

Things Remembered

By

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People would go to the creek and dig yellow roots and herbs and boil them and make medicine. When a baby was born, a midwife would deliver the baby and they told the children that babies came out of hollow logs. People would go in the woods and pick huckleberries and mayhaws and put them in fruit jars and can [preserve] them for the winter. They would also go into the woods and get certain weeds and boil them to get a yellow dye to color Easter eggs. Swimming in the creeks was a common summer practice.

These were their activities and pleasures in those days. There were no automobiles and doctors were not available so people had their own home remedies.

Time was spent possum hunting; they carried an ax to cut down the tree and a corn sack to put the possum in. These hunts took place at night and the hunters sat around a fire and listened to the dogs chase the animals. When a possum went up a tree, splinters were taken from the burning stump for use as torches to light the paths since there were no flashlights in those days.

Before water wells were dug, women would go to the creek or spring to wash clothes and family members would carry buckets of water to the house for cooking and drinking. Large wash pots were left at the creek or springs for boiling water and washing clothes the next time.

Fresh meat was available in the summer by going into the swamp or woods and killing a hog that was fat from eating acorns. There was no way to preserve the meat during the hot summer months so the family would take what they needed and share the balance with all the neighbors. During the fall and winter months a farmer would pen his animals and have a hog-killing and invite all the neighbors to help. After a day of hard work and plenty to eat, everyone went home with enough fresh meat to feed their family for a few meals. The work did not end that day for the host farmer, to preserve this meat for use in the months ahead, it had to be smoked. Bear grass was used to hang the meat in the smoke house. Some of the meat was salted and packed in 60 gallon barrels of lard. Refrigeration was not available in those days.

Farmers plowed with oxen and wild horses roamed in the woods and up and down the creeks. Panthers roamed the woods.

Sometimes in the summers, winds would appear and be blowing around and around and blowing leaves as high as you could see. The youngsters got a big thrill out of watching a whirlwind and then it would disappear as quickly as it started.

Storms would usually come in July or September and if in July it was called a July storm, or if in September it was called a September storm. They named the storms by the month they came in. These storms were usually not severe. Sometimes they would blow over a corn crib, a rock chimney, a few trees and occasionally a house.

Places all along the river were named like places on the highways. There was Century, Bluff Springs, McDavid and Bogia landings. There were regular river hands that worked these areas where it was a convenient place to roll the logs into the river and make rafts and float them down to Ferry Pass. These hands would have to walk back up the river or catch a ride on a train. Logs were hauled to the river with log carts, usually pulled by 3 or 4 yokes of oxen.

People knew the woods, if you were in the woods at night you could recognize where you were by the big timber. Occasionally you would come to a pile of trash in the woods and it would be where an old sow had prepared a nest in which to give birth to her pigs. She would bite off little bushes and weeds and add them to the pile of leaves and straw. It would serve as a clean, dry and warm bed for the pigs. This nest was usually constructed 2 or 3 days before the pigs were born. If you walked up to this bed while the sow was in it, she would come out of there like she was going to eat you up. By the time the pigs were 3 days old, they were out roaming around the nest.

Traps were constructed in the swamps and along creeks as a way of catching hogs when they were needed for food. People watched the acorn on the oak trees, the better the crop of acorns, the fatter the hogs would grow in the woods. When bullis [wild scuppernongs] and acorns were falling the hogs would have trails from one to the other.

As transportation, people would ride ox carts or on wagons pulled by mules. Sometimes they would ride horses, but to travel greater distances you did so by water or by train. Children would get out in the lane at night and build a fire and run and play and catch lightning bugs. Kerosene lamps provided light for the homes since there was no electricity or gas. A few people had lanterns for use in walking at night but most folks just walked in the dark using whatever light was provided by the moon and stars.

People hoed their yards and lanes, not a sprig of grass was allowed. They would go down on the creek and cut gallberry bushes and remove the leaves by beating the bushes against wire fences. These were then tied in bundles making a broom for use in sweeping the yards.

To celebrate the 4th of July, someone would go to town and get ice and wrap it with quilts to keep it from melting and everyone would gather at the creek and make ice cream and cut watermelons and sometime fry fish. This was a time of lively celebration. The men would walk around and rattle change in their pockets to make people think that they had lots of money. Men would pick up ends of logs or other heavy objects to see who was the strongest.

A lot of the creeks had waterwheels installed to produce energy for grinding corn and sawing logs. The people raised their own corn and shelled it and carried it to these mills to be ground into meal for use in making cornbread. The creeks, branches, rivers and lakes and springs all had names like Taler Springs and Uncle Harvey Carnley Springs. Most springs had wooden boxes submerged forming a deeper area making it easier for everyone to get fresh cool water. They would fold bay leaves to make a cup for drinking purposes.

These were the days before alarm clocks when a person depended on the crowing of a rooster to announce the beginning of a new day.

There were no paved roads, if you traveled; you traveled on dirt road and trails. The children walked to school barefooted, and sometimes in the winter the ground would freeze and be spewed up with ice. Most schools were buildings with one room heated by a wood burning heater; but there were a few two room schools.

During the Hoover Days [1928-1932] some people couldn't afford to eat biscuits three times a day and only had them for breakfast.

There were no sledge hammers in this country and if you wanted to drive a post peg into the ground you did so with a wooden maul that you had constructed yourself. There were no mill whistles blowing. At the store you purchased green coffee pods and removed the coffee beans and put them in the stove for roasting. These roasted beans were ground in a coffee grinder and then you were ready to make coffee by placing these grinding in a pot of boiling water.

