concrete...that was concrete.

N: And, it's still down there?

B: Yeh, yeh. It's still under there; they paved right over it.

N: A two lane road?

B: A two lane road.

N: [Unintelligible words] turn down Joplin Road, or did they build a bridge?

B: No. You see, they built a bridge right straight on across there.

N: That's gone now?

B: No, it's still there...the bridge is still there.

N: The old King's Highway [unintelligible words].

B: Oh, yeh. It went way down through Occoquan.

N: What did you do after you finished the highway?

B: Well, after I finished the highway, I bundled pulp wood.

N: Where was that at?

B: That was at Dawson's Lake. Then, after I left there, I went to Quantico and built them barracks down there.

N: Where is...

B: Those old brick barracks.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Subject: Dewitt Bates  
Interviewer: Mr. Tom Nelson, PWCHC  
Date: April 6, 1984

II INTERVIEW

N: You were just telling me about you had built some barracks down in Quantico.

B: Yeh.

N: Brick ones. Can you tell me something of where they are and something about them.

B: Yeh. Right there, as you're going into Quantico...

N: The main gate?

B: The main gate. You go on down til you get near to the Town of Quantico, but you keep straight ahead. And, them first buildings that you run into will be the brick barracks.

N: They're still there now?

B: They're still there now, and I helped them build all those barracks. I poured a many bag of concrete to go in them there barracks...first brick barracks that was built there.

N: Do you know when you built those?

B: No. I...

N: It was a long time ago, right?

B: No. It was so long, I forgot what year that was, but we built those barracks. Let's see, after we built the barracks, the first that was there was...

N: The first type barracks?

B: Lumber.

N: Wooden barracks.

B: Wooden barracks. And, my father went there... You know, they give them away...the barracks...the wooden barracks.

N: Did you tear them down?  
B: ...and tear them down and haul them away. We got one of them and tore it down, and I took my team and hauled it away.  
N: A team of horses? And, did you haul it back to your house?  
B: A team of horses, and hauled it back to my house.  
N: What did you do with the wood?  
B: Took the lumber and built part of my father's house...it's built out of part of that...  
N: Part of the barracks?  
B: Yes, part of the barracks.  
N: Okay. So, what other projects did you work on? I know you worked on the roads.  
B: Yeh.  
N: And, you hauled wood, and the barracks. What else did you do as far as building?  
B: Oh, I did so many different jobs.  
N: Do you remember any other buildings that you worked on that are here today?  
B: Oh, yeh.  
N: What are some of the buildings that you can remember? Any in Dumfries that you worked on?  
B: No. I didn't work on any in Dumfries. But, I tell you, I worked on some in Arlington.  
N: Arlington.  
B: Yeh. I helped build a house in the village.  
N: What was the name of it?  
B: Arlington Village. I helped build that up.  
N: Okay.  
B: And, I worked there until the job finished.  
N: What were they...was the salaries back then, when you like worked on Quantico? What were you...?  
B: Two dollars a day.  
N: Two dollars a day.

B: When they was surveying...when the government was surveying for Quantico, they used to come from Indian Head over on a big boat over to Quantico. And, they had a band, and that band played from there up to the top of the hill. And, then when they got on top of the hill, the band would stay there. And they'd go all through the woods, surveying.

N: A band?

B: Yeh. A band.

N: You mean music?

B: Music.

N: Why would they play music?

B: That's the first time ever I saw...hear a band play in my life.

N: Why did they go over and play music in the woods?

B: They did that every day!

N: Why were they doing it?

B: They would march, you know, from the river...

N: Just practicing, maybe. Who were they entertaining?

B: No. They would come on this big boat and they would all get off and march. So, the band would play all the way up from the river on up. And, when they got...when they'd get up, they went right straight on up from the river...right straight on up to the top of that big hill. And then the band would stop playing and they'd go through the woods surveying.

N: I still don't understand. Why would they have a band and a surveyor running around in the woods! It just sounds so strange!

B: It's just the way that the government did at that time.

N: Well, that's crazy. Now, they surveyed for Quantico; was this to build the base?

B: Yeh.

N: Before there was anything there?

B: Before there was anything there!

B: Two dollars a day.

N: Were you working for the government, or were you...

B: No. I was working for a contractor.

N: A contractor.

B: See, contractors did all of the government work in Quantico.

N: Okay, so you worked on that. I've got some more questions on railroads. I know there was a railroad bridge that went across the Occoquan for a long time. What do you remember about your early days with the railroads going through?

B: Well, they had these old steam engines that went up and down. See, they hauled all the material and everything on the railroad...vegetables and all that kind of stuff from the south.

N: Came on the trains?

B: Came on the trains up to Washington; well, on up far as... I don't know how far they went. I know that they'd go on up to New York...all up through that way it was carried...all that stuff...vegetables and stuff.

N: Do you remember anything in particular about how those steam engines came through? Were they... Did people watch them, or they just...every day you saw them come through.

B: Well, that was something was going on, when I got big enough to remember. I used to go to Quantico with my daddy on the wagon. He used to haul lumber down there to the river.

N: Right.

B: And, I used to go with my daddy some days if I didn't have work to do at home. Why, he'd take me with him on the wagon. So, I tell you something else what happened.

N: Okay.



N: So, you were around when they were building Quantico.

B: Oh, yeh. Yes, indeed.

N: What do you remember about that? Anything in particular about what they were...

B: Well, that's the first thing that I could remember about it was they coming down there surveying for Quantico...to put in all these buildings.

N: Did they have ships to bring in supplies and all that, or did it come by rail?

B: Well, some come by rail; some come by boat...different ways...mostly by train.

N: Did they have much military going on that you can remember, like, practicing way back then when Quantico started to be operating?

B: Yeh.

N: Do you remember anything about... Did you ever get to watch the soldiers at work?

B: Oh, many times...many times.

N: What do you remember about the soldiers?

B: See, cause I worked on that... When I got old enough, I worked on that base for years...different times other contractors come in.

N: Was this in the World War I period?

B: Yeh.

N: Do you remember anything about the soldiers in World War I...how they...anything different about them...any stories?

B: Well, no. I never knew too much about it at that time.

N: Did you see ships pull in at Quantico?

B: Oh, yeh, many a one.

N: Were they steam ships, or were they...

B: Steam ships, yes, sir.

N: Any sailing ships by any chance, or were they all just steam ships?

B: Well, I have seen some sail ships...fishermen's. They used sail ships mostly.

N: How about... Did you see any major war ships pull in there? Did you see any with guns on them...going in to Quantico, or were they all just supply ships?

B: Oh, yeh, I have seen them come in later.

N: Back to the railroads, when the steam engines came through Dumfries and all that, did they have lots of smoke and things?

B: There was no steam engines come through Dumfries.

N: Okay.

B: Do you know where Possum Point is?

N: Right.

B: They'd come right through there by Possum Point and on through the Occoquan straight on through there.

N: And, they stopped at what places? Possum Point?

B: Well, one time they stopped at every hole and corner. They'd have different little stations and just stop there. And, then finally it gradually wore out. It just stopped at Quantico, Alexandria and Washington. But, before that they stopped at Widewater. They would stop at Cherry Hill and up here to Woodbridge.

