

Clarence and Willie Mae Irby, relax in their porch swing, a favorite spot, as Mr. Irby recalls his youth (Photo by Charles Inabinet.)

Clarence Irby

Grandmother and them was here. My Grandmother and them come from down around Lancaster. They was on a farm.

My mother worked in the mill and I'd go in there and help her. Back then you could go to work when you was big enough to walk. We had to stack up crates and stand on 'em to reach the machines.

I never did get much schooling because I didn't have a chance to. I just went a little bit and then when I got up big enough why I had to go to work. I got big pay — 20¢ a day. Now that was 12 hours too. That wasn't no 8 hours. We worked five days and a half. We got off Saturday at dinner. I don't have no idea anybody back then was making over 50¢ a day.

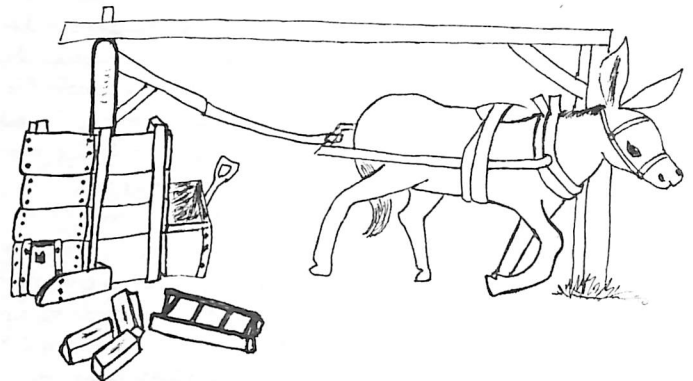
I don't know how my people first heard about Lando, but back then people would go different places to hire help — but you better not be caught. I don't know whether it was a law then that you couldn't go in and hire another man's help or what, but I do know that they'd slip in a night and hire the help. People would come from Chester over here to get help. To show you how much even a dime meant back there, they'd come down here and there was nobody working but Sid and myself. We was making 25¢ a day and they offered us 35¢ to come to Chester and we moved just for that dime on the day. Then later somebody from here came and hired us back for more money.

I have worked here 10 hours a day and come out here back up behind the superintendent's house to what used to be the ballground and played 7 innings of baseball. But you couldn't do it now. It's different. You have to make production and get off so much. Then you just made a day and that was it.

I was born in 1895 and it was about 1903 when I started workin'. So, I reckon I went to work down there when I was about 8 years old. I doffed, just anything I could do.

Children couldn't do no heavy work, just sweep or doff. You may be on one job one day and another job the next day. They made blankets then too. I remember when there wasn't nothing there but just a little old yarn mill from the boiler room down to the lower end was all the mill part there was.

The people made the bricks to build the new part right down there on the creek where them transformers sets now. Right in there is where they got the clay out of there and made the bricks. They made the kilns and all right there. They cooked the brick right down there and hauled 'em out. That little old branch that comes under the road before you get to the bridge, they had a dam there and that's where they got the water at. They run it over there to the brick yard in the "mud pits" they called 'em. To get that mud ground up they had a great big old wheel in there and a mule pulled it around. Something like making molasses. The mule pulled that wheel around and that would cut that mud up. When they got through building the mill, they done away with that.



Making Bricks

The grist mill was where the old dye house is back over built out towards the creek. A fellow name of Wallace run it. That was when they just had the yarn mill. People all around through the country would bring their corn. I don't know whether they ground any flour. I was big enough to remember seeing that cup bringing the meal in there. It was a curiosity to me to stand there and watch that cup bring in the meal. Seeing him sacking it up too, that was a curiosity to me when I was just a small boy.

Barbers owned this mill before the Heaths did, but the Heaths owned it when I came here.

When they was building this upper end of the mill, they must've started about then to use the "loonies". For them loonies wasn't no good no where else except here. They didn't pay off altogether in the "loonies". If you wanted to draw your money early or you had to have it before pay day, every two weeks, then they'd give you "loonies". If you cashed them "loonies" in for real money you'd lose about 10-15%. You could buy anything you wanted here. Them "loonies" was just as good as a silver dollar down here.