People were scared to walk across a creek bridge after dark. They said you could see hants. They wanted someone to be with them when crossing a bridge at night. You could hear men coming in from work at night. They would be toting a lantern and they would hollow when they crossed a bridge. Some nights the moon was so bright you did not need a lantern or a torch made from a burning lighted splinter, you could almost see as good as in the daytime.

When the men would go rabbit hunting, sometimes the rabbit would run into a hollow tree or a hollow log. They first would try to take a small stick and twist in the hollow tree or log in hopes of catching the fur and pulling him out, otherwise, they had to chop down the tree and split it or split the hollow log in order to get the rabbit.

The women would buy cloth and make their own clothes, usually on a singer sewing machine. These items could be ordered from a Sears & Roebuck Catalog which also advertised men and women who were suitable for husbands and wives. You could correspond with these people and perhaps find a suitable mate.

Men would camp out on the lakes and river banks at night and make coffee in a gallon syrup bucket and every few hours they would check their lines to see if they had caught

more fish. They used a fat lightered splinter as a torch to see how to get up and down the river banks at night.

You could not travel from the Jay area to Milton in one day so you had to camp one night along the way. People would carve their initials on big trees in the woods and swamps so others would know they had been there earlier.

Life could get lonely and people would walk or ride a mule and wagon for many miles to visit their neighbors for a time of visiting, drinking coffee and swapping stories. People would walk miles to a square dance or to attend church.

There were many marriages of first cousins because there were so few people to choose from and no way to travel any great distance to find a husband or wife. Not many used the mail order system and the Sears & Roebuck order for this purpose.

If you traveled it was by ox cart or walked, either being a very slow process. There was never any extra time to make a long journey. The daily chores included taking care of the livestock which roamed freely in the woods and swamps. In order to identify their livestock, hogs, goats and cattle, some would brand them, others would cut notches in the ears and some would do both. Sometimes they would cut the skin under the cows' neck and let it hang down and this way they could recognize their livestock. Branding was a lot more work in that you had to get the branding iron really hot so that it would burn into the hide and make a lasting mark. These brands and notches were recorded in a tally book as a means of showing how much livestock you owned. Some put bells on a few of the cows and oxen so they could hear the ringing and go directly to them in the woods. Livestock roamed freely in the woods and you had to have some way to identify those that belonged to you.

If a house was constructed properly, there would always be a window near the fireplace and a scaffold built at the window. Wood was stacked on this scaffold. At night you would not have to go outside in the cold to get wood, just raise the window and reach out and get it.

People could go into the woods and build a home, most homes were constructed of logs or cypress boards, and stay there a while and it belonged to them. They would homestead the property. They would cut the logs and split them into boards for use in building the house. Some logs were cut into shorter lengths and split and with the use of a drawing-knife cypress shingles were shaped and used as roofing material.

People would go into the woods and get forked limbs and cut them and nail them to the wall for gun racks.

Most people couldn't tell the time of day by looking at a clock. People very seldom saw a newspaper, didn't matter, they couldn't read.

Jay was called Pine Woods [Pine Level]. There was no stock law and cattle and hogs could range freely going up and down the roads and into the woods anywhere. All L & N right of ways were fenced except where there was a depot, a store and a post office and various other activities. If you had a hog or cow killed crossing the railroad where it was not fenced, the railroad company would pay a good price for your loss.

When butchering a hog they would go to the creek and wash the chitlings. When a beef was butchered the cows would come through the woods from all directions, bellowing and pawing and hooking the bushes. This would scare the youngsters and they would run and get in the yard. People always had turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens and guineas. Guineas were almost as good as a yard dog. When a stranger came around they would all go to hollowing and you knew they had seen something or somebody.

Sometimes a hen would set a nest out in the weeds and bushes and come up with a bunch of biddies. Everyone had goats, and goats didn't like the rain. Some people would build sheds for their goats to keep out of the rain.

Every man in the community had to work ever so often on the roads. The earlier work was done with shovels and also using a mule to drag a log, turned across the road, as a means of filling in the holes. When road grading equipment became available it was pulled by mules.

In every community there were people who could not read. They would get others who could read and write to write letters and fill out mail order forms for them.

People would plant oak trees in their yards for shade. When homes were built they always had a hallway through the center so the wind could blow and help keep it cool. All the homes were covered with cypress shingles that were cut and shaped from logs from down in the swamps. Every home had a scrub broom made from twisted corn shucks. Sometimes a smoothing iron was tied to the broom to add weight and make it clean better as it was pushed across the wooden floors. No rugs or mats, just wooden floors.

There were trails all through the woods from one place to another and it was not uncommon to have trails across a field.

You could hear people in the woods at night possum and coon hunting. The dogs would be barking and the people hollowing. Some of the hunters would fashion a bugle from a cow horn and blow through it as a means of calling their dogs.

When the dogs would tree a possum in a lightered stump, they would wear their teeth out digging a good size hole and tearing at the roots around the stump trying to get to the possum.

There were plenty of squirrels in the river swamp. Men would go hunting and when the dogs would tree a squirrel the man with the gun would tell another hunter to go shake a bush or vine to scare the squirrel from the nest. The day would end with a good meal.

Men would walk through the county and make pictures of people. The cameras stood up on a 3 legged tripod. Other men would walk through the county and fix stoves that had burned out.

Men would take a sack of corn in the woods and call their hogs and feed them to keep them gentle and easy to catch. Hogs around the house were fed slop [table scraps].

There were no restaurants, you could eat at home, go on a picnic and eat or go camping and eat or go visiting and eat at someone else's home just to change the menu.

You could hear people chopping wood late in the evening. You could hear hens clucking and see biddies running across the yard. People would store jugs of milk in the spring to keep it cool. In later times, if you had a dug well or a bored [boarded] well you could lower the milk jugs down into the water with a long rope.

