

# George Ferguson

I was born in 1898 over there next to Chester. Then about 1899 we moved from there below Richburg. In 1902 we moved to Lando and lived here 'til 1904. During this time why they was building those houses down in Happy Holler, and my father and my uncle, they worked on the houses helping to build them. Me and my sister played all over those houses. A fellow named Redmond had the contract to build them. It was in the hot summer time, watermelon time, you know. So the carpenters'd get a big old watermelon. Well they wouldn't slice 'em – just cut 'em in half and set down and eat out of a half 'til they got enough of it. Then they'd give it to us children, and we'd eat out of it 'til it was all gone. Then we'd take our little hands and make what we called "watermelon soup" in the rind. Then we'd drink it. I remember doing it lots of times.

Then we moved out of the village for a while, but about three weeks before Christmas in 1910, we came back to Lando. In 1911 I went to work in the mill. I was sweeping or carrying filling, or doing whatever they wanted me to do that I could do, for I wasn't no more than twelve years old.

At that time my sister and Mr. Pal McKinney's wife, she was a McGarity then, they cut blankets in the cloth room. They had a big table and they'd pull the blankets up on it and take two pair of scissors and meet one another cutting in the middle of that blanket. They'd cut that blanket and lay it back on the pile and cut another one. Then the hemmers would come along and get them blankets off the tables and carry them to the machines and hem them cross the ends where they was cut. Well, I was just a little old fellow and my sister and Miss McGarity they both dipped snuff. They got after me one day to take a dip. I didn't want none, but they persuaded me, and I went ahead and took it. Well, it wasn't but a few minutes 'till I got so sick that I couldn't stand up hardly. They put me up and under the old cuttin' table on the old blanket scraps and things and I stayed under there so long that my job got so far behind 'till my boss man run me off. That was the sickest I've ever been in my life. I ain't had no use for that stuff ever since.

Well, then I went right on down to the spinning room which was in the old part of the mill. The old mill was just the lower end from the boiler room down. Mr. Ab Sanders was the overseer down there and I asked him for a job doffing cause I'd already learned to doff when I was in the cloth room by going down there to help the doffers to doff off the filling which I was getting for the hemmers to hem the blankets with in the cloth room. Mr. Ab told me, says, "I don't have a doffing job I can give you, but I can give you a sweeping job. And just as soon as there come a doffing job open I'll put you to doffing." So I reckon I maybe swept six months down there and a doffing job come open, so he put me to doffing and I worked on for him as long as he was there. Then I believe a man by the name of George Durman come in and I worked for him.

I worked there probably 'til 1916 and I went to work in the new mill spinning room. During the time I was working there, come the year of the high water on Fishing Creek. It washed all the bridges away. I remember it was about ten o'clock on a Saturday morning, and I was standing in the mill looking down toward the bridge, which was the old iron bridge, and I seen the bridge when it tumbled off of the pillars. It had them big high overhead rails on it and it lacked about six inches, I reckon, of being over the top of that. "Fore the water went down then it got up and come under the mill into the boiler room and it got on up in the furnace of the boilers to where the fire is and put the fire out. They had to let the mill stand then 'til the water got down to where they could fire up the boilers again.

Well when they got started back up, I worked on up there 'til 1917 and that's when the recruiter come through recruiting men to volunteer for the army. So I volunteered about the first of November and they sent me to Fort Scrivens, Georgia to do my soldiering. Then in August, I left there and went to France, and I stayed there pretty close to two years.



GEORGE FERGUSON, 1917, at Ft. Scrivens, Ga. (Photo courtesy of George Ferguson)

After that I come back and went back to work in the spinning room and went to the weave room. After working there awhile, I went to the napper room, and when I retired in 1965, I was fixing in Jack spinning.

All together my years in Manetta Mills was fifty-four, and the longest I was away from here was during the First World War. After I come home I married and me and my wife started raising a family. And we raised eleven children out of thirteen here and now they've been all scattered over the country.

The house rent started off at twenty cent a room so a three-room house cost you sixty cent a week. When you moved to town, you'd go to the overseer to get a job and if you got your job, the overseer would refer you to the superintendent to see if he had a house open for you. He kept records of when a person moved in or out of a house, and by that he could tell what house you could have. They was old houses scattered all around here what belonged to old man Barber. I think the houses in Happy Holler was built last after them in Frog Town. But some of the houses that burned down has been built back since then.



I remember it must of been somewheres before the thirties when they built that store that's standin' now, for it was there during the depression if I ain't mistaken.

Dr. Gaston was the doctor in Lando when we first come here, I believe. He lived right up here at Edgemoor and he sent both of his boys to college and made doctors out of 'em from the trade that he got off the people here in the village and round through the country. He's made many a visit to my house to see my wife and my children. He'd come down here for fifty cent a trip and put it on a credit at that. Lots of it he didn't never get, I reckon. Later he put him a office in the bottom of the store where the barber shop used to be and they built that little building on the side for the new barber shop. Down under the store, that's where Dr. Gaston kept all his drugs and things.

The old cemetery was over off the back of the school house. I reckon that was the cemetery for the Barber Manufacturing Company. Then when the Heaths taken it over, they built the schoolhouse there and went to burying over there in the new cemetery. That musta' been 'bout 1906 or '07.

