

Clingstone

Summer 1976

HENRY FONDA
"THE RETURN OF
FRANK JAMES"

GRAND

GRAND



In Search of Things Worth Remembering

In Search of Things Worth Remembering

With this, the third issue, Clingstone, Volume II comes to a close. We complete our second year with a special issue celebrating Greer's Centennial. Greer has been named an official Bicentennial City, however, we are not only celebrating the nation's 200th birthday, but Greer's 100th birthday as well.

We wish to thank you for your praise, criticism, ideas, and support, for without these, we would not be able to publish Clingstone. We also wish to thank all the people whom we have interviewed for their friendship and cooperation. And we give a special thanks to our advisor, Mrs. Kathy Johnston, who has helped us throughout the year.

We have endured through many mistakes and have learned much throughout the year. And it is the experience we have gained, the friends we have made, the memories we have to cherish, and you, the reader and subscriber, that have made this year of Clingstone a success.



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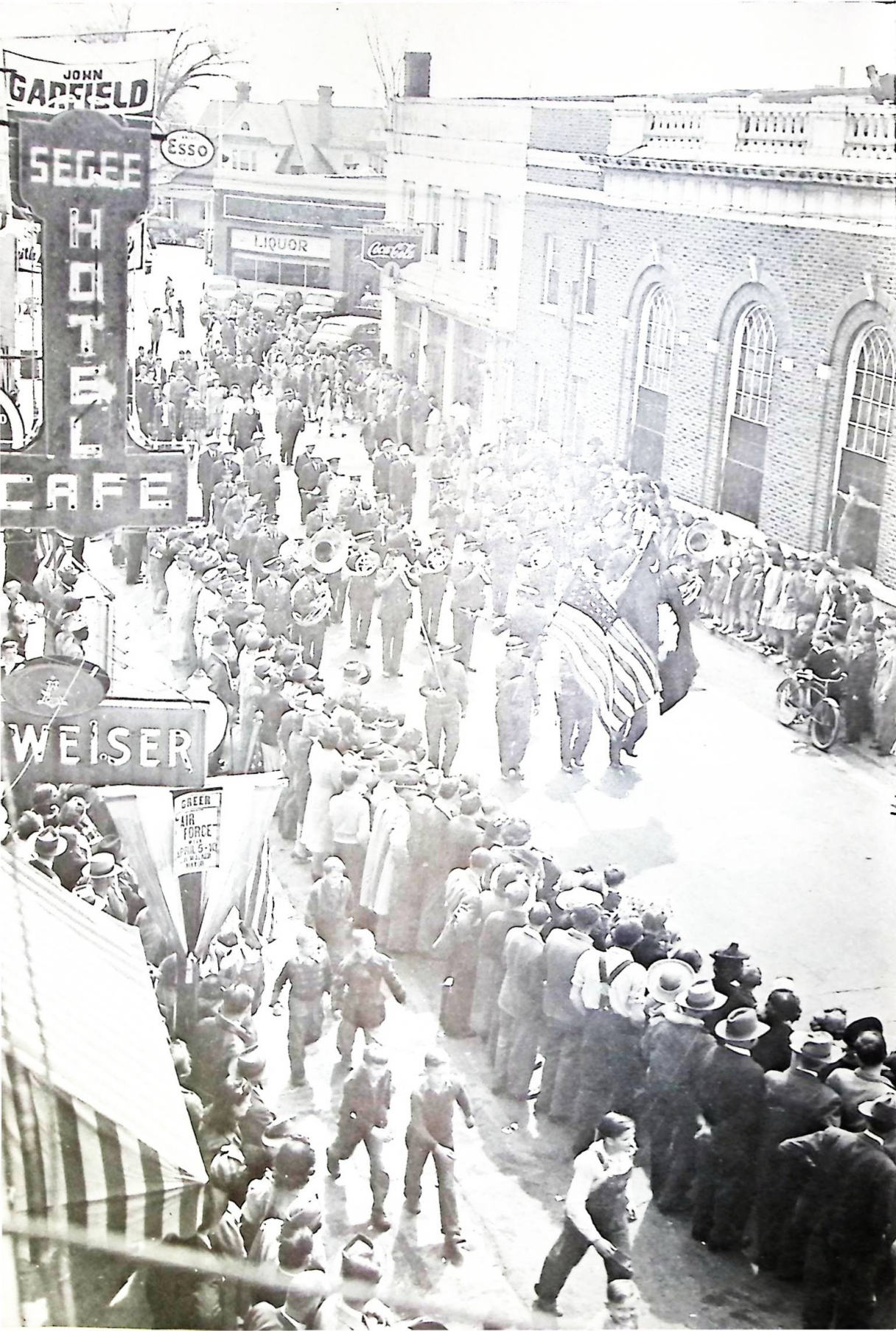
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CLINGSTONE
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Downtown Greer: 100 Years And Growing

Interviewed by: Jimmy James, Michael Gooding,
Jeff Loftis, Mark McLemore, Vicki Hiott,
Robert Martin, Perry Williams, Susan
Hill, Jim Helminski, Kathy Johnston, and
John Rollins

Photographs by: Perry Williams, Jim Helminski,
Kathy Johnston

The pulse of any community is its downtown area. Downtown Greer began as a few stores near the railroad tracks. As the town prospered, new business came and the dirt roads were paved. Many of the first buildings in downtown Greer still stand. Some have been torn down. But many people still remember what this downtown area was like when it was young and growing. Downtown Greer was full of vitality, especially on a Saturday.

Mrs. L. R. Mason, Sr., Wilton Gibson, and Clarence Westmoreland all grew up near downtown Greer. They share with us some of their memories of the town. Helen McCarty and Bill Ponder talk about two of everybody's favorite places in downtown Greer, the Grand Theater and Ponder's Ice Cream Parlor. R. B. Colvin, Greer's fire chief, describes the early days of the police and fire departments. Inez Barnett, whose father ran a livery stable in Greer, and Roy Collins Sr., who opened the Bailes & Collins store in Greer, give us an insight into what running a business was like in the earlier days of the town.

As Greer begins its 101st year as a town, we feel extremely grateful to these people who helped remind us of our town's earlier years--years which were very important in shaping the character of this community.

"Lordy me, there wasn't much town to it."



Mrs. L.R. Mason

Mrs. Noettie Peace Mason has lived in Greer for 92 years and has raised six children in this town. She remembers Greer when it was hardly a town at all.

Vickie: What was it like when Greer first started as a town?

Mrs. Mason: Well, Lordy me, there wasn't much town to it. I was born and bred just up the road here. And there wasn't another house 'til you got out here to what we called ole Granny Morrow's. And on down was Dr. Westmoreland's, where the mortuary is now. And in front of his place, he had a little office where he took in patients. On down where the Baptist Church is now was ole Granny Mosteller's. There was only about six or seven houses on the street. And the post

office was just a little wooden building. You went in and at a little cubby hole the postman stuck his head out and gave you your mail.

Vickie: What was it like raising your children in Greer?

Mrs. Mason: Well, it was just like the country. All of this was field.

Vickie: Where did you buy their clothes?

Mrs. Mason: Well, we generally went to Greenville. Mr. Davenport had a dry goods store. He carried shoes and clothing.

Vickie: What were church services like?

Mrs. Mason: We didn't have a service down here but once a month at the churches. One Sunday it would be at the Presbyterian Church, one Sunday at the Baptist, one Sunday at the Methodist, and one Sunday we'd go up here in the country to Fairview Church.

"... it was a treat to get on that train and ride to Spartanburg."

Vickie: Can you tell us something about the railroad?

Mrs. Mason: We had a little bitty depot down there at the railroad where Mr. Jackson worked. We had a few passengers who occasionally got on and off the train. I don't remember how many passengers used to come through, but there weren't too many. But it was a treat to get on that train and ride to Spartanburg.

Vickie: Did you ever go to Ponder's Ice Cream Parlor?

Mrs. Mason: Lord, there wasn't a Ponder's then. Later on, we had a Ponder's. Yeah, it was a treat to go to Ponder's if we could get 15¢. Go to Ponder's, give a nickel for a cone of ice cream and a dime to go to the show. And if you happened to have a little bit more, you'd get you a bag of popcorn to eat while you were there.

Vickie: What was school like in Greer then?

Mrs. Mason: We didn't have a grammar school for years. There weren't any grades--everybody just stayed in one room, first graders on up. But a little later on, they started the ninth grade. All they had was three rooms: on one side was the little girls' room; right in front was the boys' room; and on the other side was

the grown girls' room. And we had to bring lunch in a tin bucket or a little pail.

Vickie: What did you do for fun?

Mrs. Mason: There wasn't anything to go to but Chick Springs for entertainment. That was a great place to go to on a Sunday afternoon.

Vickie: Was there a place to swim then?

Mrs. Mason: No, there wasn't. They had water that people went to drink. It tasted like Epsom salts. There were two springs there. One was an iron spring and the other had a shelter over it. That's where we went when the candidates had speeches. They stood under the shelter and the people sat around under the trees.



Wilton Gibson is the sort of contact every Clingstone staffer enjoys having. After answering our first question very thoroughly, Mr. Gibson eagerly asked for the next question.

Jimmy: What was Greer like on a Saturday?

Mr. Gibson: This was known as a Saturday town. The stores did their biggest business on Saturday. This used to be a farming section. The mills came in a little bit before my day. The majority of the money in this area, up until 1920, came from agriculture, not industry. Saturday was the big day. People used to come to town to trade on Saturday. The rest of the week was pretty quiet.

Jimmy: Do you remember any of the stores?

Mr. Gibson: Stores in that day? Mr. R. P. Turner was running a retail store where T. E. Jones Furniture Store is. He was in the retail business then. Later, he opened up a wholesale grocery. He was one of the largest wholesalers in the state of South Carolina. Other stores I remember are Hoble Henderson, Herring Furniture Company, the Greer Furniture

"This was known as a Saturday town."