It was a common practice to burn the woods in early spring to allow the fresh green grass to grow as grazing for the cattle. You could hear people in the woods calling their cows or hogs.

People carried cotton to the gin on a mule and wagon. It was not proper to eat fish if it was caught on Sunday. People did not work on Sunday. The first game warden was Mr. Herbert Campbell.

Hogs in the woods and swamp had wallowing holes.

People said if you do anything on New Years Day, you would be doing it all the year.

You had to wear asafetida around your neck to keep various diseases off.

There were a few pencils. To write with an ink pen, you would have a bottle of ink on your desk, dip the pen into the ink and write until it quit, usually not more than one line, then dip it in the ink again and continue this process until you had finished.

When Momma was cooking she would tell the youngsters to go to the wood pile and get an arm load of stove wood and bring it inside.

The roads were called Three Trail Roads, a trail where the horse walked and one on each side where the wheels rolled.

Every few miles up and down the track were depots where the trains would stop and load and unload passengers. Sometimes the train would stop at an old country store if no depot

was available. Some of these stores sold fat lightered splinters for use as a torch to light your way at night.

When transferring cows from one place to another they had to be drove through the woods and across the creeks. There was no way to haul them. When people washed clothes and hung them out side to dry, they had to keep an eye on them because if cows come up out of the woods they would chew them.

Things you don't hear or see anymore:

Mill whistles

Cow bells in the woods

People calling hogs

Bulls bellowing in the woods

Roosters crowing in the morning

People chopping wood or sawing with a crosscut saw

Hens cackling

Lightered knot fires burning at night

People carrying out slop to feed their hogs in a trough

People finding holes in the swamp and mudding these holes to get the fish

Dogs barking as people go possum or coon hunting in the woods late at night.

You don't see people walking up and down the road or riding mules and wagons anymore.

McCaskill Mill creek had four mills run by water power. A little ways west of Uncle Harvey Carnley Spring was an Indian Cemetery on a high hill on the edge of the swamp. Uncle Harvey Carnley Spring Branch emptied into the ole Dead River in the swamp and there was a field located there and it was fenced and farmed. Campbell Lake was always noted for good fishing.

The log landing at the Escambia River was called the Sunday Landing. Logs were hauled there with carts pulled by ox teams. The logs were rolled into the river and tied together to form a raft and then floated down the river to Ferry Pass Landing.

There were regular goat harnesses allowing the use of goats to pull small wagons.

Morris Field Log Landing was located on Escambia River. The Bluff Spring Ferry Road connected Jay and Bluff Springs by way of a ferry. Stanton's Mill was located at Bluff Springs. Other landings along the river included Martin's Mill, the Sand Field and Sturtevant's Dead River and a place called the Cotton Field in the swamp. Malone Hammock Branch is just another stream that feeds into the Escambia River. Dick Hill is a large red clay hill overlooking the river basin.

Uncle Shag Gilmore's ox lot was located in the swamp where he penned his oxen each night. Each day he hauled logs using large wheel carts pulled by teams of oxen.

Coon Hill Cemetery is in the river flats and at one time Coon Hill Church was located nearby. Just north of the cemetery was a water powered mill located on Diamond Creek. A big swimming hole was just down the creek.

A hotel was constructed at Mineral Springs and a county road and long wooden bridge connected Bogia to the Chumuckla community. Mineral water was sold as a curative for all ailments. People would travel from great distances to purchase this healing water.

Sandy Landing is located a short distance down the river from the Mineral Springs Landing.

William Diamond was born in a hollow log while his parents were hiding from the Indians. He came to this area by raft and settled in the Bluff Springs Community.

People could get meat but could not get salt. They lived near the rivers, lakes, and creeks or springs to get water because there were no wells or pumps.

Every place was named along the river in the swamp or on the edge of the swamp such as Luke and Tremble [Look & Trimble], Dead River and Mimms Island. Mimms Island was an Indian settlement and near the banks of the river was an Indian Cemetery. Bradley Bend, near Mimms Island, also Turn Around Cove was a landing. Sunday Landing was where they haul logs with log carts using teams of oxen. The logs were put in the river and tied into rafts and floated to Ferry Pass landing.

Uncle Harvey Carnley had a big field in the swamp that reached from the Dead River to the Escambia River and sometimes when the river was flooding they would have to cross some of the backwater in a boat to get to the field.

When crossing the Escambia River you had to use a ferry. There was a long big cable that stretched across the river and attached to a big tree on each side. Smaller cables with rollers that rolled on the bigger cable were attached to each end of the ferry. There was also a long pole with a notch cut out to fit on the big cable crossing the river. You could reach up and catch the cable and pull yourself across the river. Sometimes you could sit there for hours before any one came along to pull you across the river. Uncle Alonzo Carnley got forty dollars a month to tend the ferry. He was a big wheel, because nobody made that kind of money in that day.

According to history, Bluff Springs must have been a battle ground in the early 1800s or before. There was a brick yard and two stores plus a Post Office and train depot in Bluff Springs. There was also an ice plant. Dry goods, metal goods, groceries and mill supplies were delivered to Martins Mill in Bluff Springs by a train from Flomaton.

Just below the old Carnley Cemetery there was a log ditch that was used to float logs down to the Escambia River. There was a turpentine still near the creek.

You could be charged a fine for cussing in Milton.

If you walked down the streets in Pensacola wearing shorts or a bathing suit you would be arrested. The first streets in Pensacola were made with wooden blocks. Then tar was poured over them to make them permanent and to glue them together. More tar was added and it made a thick layer and when it dried it made a good smooth road. In later years streetcars operated in Pensacola. If you went to town, you just had to ride the streetcars, that being the best way to travel in town, and it made you feel important. Street vendors sold stove wood. They would walk up and down the street hollering "Wood for sale". They would deliver it using a mule and wagon and stack it inside for you.