They decided way back yonder 'bout forty years or so ago to clean up the cemetery. Mr. Clarence Miller was the man in charge. He put the word out that they was gonna' put it out on bids and had a bunch of men to gather at the store and everybody put their bid in. I had a pretty good bunch of boys already comin' on then large enough to help me, and I needed a little extra money too. So, I bidded my bid at forty-five dollars. Some of the other bids was sixty-five, seventy-five and the likes of that. So when the bids was all in I got the job. There wasn't nothing there then but old parts from them big trees down to the back side. They enlarged it two times after that.

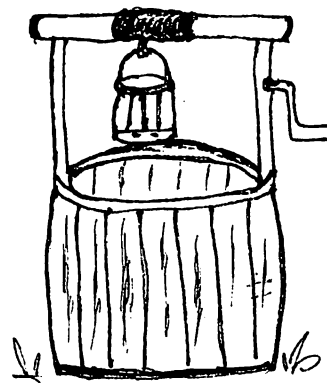
They have a cemetery committee, one man from each church, and Mr. Pal McKinney is the head of the committee still. He's the man that gives the lots and sees that the graves are dug. I worked doing that cleaning and it was hard work. I had to haul all the dirt away from the grave that was dug up

until Mr. Bass decided to get the undertakers to move out the dirt, and that was a big help to me. But I remember one time here the people was buried so fast 'til I had four graves of dirt that I hadn't got a shovel full throwed out. And I had every bit of that dirt to haul out on a wheelbarrow. You know, the company furnishes every foot of the ground that the cemetery had in it and don't charge nobody for being buried there.

I remember when they used to sell caskets down there in the store. Well, they'd take them caskets to the home and the people on the hill would fix the bodies, wash 'em up, dress 'em and put 'em in the casket right there in the home. You know back in them days it wasn't many people embalmed. I can remember when they used to haul bodies to the cemetery on wagons, if they didn't carry 'em.

In the old mill electricity was powered by a water wheel before the Heath's bought it. My father-in-law told me 'bout a old fellow used to take care of the lights and the wood and coal heaters setting up and down in the alleys. They had kerosene lanterns on the posts and he also kept the globes clean and the lamps filled up with oil, and kept fire in the heaters in the winter time. When they first put in the electricity to light up the lights, Mr. Wallace told 'bout the evening they first turned 'em on. Said it was just getting dark enough to need lights and said he throwed that switch in and all them lights lit up at one time. He said that old fellow jumped around and took to hollering, "Who lit up all the lamps at one time?"

It must have been somewheres in the thirties before they got light in the house here on the hill. And we had out houses until after the depression and the water, baths and sewage was put in the house after the depression, too. But I don't know the exact year. We had wells and springs to get water before that.



I remember, we had a old spring there at the end of the mill where they used to furnish the water from the mill. They was still using it when I come to the cloth room in 1911. There was a boy carrying water in the weave room name of Livus Pittman. Me and him carried water together. If I'd be at the spring with a bucket of water and I looked up and seen him coming, why I'd pour my water out so I could go back to the spring with him. If I'd catch him down at the spring when I'd done got my bucket full, I'd take it and pour it on top of him. He'd do the same thing to me if he caught me. Then later on they put a pump to furnish the drinking water, and I guess that was around 1915 or '16.



Ballgame held July 4, 1919 (Photo courtesy of Myrt Long)

We'd have a big picnic at that big two-story house on top of the hill right there where Bessie Hyatt and them live now. It'd be on the fourth of July, and I remember one year we had a superintendent who was pretty bad to drink, so he got more than he really oughta' had, and fell in the lemonade barrel. I laughed at him and he run me all over that yard. I reckon if he'd caught me he'd a give me a good whippin'.

They used to have ball games, two of 'em on that day — one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There was a mill in Rock Hill always put their reservation in two or three months ahead of time to play ball in Lando on the fourth of July. Lando had a good team and they did too. I remember the ball club they had one year all except one, and I can't get him in my mind. They had Fred Miller, he was the catcher. Lewis Miller and Pete Long pitched, and Mrs. Myrt's husband, Luke, played first base. Marvin Webb played second base, and Mr. John McCorkle played short. My cousin Martin McFadden played right field, I believe.

Years after that I remember I started to playing baseball. One Saturday, the Saturday I was gonna get married. My wife-to-be was in the grandstand, and I come up to bat. I believe I got a two-base hit. Anyhow, I got on second base and stepped off and they cut me off with the ball, and I couldn't get back to the base. So I had to take out for third. They chased me around there for a long time and I finally made it to the third base. Before the pitcher could throw the ball to the batter again, I stepped off of base and they got me in a chase again 'tween third and home plate. So I was runnin' backwards and forwards and the catcher was standing right straddle of home plate. When I got the right chance, I took out and went right through his legs over home plate. I made it safe, too. Well, they guyed my wife, well she was gonna be my wife that night, they guyed her so about me doing that 'til she got up and went home. She still married me though. You know, I think I really made her be a little bit prouder of me.



GEORGE FERGUSON:

"Altogether my years in Manetta Mills was fifty-four." (Photo by Susan Meiselas)



LANDO BASEBALL TEAM (Photo courtesy of Jessie Hernandez and Stafford Hinson)