They had two stores here then. When they built the new store where it is now, they moved everything out of both stores into the new store. But they didn't have as much stuff because when that was built automobiles was beginning to come in, and people then was beginning to go to town.

I remember the first automobile I ever seen. It was made up like a buggy. Had great big wheels and it had a chain under there that pulled. I can't tell you how fast it would go, but I imagine it could go faster than a horse. I remember the first real automobile I ever seen. I was still small. It come up the new cut down here where Mrs. Collins lives on that hill.

The way you got a house when you moved here you had to go to the Superintendent and tell him you'd like to have that house, so and so was moving out of it. Back then all the houses stayed full. Cause back then the people moved to their job. You don't see nobody out on the roads moving and back then, why it wasn't nothing to maybe see two or three wagon loads a day – somebody moving places. Some families had to have three and four wagons to move all their belongings. But then most people didn't have lots of furniture like they do now. They just had what they needed; tables, chairs and bed.

They wasn't but one church here then. It was the old Methodist Church. Called the Union Church then. The Methodist used it one Sunday and the Baptist used it the next Sunday. The Baptist decided to build their own church where the Church of God is now. Later they sold it to the Church of God and they bricked it up. The Church of God was meeting over there where the "Hut" is now when they bought the old Baptist Church. Seems to me the Church of God started meeting down there in that old big boarding house. A family of Thomases run the boarding house. I remember it was a Sunday they had their first meeting. Then they kept picking up and they come in to a little old store building out here. Then it seems like they had a tent one time. They got strong enough to build that church out here by the "Hut".

When the Baptist moved out of the Union Church the Methodist stayed on in the old building. They later built a new church right beside the old one. Then they tore down the old one. They always had a pretty good crowd. There wasn't nowhere to go on weekends and Sundays, so most everybody went to church.

Me and my brother were playing over here in the pasture and the church bell rung. I told him, "Let's us go to church." When we got there I told my brother, "Let's get up on the front row. They might let us take up collection!" Mama wasn't too happy with us when we come home. She didn't make us feel too happy neither. When she got through whipping us she told us, "Now I'm not whipping you for going to church. I'm whipping you for going to church like you was. You could 'a come home and cleaned up and said you wanted to go to church." The next Sunday, why she cleaned us up and made us go.

We had a string band and a brass band. The First World War was declared in 1914 and back then we had a real good band. Why we was playing "Grade A" music. I used to beat the bass drum. We met in the school house in the band hall.

The Company furnished the instruments for the band. I started in with a trombone, a valve trombone. We tried to organize again after the First World War was over, but we couldn't make too much speed out of it. I took the slide trombone then. But at the first starting I had a valve trombone. We had a Director, fellow named Hilton. I don't know but I think they had a falling out over there one night and they had just a reorganizing and they asked me to take the bass drum. We had certain nights we'd let the folks come to hear us. I was about 17 or 18. Now back over there in the pasture they built us a bandstand. We usually would go there on Sunday evening and we had a lot of people to come and listen. Back then around here we'd gather over there at the school house and play "Skip-to-My-Lou". We just had a piano. We wouldn't break up 'till 10 or 11 o'clock Saturday night. Some Saturday evenings we'd get together and have a parade 'round through the hill. The band would start in there at the store and go on up and around the hill and come back down Benjamin (Street) and back to the store and maybe have a band concert for 30 or 40 minutes. We didn't have no uniforms, but all of us wore dark pants and white shirts.



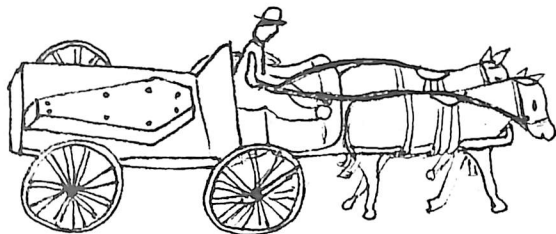
Clarence Irby standing 3rd from left (Photo courtesy of Ted Robinson)

There was a movie. When they first started, they started over there in the school house. Then when they moved the stuff out that old store into the new store, they fixed it up and made a show hall out of it. It cost us 15¢ to go to the show. We sat in chairs and we had silent movies.