Mr. Wilton Gibson

Company, it was where T. E. Jones is now and it was run by Mr. Verne Smith and Doug McCorkle, Rhen Stone. Mr. Verne Smith was the father of our present senator. They ran that store for years. Flynn's Grocery, two Flynn's Groceries; one was there on the corner where T. E. Jones is. There was a grocery store there before Mr. Turner had his store there. Then his brother Mr. Ben Flynn had one across the street several years later.

Mr. Terry Wood ran a dry goods store on Randall Street across from where the Greer Fire Department was. Mr. Terry Wood is the grandfather of the lawyer, Bill Wood. Mr. John D. Wood's mortuary was across from the Fire Department on Randall Street.

Mr. Wood was known then as just an undertaker. Then we had a candy kitchen down the street run by George Annaknakus. I used to think he made the best candy of anyone around. Mr. Duncan ran a bicycle shop. He later opened up a marble yard. Mr. P. L. DeYoung was the man who did all the cutting on the tombstones. Mr. Basil had a blacksmith's shop behind where the Wayside Inn used to be. There was a great big oak tree there. There was another one down behind where the Sullivan Eskew Hardware store is.

I was born in a house right next to where the old Ponder's Ice Cream Building is, where Mr. W. M. Thompson had the Ford Dealership before it was D and D Motors. They built a house there, and I lived there until I was six years old. The streets were not paved then. Most of the traveling was done in horse and buggy. Dr. Marchant lived right across the street from us. His barn, or horse stable, was right on the street. As a child, I recollect, he had a little window cut, and this horse would stick his head out the window and be right on the street. His house was where the First National Bank is now.

The streets have been changed. East Poinsett was known as Hill Street from North Main toward Spartanburg. West Poinsett was known as Emma Street. North Main was known as Mostella Street. We lived on Poinsett when it was known as Mostella Street.

My father ran a general merchandise store right across from the Greer Furniture Store. He handled tobacco, shoes, just all kinds of things. Course, he got most of his trade from his farmer friends because he was born and raised up here at Washington Baptist Church about five miles from Greer. He moved to Greer in 1898. He ran a store for I don't know how many years. He was in business I know in 1918 when the first World War was on. Sugar was rationed at that time. I remember one time he got in a wooden barrel of sugar. I would say it was a 50 or 55 gallon barrel. He weighed it up and rationed it out at a pound to a customer. I can see him now, pouring it out and tying those little pound bags of sugar. Everybody wanted to get two if they could. I remember Daddy said, "We've got to spread it out. Give everybody a pound."

*"People would go out of their way to trade
with a man they could call their friend."*

Jimmy: Did the people get to know the merchants they dealt with better than they do now?

Mr. Gibson: I remember talking to older people who talk about trading with my daddy. I've had one or two tell me they'd go miles out of their way just to trade with Jake. That was my father's name. People back then believed friendship had more to do with it than it does today. People would go out of their way to trade with a man they could call their friend. I would say yes, they traded more on a friendship basis than they did a price basis.

Jimmy: Where did you go out to eat?

Mr. Gibson: There wasn't anywhere to go. There was a boarding house. Miss Emma Bell ran the boarding house that was right next to my house on Hill Street. She used to serve good food. People would talk about it. Then there was a hotel run by a fellow Barber; it was the upstairs of a building that stood where the Dollar Store is now on Trade Street. Hamburgers--you never heard of that. You didn't hear of loaf bread much. I remember I used to think my mother could roll out the dough and cut out the biscuits and put them in the oven faster than anyone I ever saw. We had hot biscuits for breakfast. Nearly everybody made their own bread. If we had loaf bread back when I was a kid, it was because maybe the preacher was coming. My father said we better get a loaf of bread.

Behind the Wayside Inn there was a place known as the hitching lot. Specially on Friday and Saturday there would be just numbers and numbers of wagons. Lot of 'em would come in covered wagons. Back then people used to grow cabbage, and they had chestnut trees. They would load up their covered wagons, and they'd drive down here and park on this lot. They'd sleep in the wagons. They would cook on the lot. They would sell their cabbage and chestnuts. As a

child I would be going to school, and they would be cooking breakfast out there, you know, and I could smell that bacon. It would make me so hungry I didn't know what to do. They'd hitch their teams there and go and trade. Go down the street and trade a little.

"We got interested in this basketball."

Jimmy: What did you do for excitement when you were a boy?

Mr. Gibson: Well, that's a funny thing; we had to do our own thing. We didn't have anything done for us. When I was growing up, this boy that lived across the street from me, we were what were called bosom pals. I remember Mr. Bill Gambrelle started the first basketball team in Greer in 1920 or 21. Back then you just couldn't walk in a store and buy a basketball. Everybody didn't have them. This boy and I took a billy goat wheel and knocked the spokes out of it. Back then boys would have a goat, and they'd have a little wagon with a wheel about 18 or 20 inches in diameter in the back. They used to drive their billy goats. We got interested in this basketball. We made us a backboard and used the billy goat wheel. But we didn't have a ball. We took a tow sack. We'd take that sack and roll it up into a ball and tie it up with string. Then, instead of dribbling the ball, the sack wouldn't bounce, we'd throw it up in the air and go down the court and then shoot it. But we had to improvise. As you went on up in the twenties, of course, the schools started having basketball teams.

There weren't near as many people, boys and girls. When I got to be a teenager, we had picnics and a party in a home. You had what was known as a prom ticket. A prom ticket today lists the dances; back then all we could do was walk down to the corner and back. We'd promenade that way. You'd talk and that would be all there was to it. We didn't have any planned recreation.

Jimmy: Do you remember the first movie you saw?

Mr. Gibson: Charlie Drace opened the first movie here I think. He had it either Friday night or Saturday. I lived two doors below his theater. There was another one across where the Graham Cash Store is. Then there was one down where West Electric is.

Mr. Drace, I remember his favorite saying: "All right, come on in. We got a cuttin' up comedy and a shootin' up western." Back then they had serials. I vividly remember "The Perils of Pauline." They'd always leave ya'; there would be a train coming down the track, and she'd be tied to the track. See the next episode and see if she gets rescued. They were silent then, no talking. I wanted to go every Saturday. You could get in for a dime.

"They'd turn loose a greasy pig, and they'd put a silver dollar on top of a greasy pole."

Between the railroad tracks used to be known as the Town Square. That was a little bit before my day. The Fourth of July used to be a big day in Greer. They'd turn loose a greasy pig, and they'd put a silver dollar on top of a greasy pole, and the person that climbed it got the dollar, and the one that caught the pig got it. They used to have fire works. People came to Greer. They'd have big ball games down at Victor.

One thing I recall, they would have medicine shows. One came here and opened up in the building just below the Greer Drug Company. They used to have bottles with what they said was tape worms in 'em. They'd say, "Looka here. You may be in this fix. You need a bottle of this tonic. It'll eliminate the tape worms and make you feel better."

Some of the biggest excitement we had was for a horse and buggy to run away and maybe turn a wagon over in the middle of the street. I recall one. Mr. Ponder, when he first started delivering drinks with a horse and wagon, a Mr. Shepherd was working for him

and driving for him. Ponder had a horse named Frisco. Frisco was trained as soon as the man's foot hit the single tree or shafts, why, he was to go. You couldn't hardly get on the wagon before he'd be off. He'd also get scared and run away every now and then. Frisco got scared and took off down to the end of Trade Street. The wagon turned over with all the drinks and everything else in it. That was excitement when you had a run away horse every now and then.

Jimmy: What sort of a man was Mr. Ponder?

Mr. Gibson: Mr. Ponder was one of these fellows that didn't seek any publicity. He had one of the warmest hearts of anyone I've ever known. He loved Greer. He ran a general merchandise store. I remember when I was four or five years, he had a peanut parcher, and he used to sit out on the street and the people would smell the peanuts and want 'em. Mr. Ponder ran a store where the flower shop is, where Fay's Flowers used to be. He moved from there to where the City Cafe is now. That's where he started making ice cream with a hand churn. He would grind it and make it. That's where he got his start making ice cream. After he had made the cream, he'd let me lick the dasher. He operated there for several years. Then he bought the place right across there, and he started Ponder's Bottling and Ice Cream Company. He bottled cherry cola.

During 1918 when he was in the ice cream business, he would put me in this T Model Ford truck with two of his nephews and load it with 26 cases of drinks. The three of us would drive up here to Glassy Rock some 18 miles and deliver all those drinks to one man, Mr. Ham Turner. The roads weren't paved. Sometimes the mud and ruts would be axle deep. He'd always send the other two older boys with me.

Jimmy: Do you remember any characters of Greer who stand out in your mind?

Mr. Gibson: The character I remember most was Tom Davis. He worked with the Post Office. The Post Office was right below the old McLeskey-Todd Drug Store. Then it was moved to where Price's Feed and Seed is now. I've seen four post offices--the one on Hill Street, the one on Trade Street, the one on

South Main, and now the one on North Main.

Back to the characters. Tom Davis used to hang around the Post Office all the time. A lot of people used to play jokes on him. In fact, people had more time to have a little fun out of life. It wasn't uncommon for Mr. Verne Smith, or Doug McCorkle or Rhen Smith to send some poor character after a left-handed monkey wrench. They wanted the key to the city. They sent him down to the Mayor's office to get the key to the city. They had a lot of fun back then. A lot more fun than people have today.

*"If it hadn't been for the men that loved
Greer, we might not be on the map today."*

We had a lot of men who loved Greer and did a lot for it. Back then, the impression I got was if a man gave you his word, it was his bond. Whatever they told you that was it. If it hadn't been for the men that loved Greer, we might not be on the map today. We would be just a wide place in the road. We had people that boosted Greer. People who gave of their time without money.

