



BILLY HAGGERTY: "Those were the days! It'd be nice if you could go back up that road." (Photo courtesy of Billy Haggerty)

Billy Haggerty

My mother, she's out of Lancaster County. My father, he came from Greenville here, I think. He was "mule" spinner. My mother came here with one of her sisters. But her sister didn't stay very long from what I understand. But my mama stayed and she and my father then married and they lived here. Mama was raised on a farm. She knew what work was all about. She said her father, he was a Civil War veteran, I think, he wouldn't do any farmin' hisself. He had four boys and four girls. She said he was a pretty good blacksmith, wagon repairman and the like of that when he wanted to do somethin' for somebody. Mama said they'd be in the fields, the girls, a' hoein', and said sometime he'd come around and check 'em out. And if they'd left a bunch of grass anywhere, they had to go back and get it. I could tell she was raised like that by how particular my mother was.

It was just this lower end here when they came. It was just a little yarn mill pulled by that old water wheel. It's not much of that wheel there now. You know, they tore down everything and made a runway to go 'round through there. It wasn't in the water. That big metal flume encased the wheel. Had a manhole there. They'd have to get in there to work on it. The wheel was lined up with that flume shaft with big grooves on it and several great big rope goin' up there in that wall into the mill.

The upper store was the original Robinson's store, I reckon. A fellow Robinson used to live where Fred Hyatt lives. That was his own property then, I reckon. I think he first had a little store out there towards Homer's house sittin' there.

Sometime I think, why don't we carry somethin' in our pockets to make notes of things. Not just a daily diary, but make notes of things and then sometimes if it comes up and somethin's said about it or somebody wants to argue about it, look at that book and maybe you have it in there.

I was born in that house in front of the mill up the bank and soon after that we moved here to this house. I don't

remember it, but they said I said that I wanted to go back home. By my sayin' that I must 'a been about two or three years of age. Well, I was seventy-one in May. So I been here in this house at least 68 or 69 years. I'm gonna ask Allen sometime, but I can't catch him handy whenever I go to pay my rent, power and water bill, I'm gonna ask him, "How long do you have to occupy a house before you get it rent free?" If he might not know what he's sayin' and say right quick, maybe he'll say, "Sixty-five years." And I'll say, "All right, you owe me." Mr. Will Hernandez been livin' in his house, next to me, the longest, I believe.

I never had the movin' lust. This is one of the ruggedest places there is, you know. But you're down here. You're not right up on the road. That's the reason my mother liked it down here. "You can't take the boy out of the country." That's one good saying and one of the best is, "There's no place like home."



BILLY HAGGERTY'S HOME: "I been in this house at least 68 or 69 years."

I'm poorly educated, I tell you. I went to school; I quit in the seventh grade. So, I don't have too much education, but I tried to make good. I didn't mess around like some of the boys. I tried to learn when I went. Not boastin' but tellin. it like it is, if I'd a' put what I learned to use as I went along, I'd a' been pretty well along learned. But I read a little stuff now and then. That helps. I read a little article in a newspaper the other day. Just a line or two talkin' 'bout after you quit school, it's what you learn after school what counts. And I've learnt that. I tell you what, I believe in quality education, as much as you can get. Here's somethin' else though. I don't know what other people think about my crazy ideas, but if everyone could have a college education, how many would be doin' this manual work?

I started to work for Gaston Overby's father when I was about twelve, doffin' twisters. I was goin' to school some too. I done some balin' for 'em when they needed me. I 'ranged it with Mr. Walton to let me off to pick cotton in the afternoons. I'd go over there, not the whole term, but when the cotton was at it's thickest. He'd let me pick it myself if I wanted to instead a' gettin' a crowd in there that wouldn't pick it so clean.

body to help her 'cause she was almost a perfectionest in what she done, and some would make too biga' stitches. I've seen her be sittin' in there sometime, she'd have her thimble, and she'd have the right hand to work her needle in and out, and she had her other hand under the quilt there to push it back. You can, if you're not mighty careful, make too longa' stitches, you know. If you notice there, hers is not the finest stitches but they're not the coarsest. That's why it took her longer than some people to quilt. She never did just do it all at once, but it'd take her maybe a week or so in her spare time after she got it in her framework to quilt it.



It's interestin'. I'll tell you what she used to do too – half-sole my shoes. I've got a "last" up there now. I broke the first one, and I was lookin' and found one at the store just like it. She cut my hair, shaved my father and cut his hair. She'd kept chickens 'til she got disabled. Had a fence 'round 'em. She took post and wire and put 'em up. Well, I was so small I couldn't. Back then we didn't know what post hole diggers was 'round here, you know, to dig the holes to set the post in. She'd chopped the small end of the post, take a axe and drive it down in the ground. I can remember I'd be hunkered down holdin' that post. My father, he worked in the mill, but he never did take any interest outside. I don't reckon he knew anything else.