N: Did you ever ride the train?

B: Oh, yeh. I rode the train.

N: Did you ride just to get to Alexandria?

B: I was about grown when I first started riding the train. I went to Pennsylvania one time on the train.

N: Did you ever deal with the boats very much?

B: No. I don't want no water, man.

N: You didn't like to swim?

B: No, sir!

N: How about fishing? Did you ever do much fishing?

B: I do that on the shore, yeh.

N: On the shore. Where did you do your fishing?

B: I did a lot of fishing down at Possum Point Creek.

N: Do you recall any changes since your early days when you were fishing there?

B: Oh, my Lord, yeh, because they've got buildings all down through there now. In them days, there wasn't a building down in there. But, they've got houses all down through there now.

N: Quite a change. You told me about stores and things. You got your groceries from Mr. Ratcliffe's store. How about the hardware stuff, like your hammers and saws and all those things? Where did you buy things like that?

B: Well, we'd go to Manassas...they had a hardware store in Manassas.

N: You couldn't buy it locally very much?

B: No, not too much.

N: How about your clothes? Did you buy them, or did you have to make them?

B: Well, yeh. We had to make all our clothes when I was young. My mother made all my clothes. Took feed sacks and made underwear.

N: It was kind of rough weren't they...itchy?

B: No. They wasn't too bad.

N: This suit that you bought when you were a youngster and went to church for the first time in it, was that store-bought?

B: Yeh, that was store-bought. My father went to Washington and bought that.

N: Do you still have it?

B: No way, indeed. No, I don't have that. That's been gone for years and years.

N: During the time you were growing up, and they had doctors and what not, what did you do when you were ill, or what happened when you...

B: Somebody would go down to Dumfries and get a doctor there by the name of Dr. Kline.

N: Dr. Kline, Okay. Did he come to your house to...

B: Oh, yeh. He had an old horse and buggy.  
N: He would come to attend to you.  
B: He would come by, yeh.  
N: Were you ever sick when you were young, as far as needing the doctor to come see you?  
B: No...  
N: How about when your parents were...  
B: Because my mother was practically a doctor. She doctored on everybody in the neighborhood.  
N: What did she do for medicine?  
B: Go in the woods and get her herbs.  
N: Herbs? She knew the different kind of herbs?  
B: Yeh. Yes, sir.  
N: Did she pass that on, or did she have it in her head that she knew what herbs, or did she have it in a book?  
B: No, because she couldn't read.  
N: Okay. She found the herbs in the woods.  
B: She just found, through nature, she would find herbs and things in the woods and make medicine and stuff like that for different people.  
N: Do you ever remember taking some kind of herbs as far as...  
B: Oh, yes. I drank a lot of different kind of herb medicine that she used to make.  
N: What would she do if you...  
B: She raised us on that.  
N: For instance, if you had a cold or something, what would she do to treat you for something like that?  
B: Well, let's see...  
N: Can you remember?  
B: Yes, I can remember some of the things. She'd take onions and cut them up and put sugar on them, and then put a press on them and press that juice out of them. We'd take that for a cold and it would heal it, sure enough.  
N: What did you do for the bad breath after that?

B: We wouldn't bother with that.

N: Do you remember any other cures, or herbs she used to use for different things?

B: Oh, yeh. Catnip tea and... That was for babies...catnip tea. She would take...

N: Catnip...

B: Catnip tea. She'd make a tea out of it and give it to the children. They'd get alright, I guess. And, then in the spring of the year we'd go out and dig up sassafras roots and make tea out of them to drink it for to cleanse out your blood. I've seen her take the other part that rolls up and spread it open and take that pulp out of there, and put it in water and make it thick like that and wash babies eyes out with it so they wouldn't [unintelligible words].

N: What did you do if you were really sick, and you had to go to like a hospital, for instance?

B: Well, you had to go to Washington.

N: And, take the train or something?

B: At that time, yeh. You'd have to take a train and go to Washington. That was about the closest one in them days until Alexandria got built up, and then they'd go to Alexandria or Fredricksburg.

N: Dr. Kline was the only one you can recall in the area that helped you other than your...

B: Well, the doctor over here in...two doctors over here in Occoquan. One was...I don't remember their names.

N: But they had offices or homes in Occoquan. That's very interesting.

B: Yeh, they had an old car. I used to carry my mother...she got sick and I had to carry her to the doctor.

N: Down at Occoquan?

B: Over to Occoquan.

N: How'd you get her there?

B: A horse and buggy.

N: Do you remember going into the doctor's office in Occoquan?

B: No. I never went in; I just took her.

N: We'll talk about mail now, and delivering letters. What were the... Do you remember getting mail?

B: Oh, yeh. It used to... See, we'd go to the Post Office and get our mail.

N: Where was the Post Office?

B: In Dumfries.

N: In a house, or was it in a special building?

B: Well, it was a little special building they had for mail. There's been three different places in Dumfries for mail.

N: Do you remember where they were?

B: Yeh.

N: Where were they?

B: Do you know where the Kline House is?

N: The Kline House...the doctor's house right?

B: Well, right down below that was the first...right straight on down the street, right on the corner was the first Post Office. And the next two were down on number one [referring to Rt. 1]. One was on the right-hand side, and the other one was on the left-hand side.

N: Okay. Nobody brought it to your house or anything. You had to go down and get it.

B: No.

N: So, how did you know if you had mail?

B: Just go down there and see if there was anything.

N: Was it in a little box, or did they have to...

B: No. You'd go in and ask the man. He'd go around there and find it for you.

N: But, that was a long time ago.

B: "Any mail?"

N: You talked about the churches that you attended...the Baptist church in the Batesville area.

B: Right.

..: Did you attend any other churches...visit them...in the area?

B: Oh, yeh. Neabsco...

N: All these are baptist churches?

B: All baptist churches. Up to Stafford...we used to go up to the Stafford church.

N: Why did you visit the different churches?

B: Well, I don't know. It was just more of a hobby, I guess.

N: To see what was going on?

B: To see what was going on, because sometimes I'd go...you know, when I was a kid I'd go...I'd never even seen the inside of the church, because we kids would be out in the woods up the lane goin' on.

N: They didn't go into church very much.

B: Old people go in the church.

N: And, the young people just played outside.

B: We just played outside. Girls and boys would go around talking to one another, you know.

N: When was it determined that you should go to church, as far as going inside? You told me when you bought your brand new suit... When did they determine that it was time for you to sit in the church?

B: Well, as I got older, I found out that my place was inside.

N: Not playing. You don't remember what age, do you...what age that would be, like six years old?

B: Well, we'd go to Sunday School and my mother would take me to church. And, most of the time though when I went with my mother, I had to be in the church. But, I didn't know what was going on, I'd just be in there, see. Yes, indeed. I wouldn't even know what the man was preaching about!

N: Can you remember what kind of preaching that you could hear?

B: The majority of them preachers couldn't even read.

N: And, they'd just talk...

B: They'd just take it right from the spirit and talk, yes, sir! They were happy men; they'd have a time...shout all over the place!

N: Shout all over the place.