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We interviewed Clarence Westmoreland because of his knowledge of many of the happenings in Greer. This interview has enlightened us on many things about Greer we may have never known.

Robert: What was the downtown area like on a Saturday? Was it crowded?

Mr. Westmoreland: Extremely crowded. The major and bumper day was Saturday. The employment around Greer was in the textile mills. On Saturday, they only worked five hours. Then they would go home and get on their town clothes and go to town. On Saturday evenings, it was difficult to walk up and down the

street--thousands and thousands of people.

This area, East Poinsett Street, was known sixty years ago as the Poplar. Where you see Jeff Brown's Grocery and the Deluxe Cleaners, there was a tremendous poplar tree. Back behind it was a parking area for horses and buggies to come in. The first company store operated by Victor Mill was here also. The first operators were Mr. Ridgeway and Mr. Albert Johnson. They would take your orders and deliver them by horse and buggy through the week or on Saturday afternoon.

Farther on down was the Standard Oil Company. They had enormous tanks at much lower levels than the railroad. They had this tank that was drawn by a mule which carried kerosene to the grocery stores.

A little over 60 years ago, there was just a single track through here on the Southern Railroad. They were all old locomotives. The P & N built their railroad through here about the same time. That was a big attraction for the young boys especially. There would be hundreds and hundreds of employees, and they did it all with handwork.

The first automobile I ever saw passed right up this road.

Susan: Was the road paved?

Mr. Westmoreland: Lord! It was knee deep in mud during rainy weather. It was known as just the Spartanburg Road. The first car was a White Steamer owned by the boss mechanic down at Victor Mill. This 1904 White Steamer cost \$2,150 and was invented by Rollin H. White. A 1905 model led the inaugural parade for President Theodore Roosevelt.

Susan: What can you tell us about going to the movies in Greer?

Mr. Westmoreland: That was the biggest event we had on Saturdays--go to the theater. There were two theaters in Greer at that time: one down on the lower end of town right across from McCarter's Barbershop; and the other one, Mr. Charlie Drace's theater, sat way back where Dr. Jewel's place was on Poinsett Street. We'd get a dime or fifteen cents on Saturday, those who didn't work. Quite a sum, a dime, and you'd go see the show for a nickle. Most of us would sit through

two shows, all westerns I think. They were silent pictures. Grown men who would want to see the show and couldn't read would pay some young boy's entrance into the theater, sit next to them, and listen to them read all the passages through the movie.



Mr. Clarence Westmoreland.

Susan: Why did Ponder's Ice Cream Parlor do such a big business in Greer?

Mr. Westmoreland: Well, it was because of the quantity and quality of their cream. You could get ice cream just stacked and stacked back in those days. That was our typical Saturday--to the movies and Ponder's.

Susan: What can you tell us about Jockey Day?

Mr. Westmoreland: The first Monday in every month was

known as Jockey Day, and down where Jones' Coin Shop is now was known as the Jockey Yard or Carnival Yard. Farmers, traders, mountain boys, and mountain men driving their ox carts would bring their wares. It was on the scale of a flea market now, only it was livestock and shotguns and dogs. Oh, dogs were tremendous on the market then.

Did anyone ever tell you that Kate Smith appeared here in a theater? The theater was between Miss Alta Cunningham's and the Bank of Greer. They gave vaudeville shows, and Kate Smith appeared there, I guess back 50 years ago. She was just a young girl then.

Susan: Can you tell us about the medicine shows?

Mr. Westmoreland: Oh, gracious yes. That was a main attraction. They would come to town, and back then in Greer, there were big spaces between stores: that's where the medicine shows were. They would have some trained professional people with them to help put on the show. Then they would get some local people, and they would really put on some good entertainment.

*"You could tell a man's pocketbook
by the kind of lard he bought."*

Robert: Could you tell us anything about the old oil mill?

Mr. Westmoreland: The oil mill was built in 1897 by Mr. D. D. Davenport, Sr. Shortly after, N. A. Collins was manager and operator of the Greer Oil Mill. It was known for the oil it produced. That was known back in those days as compound lard; it was made from cotton seed. You could tell a man's pocketbook by the kind of lard he bought, whether it was pure lard or compound lard. Compound lard was made from cotton seed. They weren't that far out of line eating that compound lard healthwise.

Robert: What were some of your favorite stories about Greer?

Mr. Westmoreland: My greatest regret today was not talking to more Confederate veterans or more old slaves. Right where this service station is located

now was a old wooden building that was a grocery store. One of the old Confederate veterans, when I was six or seven years old, was sitting out in front of the grocery store. We heard this old locomotive called the Dobson Grade. We could hear it coming--choo-choo-choo-choo, and it stopped at the Line Street crossing. The old Confederate veteran had on his old suit. He was proud to be a veteran of the Confederate Army. He had a yellow band around his hat. He looked at me, and he said, "You know the reason that train stopped?" I said I didn't have any idea. He said, "It's tired. It's stopped to rest. You hear it a' puffin'?"

*"There was a good relationship
between blacks and whites."*

One of the best stories I can remember is from an old slave, Harrison Mack. We called him Uncle Harrison Mack. We saw him one time with a great big possum. We asked him, "Uncle Harrison Mack, where did you catch that possum?" He said, "Out from under an old harripum." He had found it under the clay roots of an old tree that had been blown over by a tornado. He called the clay roots a harripum or hurricaine instead.

There was a good relationship between blacks and whites. Each neighborhood had its own ballground. Baseball was about the only sport young people could participate in. Just about four houses above here now, there weren't any houses here then, there was this log cabin, and a colored man lived in it. He had a son named Clarence. We had a good ball team. Clarence was our catcher. What is known now as Sunnyside was known then as Happy Holler. We'd have rock battles. Sometimes we'd drive the blacks back, and sometimes they'd drive us back to the Southern Railroad, and we'd wait until another day.

Susan: What were some of the jobs you used to have when you were a boy?

Mr. Westmoreland: Our only means of making any surplus money was, in the fall of the year, picking cotton.

During the summer months, everyone, especially the ones here on Victor Village, had their own gardens, their own cows and chickens, and their own hogs. They would give us 35 to 40¢ a week to get their cows and take them out and graze them in the afternoon. Usually, it was close to some ballpark, and we'd play ball while the cows were grazing and have our fun too. In the fall of the year, the most I'd known of cotton a' payin' per 100 pounds pickin', hand pickin', was around \$1.00. We could make anywhere from 30 to 40¢ an afternoon, after we got out of school. See, back in those days, cotton was king. You could go half a mile off the village here, and you'd be into the farming area and ready to pick cotton.

"...the good ole days is right now."

I can truthfully say to the people who say, "Give me back the good old days," the good old days is right now. Absolutely, it is now.

One of the most well known citizens of Greer is Mr. R. B. Colvin who has been serving with the Greer Fire and Police Department for almost 40 years. Fire Chief Colvin told us about Greer's fire and police department in its early days.

Mr. Colvin: I first joined the Greer Police and Fire Department early in 1937. I was on as a fireman, but I helped the police officers at that time too. They threw me in as a police and fireman.

John: How many policemen were there?

Mr. Colvin: When I was sworn in, there was Chief Tapp, and Mr. Charlie Lovett was the daytime policemen and also doubled as the street superintendent. Then Gus Finley and Green Taylor were workin' at

night. Then they hired me to help Mr. Sam Mahaffey to solve problems and help with the office records. Later they hired John Robinson as a police officer. So that gave us Chief Tapp and Mr. Charlie Lovett and myself helping in the daytime--Gus Finley and Green Taylor workin' at night.



Pictured with one of the Greer Fire Department's first engines are top, left to right: T. R. Hallman, B. A. Fincher, Joe Brantley, R. B. Colvin, S. O. Mahaffey, and W. A. Pennington. On the bottom row, left to right, are: W. R. (Bud) Hunt, Luke Jones, Howell Davis, Dick Singleton, Hoyt Tapp, and Bill Allen.

John: How many firemen were there?

Mr. Colvin: Well, at that time we only had one paid fireman. That was Sam Mahaffey. He was a driver. He had joined the fire department when they got the first fire truck back in 1919. We had 25 or 26 active volunteers, but Mr. Mahaffey was the only paid man, and I was added to that as Assistant Fire Chief in 1937.

They'd hold up that sign saying:

"Did you save the chimney?"

We had an old truck with the fire department, and it was a great experience trying to work it. Sometimes it would catch fire itself before we left the fire station, so we put the fire truck out before we went to the fire. The carburetors was bad to leak. Then it was hard to warm up and get goin'. We used to leave Mr. Mahaffey who was drivin' in those days cause he would always come back from the fire faster than he went. The reason for that was it took the length to the fire to get it warmed up. It was real cold-natured. By the time we went to the fire and put it out, it was runnin' smooth, and Mr. Mahaffey would let it come on back pretty good.

They used to have a sign around here as we came back. We didn't have but one old truck; it didn't have any modern equipment. They'd hold up that sign saying: "Did you save the chimney?" They knew the house burnt down, and the chimney was all we could save. Of course, we tried to change that status over the years. We try to get there on time and use a lot of modern equipment. Of course, you have to get some sort of reasonable notice to stop a fire.

John: What was the biggest fire in Greer?

Mr. Colvin: The most destructive fire recently was the old Davenport Junior High fire. I was up there 16 hours myself. Now back in 1936 and '37, we had some bad fires. One was at the old Ponder's Ice Cream place. We had to call in Greenville. We didn't have but one old truck then. I remember the weather

was so cold the hydrant froze, and we all like to froze fighting it. But we finally got it out. Some fellows from Greenville came over and helped us, and we worked there nearly all night at that one.

Then a few years later, up into the early forties, I believe, they had another fire at Ponder's and a colored man got killed. Mr. Fred Flynn was the night watchman. This man that got killed went upstairs and took a nap. He must have been trapped; he died from suffocation.



