

AU 679

Interviewee: McCarty, William Bonner (W. B.), Sr.

Interviewer: McCarty, William Bonner (Bill), Jr.

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W. B. McCARTY, JR.'S INTERVIEW WITH W. B. McCARTY, SR. - APRIL 3, 1962

This is April 3, 1962. We're sitting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. B. McCarty, 1739 St. Ann Street, Jackson, Mississippi. And we'd like to interview Mr. W. B. McCarty at this time. Mrs. McCarty is also with us.

Jr. - Dad, who were you named after?

Sr. - I was named after my father who was named William Henry and my graddaddy McGee was named Henry Bonner McGee, and I was named after my dad William and Bonner after my grandfather McGee.

Jr. - That's fine. Who were the Bonners? Do you know?

Sr. - I don't know. They were my mother's family.

Jr. - From your mother's side there naturally being a McGee.

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - How old are you now?

Sr. - 70 years old. I was 70 October 3, last October.

Jr. - What year were you born?

Sr. - 1891.

Jr. - Where were you born?

Sr. - Born in Hemingway, MS in the old house up there my grandfather built in 1840

Jr. - Is the old home still standing?

Sr. - Yes it's still standing.

Jr. - Do you know who lives in the home now?

Sr. - Well the Ruscos I think, that's who my father sold it to.

Jr. - Who is that, Hub Rusco?

Sr. - That's right. His folks, he's dead.

Jr. - Hub Rusco is dead and his people are living there. What's Hemingway near?

Sr. - Hemingway is 12 miles from Greenwood and 12 miles from Carrollton and 8 miles north of Black Hawk, MS.

Jr. - In Carroll County?

Sr. - In Carroll County. Eight miles from that other place over there where we used to go where the old that old noted place where Greenwood LeFlore moved to after the Dancing Rabbit Treaty. The old carriage used to be at the house. It has burned now. Mother you've been there, I forget the name of it. It's between Carrollton and Greenwood. (Malmason)

Jr. - You say your grandfather built that home?

Sr. - That's right.

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Jr. - Well I was over last week in Alabama down below Demopolis there about 28 miles from Demopolis and all of the old homes are made out of heart pine and none of them had any paint on them. Do you recall whether or not your old home place had any paint on it?

Sr. - Oh yes it was painted.

Jr. - It was painted. These old homes over there were built around 1830 - they still are standing with no paint on them.

Sr. - About 100' long, had 2 brick chimneys on the east side and the west side, dining room, you went through the porch and out to the dining room - back of that was the kitchen where the flies couldn't get in. When I was a little boy why we had a negro boy to sit in the corner and pull the fan way up over the table to shoo the flies off while we ate.

Jr. - You say your grandfather built this house - let me get that year again.

Sr. - About 1840.

Jr. - 1840. Was your grandfather farming then?

Sr. - Yes, he came from Virginia in 1830 to raise cotton.

Jr. - Well about how many acres did he have around the old home place?

Sr. - He had about four or five thousand acres, several hundred slaves.

Jr. - Did you know any of your grandparents?

Sr. - Only my grandparents on my mother's side, the McGees, I knew them.

Jr. - Your mother's parents.

Sr. - My grandfather McCarty was killed in 1863 during the Civil War. My father was about 8 or 9 years old, something like that, about 8 years old.

Jr. - You say you did know your mother's father. What was his name?

Sr. - Henry Bonner McGee.

Jr. - Henry Bonner McGee. Do you know where he was born?

Sr. - He was born between Macon, GA and Augusta, GA. And he came over here the year the stars fell which was 1832. His father brought him to Goodman, MS.

Jr. - Do you know the year that he was born approximately?

Sr. - 1817, the year Miss. was admitted to the Union.

Jr. - And he was born in Georgia?

Sr. - Georgia.

Jr. - Do you know the County?

Sr. - No but close to Crawfordville, GA. That's all I know. He was a cousin of Alexander H. Stephens (Stevens) who was Vice President of the Confederacy.

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Jr. - Do you know Mr. McGee's occupation?

Sr. - He was a farmer.

Jr. - A farmer where?

Sr. - Well right after the Civil War, he bought the old Johnson place starting at Tchula going east about 5,000 acres.

Jr. - And his old home was on Pine Grove Plantation?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - The old home place that burned a few years ago?

Sr. - It was built in 1817. It had copper gutters and had plates on the bottom of the gutters 1817 - big old two story white house with the dining room and kitchen way out in the back where they could eat without flies.

Jr. - Well now that home was replaced by the one that Henry McGee built and it's already burned now.

Sr. - By his father built, yes his father - it burned and then his father built one and it burned.

Jr. - Do you know where Mr. McGee is buried now?

Sr. - Buried in Acona, MS - Acona Cemetery.

Jr. - Acona.

Sr. - I believe we tried to find his grave one time, you and I stopped and went in this graveyard. I don't think we found it. No that was his father that was buried there down close to

Jr. - Black Hawk?