B: Yes, indeed! They didn't have no music in them days in churches. Man, they would get to singing, and you could hear them a mile away!

N: No organ or piano?

B: No organ, no nothing.

N: Just singing and clapping.

B: We had a organ in our... They put an organ in our church and that organ sit right there and rotted because nobody could play.

N: Well, if very few pople could read, did you have books in the pews, or did everybody just sit there and listen?

B: Oh, yeh. Well, they had a very big bible, you know. Well, most of them could read, you know. I mean, a little bit, but not for...

N: You didn't need the books to go to church?

B: No. They would read some and then they would go on and the spirit, I guess, just guided them into it. But, they had a good time though. They would sing and shout all over the place. I remember one time there was a pastor that didn't come but one Sunday in the month. And, he come from Richmond. He'd come up here on the third Sunday, and they'd have service, and then they would have a revival in the fall. And, I'd see them sitting up there at 1:00 at night, singing and shouting.

N: One o'clock in the morning?

B: Yes, sir!

N: Nobody was tired yet?

B: Nobody was tired. They wasn't even thinking about going home. Yes, indeed! I'll never forget his name. The pastor's name was... Reverend Lane was his name.



N: Have you ever heard of Reverend Smoot...the one that used to preach up at Bacon Race Church? Remember the church at Bacon Race Road where it comes into Davis Ford Road...that old church with the graveyard in front?

B: Yeh.

N: Do you remember that?

B: No. I never was up in that area much. No, I never was up in there much.

N: Did you ever go to church in Occoquan?

B: Yeh.

N: What church did you go to there?

B: The baptist church there in Occoquan.

N: The brick one, or the wooden one?

B: Ebenezer. The first time I went over there, I never will forget it. My daddy hired a fella with a car to take his family over there. And, so we went over there in Occoquan. Man, I thought I was in the big city.

N: The big city of Occoquan.

B: I never had been to no towns or nothing like that.

N: Occoquan was bigger than Dumfries, you think?

B: Oh, yeh. Occoquan was much bigger than Dumfries. Dumfries was a big place, but there wasn't no buildings in it, just them stores there and two or three houses.

N: What do you remember about Occoquan in particular? Do you remember any impressions about visiting Occoquan, besides being a big town?

B: No.

N: The stores, or just the way it was? Do you remember anything?

B: Let's see. A colored fella had a store there. His name was Harris...Okal Harris...and we used to go over there to that store and buy ice cream, you know.

N: Ice cream...it was a grocery store like?

B: Yeh. Yes, indeed. He was right across the road from the church there.

N: They still have that store, don't they.

B: I don't know if they still run that store or not. But, I guess it's still there.

END OF TAPE I

[SIDE 2]

N: When did you see your first movie?  
B: My first movie?  
N: Did you ever see some movies when you were young?  
B: I don't know. Oh, I guess I'd be about grown when I saw a movie.  
N: Grown when you saw a movie. Where would you have seen it?  
B: Well, that was one they just had...a little thing in the church, I think.  
N: In the church and they showed it on a projector.  
B: They'd show pictures on the wall.  
N: Alright. Do you remember when you...  
B: I believe that was the first pictures I saw.  
N: How about television...do you remember seeing some of your first television?  
B: Oh, yes. I was married when they made television.  
N: Excuse me, you were what?  
B: I was married when they made television.  
N: Married. Did you see somebody else's? Did you buy your own?  
B: I'll tell you what happened. Me and my wife, we had a little old bachelor radio. And, I told my wife one day, I said, "Do you know one thing?" I said, "They're going to have something right in your home where you can see all this stuff." She said, "Oh, no, there won't be nothing like that!" I said, "Oh yes, it is." You know, it was just like I had a feeling, I can see things. And, so it went on and on and on, and so when they come out, she said, "You said it was going to be like that!" I said, "I told you. Yes, there was a year when I told you." I said, "Well, like I said." Yes, indeed, see the progress that's going...like I said, it's still growing.  
N: And, did you buy your own, or did you just go watch somebody else's?

B: Oh, I watched other people's for a long, long...other places. A fella lives here on No. 1 [referring to Rt. 1] had a build on, and...

N: Over towards...

B: Right there at Pogo's Inn.

N: Pohick?

B: No. There's one of them in Dumfries as you go by the first red light going out that a-way. Right around now, a fella has a store...a built on right around there.

N: Beer garden.

B: Yes. And, he had a little...he bought a television and set it up there where people could come in to see it.

N: And drink beer too.

B: And, that was the first one I saw.

N: That's very good.

B: [Unintelligible comment.]

N: During... As you were growing up, you had World War I and II. What do you recall, or were you ever in the service?

B: No. I was too young for the first one, and I was too old for the last.

N: Did you have to have... There was no military service that you had to have, then. There was no requirements...

B: No.

N: ...that you had to do something for the government in that way?

B: No.

N: When they had World War I, do you remember people leaving for it?

B: Oh, yes, indeed. Yes, indeed, because my brother went.

N: He was old enough.

B: My brother, my cousins. Oh, I had a bunch of cousins that went, yeh. Yes, sir.

N: What was happening during that time in Dumfries as far as when people were leaving for war? Did the community do anything special to help, or do you remember anything you had to do to...

B: No. The only thing...the only thing was when they was coming back. Everybody was glad, you know, to see them coming back.

N: Did they come back in the train, or did they just come in?

B: Yes, they come back on the train. They left on a train and come back on a train. In them days, that was about the only way you could travel any distance was on a train.

N: Because the roads were so poor?

B: Oh, yeh.

N: Did you ever deal with the County government as far as courthouses? Did you ever go to the courthouses, or did you ever... Do you know anything about the government of Prince William County? Did you ever deal with it?

B: No.

N: Not at all? Did you have to register to vote at some point?

B: Oh, yeh, yeh, yeh. They had a place in Dumfries, so I used to go register there.

N: To register.

B: Yeh.

N: How about banks where money was kept and all that. Do you remember any of the first banks?

B: The first bank that I know anything about was in Quantico. I mean close...the closest one.

N: Dumfries didn't have one?

B: No.

N: And, was that run by the government, or was it...

B: No. It was...

N: Like a private bank?

B: Private bank, yes.

N: Did you ever use the bank, or did you keep your money like at home?

B: I didn't have no trouble keeping money...didn't have any to keep!

. : Didn't have any to keep.

B: We stayed broke from one payday to the next.

N: So, what did they pay you? Cash when you had your...when you got paid?

B: Oh, yeh.

N: Just regular cash, no checks or anything.

B: Mostly got cash money.

N: So, what did you do with the money then? Did you stick it in your wallet...

B: Yeh.

N: ...or just kept it in...

B: [Unintelligible comment.] If I had too much to carry, I took it somewheres and hide it sometimes.

N: Did you have much crime as far as people stealing?

B: No, nobody bothered nothing. [Unintelligible words] even have to lock the door. Go away from home; they'll even lock the door.

N: Do you remember, if there was crime or anything, what it was, or was it just stealing pumpkins out of the field, or what?

B: Oh, yeh. They'd steal a little watermelons.

N: Watermelons.