Fire Chief R.B. Colvin

John: What were some of the most common crimes in Greer?

Mr. Colvin: Well, for many years, probably public drunkenness or disorderly conduct. We used to have a lot of fights when I first joined the department. They started selling beer back in '33 sometime. People would get in these cafes drinking beer, and they weren't used to it. You see, it was illegal to sell beer up to that time, and liquor too. But they

legalized beer, and they'd get to drinkin' and get pretty happy and get in an argument. Then they'd get into a fight. I remember one time I was policing one Saturday night, and I got five different fellas out of a cafe. I walked 'em out.

John: What was the worst crime in Greer?

Mr. Colvin: One of the worst crimes I remember working was when this man kinda went berserk. I think he was drinking. His wife had left him. She was staying at her mother's, and he went there one night about eight or nine o'clock and tried to get into the house. They wouldn't let him in. Well, he commenced shootin' through the door, and then he killed his wife and his mother-in-law and ran out of the back door. As he ran around the side of the house, his son went and shot him.

Roy Lister was deputy sheriff at that time, and we went together to the scene. I'll never forget that. There were three people dead on the scene, one outside and two inside the house. That's recorded in my mind right now as one of the most serious crimes in a good many years.

John: Was the punishment for crimes any different?

Mr. Colvin: I don't remember any hangin's, but I remember Chief Tapp talking about when they used to hang 'em. A fellow killed a police chief in Duncan, and they hung him. They'd have a public hangin'. Of course, we had the city courts. If they fined them more than they could pay, they would have to send them to the county chain gang. They sent the women to the county stockade in Greenville. If it was serious, they were tried by county court.

John: Were there any mob lynchings in Greer?

Mr. Colvin: No, not in my day, but the older fellas would talk about them. But I never heard of one right in Greer.

John: Were there problems with communications?

Mr. Colvin: Communication was bad. There weren't too many telephones in the city in those days. I remember the Wood Mortuary was 2. They were the second people in Greer to have a telephone. The city jail was 40. That's the way they numbered them in those days.

John: When did Greer get its first police car?

Mr. Colvin: The first police car I can remember was in 1933--a model Ford, two doors. The doors opened from the front, outward. Other cars were personal cars. Or a policeman might get a passerby to help him pick up a drunk.

John: Did the car have a seal on it?

Mr. Colvin: No, it didn't have any marking on it. Back in those days they never did put anything on the door of the car. Just a black two door. Just a regular car.

John: When did the police cars get radios?

Mr. Colvin: First in the 50's. Before then communication was by telephone. Usually you had to send somebody after them.

"... you either had to whop 'em

or handcuff 'em to get 'em in."

John: Who were some of the town characters?

Mr. Colvin: Bulldog Crawling. He was a tough customer. He'd get drunk or get into a fight. (There were a lot of 'em like that in those days.) If you had to arrest 'em, you either had to whop 'em or handcuff 'em to get 'em in. They'd fight back--raise sand. Sometimes we'd need two or three policemen to get 'em in.

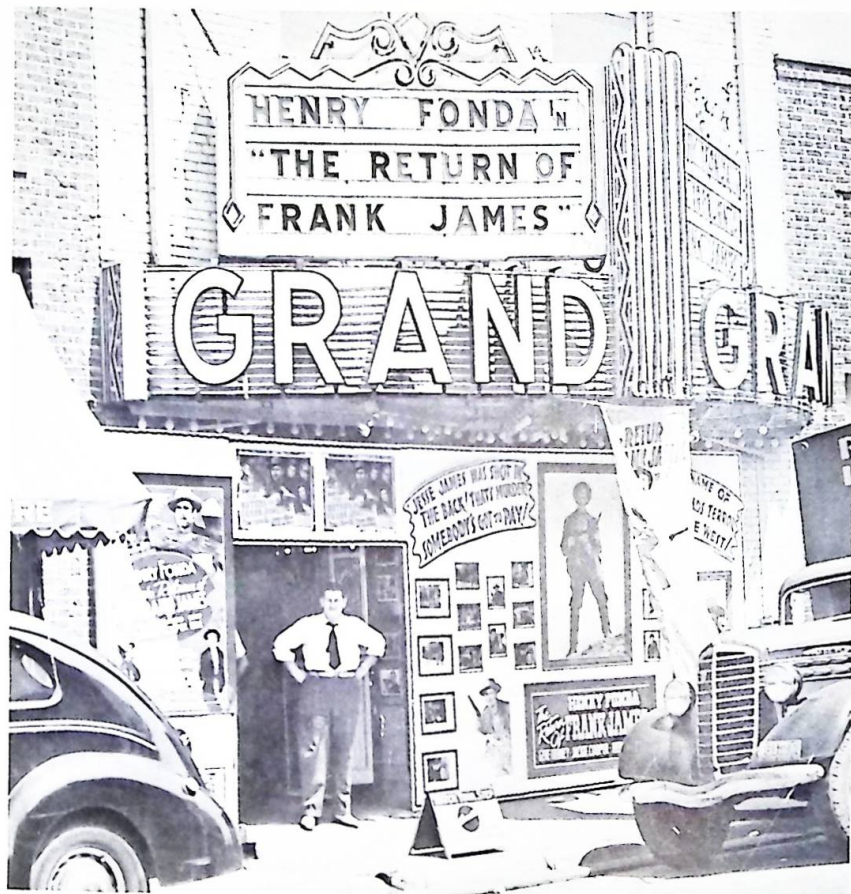
John: What did the firemen and policemen do in their off time?

Mr. Colvin: The police didn't have too much time. We'd work 87 hours a week, 6 days a week. We'd work 12 hours a day. Then on Saturday we worked 3 hours extra. We didn't get a day off. We did most of our rounds on foot. Sometimes we'd set around, though, and talk and gossip a little with long tales. We'd have a good fellowship.

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*"Come on in. There's a cuttin' up show inside—a cuttin' up show."*



Mr. Bill Drace stands in front of the theater his father began.

The Grand Theater was something of a landmark in the past days of downtown Greer. And Mr. Charlie Drace who opened the theater was one of Greer's best-known citizens. We would like to thank Mrs. Helen McCarty, Mr. Drace's daughter-in-law, for sharing with us several stories about "Mr. Charlie" and his theater and for allowing us to use several photographs made by Mr. Drace in our magazine.

Mrs. McCarty: Everybody called him Mr. Charlie. "Let's go see Mr. Charlie's picture show," they'd say. He kept that theater from the early 1900's until his sons took over. His younger son Bill kept it going until he had a heart attack. It's closed now, but it has been a real landmark because it was the first theater here back in the horse and buggy days.

Mr. Drace came here in 1896 from Gettysburg, Pa. When he first came here he was a photographer. Then he combined the two and opened up a theater. He married and built his home over here on Miller Street. His wife was Fannie Miller. This street was named after his father-in-law, Mr. Miller. This street down here, Drace Ave., was named after Mr. Charlie.

Everybody that I have talked to ever since I came here in 1938, has told me about how they loved Mr.



*"Everybody called him Mr. Charlie."*



Charlie, that he was always so charming, pleasant and full of life. He was always joking. He was the best showman that they have ever known. He would always have something ready for them if something went wrong. And he was quite a character standing out front with the carrying on.

Mr. Drace would stand out front when he had a big picture on, and he had on his big top hat, and he always had a cigar in his mouth. As the people would go by, he would stand out there and say, "Come on in. There's a cuttin' up show inside--a cuttin' up show." They would line up to get in the theater for a block away down the street. If he was having a vaudeville act or something, he would have one of them standing outside cutting up and carrying on.

The seats in the theater were not like seats we have today; they were more like benches. And sometimes it was not too warm in there, but he had those pot-bellied stoves going, and they had the peanuts and everything. They seemed quite happy. Mr. Drace's father-in-law grew the peanuts that they parched down there. They made up some kind of big contraption to parch just beaucoups of peanuts--large bags of peanuts for five cents. They only charged ten cents back then to get in and five cents for children.

*"All the kids loved Hoot Gibson."*

He would always give out pictures of all the old western stars to the kids, and they just loved it. He would give them all a button with their favorite western actor. All the kids loved Hoot Gibson, and Mr. Drace stood out there and said, "Come on in. Come on in. Hoot's a hootin' it up! Hoot's a hootin' it up!" They'd really come to see Hoot Gibson.

And they really did love those continued serials. He would have one and it'd run, my goodness, six months--just one right after another. One was the "Perils of Pauline," and, of course, they didn't want to miss a Saturday because they wanted to see what was next.

He had some vaudeville acts, but part of the time he didn't know if they would show up or not because it would take so long for them to get here, even from Atlanta or somewhere close. One time he was having a vaudeville act, and they didn't show up. It always seemed he had something else to show them in case of an emergency, so he told the audience that if they wanted their money back, he'd give it to them or he would just parch a lot of peanuts and just give them all peanuts. And there was a guy, I don't know his name, that was around Greer at that time who would take off warts. You had to give him a penny, and he would rub that penny on that wart, and later, it would gradually disappear. Mr. Drace knew this guy because he would come to every movie that he had on, and he told the audience that if any of them had any warts, he'd just have them all removed for them. He gave each one the penny that the man put on their wart.



*The Grand Theater and Ponder's Ice Cream Parlor--two of downtown Greer's favorite places.*



Back in the 1900's, Mr. Drace used to give away door prizes. He used to give away tickets, and the tickets had a number. And they had a drawing, and Mr. Drace used to have in his little photography shop guitars, watches, banjos and things like that. Even when Mr. Charlie started out, he would give away things like that, and it helped promote the people coming. My husband Bill gave away nice prizes too.

*"Mr. Charlie was always joking and playing tricks"*

Bill was quite like his father, always playing tricks and gadget-happy, you know. They were both gadget-happy. Anything they could rig up or anything different, they would get it. Bill had a pocket watch back in 1938 that he would set for a certain time, and he could be in a cafe or anywhere, and he would have it set to remind him of certain things that he had to do and places to go. It would go off, and everybody would just look. They didn't quite understand it.