Sr. - Between Pickens and Lexington over there close to Goodman - that old cemetery - was his father (Franklin Cemetery)

Jr. - Do you know about how old he was when he died?

Sr. - Grandfather McGee?

Jr. - Yes sir.

Sr. - He was about 93.

Jr. - A very old man. Do you remember your grandmother, Mrs. McGee?

Sr. - Yes.

Jr. - Tell me what you know about her. Do you know where she was born?

Sr. - No I don't know where she was born.

Jr. - Do you know where she's buried now?

Sr. - Yes, she's buried in the Acona Cemetery.

Jr. - Same side by side

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Sr. - Yes, the marble monuments are still there.

Jr. - Well do you know about when she died, about what year that was?

Sr. - Oh she died about 1904, '05.

Jr. - Did she die after your grandfather McGee died?

Sr. - No she died before. Grandfather McGee died about 1908, '09. It's in the Bible there.

Jr. - Well so much for your grandparents McGees. Now let's talk about your grandfather on your father's side who would be McCarty. You say you did not know grandfather McCarty?

Sr. - No because he died in 1863.

Jr. - During the War?

Sr. - Yes.

Jr. - All right sir. You've already stated that he came from Virginia.

Sr. - Virginia. Grandfather McCarty came from Virginia.

Jr. - Do you know what county or what place in Virginia?

Sr. - No.

Jr. - And he was the farmer that we've already talked about?

Sr. - That's right, he was a cotton raiser.

Jr. - Did you know his wife, your grandmother McCarty?

Sr. - No, no.

Jr. - Do you know where she came from?

Sr. - No I didn't.

Jr. - Do you know where she's buried?

Sr. - Oh you're talking about my grandfather McCarty's wife?

Jr. - Yes sir.

Sr. - Oh she's buried out there in New Hope Cemetery right out of Hemingway. My grandfather was too but the tombstones that my father bought later laid around out there in the cemetery because they couldn't locate the graves.

Jr. - Well so much for your grandparents. I recall you telling me years ago about your grandfather, when your father was a boy right after his father was killed, that the slaves were taken by a man who was the overseer and sold down the river.

Sr. - Yes he left a will to a Mr. Mallory as administrator of the estate.

Jr. - That's before he went to the War now is that right? Evidently because

Sr. - When he died Mr. Mallory took the slaves and took the cotton on the wagons to Greenwood and then to Natchez and New Orleans, somewhere and sold them, four or five

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hundred bales of cotton, and then he came back and he got three-four hundred slaves and he took them to New Orleans and he was going to sell them and he never returned and the family, during the days of reconstruction all that was left them was 160 acres - my father was the oldest of the four children, his two brothers and a sister

Jr. - Who were they?

Sr. - Annie, Mrs. Dr. Holman

Jr. - Annie McCarty Holman?

Sr. - That's right. And Uncle John McCarty and Uncle Ben McCarty, Aunt Lela's husband.

Jr. - Aunt Lela's husband was Ben McCarty?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - Well now let me be sure that I recall, you say your grandfather McGee was the one that was killed during the War?

Sr. - No my grandfather McCarty was killed during the War.

Jr. - All right well now if he was killed during the War, he must have drafted a will before he went to War which made Mallory the executor.

Sr. - That's what they say. Mr. Mallory was the executor of his estate. That's what the old timers used to say up in Carroll County.

Jr. - Well now if he died in 1863 Mallory must have made off with those slaves that next year, the confederacy fell about 1864, is that right?

Sr. - In 1865.

Jr. - In other words, he sold the slaves before the confederacy fell and before the slaves were freed, he took them away.

Sr. - Yes. He sold the cotton first, you see. Cotton was worth \$1.00 a pound then, worth \$500 a bale, he sold it to England. England bought it. MDAH

Jr. - Of course after Mr. Mallory took the slaves and sold them that left no one to look after the farm land, you say approximately 5,000 acres?

Sr. - Four or five thousand acres.

Jr. - Four or five thousand acres - all that was hill land then, is that right? NOTICE  
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Sr. - Yes, hill and creek bottom land.

Jr. - Well now then after your grandfather McCarty died and left your dad the oldest of four children, do you recall how old he was, your daddy?

Sr. - He was about 8 or 9 years old.

Jr. - Eight or nine. And do you recall how old the youngest brother was, his youngest?

Sr. - Uncle Ben was the youngest. He must have been two or three.

Jr. - So your dad was eight then. What happened to him, do you recall after the War there, being 8 years old, the oldest of four children, what did he do?

Sr. - Well he lived in the old house and he said the first job he ever had was rolling sawdust at \$5.00 a month in a wheelbarrow.

Jr. - Well who looked after him, being 8 years old, and those other three children?

Sr. - I don't know. I guess some of the neighbors.