People put 60 gallon barrels under the eaves of their house to catch rain water to use because that was easier than toting water from the creek or spring. The woods were full of people, cows, hogs and goats.

Uncle Alonzo Carnley operated the ferry on the county road from Jay to Bluff Springs. On his way to work he would carry a sack of corn and throw it around his hog pens to keep the hogs gentle. He had hog pens all along the roads in the swamp. When someone came along in a mule and wagon he would carry them across the river on the ferry, sometimes called a flat. These flats had banisters on each side and one time when I was 15 or 16 years old I got up on the banister and dove off in the river. I swam under the ferry and came up on the other side. That was a very dangerous thing to do. If I had gotten hung under the ferry I would have drowned. If my parents would have been there they would not have allowed me to do such a foolish thing.

J. P. Kent had a hardware store and sold furniture in Jay and he also sold battery powered radios before electricity was available in the area. Mr. E. E. Watson operated the Watson Hardware store. You could also buy, sell and trade horses in Jay. Three miles north of Jay in the Mt Carmel community was a store. Just up the road in the edge of Alabama was Rose Hill and a little further north was where Linzy Mill Creek crossed Highway 89. The creek was named for the owner of a water powered grist mill located near the crossing.

There was a school house about half a mile east of the Dykes community on the old Bluff Springs road.

The Spanish Trail went through the county and the stage coaches were pulled by mules and horses.

A county road connected Jay with Pollard by way of a long wooden bridge across the Escambia River. Pollard was the main town in the area at that time. Later the stores closed and moved to Brewton.

A county road connected Santa Rosa county and Molino in Escambia county and there was a hotel located in Molino.

There was a log ditch above Flomaton for use in floating logs to Big Escambia and Little Escambia Creek and on to the Escambia River. There was a mill located on the river at McDavid. Canoe Creek, located on what is now Highway 29 below Bluff Springs, was used to float logs to the river. Logs were pulled to the landings on these creeks by yokes of oxen. There was a large cemetery at Muskogee on the Perdido River.

A road, known now as Highway 4, connected Jay with Flomaton and a ferry was provided to cross the river. A bottling plant was located in Flomaton, along with an ice plant, train depot, a hotel and stables where you could buy, sell or trade mules and horses. It seemed like it was a long way to Century or Flomaton when the only way to travel was to walk or ride a mule and wagon. You traveled on dirt roads and there were bog holes in the swamp and the mule and wagon had to be pulled across the river on a ferry. When the big rains came you couldn't travel at all because all of the swamp was covered with water. If you just had to go across at these times you paddled a boat through the backwater, this was called a "Boat Road", then across the river and then across the backwater on the other side.

Flomaton was a typical town, with hitching rails along the streets so you could tie your mule while you shopped. The streets were dirt and hogs and cows roamed around town and up and down the roads. The first drug store in Flomaton opened in the 1920s or early 1930s. It was a Rexal drug store.

The man carrying the mail would have a rod and when the passenger train came by he would get [snag] the mail and carry it to the Post Office. After mail delivery was started in the country it was limited to the main roads. Some people had to walk miles from their home to their mailbox.

Rolling stores came later and ran on certain days and people would sit for hours beside the road waiting for it to arrive. You could trade chickens for items that you needed

They were digging a well at old Ebenezer Church in Santa Rosa County and the well caved in and covered a man completely. They didn't have anyway to get him out and his body still remains in that old well today.

All the old timers said that you should never skin a possum, but scald him same as you do a hog.

No one worked on Sunday; they rested that day for honor and respect.

There was a turpentine still east of Jay. There was a mill on Coldwater Creek and also log ditches leading to the creek. Logs were floated down Coldwater Creek to Blackwater River north of Milton and on to the lumber mill at Bagdad.

The Stockade Pond was located south of the Pine Level Church community and consisted of a pottery and a store. The logging railroad ran through the area and to points further north in the county.

A Negro killed a white man [*] over the use of a stalk cutter and all the blacks were moved from the area. [*Sammie E. Echols, May 18, 1895 – February 24, 1922 – Buried in Concord Cemetery on Highway 89, 3 miles south of Jay]

In Bay Springs, located near Walnut Hill, there was a factory that made wooden coffins. When a person died, someone would go get a coffin, or build one, and the body was kept at home until time for the funeral at the local church. Neighbors and family members would bring food and stay with the family during this time. The casket was transported to the church and then to the cemetery by mule and wagon.

Hawk Harmons lived in Century and he would go to people's homes and call up the hawks and kill them. Everyone had chickens and the hawks would get the biddies and smaller chickens and fly off with them. People paid Mr. Harmons a small fee to kill the hawks.

People made lye soap for use in washing clothes and for other cleaning purposes.

When you borrowed money to farm with, you didn't have to sign any papers. Your word was your bond. People raised sugarcane and cooked the juice to make syrup.

Grasshoppers were plentiful, especially in the old field places. My mother and other women would be going fishing and take all of us youngsters along to catch grasshoppers for fish bait. The grasshoppers would make a fluttering sound as they flew about 10 feet. If you were fast enough you could catch him as he landed. Some of the younger children would be crying as we walked through the tall grass and briars. The more large grasshoppers you could catch, the more large fish you could catch.

When the Ferry Road was in use, men would always stop at the spring and get a drink of water. They were either walking or riding a mule and wagon and were always thirsty. The spring was boxed in with wood to provide a good place to get drinking water.

Here are a few of the old time songs: Steam Boat Bill, Little Mary Figins, Rosebud Casket, Home Sweet Home, and The Old Country Church, Precious Memories and I Could Pop My Knuckles on a Mules Behind.