They had ice down in the old store in a ice pit. They shipped ice in here by box cars from Chester on the railroad. They'd pack it in that pit and cover it in sawdust. After they built the new store they put in a ice plant. A piece would last us two or three days. You'd lay your meat around the ice and you still couldn't keep it long.

A lot of people raised their own meat. It ain't like it is now to send by the store for everything. Long back then there was mighty few people lived here that didn't have a hog. They could bring them down toward the creek or over here in the pasture or some place off where they had their pens. You had to put your hogs back off from the village.

There was a cemetery down by the school house. That's where my grandmother and them is buried. You can't find none of them graves now. It's where all them bushes are up by the schoolhouse. I wouldn't doubt a bit if there wasn't graves under that schoolhouse. Here you don't have to buy no cemetery lots. You just ask for a lot and go over and pick you out a lot. It's just like that now. You just have to be a member of the church. Back in that time there wasn't a funeral home here. There was one in Chester and Rock Hill. The family had someone to come and clean the body and dress it and lay it in the casket. They generally carried the body on a wagon to the cemetery.



Wagon & Casket

Lando has never been incorporated. We used to have police that lived here. The mill paid part of their salary and the county paid the rest.

It was pretty rough around here long in them days. There was just some few bad guys. It wasn't then like it is now. They'd get out here might nigh any Sunday morning you could see one or two coming up with a black eye. But it didn't amount to nothing. It was over and there wasn't no more to it. The next morning they was laughing and talking no begrudge.

'Bout the only time the mill closed here was on the 4th of July. We'd have a couple of ball games and all kinds of races. It was something going on all day. You talk about eating! They really had it back then. We used to have our dinners up here where Marion Hyatt lives now and they'd built a table all the way across that yard up there. Had all kind of eats. People'd bring their baskets. They'd come out of the country. People 'round Chester and Rock Hill looked for-

ward to the picnic at Lando. Everybody really enjoyed it. The band would have band concerts. They usually had a ball game in the morning. Then we'd go back to the ballground and sometime they'd have 2 or 3 hours of racing — sack racing, 3 legged races, winding the may pole. Once in a while they'd turn loose a greasy pig and that would be a lot of excitement trying to catch that greasy pig. Then they'd have a greasy pole trying to climb it. Maybe put a dollar or a couple of dollars on top of that pole and the one that climbed it got the money. The one that caught the pig got the pig. The mill put it on. They furnished all the lemonade and the hams. I can remember that well because I enjoyed that ham. They'd have ice cream and peanuts and such as that for the youngins' and course for lot of the grown folk too, cause back then there wasn't too much of that around.



July Fourth picnic, 1919 (Photo courtesy of Myrt Long)

There was a old fellow here then, he went to the picnic that day. He was a terrible eater. He could eat just as long as there was anything on the table. He was walking up side the table and Mrs. Anderson says, "Do you see something else you want?" Says, "Yes, Mam! I'd like to have a little piece of that cake over there." She had a pound cake setting there. She said, "Just come on and help yourself." And she cut him off a big hunk of it and just left him there with it. And he sit there 'till he eat over half of that cake. And the next morning he went to the mill, told the section hand, says, "Joe, I want off today, I'm sick." Says, "My stomach is tore up. I eat a little bit of sweets up there yestiddy and I'm sick." He wasn't no Methodist preacher, but he could eat!

They'd always have some kind of speaking during the candidating. Sometimes they'd speak over at the school house. See it was a pretty big thing. It had a gallery and would seat a lot of people. Then sometimes it would be right there at the store. If they didn't build them a stand to speak on, somebody would have a wagon there for them to stand up in. Something for them to get up above the crowd so everybody could see them.