B: I had to do that myself one time. Yes, indeed. At least I was with some boys. They went in the field and got the watermelons; we were watching. We was just as bad as they were because we was watching.

N: Did they ever... Is that about the seriousness of the crimes they had, or...

B: Well, all this...of several they had in them days when I was a kid would be Saturday night fights.

N: People drinking too much.

B: Yeh. They'd get [unintelligible word], man. If they didn't have a party, they didn't fight. They had some... We had a time last night. Yeh, we had a big fight!

N: And, everybody laughed about it?

B: Yes, indeed! Yes, indeed!

N: Did anybody get hurt when they'd fight?

B: Yes, indeed!

N: Just fist fighting?

B: Yes, fist fighting. Sometimes somebody would use a knife or something like that. Once in awhile somebody would have a [unintelligible words].

N: Did they have police around, or was there a Dumfries policeman?

B: No, they just had a sheriff; that's all they had.

N: A sheriff. Was he elected, or did somebody just...

B: Yes, he was elected by the County.

N: He stayed in Dumfries?

B: [Unintelligible sentence.] Charlie Barbee was his name.

N: What was his last name?

B: Charlie Barbee.

N: Barbie?

B: Yes.

N: Did he wear a gun and...

B: Yes, he was the only one around that wore a gun...

N: Were people allowed to have guns?

B: And, they was scared of him when they saw him coming, you know.

N: Was he big, or was he...

B: Yes, he was a regular size fella...kind of short, but he was nice though.

N: How did he get around? Did he...

B: Horse and buggy.

N. Horse and buggy.

B: Yes.

N: How about the fire departments? Do you remember anything about having fire departments in the area?

B: No. We never had no fire department.

N: What happened if you had a fire?

B: Everything burned up...burned down and burned up.

N: Did you try and put it out?

B: Oh, [unintelligible words]. If somebody had some water from a well, or something like that...might try to put it out. But, if it got too big, you'd just have to let it go.

N: Do you remember any fires?

B: I know of two or three houses that burned down up in Batestown, and no fire department or nothing.

N: Just burned down.

B: The house just burned on down.

N: You told me about the crops that were grown in the area. You say corn was the primary crop. Did they grow tobacco or any other crops.

B: No, tobacco...not enough to amount to nothing. I had two uncles, and they used to raise their own tobacco, but that's the first tobacco I'd seen.

N: So, there was only just like corn, and...

B: Corn and wheat.

N: Wheat.

B: Oats and rye. That was the biggest thing.

N: Was that shipped out of here, or was it just...

B: No.

N: ...for around the area?

B: Just for around here...just for their own use.

N: Do you recall any stories that may have been told to you as a child from your relatives or friends of things that happened a long time ago that you may have passed on.

B: Yes, indeed! Oh, my Lord, I wouldn't know where to start any of them.

N: Just try some for me, I'd like to hear them.

B: I tell you one what happened. It was set at slave time. There was a black man, you know, he had a...went out and stole his master's horse and rode it to this party. When he got there he had five or ten cents in his pocket. So, a boy was standing out there, and he said, "Here boy."



.. said, "Come here, you hold this horse." So, the boy he stood there and took the horse. So, he went on in; he was kind of embarrassed, you know. After a while, the boy come out and said, "Hey, mister; say you better come out here. Your horse is sick." "[Unintelligible words] old horse, he's alright." So, finally, he come back again and told him, "Yes, sir, that horse has something wrong." He went out there and saw that old horse was laying down there dead.

N: Dead? The horse was dead?

B: He come out there and saw the horse. He said, "Lord," said, "if you've never done anything before, I want you to do it now!" He said, "I'd want you to get this horse much older so I can..."

N: Take him back?

B: ...take him back home." So, at that time, they had these double head necklaces, you know, they called them. So he told him, he said, "You open all the gates; I'll put him in that stable." And, they opened all the gates. They said that horse got up and made a run so hard, as soon as he got in the stable he fell down, dead.

N: Dead.

B: Next morning, he went outside and said, "Hey, master. Do you know what happened? One of your horses died last night."

N: So, he didn't know he was gone.

B: He didn't know he had him out riding. Oh, he was a big shot. Rode this horse up, but everybody else was walking. If you rode a horse back in them days, you was really something! He just stole master's horse to ride to the party. I just heard that tale and I think it's more of a tale than anything else. They used to tell some terrible tales back them. Oh, yeh.

N: Can you think of any others that you remember?

B: I know a whole lot of them, but right now I just can't...

N: We'll come back to them when you think of them. What was your impression of Batesville? Batesville was an actual little community, right?

B: Right.

N: It's named after your relatives?

B: Yes.

N: How long have your relatives lived in...or when did they move into Batesville?

B: Well, they moved in there directly after slavery.

N: And that's when it first became Batesville?

B: Right.

N: Would that have been your grandfather, or your...

B: My grandfather and my great-grandfather. He was working for this man...

N: The land owner?

B: Yeh, and the man thought so much of him, he give him that land...give him 30 acres of land.

N: Thirty acres.

B: Yeh, for them to live on. And, they give it to him that it would never be sold, that it would be handed down from generation to generation of the Bates'.

N: Is that still being done?

B: Well...

N: You mentioned somebody selling something. Were they allowed to do that?

B: They... They ain't in... That land's laying right there, and nobody ain't bothering them...the County or nothing ain't never bothered them.

N: Is there a title on it, or a deed now, or is it just sort of... Is it protected for the Bates family?

B: No, nobody gonna see into it. See, because it was divided up after my grandfather died. They divided this land up with the boys. I think there was about six or seven of them boys. And, they divided this up in six-acre lots, and give it to each one of the boys. So, some of the

B: boys sold theirs to... Now, a Bates can sell it to a Bates.

N: But, not to outsiders.

B: Not to outsiders. So, as long as it stays in the Bates family...

N: It will still be called Batesville.

B: Right...Batestown.

N: Batestown.

B: So, all that land is laying right in there. My daddy's land, he had twelve acres, because he had bought one of his brother's lots. There ain't but one lot of that land that's been sold, and this was my uncle's son. My uncle give him, his son, this lot, and he sold his to a fellow by the name of Brown who was building houses.

N: How can he do that, if it has to be a Bates person?

B: Well, I don't know how; they worked it around some way or another. But, this fellow couldn't get a deed for that place for eight years.

N: I'll bet! He was taking a chance buying without a deed.

B: Yes, sir, he said he was.

N: Right.

B: He said, "I'm taking a chance on it..." And he jumped right in there and built two houses on that. He said, "...because if the Bates come here, they can take everything I've got." But, nobody didn't bother, you know.

N: What are some of the traditions that have been passed on by your family that you can think of, like do you have any family traditions, like family gatherings, or...

B: Oh, yeh. They have...now they have every year. They have this Bates gathering. And, see there's a lot of them out in Pennsylvania and different places. Now, they go down...they've been down here for a couple of years with the family reunion, they call it. And, all the Bates' and Davis'...

N: Davis'? That's...

B: That was my mother's people...Davis'...

N: That's a very popular name.

B: So, they all stay together.

N: So, when do you meet for this gathering...what time of the year?