Most of the old timer's had plenty to eat. They grew corn for grinding into meal for cornbread, kept meat hanging in the smokehouse, or packed in lard barrels, fruits and vegetables were canned, and sweet potatoes were stored in potato banks in the edge of the garden. They enjoyed fried chicken and fish along with deer, turkey, possum, squirrel and rabbit meat. You could gig suckers in the creeks in the clear shallow water. At certain times of the year the suckers would run up the creek and during this time provided a good supply of food. People worked at home or in the woods and had barely enough money to buy the necessities such as sugar, salt, flour, and a little tonic for medicine. If you had a little money you could buy slabs of bacon or white salt meat at the store but you had to slice it yourself. What money they did have was usually a few silver dollars and a few

Indianhead pennies. There was one man [Mr. Harrell] who raised a large family on the edge of the river swamp, or marsh. He raised his living at home, planted corn for meal and also to feed the hog, cows and mules. He always had a large garden and would hunt wild game for food in the woods.

In most communities there would be someone with a pair of pliers used to pull teeth as needed. When a person got older they usually only had 3 or 4 teeth left and they would allow them to decay and fall out.

People driving teams of oxen had certain places they would pull the logs, a place where it was easy to roll the logs into the river. Every landing such as mentioned had a name. On the weekends the loggers would put bells on the oxen and turn them loose in the woods. On Monday morning they would hear the bells clanging and go drive the oxen back to the camp to be yoked and used for pulling log carts another week.

People sat around the eating table on wooden benches. All meals were eaten at home, unless the men were a good distance away at a logging camp. A blessing was always offered before a meal and youngsters were taught to be quiet at the table and ask for what they wanted. People taught their children to have respect for their elders. They would cut little blackgum switches and frazzle the ends and use them for tooth brushes.

Children would hang a stocking near the fireplace at Christmas and expect Santa Claus to leave them a couple of oranges, an apple, some peppermint stick candy, a little coconut monkey climbing a string or maybe a little iron horse and wagon. They looked forward to that day knowing they would not see anymore of these goodies for another year.

L & N Railroad had water tanks all along the tracks so the steam locomotives could stop and fill up with water. Trains were made up of an engine, 4 or 5 boxcars for freight, 1 or 2 passenger cars and a caboose. Train depots were located in most all communities for the convenience of the people since they had no way to travel to the train station except by mule and wagon or walk.

People had rail fences [Abraham Lincoln style] around their fields. They would get big timber and cut it in the right length and split it into rails. They would plant velvet beans between the corn plants. When they gathered the corn they would turn the cows in out of the woods. The cows would eat the corn stalks and velvet beans and would really give a lot of milk during the fall and winter months. [The Florida "Stock Law" was passed in 1949 and livestock had to be fenced away from the public roads.]

Henry Clay Mitchell was High Sheriff in Milton in Santa Rosa County [1921-1933] in the 1920s and wore plain clothes like everybody else. He drove a Model T automobile. Hill Taylor and Willard Tompkins was the only sheriff in the northern end of Escambia County. They wore plain clothes like everybody else and drove old model cars and served in the 1920s and early 1930s. When T Model cars came in they had to be cranked by hand and sometimes they would fly back and break your arm.

When people got married everyone would chivaree them. There would be ringing of cow bells and banging of pots and pans and all sort of whooping and hollowing going on around the house.

Some stores sold chickens. They had chicken coops outside the store and if you bought a live chicken you had to clean it yourself. If you bought fish you had to scale and clean them. None of the towns had paved streets and the cows and hogs roamed freely up and down the roads.

The flood of 1929 covered all the streets in Flomaton and ruined a lot of the goods in the stores.

One man built his house between two branches. One of the branches was used for boiling and washing clothes and for supplying water for the house, carried there in buckets. The other branch was used by the livestock. When one of his youngsters got old enough to move to town and get a job, he purchased an old Model T with his new earnings. He was not allowed to drive it down the hill to the house, he had to park it and walk down the hill. The man could drive his mule and wagon to the house, but the son was not allowed to do so with his car.

About the only activity they ever seen outside of the family was a man driving an ox team hauling logs to the Escambia River.

In parts of Alabama some people lived 7 or 8 miles more or less back in the woods, across hollows and creeks. The remains of some of these old home places are still visible, the old rail fences, pecan trees and dug wells. It is unbelievable how some of these people lived. They enjoyed themselves, they had lots of freedom. They could hunt and fish anytime or anyplace, there were no game wardens back then.

If you owned goats and they gave birth in the woods, sometimes the wild hogs would find and eat the little goats. Goats had a bad habit of eating through the fence and then their horns would hang in the fence and they would be caught. People who owned goats were aware of this and kept a lookout for those getting hung in the fence.

An airplane came over the house and all the women and children went to the back side of Granddaddy's field looking up at that plane. It was the first one they had ever seen, it could not have been flying very high or going very fast because they watched it a long time.

When people had to tote water they sometimes carried the bucket on top of their head. Others would have a wooden rack or board they carried on their shoulders with straps hanging on each end allowing them to carry two containers of water at the same time.

At Golden, a community just north of old Pensacola, there was a factory that made 60 gallon wooden barrels. In the same area was located the Green Gable, a local watering

hole and eatery. Most people worked for seventy five cents and the better jobs paid one dollar per day and they were lucky and proud to have a job.

All women wore decent clothes reaching to the knees or below.

All the ponds were usually full of water in the winter and would freeze and you could walk across on the ice. All through the winter it was freezing cold and the ground would be spewed up with ice and everything covered with a white frost. Most of the youngsters walked to school in these conditions without shoes to wear. There were no weather men but the old timers could pretty well tell when it was going to rain and pretty well judge the time of day. There was no electricity or radios to give you the news.