Mr. Charlie was always joking and playing tricks on the people he knew around town and his family. One time he was supposed to be on a real strict diet, and he wasn't supposed to eat anything. He was a real big eater. He would come home, and his wife would tell him everytime he started to eat something, "Now don't eat all that." Now, what he was doing was before he came home at night, there was a cafe across the street where he would go and eat a huge steak. He'd do that every night and then go home and tell his wife that he believed that he wouldn't eat much that night, maybe just a glass of milk of something because he was trying to lose weight, knowing all the time that he had eaten that huge steak.

There was nothing he couldn't do. He could wire a house, just anything like that, you know, which helped him a lot because he'd do a lot of his work at the theater himself. He'd cut out his own pictures and props, anything like that. I think the building

was already there, and Mr. Drace had to redo it. At first it was just a makeshift thing in there, and it just kept on improving and improving.

Now there was one thing that you noticed about his theater from the beginning: he was full of fun, but he did run a good clean theater. That a lot of people have told me, and when I worked down there selling tickets, a lot of mothers would bring their kids to see the movie while they did the shopping, and they knew that I would see after them, sort of like a babysitter. If we caught anybody doing something they shouldn't, we'd make them leave. Everybody in Greer knew that when brought their children there, they were looked after. They trusted us.

It was the only entertainment, clean entertainment, that they had in Greer back then. You take in 1906, people would just get together and visit in the homes and have singings or something like that. Before my husband Bill passed away, they passed a law to open the movies on Sunday, but he never would. He said that his father before him said he would never run his theater on Sunday, and so he followed his father's wishes. He never did open on Sunday.

*"Seems like they had more fun than we do now over just simple things."*

Robert: What did people consider a good Saturday?

Mrs. McCarty: You'd get you an ice cream cone, and you'd get a huge one, you know, and go see the movie for a dime. Now that was a good day, and everybody just had fun. Seems like they had more fun than we do now over just simple things.

Perry: My grandfather lived in Cashville, and he said he'd walk 24 miles just to be up here to see a movie.

Mrs. McCarty: You know, I talked to an elderly lady not too long ago, and she lived way down the Woodruff Road, which is quite a ways, and she said that she and her whole family, because they didn't want to miss any of them Saturday shows, would leave early in the morning and get here on time and stay until the theater



*"Mr. Charlie was really a fine person,  
they tell me."*



*Mrs. Helen McCarty*

closed. Then they'd walk all that way back home. On Saturdays, he would have two or three features, and most people back then would come and spend the day. They knew every Saturday that they were going to spend the day at the Grand. Some people would stay and watch everything twice back then. You see, there was really nothing to do in those days, and to walk

10 or 15 miles was nothing back then because people were used to walking.

Mr. Charlie was really a fine person, they tell me. You see, I never did get the pleasure of meeting him because he passed away before I married his son Bill. We were married in '38, and he passed away in '28. But everybody said I sure did miss something because he was so jolly all the time.



*"They knew every Saturday that they were  
going to spend the day at the Grand."*







*Mr. Bill Ponder*

*Carl Ponder was well known in this area because he ran the most popular ice cream parlor around. We talked to Bill Ponder, his nephew, and found that he and his wife knew a lot about the ice cream parlor because they both worked there.*

Mike: Did you work at Ponder's Ice Cream Parlor?

Mr. Ponder: Yes, I worked there for about ten years. I came over in 1942, and I left in 1954. I was in the freezing room, what was called production. We made popsicles, and cups, pints and half gallons of ice cream. We made it all.

Mrs. Ponder: All the school people worked there. It was the place, you know, because you could manufacture

the ice cream there and serve it there. All the teenagers from school had a job there. Everybody gathered there, especially after a Friday night ball game. Saturday morning, all of the team came in to discuss their plays, what had happened the night before and things like that.

Mr. Ponder: A lot of people would just come in and gather just to have a chat over a chocolate shake or sundae.

*"People just went wild over this rainbow ice cream."*

Mike: What were the favorite flavors?

Mrs. Ponder: Well, I think that the favorite flavors have always been vanilla, strawberry, and chocolate.

Mr. Ponder: Well, we had what you call a rainbow. Rainbow ice cream was when you get a churn down pretty low and scoop all that out and dump it in one 10 gallon churn. You'd wind up with vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, and so on. When you'd scoop across it, maybe you'd get three or four flavors. People just went wild over this thing.

Jeff: How many flavors did you have all together?

Mrs. Ponder: About 20.

Mike: Did mostly young people go there?

Mr. Ponder: The young and old: a place for everybody. Even had a curb service.

Mike:: What were the hours?

Mr. Ponder: About 8 to 12 midnight.

Mike: Did you deliver?

Mr. Ponder: Yeah, we had routes all over the Greer area--Greenville, Anderson, and Pickens.

Mike: How did Mr. Ponder get started in the business?

Mr. Ponder: He had a novelty store at first. He started on weekends just making a churn of ice cream, and he'd sell it. He kept doing pretty good, so he bought a bigger churn. He would freeze it and pack it in ice. Finally, he just got in the ice cream and drink business and forgot about the novelty store.



*"His dog Buster would eat a cone of  
ice cream just like a person."*

Mr. Ponder was never married, but he had a dog for a companion. His dog went everywhere he went. Called him Buster. If you was to hit Mr. Ponder, I don't know what that dog would have done. He would also lay down on the street and eat a cone of ice cream--hold it between his paws, just like a person.

Back during the war, people couldn't travel much because of gas rationing, so things got kind of boring. Well, we talked Ponder into letting us use his old pick-up truck. At night after we would get through work in the freezing room, a lot of students helped, you know, we'd go on a picnic over at Pine Grove Lake. We'd carry us a watermelon and sandwiches, some drinks, and have a little picnic and go swimming. It got to us how we'd just have a big truck everytime we went.

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*Fred Lynn ran a livery stable in downtown Greer. He also grew cotton right in the center of town. His daughters, Inez Barnett, Eunice Stokes, and Edna Barnett gave us some information on their father's business and a look at another aspect of downtown Greer's past.*

Jeff: Could you tell us alittle about your father's livery stable?

Inez Barnett: W. F. Lynn, better known as Buddy, ran a livery stable in Greer from 1906 to 1921. His first stable was on North Main Street where the Banker's Trust building is. The second livery stable was below the ice plant. That building still stands today. The last livery stable was at 214 Randall Street, now occupied by Vincent Duncan Motor Co.

Mike: Just what was a livery stable?

Inez Barnett: It was a place where farmers or just



*Left to right, Fred Lynn, Tom Nobles, Buddy Lynn, Bill Howard, Eunice Lynn Stokes, and Lola Whitmire with Mr. Lynn's summer livery service in Saluda, N. C. around 1917.*

anybody would come and trade or buy horses and mules. My dad would travel to Knoxville, Tennessee and Missouri to buy mules and horses for the stables and ship them back on trains by the carloads.

Mike: Why do you think your father did such a good business?

Inez Barnett: Well, all the people in the rural areas farmed, and there weren't any tractors then, so everybody had to have mules or horses to plow their crops. Some farmers had a two horse crop and some a one horse crop. Mules and horses are like people: they would die or get disabled, so they would have to be replaced so the work could go on.

Men didn't always have to go to the stable to trade or swap. A good deal could be made anywhere. Mr. E. L. Hightower said he traded a mule to Dad for the first T-model Ford he ever owned. The deal took place at the Oneal cotton gin. I remember Dad going to Mr. John Rollins home in the Oneal Community to



trade mules. They had almost closed the deal when Mr. John said, "Wait a minute, Buddy, I think I hear Mary crying." He went in the house and found his wife crying. She didn't want him to trade the mule because it was gentle, and she and the girls felt safe in driving it. He told Dad he wouldn't trade the mule, so the deal was off.

Jeff: Did Mr. Lynn do anything else beside run the livery stable?

Inez Barnett: Yes, besides his wheeling and dealing, Dad was also a farmer. He would put in a crop of cotton, corn, and wheat. He would grow enough sugar cane to fill a fifty gallon barrel with molasses. He also grew potatoes and turnips to keep for the winter. This kept all eight of us children busy and out of mischief.

Mike: Did he plant a lot of cotton?

Inez Barnett: Yes, from his first stable down to the Methodist Church, he planted in cotton. He used compost from the stable as fertilizer. The cotton was high as my head and full of bolls from top to bottom.

*Inez Barnett  
looks over her  
father's cotton  
in the Greer  
city limits.*



*"We got so dirty picking cotton, we were  
ashamed for the town people to see us."*

Jeff: Did you pick cotton?

Inez Barnett: Of course, and it was hot, backbreaking work. The road was dirt and the cotton was dusty and black. We got so dirty picking it, we were ashamed for the town people to see us. He also planted some cotton in the city parking lot behind the old Leader Department Store building. Dad also had quite a herd of cattle. There weren't any supermarkets or dairies. The farmers had to keep milk cows for their children to have milk to drink.

Mike: When did your father die?

Inez Barnett: He died at 48 in 1921 of Lombard pneumonia and heart trouble. Over 3000 people from all over the Piedmont attended his funeral.

Mike: Was Mr. Lynn a very strict father?

Inez Barnett: Not particularly, but I remember one impression he made on me that stayed with me. I was trying to make words rhyme as a game. My brother and I were playing in the barnyard. I told my brother to say, "tell-smell." He said it, and I said, "Go to hell." Dad heard me. There was an apple tree nearby, and he reached up and got a limb off the tree. After that, I didn't use that word anymore.

Mike: What other stores were near the livery stable?