B: Well, they do it once a year around... They're doing it this year in Detroit...they're meeting in Detroit.

N: Detroit. And, you just have dinners, or what do you do when you get together?

B: Oh, they have plenty of food and stuff...plenty of drinks. Yes, they have plenty of stuff, and they just dance and have music. They just carry on, just have a good time and get around and talk to one another, you know. That's the only time I see them. Mostly, up and when something like that...when they have this family reunion, and when they go...they have it over in the park. And, I go over there and see them, you know. I don't mess around with them too much, but they have a big time with me! I always go around and see if I can beat some of them, you know, and talk with them.

N: How many Bates are now living in Dumfries...some of your relatives...would you say that still live in Dumfries?

B: Well, there's a few of them around there, but not like they used to be.

N: Are you talking about five or ten, or are we talking about more than that?

B: Oh, yeh, more than that, because I have four myself.

N: In your house?

B: I have four myself; my brother had nine, and all of them is living. At least the boys stay at my brother's house...two of the boys.

N: Let's switch to something a little different now. A lot of people have superstitions. Can you recall any superstitions that were passed on that sound...that are funny now that you may think are funny, or do you have any superstitions that you...

B: No, I never did...I never did get into that.

N: Never did?

B: No. I know our people was superstitious though.

N: What were some of the examples. Tell me some examples of superstitions, like, some people don't like black cats, or things like that.

B: Oh, yeh, if a black cat crossed the road, they'd have to turn around and go back; all that kind of stuff. Yes, indeed. Don't hang your coat on that door knob!

N: Why?

B: That's bad luck.

N: Is that right?

B: Right.

N: I've never heard of that one.

B: You never? Yes, indeed...bad luck! And different... Let's see, I'll think of some other things. I know a lot of things they used to do...say, man, don't you do that, that's bad luck!

N: What's... You went to school for a short period. You said you went how many years? Five years?

B: No, but off and on for five years, see, because I didn't go to school until after Christmas, because I had to get the crop in...corn and stuff in. My dad always said, "You hurry up now and get the crop in." Said, "Then you can go to school after Christmas." I'd go to school after Christmas up until plowing time started. Then, I had to get out and plow.

N: So, you went to... So, you did do some schooling. Do you remember much about the schools in our County as far as...

B: Yeh. We had a great big old wooden school, and we had a great big old stove sitting in the middle of the floor.

N: In the school?

B: In the school, and we had to get wood for that thing to keep us warm.

N: And, you, as a student, had to go and get...

B: Right. We had to go in the woods every three o'clock and get wood for the next day.

N: So, what did the teacher do?

B: She taught. She'd be teaching the children. She had from primer to about the fifth grade, and she'd teach this class about 20 to 25, 30 minutes, and then she'd teach the other class.

N: In the same room?

B: In the same room.

N: My goodness.

B: I'd sit in the back of that school, my feet aching many a day...

N: From the cold?

B: From the cold, yeh, because the little children had to get up front. We had to sit in the back.

N: Because you were older and could hear better.

B: Cause we were older, right.

N: So, how did a teacher teach a whole class when you had little kids and big kids. How could she teach a whole class?

B: Well, she'd teach one class so long, then she'd teach another class, and then she'd teach another one til she got around to them all.

N: You mean, you would be just doing something...

B: We had arithmetic one day, and we'd have reading one day, and we'd have spelling one day. That's what [unintelligible words].

N: And, she would teach everybody.

B: Right.

N: Did she walk around to the desk and talk to you, or did she talk out loud?

B: No, she talked right out loud.

N: What happens if you're bad?

B: Got a whipping! Man, she kept them great big switches sitting up in that corner there. Man, I used to see a teacher tear them boys up!

N: Did she do it in front of the class, or did she...

B: Yeh, right in front of everybody. One boy there one morning, he knowed the teacher was going to whip him the next day...he brought a knife!

N: He brought a knife to the class!

B: Brought a knife to class in that school!

N: And, that was against the rules?

B: Yes, indeed, it was against the rules.

N: Oh, goodness.

B: So, then she would write a letter to the parents...the teacher would, and some of the other children wore pads, you know, because he wasn't prepared to sit. And, so then... And, sometimes, they put them out of school if they got too bad. They put them out.

N: So, they wouldn't go to school at all.

B: They wouldn't go to school at all. Even the parents would take them out and make them go to work.

N: Goodness. Did you ever get in trouble like that?

B: No. I was about to get in trouble one time.

N: It really gets to you, right?

B: I was about to get in trouble one time, but, I don't know, it just wasn't for me to be whipped, I guess.

N: What would happen if you got into trouble?

B: Teacher whipped every child in school...every boy in school that day. And, another boy, he bucked against it, and said, "We're going to whoop him, because he hasn't done nothing." So, after that, me and this other boy were buddies too, you know, so I guess she thought maybe I was going to do the same thing. But, she didn't bother me. That one boy was the cause of all that trouble. Now, the teacher was telling them about their hands, you know, being dirty, and for them to wash their hands...keep their

B: hands clean. We got all that stuff [unintelligible words]. And, this boy was between of this teacher and the stove pipe. This teacher couldn't see what he was doing. He threw his hands up and said, "Look at mine."

N: And, he had black hands from the stove?

B: He kept on putting his hands up and got all the kids laughing. Course, the teacher got mad at this. But, she didn't bother none of the girls; they laughed too, but didn't bother them, but she did tear some of them boys up. Yes, indeed, I never will forget that day. Some bad kids come there.

N: How many kids would be in a school like that...would you have when it's full? Twenty kids, or more?

B: Oh, I'd say probably 75.

N: In the one room?

B: In one room!

N: And, one teacher!

B: One teacher.

N: How could she manage all those kids?

B: I don't know. We had one teacher by the name of Miss Owens. Every morning she give us a lecture, and she would lecture us until about eleven o'clock. I have seen it almost go to twelve.

N: Lecturing about being good, or just...

B: Yeh, about being good, and how she went to college and how she did this and did that. She went to Hampton Institute, and that was all her talk...was Hampton Institute. And, we'd sit there, and we'd get so tired of listening at it, you know. But, buddy, when she says, "Time for lesson," you'd better know it.

N: Did she give you tests and all that? Did you have to take tests to get grades?

B: No. In them days, never took a test.

N: No tests?

B: No.



N: Did you get grades?  
B: No, didn't get no grades.  
N: How'd you know if you passed?  
B: You didn't pass.  
N: How'd you go on to the next grade?  
B: Well, when you read through your book and knowed that book well, you go on to the next grade.  
N: So, if you didn't read through the book, you didn't go to...  
B: You didn't go to the next grade. You'd go back in that same book next year til you went through that. I stayed in fourth grade, I know, two years.  
N: You didn't read your book?  
B: I think I was a very poor reader, and a poor writer too. Yes, indeed.  
N: So, when you left school, it was because you wanted a job?  
B: I left school and went out and worked...left school and went out and worked.  
N: What... We talked about, earlier, about you lived in the black section of Batesville, which was the only black section in Dumfries, and the rest of the Dumfries area was white. Do you recall any problems...racial problems between blacks and whites at that time? You mentioned that you went to a party one time. Were there any problems in dealing with...in these two communities?  
B: Well, as far as... I know some of the boys...white boys and colored boys'd get to fighting, but I never had no trouble. I never had no trouble with none of them in my life. Everybody always looks the same to me, I just don't know why. I growed up that a-way.  
N: You didn't get treated...  
B: And, my daddy...the white people thought more of him than [unintelligible words]...give him anything he wanted.  
N: Why do you think times have changed?