People milked their cows so they would have milk for drinking and cooking. Sometime the old milk cow would kick the bucket over, sending milk all over the person and the ground. Everyone kept a few chickens and they built biddy coops with holes just large enough for the biddies to go through. Momma would mix feed and drop it in the coop so only the little biddies could eat it. There was always another coop for large chickens when they needed to be penned for various reasons. Feeding the chickens was usually a job assigned to the younger children. They had to go to the crib and get a certain number of ears of corn and shell it off the cob and feed it to the chickens.

Most of the young boys enjoyed making bird traps and catching birds. They would sometimes hitch a goat to a small wagon and ride around the home place.

School Days

All of the girls wore dresses and none of the boys wore long hair.

The old, old school, maybe the first one in the community, was located more or less north by northeast from Jim McCaskill's home place and due east from Clifton Lowry's home. The name of the school is unknown at this time; it might not have even had a name.

Our school [located about a half a mile south of Ebenezer Church] had two rooms and a porch and also a cloak room for everyone to hang their coats and bags. It was similar to a dwelling house. Each room had a wood burning heater that was kept glowing red hot in the winter months. Each room had a blackboard and chalk and erasers to rub the writing out when finished. Every school had spelling matches. When you first started to school you had to learn you're ABCs. The teacher would write words or sentences on the blackboard and point to them with a long stick and call on different students to pronounce the word or read the sentence. When a student done wrong, the teacher would stand them in the corner and make them face toward the wall. If what they did was bad enough, the teacher would send them down in the woods to get a switch. The teacher told them they had better get a good one because if they had to be sent back for a better switch, they would be punished that much harder. The woods contained some long dogwood sprouts that would really work on you.

If the teacher lived a good distance away, they had to board with someone in the community and walk to school same as the students. This school had two restrooms, one to the north for the boys and one to the south for the girls. The restrooms were very small little shacks. Woods surrounded the school and sometimes at recess the boys would slip off into the wood and wrestle or spin their tops or just play games. Wrestling or fighting was a favorite pastime. Usually games were played in the school yard with all students participating. They played jump rope a lot of times. You take a long rope and get a person at each end and throw the rope over and over. Someone gets in the middle and jumps it as it comes under them. At lunch, if the weather was good, everyone sat outside on benches to eat. Scraps were thrown to the hogs that would arrive daily in hopes of getting a free meal. A school term was about three months, usually once a year, but sometimes twice. Occasionally the teacher would take all the students and walk down to Ebenezer Church and on down to the creek. On longer trips we would walk to Morris gully that was located deep in the woods. Traveling to school each day, most everyone had to cross at least one creek. There was always a plank or log to walk across on, but some times the boys would wade. Along the roads were winter berry bushes [huckleberries] that provided refreshments to the weary students as they traveled to and from school.

Some of the boys would get reeds and cut them off and make whistles. Sometimes they played with buggy rims or barrel hoops, rolling them up and down the road and around in the school yard. This was also a favorite game the girls played at home. Two or three boys would pull over a tall slender pine sapling and then one of them would hold on and ride it as it sprang back to the upright position.

The boys enjoyed spinning tops, and walking on tom walkers [stilts]. The boys and girls played some games together. They would hold hands and march around in a circle, called marching around the level, they also played drop the handkerchief.

Other entertainment at home or school included going into the woods and getting rabbit tobacco and rolling it up in a piece of paper, usually a page from the Sears & Roebuck catalog, and smoking it. Most homes and schools had at least one swing, constructed by attaching chains to the limb of a large tree. One could play blindfold at home at night by tying a rag around their eyes and try to catch someone else to take your place. Outside in the day time you could play a game [Rover, Rover, Let the Ball Come Over] by throwing the ball over the house and see who could catch it on the other side before it hit the ground. Hop scotch was a good game for home or school or church.

Just about dark was a good time to be outside listening to the whip-o-will call and watch the bull bats flying around in search of insects. As dark approached it was fun to try to count the stars. People would sit around the fires, either in the house, out in the yard or off in the woods, and tell tall tales to the amusements of the younger people and the older ones as well, if they were simple minded enough to believe them.

Straight north across the creek from Ebenezer Church was a school house on Dykestown road. Up the road from the school was a place called Sweetgum Hollow, now called

Sweetgum curve. Just past this hollow was the Pellem place. They Pellems had a deep dug well from which they could draw water. They kept wooden boxes around their house in which they put the possums they caught in the woods. They would sell the hides and eat the meat.

Part of the way people survived was by spending time in the woods fishing, hunting, trapping and tending to their hogs, cows and goats. They would find a gopher hole and try to pull the gopher using a long vine with a hook attached. If this did not work, they had to dig them out using a shovel. After they got a few caught, they would travel around and sell them. Those were the good old days.

When people cleared new ground it was by man power. They had to use a shovel to dig the stumps and also an ax and a grubbing hoe to get the roots out of the ground. When they got it cleared they would plow it using a mule or an ox. If you planted sweet potatoes in a new ground field they would really make a good crop and they would be big ones.

People lived according to the Bible. Some homes had a pump organ and when they were played they made really beautiful music.

If a rabbit ran across the road in front of you it was a sign of bad luck. You would have to turn your hat around to keep something bad from happening to you. Everybody wore hats in those days.

There was a man chopping wood and a piece flew up and hit him in the eye and put it slap out. He spent the rest of his life seeing out of one eye. One time a mule kicked a little boy and killed him.