You get some cord wood sometime. Some of it was so tough! They'd dump it in here, used to have a wood yard out yonder towards where the coal yard is now. Some of the roughest, hardest wood you ever saw. It had big old knots in it. We had to get some of that sometimes when we couldn't get anybody to bring it out'a the country already chopped. She'd get out there and chop that wood 'till I got bigger. She was a hard worker; you can still hear the people say, "She always had a nice garden."

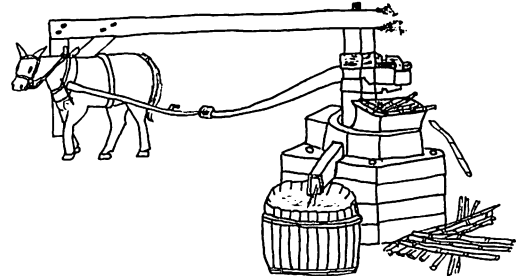
It's not been too awful long to remember when electricity and bathrooms was put in. I don't know how other people felt, but you can sometimes go by yourself. It was a big change for convenience – turnin' on a spigot and gettin' your water after carryin' two buckets of water for so long. Bathrooms and electricity was both mighty handy.

I tell you what. I've seen my mother sewin' at night helped ruin' her eyes. And I helped ruin' mine down there weavin' in poor light, especially when we had dark yarn. The 'lectric lights just wasn't sufficient and wasn't maybe positioned right or somethin'. She'd have that old lamp sittin' on the end of that machine and when she was peddlin' that machine and sewin', that thing'd vibrate and I've seen her a many a time reach and get it and pull it back over a little bit where it'd done vibrated to the edge.

Back when people was farmin', just gettin' by, maybe the woman'd have a half a dozen children of all sizes and ages and small babies. Do all that housework, cookin' and washin' and

ironin' and maybe sewin' and makin' quilts and things, if they could take time, and get out there and hoe cotton. Maybe take a quilt or sheet out there and lay the baby on it in the shade, doin' farm work too. I don't see how they could do it all. That's the way my mother was raised. I've often wondered 'bout what they say, "A man's work's from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done." I've thought about that so many times, how they could do so much.

Lots o' times I'd stop over there at Westbrook's and watch 'em grindin' that cane makin' juice and makin' molasses. Now anybody can't cook molasses and they'd have a little scoop like in little sections like keepin' that cooked juice goin' away from the other. Skimmin' it, lettin' that white skimmins off and throwin' it out, and yellow jackets'd be just a comin' gettin' on it. They'd make good molasses.



Them ole timey Greeks and Syrians, or that's what they used to look like and talk like, I thought they was comin' out a Charlotte then, but I think they was comin' out 'o Winnsboro. They could carry a big old pack of dress goods and dry goods. They'd come in here on Friday evenin' or Saturday mornin'. They'd sell some stuff too. They walked or mighta' rode the trains as far as Chester, but they walked everywhere. One Monday mornin' I was pickin' cotton over there for Ola Stroud's father and one of 'em was headin' back through the country.

You know back yonder, I can remember when people had scarlet fever and that there what they call pellegra and malaria and measles, chicken pox, whoopin' cough, small pox and sore eyes. You didn't have to have shots to go to school, not unless there was diseases, not just routine.

When the flu came, we had a "super", Mr. Farr. He'd go around and give people a little dose of kerosene and sugar. Some of the doctors'd go in with their nose and mouth mask on 'fraid they'd catch it too. 'Course, you couldn't blame 'em for that. But I understand when they was treatin' people they was scared to give 'em food and water; scared it'd make 'em worse or kill 'em. They didn't know just what to do.

They said the house that was right here was Cornwallis' headquarters. I don't know how long he was camped here, headin' northward. You know, I read here a while back that it was said that he crossed Landsford retreatin' from Charlotte. There was a door facin' those big rocks out there by Ida's and another door at the back with a high flight of stops there. Mr. Ramsey kept his cotton upstairs and his fodder and stuff downstairs. I heard that the way it was built they had that bottom up under there for a stable. It wasn't but about two big rooms upstairs, I don't think.

You know what. All that buildin' stuff, that rock foundation behind the old mill, they didn't have nothin' to lift

it, only man power. They's rocks around here that they cut and didn't use. There's one around there 'cross from the tank where you can see where they started drillin'. It's got a seam. There was another one beside of it, but when they started buildin' the road, they kindly got some of it out the way. All you got to do if you want to see that old rock foundation is go down there at the weldin' room and look out the door and see it.