B: I don't know. Well, that's the Bible, you know. It said things was changing, and I could see that every day. I tell them in my church, I said, "I can see things changing every day..." I mean, I said, "because I've been here a right good little while, and things have made a big change from the time I started up until now."

N: Is it better?

B: Well, I don't know. Sometimes I think it's better because we get more money, but, then I don't know. Back there we didn't have nothing to worry about...no food or nothing like that.

N: You had all the food you could eat?

B: All the food we wanted all the time, yes, indeed. Never had to worry about nothing to eat. We raised our own food.

N: You don't raise your own food now?

B: No, you don't raise it. You got to go to the store and buy it now.

N: Do you have gardens and all that?

B: No, I had no garden for a long...I ain't worked no garden for a long time. I used to have a garden though. I used to raise all kinds of stuff, and I've even let people come and go in the garden and get what they want. I said, "There's plenty of stuff out there; go out and help yourself."

N: It's strange how...when you, a long time ago, you say you had all the food you could eat, because you didn't have to worry about money for food, and now a-days, the ground's still there, the gardens are still there, but everybody worries about food to eat. Why do you think that could be?

B: I don't know. It's laziness, because some of them people plow up some of that land and raise something to eat, but they're lazy.

N: Because we've got refrigerators now, and you could put the stuff in there.

B: Right. Some of them...and some of them just don't have time. I don't know, I just don't know what it is.

N: It's really strange.

B: It's really a mystery to me. Nobody wants to work any more. No, indeed. Now, take my two boys; I've never seen them try to raise a garden. I've got the land back there where they could have a nice garden. They could come over there and try. I got the plow and things right there. They could come over there and plow it up and have them a garden and raise their stuff. Shucks, ain't they something! No, indeed.

N: It takes a lot of work. It's not...

B: Yeh, it's a lot of work, that's the trouble.

N: Too much distractions, like television and lots of things to do to keep them from being in the garden.

B: Right...that's right. See, I used to raise chickens and pigs...hogs and all that stuff.

N: On your property?

B: Even since I've been where I'm living there now. In fact, they're building two houses down below me. They live right on top of me, practically.

N: The Brown's, is that the name?

B: That Brown built. And, my chickens got to going down in the lady's yards.

N: Oh, oh.

B: And so they kept on doing that. Yes, I could have made a fence, but they would get out at [unintelligible words].

N: Clip their wings to...

B: And, every time I would build...they made me so mad. One day I went out there and killed every one of them and put them in the freezer. I said, "I ain't bothered with no more chickens!" So, that's the reason that... Now... But now, hogs...you can't raise them. The County won't let you.

N: Because they smell or something?

B: Yeh. Yes, indeed.

N: How many hogs did you have when you raised them?

B: Oh, I've had high as four and five.

N: Four or five hogs?

B: Yeh, yeh. We give everybody some meat. We'd kill them...never sell them...give it away. And, my daddy used to do the same thing.

N: You couldn't store it, could you?

B: Yeh, you can salt it down...put salt on it and salt it down.

N: Did you have a smokehouse or something? Is that where you stored it?

B: Yeh, at home...at my father's house we had a smokehouse. I put all that meat in there. Man, my daddy was out there for days smoking meat. Real big hams, I tell you! Used to go out there and cut off what you want.

N: We're going to switch this stuff...

B: Let's talk about mines.

N: About the mine?

B: The mine up my way.

N: Let's talk about it, I haven't heard about the copper mine.

B: Yeh.

N: Okay.

B: I'll tell you some of the things I used to do. See, I could lay in my upstairs window and I could see when the thing come up out of the ground and dumped...

N: The shaft?

B: Out the shaft. I'd see them dump out. I laid in my bed many times and watched them dump that stuff down the chute. And, you'd hear it go rurr, rurr, rurr down the chute.

N: Coming out?

B: Yeh. And, so when my daddy worked in there, and I used to go over there and carry his clothes to change, because when they come up out of there everybody looked the same.

N: All dirty.

B: Yeh, you didn't know one from the other. And, so I was standing there watching for him to pop up, you know. Everytime he'd pop up, I'd get scared, you know. I said, "Great day, my daddy come out of that place!"

N: How'd he come up? Was it like an elevator or...?

B: On the chute.

N: On the dirt chute?

B: On the elevator. They had a big motor that set way back, and a cable...

N: That pulled...

B: That pulled that thing up out of there.

N: And he would sit in the buckets...

B: They'd stand on that... They had a thing that they stood on to come out of there...called it a bale or something. Some stood on the bale and some stayed in the bucket.

N: Well, how did he... How long did he work in the mine?

B: Oh, he worked there until they shut down.

N: How many years do you think he worked...

B: Oh, he worked in there about...because he had worked in there before I was in the one ... There were three mines...different mines up there. And, they had worked...

N: Different copper mines?

B: Right. And, they had... The first mines, I can't remember them, because one of them they had they walked in and out...they could walk in and out. But, this last one, it went straight down. And, I used to carry his clothes over there.

N: At the end of the day?

B: At the... In the afternoon...time for him to come off. I always got over there early enough to see him come out of there. And, then we'd go on over to a place they had over there to change clothes and wash up.

N: Shower.

B: Shower.

N: What was his pay? Do you recall? How much did he get for working in the mine?

B: I think about \$2.50.

N: \$2.50?

B: That was about the biggest pay that was around there at that time.

N: And, how did the copper they mined...where did it go?

B: Well, see, they...they had a dinky...they called it a dinky...

N: Dinky.

B: ...that hauled it from up there at that mine down there where Possum Point is. And, they'd load that stuff on these little cars...a little dinky...

N: Gondola cars...type things.

B: Yeh. And, that little dinky would take them down there and they'd load them on the big cars on the big tracks and they'd carry them to these different factories where they made this stuff.

N: Goodness. Dumfries doesn't... I don't picture it as being a big mining place. Didn't they have trouble with water down in the shafts?

B: Oh, they had pumps to pump it out.

N: But, they were down in the water.

B: Yeh. See, the shaft went all the way...way on down and they would level off, you know, and go back in these rooms and get this stuff out.

N: So, the mine is still there today?

B: Yeh.

N: Did they ever have any trouble with the ground falling in where the mine was?

B: Not as... I haven't been over there for years and years. I used to go over there any time I wanted, but after the government took it over...

N: It's on government property now?

B: Yeh. And, after they took it over, they stopped people from going up in that way. But, they ain't too bad now. I think you can go up in there now.

N: And see the old site. Is the equipment still there?

B: No. There ain't nothing there...everything's gone.

N: Just holes in the ground.

B: Yeh. No, I hauled lumber the last part of the shaft when it was running. I hauled lumber there with my daddy's team.

N: Lumber to go down in...