On the east side of Blackwater River in Milton there is a big cemetery in the woods. Most of the names on the tombstones have the same family name and the dates carved are back in the 1800s. North of Milton and Pace is Pond Creek. It served as a natural log ditch used to float logs to the mill at Arcadia, near the mouth of Pond Creek. North of Pace there was some really large farms and there is a cemetery right out in the middle of one of these fields. Just a little northwest of Chumuckla out in the woods are three graves. They are kept really clean even though there is no road leading to them.

East of Highway 29, in Escambia County, near Cantonment is located Beck's Lake and also Spring Lake. West of 29 near Muskogee on the Perdido River there is a huge cemetery and a large mill was once located there. There was a wooden bridge connecting Molino with Santa Rosa County by way of Cotton Lake.

Alger Sullivan Lumber was once located at Foshee, Al. It was moved to Century and stayed there until it closed. When at Foshee it was located in the forks of two creeks and logs were floated down these creeks to the mill. A railroad spur allowed the lumber to be shipped by train to Brewton and various places. People lived near the railroads since this

was their main way of traveling any great distance. Mail was delivered by train and when you ordered something it was shipped to the closest train depot.

There is a mountain almost as high as a forest tower. It is very unusual in that it's not very large at the top and has some very big boulders with initial cut into them. It's scary to walk over to the edge and look down and see all the big rocks that must weigh tons. On the east side of the road near this hill is a very large cemetery.

People would live near the streams of water. This was their survival method. They would use fans at home as well as at church in the hot summer months to keep cool. These were made from palmetto ferns found in the edge of the swamps.

Catfish could be caught by putting a basket in the river. Clothes were ironed using smoothing irons. These had to be heated on the stove or placed near the fireplace. Most everyone had some sort of a home-made ironing board.

People born in a community usually stayed there and raised their families. People tried to live close enough together for social purposes and to be able to help in times of need, but far enough away to live their own life. There were no strangers in the community, everyone knew everyone else. They would visit and also help one another with hog-killings and barn-raising and other such activities. No one had a means of traveling very far; you could walk, ride an ox cart or perhaps a mule and wagon.

No one used a doctor unless it was a real emergency. Every family had its own home remedy for ailments. If you went for a doctor you had to walk or ride a mule and wagon and then if you found the doctor he had to travel the same distance back to the sick person. Doctors made house calls; they came to visit the patient.

If we needed supplies we could walk to the Bluff Springs Landing and the man running the ferry would carry you across in a boat. Your dog could swim across. Supplies could be purchased at Martins Mill or one or two other small store located in the Bluffs Springs community. When someone came with a mule and wagon to cross the river, the man would pull them across on a ferry. It was sometimes called a flat. The dog could swim across.

The woods, near the creeks, were full of moonshine stills where bootleggers made whiskey. They would have to keep a cover over the barrels to keep the cows from drinking the moonshine. When they renewed the mash in the barrels they would pour the old stuff out on the ground and the hogs would eat it and get so drunk they could not walk. This made the hogs fat, it also made them happy.

All the shirts men and boys wore had long sleeves. If someone skinned their hand pretty bad, they would chip some bark off of a pine tree and get some turpentine and mix it with sulfur and make a poultice and put it on the skinned place.

Haircuts cost 25 cents at the barbershop. The barber used a straight razor to shave his customers and there was a leather strap hanging on the side of the chair with which to sharpen the razor. There was always a boy in the barbershop to shine your shoes for a nickel. Good shoes were made of patent leather and after he got through with them they would really shine and glitter. Some people had a shoe lask that would fit any size shoe and when you needed new soles on your shoes you could fasten them on with regular shoe tacks yourself or take them to the shoe shop and they would put them on for you. You could grease your shoes with lard and that would soften the leather and make them wear better and last longer too.

Mag's Crossing was a very popular place to cross the McCaskill Mill Creek. People would cross this creek to go help others work on their farms picking cotton, digging stumps and various other chores and to go to Ebenezer Church, and the youngsters traveled this way to school. You could wade across it, cross it using a mule and wagon or an ox cart. It accommodated a lot of people.

The only makeup for the women was lipstick and powder. They had curling irons for use on their hair. You had to get the curling irons hot then clamp them on the hair and allow them to cool before removing them.

The pastor and members of the church would meet at a creek and immerse a person when they wanted to be baptized.

When you needed a fishing pole you went to the river swamp and cut a long reed cane pole. Then you tied them high in a tree and attached a weight to the bottom to hold them straight while they dried. Mosquitoes were worse at times. When fishing along the bank of rivers, creeks and lakes, most people would have a bucket of rags burning to help keep the mosquitoes away.

"Mobile Bill" or "Swimming Bill" Jackson, a pharmacist by trade, was famous for his long swims. Locally he made quite a name for himself by swimming the Escambia River from Highway 4 in Century to the Pensacola Bay, a distance of about 90 miles when you figure the turns and twists in the river.

Some people had big sugar cane patches. They would gather this in the fall and take it to the cane mill to have the juice squeezed from the stalks. The mill had large metal rollers turning really close together. The mill had a long pole attached to the turning part and a mule or an ox was hitched to the end of this pole and walked around in a circle causing the rollers to turn. You fed the cane stalks between these rollers and as the juice was squeezed out it ran down into a 60 gallon barrel. The juice was carried by bucket to a vat to be cooked slowly until it became syrup. Everyone enjoyed syrup-making time because you could drink all the cane juice you wanted to drink. Cane syrup was a part of most meals. You could sop it with a biscuit or a piece of cornbread and sometime you would put in some butter and stir it up to change the taste.

People were uneducated but they were decent and respectful. You would never see a man or a boy with their shirttail hanging out, they always kept them packed in their pants. You would never see a man or a boy without a shirt. They wore long sleeve shirts and long pants reaching down to the top of their boots or shoes. You never saw a man or boy with long hair. They always kept it cut short.