Those were the days! It'd be nice if you could go back up that road!

I've made a few slings in my time. Just take a shoe tongue and take me two strings, bands you used to have to pull the spindles down there. Twist it 'round, then a loop or knot on one to hold between your fingers, then you'd turn one end a-loose. Give that thing a sling, kinda like they said David used on Goliath. You didn't know where it was a' going'. Sling that thing from here to the highway.

If this tree here was big enough, see that'n up yonder, it'd make a good sling shot. You cut it off so you could have you a handle and cut this center out. 'Course you'd pull the bark off, take you a string and pull this prong and that one up kinda. straight. Then you put 'em in the stove oven and bake 'em 'til they dry and get set 'fore you take the string off of it. After that, you'd get little strips of rubber and put you some knotches 'round on these ends to tie each the string in the groove and you have you a little tag like a soft shoe tongue holdin' each end and have it tied to that with two rubber bands. Hold that thing like this, put in a little old steel ball or a rock, or a good round pebble, pull back on it and shoot that. I've seen boys get tin cans and throw 'em with one hand and then hit it with that sling shot. I'll tell you who used to carry one in his hip pocket all the time — old man Jim Hefner. He never did pull it out on me though.

I've took cornstalks, cut 'em 'bout so long. Cut that pith in 'em up at the joint there, cut you out a little hole where you could stick a little rock in there so it wouldn't be loose. Wind it up and sling that rock away up yonder.

They used to have some home remedies then. I'll tell you what I did when I was younger. I had a terrible chest cough like anybody maybe with T. B. We tried different stuff. We'd go out and get wild clover bark and wild cherry bark. You know what rabbit tobacco is? Did you know the real name of it is "life everlasting"? That's what they call the technical name. I think it's some of it back down there back 'o the machine shop. It's pretty, and it's big. Some of it's wider leafed than others, in big bunches, looks like a "velvety" thick leaf. It'll grow up and go to seed. It's good for chest colds, too. You'd make a tea out of it. You'd boil the water in a kettle and put that in a stew pot or a bowl and pour that boilin' water over it and let it steep 'till it got cool enough to drink. And if you'd want to, strain it, or maybe I'd drink mine through my teeth and spit out the dregs. But that "life everlasting", the people's boys used to smoke that rabbit tobacco, but they didn't know it was a medicine. It was good to smoke and inhale for chest troubles and things. 'Bout this time o' the year it goes to gettin' ripe and if I'm 'round where it's some, I pick me a stalk maybe, don't pull up the stalk, but skin me

some off of it, the leaves that turns white. Get me a wad and stick it in my mouth and maybe swallow the juice. Lot of people have smoked it, but they didn't know what it was for.

Here's a sassafrass tree. Now if it's red root this is one like they used to make tea. Now if it's white root, you don't use that. I've heard, now I don't know whether it's true or not, but I've always heard it'd put you blind.

I'll tell you what my mama used to do now. We used to go barefooted in the summer. We wasn't happy if we wasn't goin' barefooted. That's the reason I kept the bottom of my feet hurt mosta' the time. Old locus thorns'd get dry, they're brown things about so big. I've stuck them in my feet, maybe step on a nail sometimes in a board or somethin'. Well for a splinter that's hard to get out a' your hands you take a piece of raw fat back, home-raised fat back, you know, good and thick fat back, put it on there. We didn't know what band aids and such as that was, but she'd take a piece of cloth and wrap around it and put a string around it you know, pull that string down and tie it 'round your wrist to keep it from fallin' off and draw it. I reckon I was lucky. I never did take lockjaw. And back then if you got hurt like that and could still get around, it wasn't no such thing as doctors. You didn't even think about doctors. So they were the days. You know you hear people talk about the "good old days". Well, I was along with some of that. Not all of it, but all I can say is my good young days.

Now I'll tell you one thing. I've never steeped any, but sometime I have pulled me off a little bit and chewed it and swallowed the juice of green pine needles. It's good for indigestion. I 'magine it'd be better if you'd steep it in that boilin' water, then drink it or strain it maybe and drink the juice off of it. But if you don't know what you're getting, you liable to get somethin' poison. But if you know, you're all right. You can get books about it. I got a little package of herbs in there now. There's supposed to be 23 different herbs in it. I ordered it awhile back. They claim it might not have any healin' power, but it's just a good tea, you know. Sometime, when I think about it, I just have some hot water and fix me up a little bit and drink it. ■



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