B: To go down in there.

N: Put inside there.

B: Yeh, and to build different things with. Two by sixs and two by eights. Man, them things were wide. I was just a little fella; I was only twelve years old!

N: They were big.

B: Between twelve and thirteen years old when my daddy went to work in the mine. And, I took that team and I hauled that lumber.

N: How many years do you think those mines operated in Dumfries? Do you think they operated fifty years or...

B: Oh, no. I guess they operated about... The last one operated about five years, because the boys struck for more money.

N: Oh, they had a strike.

B: And, that's how come it shut down.

N: They couldn't afford to keep digging.

B: No, sir. They just shut it right down.

N: Goodness.

B: There was luck in that mine. There wasn't over two or three people that got killed in there. At least I know one fella that got killed in there.

N: Did they get him out, or did they just...

B: Oh, yeh, yeh, they got him out. This fella, the one that got killed, he was a bull-headed fella. And, they say

B: every evening he would fool around and wait until that thing got ready to leave before he'd get on there. And, that evening he went to step on there and that thing went up and his hands slipped off and down in the shaft he went.

N: He fell.

B: Yes, sir. He married my cousin, that fella did...married my first cousin. Yes, sir. And that evening, I never will forget it, my brother come home. And, my mother was very superstitious, she could always tell when something had happened. He come in and he backed up against the table and give a long blow. And, she looked right at him and she said, "What's the matter now?" She knowed there was something wrong. So, he said... This fella's name was Wallace Reed. He said, "Wallace got killed a while ago." And, oh, boy, then everything did [unintelligible words]. Everybody got scared around there after that, you know. But they kept on working though.

N: Kept on working.

B: Yeh. They said it was his careless doing that he got killed that like. He always was bull-headed. Said they kept on calling...telling him to come on. "I'll be there in a minute...I'll there before you leave."

N: Waited too long!

B: Waited too long. Yes, sir. There was another fella that got killed in the other mine over there, but I never knew him in any way. He was from down in... See, people come from all over the place to work in them mines. And, a lot of people come from down in Richmond.

N: Oh, it wasn't just a local work force.

B: No.

N: Where did the people stay if they came all that way?

B: Oh, they would board...they'd board with different people. They would live with different people.

N: They didn't have like barracks or anything for them to stay in?



B: No. Some of them would come up here and never did go back. Stayed right up here. Yes, they did. They did have a place for them to stay...some shanties that some of the men stayed in.

N: Is that place gone now?

B: Yeh, all of that is gone. But, most of the fellas would get them a place to stay with somebody so they could have their meals and things ready so they wouldn't have to cook, you know. If you stayed in a shanty you had to cook for yourself.

N: Would you say that the mine was one of the biggest operations in the Dumfries...

B: Biggest operation there was in Dumfries, yes, sir.

N: There was really nothing else going on except mining?

B: Everybody there hollered about that mine.

N: What's the difference between the mine there and what was going on at Occoquan? Didn't they have a mine there, or a quarry, or was that quarry in later years?

B: That was later years.

N: Later years.

B: Yeh, not too many years ago that was used...that quarry. I worked when that started operating. I went over there one time to get a job, but I looked at all them rocks. I come all the way from over there; I didn't like the looks of that place.

N: It's a big place.

B: Yes, sir. But, then I went out and [unintelligible words] and I worked out there in the stone quarry for about a month. We didn't stay long because the man soon got what rocks he wanted.

N: And left.

B: Cut the job out and we had to come on back home.

N: What do you... You talked about Dumfries when you were a boy. What do you recall Dumfries being like when you were

N: just a small boy and walking through the streets? Do you...can you remember what it looked like...just your impression of what...you know, what was happening every day there?

B: Well...

N: What were the street scenes like?

B: There wasn't these [unintelligible word] streets. It was nothing but just walk on the road...all the dirt [unintelligible words] where I lived, see. And, they used to call it going down the street. I said, "Down the street!" There wasn't any streets there!

N: [Unintelligible comment.]

B: Yes, indeed. There used to be an old carnival, you know, would come in Dumfries there. A fella had a big tree out there and they put that carnival up. Man, we thought we was going to something!

N: A carnival! How many years ago was that?

B: Oh, that was way back there.

N: When you were just how old do you think? Were you in your teens?

B: You know, I was thinking about the first work I done for this... That's the first carnival I saw.

N: First carnival.

B: It come in there that same week that I worked for that Mr. Keys. And, so they...

N: Were you just a teenager then?

B: Yeh...no, I wasn't even a teenager, I was just a boy!

N: A little boy. And they had a carnival there.

B: Yes, indeed.

N: What was the carni... Can you recall what the carnival had in it, what did they...

B: Oh, it was just a merry-go-round. That's all it was.

N: How did it run? I mean, was it like a steam engine, or did they have a tractor to run it?

B: I don't know exactly what kind of an engine they did have.

N: But, it went around.  
B: Yeh, it went around.  
N: So, it had a merry-go-round. And, what else?  
B: Just go around, like that [gesturing].  
N: Did you ride it?  
B: Oh, yes, man! Because he paid us off that evening so we could go down there.  
N: Mr. Keys did.  
B: Mr. Keys did...paid us off. First pay I drew. He said, "I'll pay you all boys off because I know you all want to go down to the merry-go-round."  
N: Is that all it was...a merry-go-round?  
B: Just a merry-go-round.  
N: And nothing else?  
B: Nothing else.  
N: And that's the carnival?  
B: And that was the carnival.  
N: They didn't have any clowns or elephants or nothing?  
B: No. But, you didn't have to pay but five cents a ride.  
N: Five cents?  
B: Five cents.  
N: And, how long could you ride?  
B: Oh, we rode a long time, yes, a long time. You took a quarter and you got six tickets for a quarter.  
N: He was making some money then, wasn't he?  
B: Yeh, he was making the money.  
N: Six tickets for a quarter back then was...  
B: Yeh, they made money with that thing.  
N: How did that man arrive? Did he have like a truck to haul this in, or did he...was it back when they had horses?  
B: Yeh, he had an old truck to haul it in.  
N: A truck to bring it in.  
B: Yeh.  
N: Wow! Is there any other entertainment that came to town that you can think of? You had the carnival to come...did they have...

B: Well, later on they had shows...

N: Carnival shows, or just...

B: No, just an ordinary show. There'd be a big tent that had all these comedians, you know, on stage.

N: When you were just a kid?

B: Well, I was...

N: Or older?

B: Well, I was a little older then. Yeh, I was a little older when that started. When the carnival...when the first carnival come in there...a real carnival, oh, I was practically grown then.

N: How about groups that came in, like evangelists or traveling preachers and all that...did they have any groups like that that came in to your communities for revivals? Did they have any...

B: No.

N: Nothing like that?

B: No. There'd just be this one preacher.

N: He'd go around and...

B: He'd go around and preach and he'd run the revival. He'd preach and he'd run his own revival and everything. See, now preachers have ministers come in to run the revival mostly. I know they've been doing that at my church now for years.

N: Do they come every year?

B: Every year, yeh, in September.

N: And, so your minister don't have to run it...he has somebody else...

