

The WPA Life Histories Collection

[Thomas C. Camak]

W11061

Beliefs and Customs - Folkways

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Title Fairfield County Thomas C. Camak, 83 years old.

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*Checked by
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"What did we do for entertainment at the other houses where dancing was forbidden? O, we played 'Thimble,' told fortunes, played 'Old Maid,' 'Little Sallie Walker,' and 'Heavy, Heavy, Hangs Over Head.'

"I know very little about the military government in South Carolina. And I have no knowledge of the Ku Klux Klan. When I became a man, I put away childish things, joined the Greenbriar Club, in 1876, wore the red shirt of those days, and obeyed the orders of Major Woodward, the leader. Where he got them we never knew nor asked any questions, but the Major presented the club, in July 1876, with three hundred muskets and plenty of ammunition to fire them. Each member took a musket and some powder and balls and a box of caps home with him.

"One night I was at the Methodist parsonage when a courier, Tom Smith, came and notified me to come with my shooting iron to McKinstry's Hill, where the Greenbriar Club was to be assembled. I got my horse and musket and met them. We were led to a schoolhouse by Major Woodward. When we arrived, it was estimated that there were 5,000 Negroes outside and inside the schoolhouse. A bright mulatto from Connecticut, I. B. Smith, was speaking. Major Woodward pushed thru the crowd into the schoolhouse and I squeezed in behind him. Some discourteous reference to the Major was made by the speaker. The Major advanced and knocked Smith down and broke up the meeting.

"That winter our Greenbriar Club went to Columbia. Fairfield had two Negro members in the Republican Mackey House of Representatives, John Gibson and Dan Byrd. John Gibson lived ten miles from Winnsboro; Dan Byrd in my section, Mossy Dale. We got John and Dan to leave the Mackey House and come over to the Wallace House of Representatives. We contributed that much to the strengthening of the Wallace House and to the undermining of the Mackey House.

"Dan lived to an old age and was a privileged character among the white people of Fairfield. After John's term expired in the legislature, he opened up a shoe repair shop in Columbia, S. C., where he enjoyed a large patronage from white people who know his history."