Inez Barnett: Next to the livery stable on North Main Street was Blaswell's Blacksmith Shop, which was real handy for Dad to have his shoeing done. On the corner where the Wayside Inn stood was a large hardware store. They sold everything from bolts to buggies.



*"If you don't treat your customers right,  
brother you might as well close  
your door."*



*Roy Collins, Sr.*

*Roy Collins opened the Bailes & Collins Department Store in 1928. Then the depression hit. But Mr. Collins survived it, and his store still serves the people of Greer. Mr. Collins describes those days when money was scarce and merchants had hearts.*

Jeff: Can you tell us what kind of stores were in Greer?

R. Collins: Well, I came to Greer in 1920 after I was married and opened up the Bailes & Collins Department Store in 1928. During the depression, Greer was small. Belks was there at that time, and so was Collins Department Store. But two or three years after I opened up, they left, and that didn't leave nothing much downtown but us. Also Smith and James; they are the oldest merchants in Greer, and they are still in business.

Jeff: What made you decide to open up a store in Greer?

R. Collins: Well, back then, George Bailes was a big merchant in Anderson, so one day he came to my house, and he made me a proposition. I didn't have that much money to open up the store, so he furnished me goods to open up the store in 1928.

Then the depression hit us. I didn't pay no attention to that, but went right on. Then in 1930, we moved to where we are now.

During the depression, Greer was small, but it was still a big cotton country. But since it was the depression, cotton was five cents a pound, and the farmers weren't making too much money off it. So I took it upon myself to give the farmers ten cents a pound. In return, they would spend it downtown. And I would store the cotton in my warehouse hoping the price would go up. It did; it went up to 11 cents a pound, so I made a profit.

Back then I had to do all the work myself. I had one man. I stayed on the floor and waited on people till 11:00 P.M. on Saturday. We had 5 or 6 women help out. See, Saturday was when everyone came to town then.

Mark: How much was your salary?

R. Collins: I don't mind telling you. I took out of the store \$27.50 a week.

Jeff: What kind of items did you sell?

R. Collins: Well, we carried a general line of merchandise. All the way through shoes, dry goods, cloth--carried cloth too. Anything you can think of, except groceries.

My wife worked right beside me all the way. We



would go up to New York two or three times a year and buy goods and ship them back down here by train.

Jeff: Were railroads pretty good then?

R. Collins: Back then railroads brought all our goods. They ran on a circuit then, and they brought our freight to us. There's no such thing as getting in a piece of freight by railroad these days.

Mark: Can you tell us how much it was to ship freight back then?

R. Collins: I'm just guessing, but where we put out about a dollar then now we would put out about four.

Mark: When did Greer start to prosper?

R. Collins: Well a few years after Belks left out, The Leader came over there, and around 1940, Graham Cash came and moved right next door to us. Since then, there hasn't been that many changes.

Jeff: Did mountain and country families come in and buy the whole family things like shoes, for instance?

R. Collins: They'd come down in September or October in the fall of the year, and they'd bring their family with them. They would either be in a wagon or buggy. Of course, there weren't many automobiles no further back than '29, you know. We got a lot of Glassy Rock Mountain people, and they would come down here and spend the day, and they would just buy what they wanted and take it back with them.

Mark: Did you have many families that traded regularly?

R. Collins: The families that started trading with us would bring in their children, and they would grow up and bring their children in there; so it was a family store.

Jeff: If there were younger kids in the family, would the older kids pass their old clothes down to them?

R. Collins: Yes, that's exactly right and a lot of them, you see, had pretty good size families back then. They may have five, six, seven, ten, children, and they would hold on to them and pass them down. Shoes were made good back then, and you could buy a good pair of shoes for \$1.98, and you could fit your boys for about \$2.98 with just about the best shoes you wanted.

Mark: Can you remember the prices you charged for slacks and shirts back then?

R. Collins: Well, I'll tell you, you fellows couldn't realize this, but then we had plain old wool shirts. You see, now they like them a little fancy, but back then they were just plain, and we sold them for as cheap as 25¢ a shirt. During the depression, that was in '29 through '32, I sold overalls for 98¢, and back then they were real cheap.

Mark: What would you do if a family came in and bought all their stuff, but couldn't afford to pay for it?

R. Collins: We always made it a rule, for instance, that if a family had their house burn down or they had sickness in the family, we always gave a 10% discount in a case like that. I did something else too. If a family came in there that had little boys or little girls, it didn't matter to me whether they were colored or white, they were all the same, if they couldn't possibly get a pair of shoes, and it was in the winter time, I would say, "Come here and let me fit you up with a pair of shoes." Sometimes they would come in barefoot in the middle of winter, and when they did that, I didn't get anything at all for it.

Jeff: What did you do if you caught someone shoplifting?

R. Collins: Well, I'll tell you. I don't think I ever in my career had anybody arrested for it. The way I did it, if I caught somebody, I would take them and give them a good talk and tell them how they would end up if they did this. You'd be surprised at the number of them that turned to the good. I would say, "If you needed this item bad enough to steal it, why didn't you tell me that you needed it, and I would have given it to you."

Jeff: What do you think made your business prosper?

R. Collins: Well, I'll tell you. The main thing in business is being nice to people and giving them service because if you don't treat your customers right, brother you just as well close your doors!

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Peaches:

We Really

Grow 'Em In Greer



Helam Parks, who has worked at Taylor's Peach Orchard for about 20 years, gets some peaches ready to go for the Sunday customers.

*Interviewed by: Connie Shaffer, Jimmy James,
John Rollins, Jeff Loftis, Michael
Gooding, Susan Hill
Photographs by: Perry Williams, Kathy
Johnston*

Peaches are plentiful in Greer, once called the "Peach Center of the World" by the Greer Chamber of Commerce. Bushels and baskets of peaches displayed at local produce stands and peach sheds are familiar sights in this area. And many of the local people spend the warm summer days picking peaches and working under the shade of the peach shed. In Greer, we grow peaches, pick peaches, pack peaches, ship peaches, sell peaches, and we also eat our share of peaches.

The men who began the peach business in Greer are gone now, but their sons and daughters are still here, and many of them are growing more and more peaches in this generous earth. We talked with some of these people to find out how their families began growing peaches, what the work used to be like, and how it has changed. Mr. Earl Taylor, the Dobson brothers, Mr. Palmer Dillard, and Sen. Verne Smith took time from their busy days to tell us about growing peaches--what the work has meant to them and to the people of this area. Mrs. Eunice Dobson was also nice enough to share with us some of her favorite recipes using peaches.

Earl Taylor, a prominent peach grower in Greer, told us how he got his start in the peach business and said the peach field is still a promising pursuit for a hard worker.

Jimmy: How long have you been in the peach business?

Mr. Taylor: Well, I've been in the peach business for myself ever since I was 17 years old. My father bought the land for me. Of course, I paid for it. I couldn't get a deed for the property until I got to be 21.

We started with the small orchard, 2,000 trees. We planted the trees. We grew some of them ourselves. Then we planted 'em, and then we added more trees of different varieties as they came along. Back when I was first growing, we started out with the ole Greenborough and the Mayflower, then the Carmen. Now those things are out of date. They've improved.

You've got to have a beautiful colored peach. The ole original Georgia Bell is a white meated peach. It's a beautiful peach if you let it get ripe. The Red Haven is a beautiful thing. So many of 'em. We've got a world of 'em. You grow beautiful fruit and you enjoy seeing it grow. There's just something about it that you love to do. It's very healthful work if you watch it.

Jimmy: What made you decide to go into the peach business?

Mr. Taylor: Well, I was raised in a peach orchard. My father planted the first trees in this area in eighteen and ninty-eight. His first planting was five acres. I was raised as a small boy raising peaches. During the summer we hauled peaches from here to Greenville in wagons and sold 'em on Main Street. You can imagine a wagon with a horse pulling it selling peaches on the corner of Washington or McBee Avenue. That's the way we sold peaches back in those days.

Susan: Did you ever ship any up north to be sold?

Mr. Taylor: Well, we did in 1920. When my orchard got to bearing, we started shipping peaches. Of course, that's many years ago.

Now, some of your first orchards were planted back in the early '20's: in 1918, or a little before that, J. D. Smith orchard and W. W. Burgess orchard; then my daddy had one. I worked as a small boy planting the J. D. Smith orchard when we weren't in school. Peach industry started right in this area, the piedmont section, and it started right here in Greer.

Jimmy: What makes this area good for growing peaches?

Mr. Taylor: Well, we have a soil here that is different from what it is down in Columbia; we have a clay soil. The peaches have a much better flavor than they do around in the other areas. I don't know what it is, but it's in the soil.



Mr. Earl Taylor, right, looks over his peaches with the peach inspector.

Jimmy: How do you think the peach industry has effected Greer?

Mr. Taylor: I don't know . . . We've got textiles, and we've got to have it all. It all helps out. We had the Peach Festival. Had a Peach Queen. To tell you the truth, I hated to see it go because we got national publicity from that. That thing went all over the country. The New York paper published Greer. We had Greer right on the map. We were really going places. At that time of the year, the growers couldn't give as much time to it because of plantin', and the merchants felt like they were being used. But we brought worlds of people to Greer from all over the country. It was really gettin' to be the talk of the town. They'd know us from the National Peach Council. We were really publicizing Greer.



Jimmy: What do you think the future of peach growing in this area is?

Mr. Taylor: I think . . . I'm 77 . . . my son's in the peach business . . . You're going to have to have quality. Might as well make up their mind. They're

going to have the very top. You've got to do it because you're going to compete with people that will do it. We used to grow good stuff. We'd grow extra peaches. We grow real good peaches now, but the labor is something you've got to take in consideration. It's not as good as it used to be.

“The ones that do the job are going
to make money and stay in business.”

I just don't know what the future is going to be. The ones that do the job are going to make money and stay in business. The fellow that thinks he can get by doing it half way is not going to. Somebody's going to do it. You can ride around Spartanburg and all out from Greer, and you can see a lot of young trees being planted.