B: No. He has somebody else to run it. Of course, he's there but, they take the service...do all the preaching.

N: What... So, you used to walk around town as a little boy...around Dumfries. Did you ever get to go very far from home on your own, or did you just stay in the neighborhood?

B: No. I stayed in the neighborhood.

N: What did you...

B: I was a man when I left home. At least the only time I left home was when I went out to Maryland where I told you I worked in that stone quarry. That's the first time I ever left home in my life.

N: How did you get there? Did you take a train, or did you ride a horse.

B: No. I went in the car.

N: A car.

B: Yeh, we went in the car. Five us went out there in the car.

N: Did you sleep there?

B: Yeh, we went out there and found a place and rented rooms to stay in. So happened we found a place with this old lady and she lived by herself and she took us in. And, she cooked for us. We thought we was big shots, you know.

N: Big grown business men, right?

B: Yeh.

N: But, you still came back to Dumfries?

B: Oh, yeh. No sooner than they shut down out there, I come on back home. I ain't never left since to go nowhere else.

N: When you married... Your wife's name is what again?

B: Gladys Bates.

N: Gladys Bates. What was her name before that?

B: West...Gladys West.

N: Gladys West. And, she was living in... Did she live in Dumfries?

B: She lived in Dumfries.

N: And, did she have many relatives?

B: She was my second cousin.

N: Goodness sake! Close family!

B: Yeh.

N: Did she have many relatives that's still living in Dumfries?

. . . eh.

N: Did they live in the Batesville area, or did they live in another place?

B: She has a brother that lives up in Joplin, but that's not...that's practically all the same area. She has a brother that lives in Joplin, and then she has one in New York.

N: So, you all lived in the same community.

B: Same community. Yeh, we was raised right up together, went to school together.

N: How many children did you have?

B: Do I have?

N: Did you have.

B: Four.

N: Four children.

B: Two girls...

N: What are their names?

B: Two girls and two boys. Nathaniel...

END OF TAPE II  
(SIDE 1)

B: The two boys live in Dale City. And my oldest daughter, the one that come in here that night, and she lives here in Woodbridge.

N: Did... I know she married.

B: Yeh, and my baby girl, she stays home.

N: With you and your wife?

B: Yeh. See, she has a child, but she was married one time. We're kind of hoping [unintelligible words].

N: Has a child now.

B: But, she had this child before she got married, and he been with me ever since he been born.

N: So, you're the grandfather.

B: Yes.

N: That's very nice.

B: He called me this morning and talked. "Granddaddy, I want you to come on home." Said, "You know one thing, I had to wash dishes!" See, he never did nothing.

N: Oh, oh. Who does the dishes? You?

B: Yeh, I do everything. Wash the dishes, cook, and the wash.

N: Your wife is not...

B: She's not too good.

N: Not too good right now, so you're doing a lot of that work.

B: She come over here yesterday though. A lady brought her over here and got a wheelchair and brought her down here. So, she said she might come back again today. I said, "Oh, don't worry about it."

N: Just take it easy.

B: Yeh. I'm doing alright; I'm getting along fine. So... She wants me home too, but... I think they've been having trouble with the furnace. Of course, I've got one of these oil heaters...

N: Oil heaters that keeps the house warm. It's not working too good?

B: ...that you can carry around. I have one like that, you know. And,... But, the other one...I got one in the floor, but, if you turn it down too low and it stays down too low long enough, it'll stop up.

N: It won't work, yes.

B: So, now when I was there, I know what to do with it.

N: Right, because you knew how to...

B: I turn it down and then the second time I turn it back up; let it blow all that stuff out and then when it gets hot and warm in there, I cut it down again. But, it has stopped up and I have to go down and take that thing... that pipe out and I got to vacuum.

N: That's soot.

B: That soot's right there by it. And, I go right down there and take that vacuum and pull all that stuff out of there and put it back...perfect condition!

N: Works good.

B: Yeh!

N: Let me ask you one more question. You've lived a long, long life and have seen a lot of things. What do you think contributes to having such a wonderful life and so many experiences? What do you attribute your...

B: My experience of it?

N: I mean having such a...

B: I've had a good time in my life.

N: What do you think keeps you so healthy as far as... You've kept healthy and...

B: Working. Yes, I think work has a whole lot to do with your health sometimes, because I've seen people lay around and didn't do nothing, and just couldn't do...just wasn't nothing to them, you know. But, I started to work so early and been working all my life...I mean hard work. I run old jackhammers in Quantico there...breaking up concrete and stuff like that, you know. And, that's the reason I'm nervous and this all now is on account of running them things...the shakes. I go to bed at night and shake, shake, shake.

N: Yes, because you're still working.

B: Still working, yes, indeed.

N: What do you wish...

B: But, I... Just because I was getting...making my own money though, I'd grab it in a minute. Yes, indeed, I'd grab it in a minute.

N: How do you think, talking about church, how do you think God has blessed your life in the best way? Which...

B: Oh, He has wonderfully blessed me. Yes, sir, and I thanks Him every day. Every day I thank Him...thanks Him for my time because seventy years is a man's life, and He let me stay here to be 78.



N: Given you a lot more.

B: Yes, sir, given me more. And, sometimes I can look back, I can see my time ending, you know. And, then again, one time, I got to thinking very much. He spoke to me just as plain as day. He said, "You've got a long time here," and that was a long time ago! Yes, indeed. Yes, sir.

N: Still has lots more things for you to do.

B: Yeh, more for me to do. Yes, indeed. Yes, sir.

N: Well, I've really enjoyed talking to you, and I look forward to seeing all this written down so that other people can enjoy the...all about the history.

B: Yes, indeed.

N: And, I think if people pray to God to give them a life just like they've given you, I think...and they work hard, I think they'll see just the beauty of the world that you've seen.

B: Right. I told them in church...chorus day...I've been singing in the chorus for forty years...no, thirty years...

N: At least.

B: Thirty years, yeh, and so I told them in church that Sunday, that as long as I've been singing in the chorus now for thirty years, this was the first year I had a chance to get up and say anything. Everybody else talking and I'd never...they'd never given me anything to say. So I said, "Well, I can tell you one thing." I said, "In these thirty years of traveling and singing, I really have enjoyed myself." Yes, sir, I have enjoyed singing.

N: That's right.

B: Yes, sir. I can't do no singing now because my voice ain't...

N: Play the harmonica.

B: But, I used to sing tenor. Boy, I used to get up there! I used to go high! Everybody used to love to hear me sing. Right now some of the younger members tell me, they

B: say, if I didn't sing, you know, say, "I missed you today." I say, "What'd you miss?" "Missed that tenor today." I say, "Oh, well, I can't do it like I used to, but I try anyhow"...I keep trying. I said, "Long as the Lord will let me, I'm gonna be singing." Yes, sir. I sing in two... I done sung in seven different groups since I been singing.

N: In your church and around?

B: Around... We had a community group one time, and had a quartet one time...I sung in that. Yes, indeed, I really have enjoyed myself singing. I just love it! I just love to sing!

N: I hope you continue with all that.

B: I hope you can come up to our church some third Sunday.

END OF TAPE II  
(SIDE 2)

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