You could recognize a man as far as you could see him, or a woman, because men wore men clothes and women wore women clothes. They wore the clothes they should wear.

Children were taught to mind and respect and obey their parents. They were taught to call their uncles and aunts by their proper name such as Uncle Hubert and Aunt Roxie. They were taught to speak to everyone and respect everyone. You always used Mr. or Mrs. when speaking to older people.

Trips to the store were made maybe once a week, perhaps every two weeks but more like once a month. You grew what you eat on the farm. If they did run out of something before they went back to the store, like sugar or rice or coffee or maybe something else that they did not raise at home, they would borrow it from their neighbor. When they got a chance to go to the store they always paid back their neighbor.

When Model T Fords came along, very few people could afford to own one. Some who bought a Model T Ford could not afford to buy a tag. When they wanted to go to town they would borrow a tag from a neighbor and put on their T Model. You always returned the tag to its owner as soon as you got back from town.

There were no ball games to attend, no moving picture shows {The first movie theater was built in Jay in 1939 by Mr. R.C. Wagoner}so the social life consisted of gathering at someone's home for a square dance or a candy pulling. Church socials were popular where everyone shared a covered meal and later in the day there would be a singing. All of these would take place in the local community since there was no way to travel other areas.

Kerosene cost 5 cents per gallon and gasoline cost 8 cents per gallon. All bottles and jugs had to be closed with cork stoppers. There were no screw-on tops or lids. Coca Cola and other soft drinks cost 5 cents.

The story was told that when one of the first trains came through the Greenville, Al, area it scared some of the children so badly that they ran off and hid in the woods and the sheriff and deputies were used to help find them. When asked where they had been to have never seen a train, the father said that they had spent all their life working on a farm way back in the woods. When the first Model T automobiles came along they also scared a lot of people, some of them ran and hid as well.

They hung people who broke the law. They would tie a rope around their neck and put them on a scaffold and pull the scaffold out from under them and leave them hanging

there until pronounced dead. When a prisoner ran away and was caught again, they would put a ball and chain around his leg and he could not run away again.

When you did go to the store and bought rice or beans or various other things they would be put in a paper sack and wrapped with twine string. There would be a large ball of string sitting over on the counter and the twine would be run through little eyelets on the wall or ceiling and the end would hang down near the counter where the salesperson would be wrapping packages. They just pulled it and used what they needed and broke it with their hand when enough had been used each time.

The store would have a large pair of scales on the counter to weigh some of the items to be sold. The man owning the store would be behind the counter. You would tell him what you wanted and he would reach and get it from the shelves on the walls behind the counter. When you finished your shopping the man would figure with a pencil to get a total of what you owed him, it usually was not a very large amount.

Hogs would follow the oxen pulling the log carts hauling logs to the Escambia River. The oxen were fed chops and corn in order to keep them healthy and strong for their work. When the oxen had 'done their job' the hogs would root in it and get the corn. Wild turkeys would scratch in it and get the chops and corn out of it. Ox drivers would tell of swinging their whip at turkeys that would be following close behind the carts. Game was plentiful in the river swamps, there were few people.

It was told to me when I was very small that a woman went to the springs to get water and was killed by a wild animal.

Some people had brass knuckles, one for each hand. If you got into a scrap with someone you would put on these brass knuckles and if you hit them you could knock them out. When you hit them it would knock the skin off their face.

People would get large iron rocks and place them on graves to keep the rains from washing the dirt down level with the ground. These rocks also kept animals from digging.

One man bragged that he could take chickens from the roost at night and they would never make a noise. You could go to jail for stealing chickens same as for stealing anything else. The lawmen were righteous people back then.

The backwater never did get over the area around Martin Mill. There were houses all along the road and houses scattered about and one area was called the Negro quarters on the back side of the mill. Most of the people that lived there worked at the mill and lots of people who did not live there also worked at the mill. There was a branch or lake between Martin Mill and Bluff Springs. It was a low area and when the backwater got up you could not cross it, unless your paddled a boat across. On the south side they built a high plank walk to use when the backwater got up. Martins Mill [Alger Sullivan] and other mills scattered about would blow their whistles early in the morning to let you know it was time to get up. Another whistle would tell you when it was near time to be at work,

another for the noon break and again to end the work day. You don't hear mill whistles blowing anymore.

My daddy went to the store in Jay on a mule and wagon and I went with him. The store was a little frame building with high wooden steps. Daddy bought a gallon of kerosene and put it in the wagon. It looked so good to me that I turned it up and drank some, nearly strangled me to death. I learned from then on that kerosene was used in lamps to light the home and lanterns used to light the way as you walked at night.

People had little use for gravel back then. When they did have a need they would take a screen and put it on some boards and then dig in the earth with a shovel and throw the dirt on the screen. The dirt would fall through and the gravel would be separated and raked into a container or loaded on a wagon.

Sometime we would get together with some neighbors and go to the river swimming. There would always be one person who would swim across the river and then swim back again. Other times we would go to the McCaskill Mill Creek to go swimming. There were two deep wash-holes in the creek and each had a diving board for the younger boys to use.

When we were growing up we never did see anyone other than our family unless someone came to visit Mother and Daddy. When they did, we would be running around like scared little rats. The older folks would sit around and say that this child favors so and so, and that child favors so and so and they would mention the name of the person we favored, which was our relatives.

One day all of the older children were sent away for the day and since I was just a little fellow I stayed at home, but I had to remain out in the yard. Late in the day I was carried into the house and held up to look in the bed at a little red-faced baby, my new sister, Nellie. I remember that just as if it was yesterday.

This information provided by: John Carlton Franklin
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Mr. Franklin was born on December 14, 1914 and has lived his entire life in this area.