Jimmy: What qualities would a person have to have to become a successful peach grower?

Mr. Taylor: He'd have to have a good orchard site and a good location for his fruit stand and his packin' shed. You really ought to have the training.

Jimmy: What kind of training did you have?

Mr. Taylor: I didn't have any. I just had to dig it all out. My father set me to work when I was driving that ole horse over to Greenville to sell when I was 14 years old. You can imagine what I went through. I brought my daddy back a hundred something dollars, and that was money back in those days. They sold right off the back of the wagon. Then we had a truck and we'd haul them to Asheville, Hendersonville. We didn't have any paved roads then. We had to stop at every creek and fill the radiator up with water.

Jimmy: What sort of hardships do you face as a peach grower?

Mr. Taylor: Oh, my Lord. Man you have hail, freezes, go two years without a crop sometimes. You've got to plan for those. It's something to have a beautiful crop of peaches that you've spent so much time on and have a hail storm come and in five minutes it's ruined.

Jimmy: Would you say weather is your biggest problem?

Mr. Taylor: Weather and labor. You can have a beautiful crop of peaches, and a man can go out there and ruin it picking it green. The housewife isn't going to buy that fruit if it is green.

Jimmy: Do you think this is going to be a good year?

Mr. Taylor: It stands to be a good year because we've had a lot of cold weather that has killed a lot of insects. I've had trees killed twenty feet apart. One is completely killed and another has a full crop. The air hits this mountain over here and does crazy things.

**"Peach growers believe in the All Mighty.
Plenty of 'em have kneeled down in
that peach orchard...."**

Jimmy: Have you had any completely disastrous seasons?

Mr. Taylor: Yea, plenty of 'em. Price wise, 10¢ a bushel, just givin' 'em away. You'll have problems in life anyway you go. There is something about peach growing and farming--you've got to depend on your Maker more than anyone else. Peachgrowers believe in the All Mighty. Plenty of 'em have kneeled down in that peach orchard and talked to Him when things got rough. I think you can live closer to Him cause you're depending so much on Him. You'll talk to Him if you're in that kind of business. It's easy to live close to Him 'cause you can see where it all comes from.

Jimmy: What parts of your work do you enjoy?

Mr. Taylor: When you have a good year and your sales have been real good. You've worked awful hard and you take a week off to go to the beach. You know the market's been good, and you've paid all your bills and made some money. That's the best part about it.

Jimmy: Have you had any interesting experiences?

"I just enjoy working."

Mr. Taylor: We've had people to buy a load, and their checks would bounce. Then we've had people who've thought they could go out and gather the peaches themselves without paying. I take the fruit away from 'em and tell 'em if they can't pay for 'em, I'll give 'em some peaches enough to can.

I've had people take peaches and then mail me a check a month or so later. I've had ladies say, "How do you know I'm going to come by and pay you?" Well, I said, "I don't exactly know that, but I know one thing. Everytime you open a can of those peaches next winter, you're going to say, 'I didn't pay that man for these peaches,' and you're not going to digest them very well."

Jimmy: After all these years of growing peaches, do you still enjoy the work?

Mr. Taylor: Yea, I can say I do. The doctors are saying I have to quit. I can't . . . I used to pick peaches myself. They ask me why I want to come out there. I say I just enjoy working. I've worked with the crews.

I'm 77 years old. The doctors say, "You've been around here long enough, haven't ya?"

I say, "No sir!"



A horse drawn spraying machine in the Smith orchard before 1920

The Dobsons are one of the most respected families in Greer. Leonard and Clyde Dobson told us how they got started in peaches, just one of their many interests.

Around 1925, our father and Uncle J. B. Dobson went into a partnership. When it was first started, there were about a few hundred trees. Then we gradually added some as we grew. Now we have about two hundred acres. We thought about planting peaches for some time. There wasn't much to do in the summertime, so we started a crop.

We used to go with the driver down one street after another around the mill village in Greenville to sell peaches. They would let you peddle from house to house. Once we used to carry the peaches to Greenville for fifty cents a bushel.

We still sell some peaches here, but ship out most of them. Most of what we are growing goes up to Asheville. We grow a special breed of peaches for Gerber Baby Food Company. You see, the plum peaches they make baby food of, we can't even sell them locally. But you can sell them to some folks who have learned to can them. We can them for ourselves and they are very good.

We had about one hundred pickers at a time to pick the Albertas, the little plum peaches. Labor goes up all the time. A couple of years ago it was a dollar an hour, and now it's \$1.80. At the first of January, it'll be two dollars.

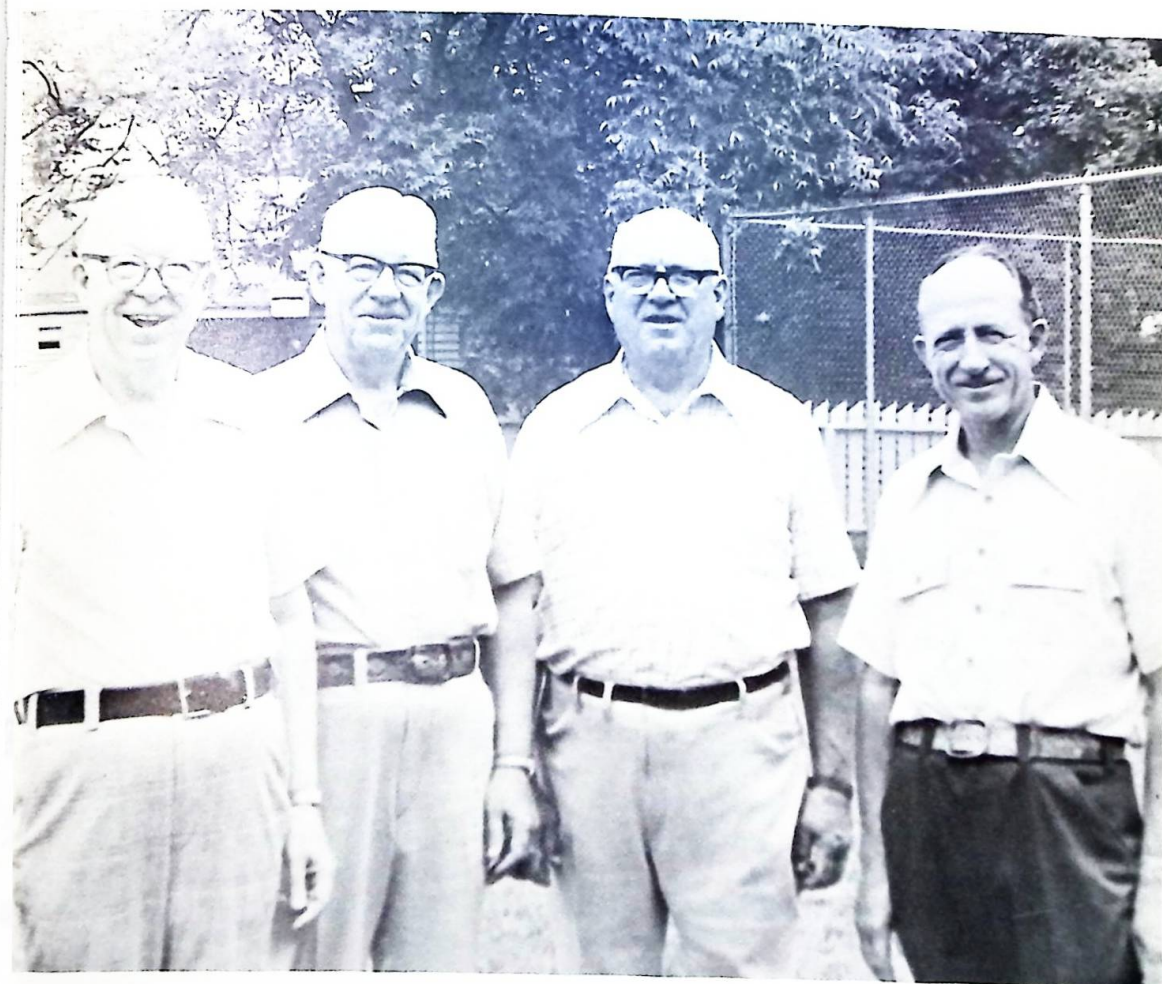
The packing operation has changed. It cost a lot more than it did. Well probably everything has doubled or tripled in the last couple of years.

You learn to take what comes. Our biggest problem is when freezes kill the blooms. It kills them in the bloom when they are in the tender stage, little

ole blossom, frost gets it, freezes it, and kills it off. Sometimes you can have a total freeze out. That's the worst.

I've got to stay in the business now. Nobody else would take my place, I can't even retire.

"Once we used to carry the peaches to Greenville for fifty cents a bushel."



The Dobson brothers: Lawrence, Leonard, Roy and Clyde . . . from a few hundred trees to 200 acres.


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*Mr. Palmer Dillard who has been growing peaches since 1926 told us how the peach industry has changed in the past fifty years.*



*Mr. Palmer Dillard looks over some peaches in his orchard.*

Jeff: When did you start growing peaches?

Mr. Dillard: Let's see, I think it was--1926 was the first year we had a crop. The trees were set about 1923, I believe it was. My father planted the orchard while I was in school at Clemson. About a year later, in 1929, he passed away. I quit then and never did go back to school. So I have been in peaches since that time.

Jimmy: What makes growing peaches enjoyable work?

Mr. Dillard: Well, I've always worked, and I do like

to handle peaches. In my early school days, we grew a lot of cotton. I didn't like cotton. The boll weevil came along, and I think my father foresaw what might happen to cotton, so he planted these peaches. And another thing that caused me to like peach growing--when I was about 12 or 14 years old, I worked for Mr. Verne Smith (Senator Smith's father) during the summer--helped him with his peaches, and it was a lot of fun. So I like it.

