

## **Me in Those old Days at Salem Cross Roads**

My interest with the woods started with the time I spent here on the farm and with the time I spent hunting with Daddy. So it was partly in Bishopville and partly up here. All of my interests today; Southern Native history, one tractor farming, fishing, assorted idleness, and other nonprofit pursuits, I blame on all of that early time I spent outdoors.

Grew up in small community and rural area with the people of the old South- my grand parents were the children and grand children of the Confederacy- So I am eat up with all of that history and culture- also my grand parents and great uncles knew their grandparents and picked up many fragments of what little remained of the family's Native knowledge and ways. Grandmother fused about Indians and White people alike, in alternate breaths. But Grandmother saved her most vehement lacerations for yankees. I never heard her say the word Yankee unless it was preceded by "Dern" and usually also included "old"with it. Same held true for the names Lincoln and especially Sherman.

Some of the Crowder family was almost always around in the '50s. We had family reunions frequently and all of the crowd came from Charlotte, and sometimes Aunt Maggie's family came from Fort Wayne, Indiana. Only a few people in one of the family pictures are still alive, but I remember all of them. It was from Uncle Eddie, Grandmother's Brother that I owe the knowledge of how to tan a deer hide. He was my great uncle, Eddie Crowder. He is the one that built this house (in 1926). He owned the store next to the house. He told me how he had seen his grandmother( Jemima Dye Crowder) "Indian tan" a cowhide. It didn't seem to work for me at that time on that squirrel, but later I remembered what he told me and used that later to "relearn" the process.

Living in the country in my very young days, having to make friends with whatever was there and having to find ways to entertain myself without store- bought toys and such has given me a familiarity with the woods and the critters that is difficult to acquire without spending the better part of a lifetime at it. It was the time I spent alone that gives me the best memories of the past; and it is the presence of those same places and trees that I can still visit today that keeps those memories alive and vivid. I can go sit under a persimmon tree that I played under when I was 12 years old, while my grandmother and great aunt would be sitting on the porch shelling butterbeans; I can go sit in fork of a pecan tree that has a piece of an old plow stuck in it, that I sat on at about the same age and ate peaches out of the orchard across the fence. I can remember my grand daddy telling me to go down to the horse trough and wash the sticky peach juice off before it got all over me. I can walk along a dirt road beside a field that once grew cotton and still remember the Black women picking and dumping their sacks on the cotton sheets spread around on the road, and the little kids running and always grinning at me every time they passed by. A little further down that road Lawrence Martin's house is still there but falling in- he raised about a dozen head in that small four room "field house." At one time I knew the name of each one of them- the boys would play with me when they could sneak off – the girls were always too shy. I don't think I ever saw any of them that didn't have a mile on their face. I also remember Lawrence coming to Granddaddy wanting money to go to town on- mostly to get another bottle of amber liquid and always promising to pay it back "Saddy coming." It was usually ten dollars- kind of the accepted amount of a Saturday loan. Granddaddy always wrote it down in his little book he kept notes in; but I doubt if it got transferred to the farm ledger very often.

I remember too, the last two mules that were used to plow cotton. Red and Daisy. I still have their collars. You could ride daisy, but Red didn't take to it too well. If you want to get the back of your britches dirty, ride on the back of a mule that is headed to the barn after plowing in a dusty field all day. I still have a yearning to be around mules that wont seem to go away- must be somewhat like the Black fellow who moved from Fairfield County up north to Detroit and returned just a few months later. Somebody ask him what he was doing back so soon and he said, "I just can't stand living someplace where you can't ever see a mule".

I remember:

Being chased by the big Yorkshire sow because I got between her and her pigs- Granddaddy stopped her with a well aimed crack from a walking stick- a handy device that every cow man carried and kept in pickup the rest of the time,

Trying to wash the black off of Lee Young at the horse trough, so he would be a little closer to my color skin (although I wasn't much lighter).

Riding in the pickup with Granddaddy, Frank Gladney, and Uncle Doug down to the River Place to take salt to the cows. I sat kinda up in between uncle Doug's legs on the passenger side- always got assigned gap duty after I got old enough to put enough force on the wire to pull it over the post and release the fence gate. If there wasn't enough argument between Frank and Uncle Doug on the way down there, it became full blown when we got there- like how many cows came to the salt when the howling and horn blowing started- and which ones were missing. If you don't know how to call a cow, I can't help you. I can do it; I just can't explain it. Don't think you can make that sound with written English.