Connie: How much did you make picking peaches?

Mr. Dillard: 50 to 75 cents a day.

"We packed the first crop we had in 1926 ...

and hauled them to the railroad siding...

in two horse wagons."

Jeff: Do you know where the first peach orchard was and who owned it?

Mr. Dillard: I would say it was on Burgess Hill. The first person that I remember that shipped any peaches from Greer was Mr. Verne Smith. Mr. Smith was one of the best men I have ever known. He was good to the people who worked for him, and everybody liked him. And he had a good reputation as a speaker, going around to meetings (peach meetings.) We had a lot of meetings trying to find out what we needed to know about peaches. We packed the first crop we had in 1926 in an old shed and hauled them to the railroad siding right down here below this place in two horse wagons. At that time we worked the orchard ourselves. By 1928 we got the first truck down there.

Jeff: Has the peach business changed any over the years?

Mr. Dillard: Oh yes. Well there is such a big change in the varieties and the way you cultivate them. In fact, just about quit cultivating peaches any more; you just spray to kill the weeds. And packing is altogether different. This has changed considerably within the last five or six years. The machinery that we had five or six years ago, today



would just be considered junk for they have changed so. We have sold everything out that anybody would buy, and the rest of it is waiting for the junk man to look it over.

Jeff: Did you ever have a completely disastrous season?

Mr. Dillard: We have had them price wise--when you have spent all your money growing a crop and then they wouldn't bring enough to pay freight for the crop.

Jeff: What kind of peaches do you grow?

Mr. Dillard: We started out growing Albertas and Georgia Belles. Now we don't grow any Albertas, but we do have a few Georgia Belles. We have 17 varieties in the orchards. We set them that way because we try to sell most of our peaches locally, packing them fresh to people who come out to buy a few at a time. Probably pack some this year only if we have more than we can sell locally.

“...he never would plant until  
the wild blackberries bloomed.”

Jeff: Do you have any superstitions about weather?

Mr. Dillard: We used to have a colored man that would help us a good many years ago--a good cotton farmer. He and his boys used to help with the orchards when they could, and he was superstitious about planting his cotton. He said that he never would plant any until wild blackberries bloomed. And he always had good crops. And he said after they'd bloomed, he'd never have any more frost that would kill the cotton, vegetables, or peaches. So I found that to be true in my observations in the last good many years.

*Mr. Dillard told us about some of his experiences as a young boy working with peaches.*

During the first World War, the Southern Railroad added another track down here; they had a double



track railroad. They were doing that work when I was just a kid. And Camp Sevier was a big Army camp up here, and they had a long side track. One day they stopped a train load of soldiers on the track, and they sat there for hours. And I remember that several came to the peach trees; they would get a hatful of peaches and pitch them down the bank to where the train was. Then the soldiers would jump off and scramble for them.

Just a year after that, around 1918, we had a T-Model Ford car. I'd haul peaches to Greenville to sell them. About 10 or 12 bushels was all that you could take then. I would take the back seat out and put the peaches in. So early one morning, I was going through Camp Sevier--it went right through the Greer-Greenville highway. They had M. P.'s directing the traffic. The Army had a lot of mules and wagons then. There was an officer and he told one of the M. P.'s to pull me over--he saw those peaches piled in the back of that T-Model. So he came over to me and said, "I want to buy all those peaches." Well, he got in the front seat of the car. I drove across the railroad tracks to what must have been a mess



hall, and he went into this place, and, a few minutes later, some soldiers came out with big garbage cans. They just picked the peaches up and loaded them in.

Then he came out and said, "I have some visitors and they would like to ride over part of the camp. Will you take them?"

"Well, the backseat is out. I left it home."

And he said, "I'll remedy that." So he went in and got some Army blankets and folded them up to sit on. He put two men in the back, and he got in front with me--told me where to go. We rode around the camp for about two hours, and before I knew it, I was having dinner with them.

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*Senator Verne Smith is the son of one of the first peach growers in the Greer area. He talked with us about his father and the business which has been very beneficial to this area.*



*Senator Verne Smith*

Mr. Smith: Daddy set this peach orchard. The first commercial peach orchard in the upper part of the state was right here on this hill. He set his first 20 acres out in 1898.

Daddy died, and there were five children and my mother, and we lost what was in the bank. Then we owed money because we'd had some bad peach years.

You know, you'd grow peaches, and you'd ship them up north, and you wouldn't know what you were going to get for them till about a month or so later. And it's a perishable thing. You might think you were going to get so much, and then you get your returns. They might claim they found something wrong with them, you know, and cut the price maybe half or more. We have shipped them up there and they wouldn't sell at all; we were giving peaches to orphanages in Washington and New York and to the Salvation Army because they couldn't sell them--after we'd worked and grown them and picked them and packed them and paid the freight.

When I was a boy, all these peaches we packed to ship north, we always put 'em on refrigerator cars down there at the Southern Depot. Now they're all moved by truck.

Staff: How did you get your peaches from the fields to the market?

Mr. Smith: We worked 100 to 150 hands in the summer-time to pick and pack and haul the peaches to the box cars. We brushed 'em and packed 'em. I've got a painting in yonder my daddy sent to Woodrow Wilson in 1914 or 15 and we got a thank you note from him.

Staff: What kind of peaches did you grow?

Mr. Smith: Albertas, mainly. We started with the Mayflower. It was the first one; then Redbirds, and ole Redbird was about like rubber, and Georgia Bells. We had an orchard in Georgia, too. I'd go down there every summer. When I was 16 I went down there and ran the packing house and supervised over 100 people. We sold that orchard when I was in the army.

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*Mrs. Eunice Dobson*

*We asked Mrs. Eunice Dobson to share some of her recipes for cooking with peaches with us. Mrs. Dobson was raised on a farm, and then she married Leonard Dobson, so there have always been plenty of peaches in her kitchen.*

Connie: How do you grow peaches so big?

Mrs. Dobson: Those are hand picked. This is the peach that we sell to Gerber's Baby Food. It is also the Clingstone peach. I thought you'd like to see one. The hard job with these peaches comes when you cut them away from the seeds. You have to have a knack for it.

Connie: What recipes for peaches have you been handed down through the years?

Mrs. Dobson: Well, not too many have been handed down, but everybody kids the Dobsons, and they say that when they come, we can't serve anything but peach ice cream.

Connie: How do you make peach ice cream?

Mrs. Dobson: I have a freezer, just a hand-turner. We

like it so well that we have a two-gallon churn. That used to be a regular Sunday afternoon chore for us. We would get this big ole churn, and you turn it by hand.

I have several recipies for peach ice cream, but I like my own better. I use about a quart and a half of mashed peaches. Now they are dead ripe. I use the Georgia Bells or a Freestone peach. And I like mine to be ripe enough so that you can catch the little skin and rip it off just like a banana. Then I mash them up. I usually put mine in the blender and add my sugar to that. I would add about 2½ cups of sugar to 3 cups of peaches, depending on how sweet you want it. Then I fill the can with whole milk. I add about ¼ teaspoon of salt. Now that salt sort of takes away from the real sweetee sweet. Just be careful and don't put too much salt. I put a piece of wax paper on top of my churn, and then I put the lid down and clip that off just around the edges. Then I fill the churn with the salt and ice. And that is the most delicious ice cream.

We used to dry peaches, and that is quite a job. We used tables and put white cloth down. We would get peaches that were not quite ripe and cut them in small pieces and place them on these tables with the skin side down. Then we would take a tall object and put it in the middle and put mosquito net over the top of them to keep the flies and insects off. If it was real hot during the summer, it would take about 3 or 4 days for them to dry. But you had to be very careful if a cloud was coming up because you had to get the peaches up and in the house before it rained on them.

But Grandpa Dobson had another rig. He had pieces of metal (just tin) made into the shape of a door and on each side, there was handle. Then he had another door effect made; it was on hinges with screen wire. When it was raised, you could place all of your fruit on it and the screen wire would keep flies and anything off of them. You could put that out on boxes in the sun. If a cloud was coming, you could bring the screen into the garage and stack them up.

Along time ago when I was a child, my mother would dry peaches out on tables covered with white



cloth. She would take these peaches, and she would cook them and make pies out of them, and it would be depending on the weather whether you had bright peaches or not. If it didn't rain and peaches dried in 3 or 4 days, you had pretty clear peaches just like you would have in the store. We would stew those peaches and add sugar to them, and she would make what you call half-moon pies. You take your pastry and roll it out in a circle and put cooked peaches which have been sweetened on one half of it, and then take the other side and flip it over and secure the edge real good. Then you'd put it in an iron skillet on low heat with just a little shortening. Brown it on one side and then flip it on the other side.

And she would make what we call custards. Take the eggs and separate them and make the meringue out of the whites. Then just beat the yolks up with the fruit and put it in the pie shell. Bake it, and, just before it is quite done, put your meringue on top and let it brown.

The only recipe I know for peach preserves and peach pickles that was handed down to me was to take your peaches and put your sugar over them. Usually it is 2 cups of fruit to 1 cup of sugar. You peel your peaches in late afternoon and let them soak overnight with that sugar over them. The next morning you take the peaches and put all of it on and cook your peaches for 5 or 10 minutes until your peaches get tender. Then lift your peaches out and cook your syrup until it spins a thread and put the peaches back in it and let it simmer or boil for about 5 or 10 minutes. Then you put them in your hot sterilizes jars.

Now you can do your peach pickles that way. Peel them and put your sugar over them and let them stand overnight. The next day you just lift your raw peaches out and take that syrup with the vinegar and bring it to a boil. Then add your peaches and cook them until they are not quite tender cause if you let them cook too long, they will mush on you. I always tie my peaches in a little white cloth, and then, I lift them out, and I never let the peach spice bag go back in unless I have stuck a clove in one of the peaches. It seems like it gets too much of the spice flavor.

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