Listening to Granddaddy tell me how the road between Winnsboro and the Cross-Roads used to run before they paved it. He usually pointed out each place where the track of the old road was. I know it well, I can show you every crook and turn. Talking about going to Columbia every month or so, and taking all day to get there in the wagon.

Trying to hold the plow straight with Red pulling it down the cotton row. Wasn't big enough so I gave that up in favor of collecting Boll Weevils and getting a penny apiece for them.

Ringing the farm bell and nearly getting my rear switched for it. Explanation- every plantation had a large bell that was used to call the "hands" from the field at the end of the day or any time when there was an emergency (like a fire). The one at home is still there. I repaired the clapper a few years ago, but that thing will outlast all of us. It must be about ¼ inch thick cast iron. And its got a ring!

Riding on top of the pickup with a full load of hay from the fields to the barn- we boys were the weight that kept the hay from blowing away. The trick was to stay up there when the springs on the truck allowed for a 20-degree list with every turn or hole in the road. The reward for our diligence was usually a skinny dip in the river, and occasionally, if the timing was right a popsicle from Reid Long's store.

Lunch was a real treat at the country store if Grandmother wasn't there to fix something. I usually had the seafood platter (sardines and saltines), and washed it down with a Nehi grape. They came in a thick bottle and were always cold and sweet. Can't get those anymore.

Picking plums- Granddaddy always knew where the big yellow sweet ones were. I still go hunting for those and will sit there and make myself sick eating and spitting seeds. I have advanced science somewhat in the area of plum quality development. There was always the unwanted "hog plum", so called because it was small and never sweet. I tried fertilizing some of these a few years ago, and sure 'nough they are still hog plums. It works well on the bigger red and yellow ones, but Ill leave the hog plums to the deer and bluejays.

The first liquor still I ever came across. Granddaddy, Uncle Doug and I went in the pickup over to the Dawkins Road (HWY 99-south of Hwy 34) to "look at some cows". Must have been some they were interested in buying. We parked the truck and headed off into the woods, seems like in no particular direction. We wandered down a hill and a kinda sweet smell began to fill the air all around us. The two adults seem to get real excited and let me know it was time to get back

to the truck. About that time we stumbled into a clearing and I saw my first high class "Shine" production apparatus. I remember barrels and pipes and a place where there had been a fire- but they didn't give me time to study it at all. We made it back to the truck in record time seeing as how we seem to be lost the whole time we were headed in there. I have suspected ever since I got old enough to know better that the whole operation had something to do with Uncle Doug and his various "business" ventures. Uncle Doug also had a tendency to consume some of the "profits" from his enterprises and was often seen carrying a shoebox under his arm on the streets and in the courthouse on Saturdays in Winnsboro. Now it was strictly against the law to have any intoxicating beverage on one's person on the streets much less in the Courthouse. However at that time when you went to buy a new pair of shoes at Belk's Department Store, they always tied a string around the shoebox when they sold you the shoes, because the lid would not stay on otherwise. The string was on a ball that was suspended from the ceiling. They just pulled it down, tied it, and cut the end off the ball. Uncle Doug figured that someone in Winnsboro on Saturday with a box containing a new pair of shoes was not a remarkable thing, so he replaced the shoes with a flask. The string secured the whole thing and gave it an air of authenticity. J.C. Fant, the sheriff, and a good friend who knew him well saw Uncle Doug in the Courthouse one Saturday with his shoebox and remarked, "Doug, you buy more new shoes than any man I know".

July 2001-

Stopped by to talk with Frank Blair in Blair-he's not hard to find. He said he remembers the old house here on the place. He ask me did I have any pictures. No only the one of Mom on the front steps with her cousins. He said that he used to come over here with Ray Blair when he was courting Miss Catherine....., whom he married. He remembers that the house was brick and had a large hallway down the center (I knew about the hallway). Also that it had big stairs going up to the second floor. He said it was a very large plantation house. \*\* So I don't forget- The house was built by Dr. David Means, probably in the early 1800's.

He also told me that it was lived in at the time by a Mr. McCuen, and that he rented rooms to school teachers. I didn't know about that. This may have been before the Crowders sold it or after, when Dr. Jennings owned the place. Need to check out the dates. If the Crowders still owned it, then it was after James Walter (Foot) Crowder died.

Some time after Dr. Jennings bought it, he tore it down, and built himself a house to retire in. This house burned down before he could use it. There is a newspaper article about the house burning. I know it was not the old Means house that burned because the pillows that hold up the front porch on my house came from the old house. Also, two the main beams are still being used to support the tractor shed in the pecan orchard.

More later.