Jr. - You think some of the neighbors possibly moved in and looked after them. Well that was pretty rough going. Did he farm that land after he got up in years and old enough to farm?

Sr. - Yes, he had a few tenant farmers and he went into the mercantile business. He had a general store in Hemingway.

Jr. - Where, right there at Hemingway?

Sr. - Yes right across the road from the old house.

Jr. - Any remains of that old store left?

Sr. - Last time I was there it was, yes.

Jr. - Do you remember the name of the store?

Sr. - Just W. H. McCarty.

Jr. - W. H. McCarty General Store?

Sr. - Yes.

Jr. - Now let me ask you just a little bit about your mother. What was her name?

Sr. - Sally McGee. He married her in 1889.

Jr. - Do you remember where in Tchula?

Sr. - Yes they married right near Tchula at the old plantation house.

Jr. - Do you recall the date of her birth? You've written November 24, 1865.

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - And she was born near Tchula on the plantation.

Sr. - She was born on the place, that's right.

Jr. - November 24, 1865. Now do you remember where she is buried?

Sr. - My mother's buried in Jackson in Cedar Lawn Cemetery.

Jr. - Cedar Lawn Cemetery on West Capitol Street.

Sr. - Father and mother both.

Jr. - That's right. You have a note here that she died in 1909 in Jackson.

Sr. - My mother, that's correct. She was living on McTyere Street. She was about 44 years old when she died.

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Jr. - About 44 years old when she died and today she would be 97 years old. She was born in 1865. Now do you recall the cause of her death? You've got cancer.

Sr. - Yes, I think cancer.

Jr. - Cancer was the cause. She gave birth to five children.

Sr. - She had five, the first one was named William Henry

Jr. - Well hold up on those names just a minute

Sr. - The first one died

Jr. - What denomination was she?

Sr. - She was a Methodist first but when she moved to Hemingway she belonged to the Christian Church.

Jr. - She was married on February 12, 1889 near Tchula. Did she teach school before she married?

Sr. - I don't think so.

Jr. - Well there is a school house between Pickens and Lexington that I thought Joe told me she taught in.

Sr. - She went to school there.

Jr. - She went there

Sr. - That's where the DAR was founded. *[Order of The Eastern Star] ERW*

Jr. - Where they were founded, right there in that old two story brick school house?

Sr. - Yes, it's still standing - the old building is there.

Jr. - Well Joe told me that she taught school there.

Sr. - No she went to school there.

Jr. - Just went to school and didn't teach there. Your mother gave birth to five children. The first born child died.

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - What was his name?

Sr. - His name was William Henry.

Jr. - William Henry. And he died at five weeks due possibly to a childhood disease.

Sr. - I guess so.

Jr. - Now the name of your father was William Henry McCarty?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - And he was born on March 12, 1853 which we obtained from the Bible and he was buried in 1910 in Jackson on West Capitol in the Cedar Lawn Cemetery.

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Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - He was a merchant the greater part of his life as well as a farmer, is that right?

Sr. - Well he was a merchant. He just had a few families there that had gardens, you know, and raised crops like sweet potatoes, corn, etc.

Jr. - He would be 109 years old if he was living right now.

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - What was the cause of his death? Was it Brights Disease?

Sr. - That's right, Brights Disease.

Jr. - What is that? Disease of the liver, kidneys?

Sr. - Kidneys.

Jr. - Died with a kidney disease called Brights Disease. What denomination was he?

Sr. - He belonged to the Christian Church.

Jr. - He was born in the Christian Church?

Sr. - I guess so.

Jr. - Do you know if he was a member of another denomination?

Sr. - No.

Jr. - I wondered if you would trace his business life for me after he left the farm there in Hemingway.

Sr. - He left the general store.

Jr. - Alright after he left his store there. Do you know about when and where he went after he left Hemingway?

Sr. - Well as we were growing up he went up to Oxford, MS to look over that and he came to Jackson to see about moving where we could go to college and he decided on Jackson and we moved here in 1905.

Jr. - 1905 moved to Jackson.

Sr. - The summer of 1905.

Jr. - Alright but now you didn't move from Hemingway to Oxford did you?

Sr. - No we never did go to Oxford.

Jr. - He just went to Oxford and made a visit?

Sr. - To look it over.

Jr. - I recall you telling me about a store he had at Rising Sun, MS on the banks of the Yazoo River.

Sr. - Well that was before he married.

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Jr. - I'm trying to trace his stores from his first Hemingway general store.

Sr. - No he started at Rising Sun first.

Jr. - Started at Rising Sun?

Sr. - Yes after he left Hemingway.

Jr. - Now Rising Sun is on the banks of the Yazoo River there just south of Greenwood?

Sr. - Yes south of Greenwood between Sidon and Greenwood. A general store.

Jr. - Tell me what you know about that store and about the incident of the free ferry and the situation before he was married.

Sr. - Well some fellow put in a ferry there. It used to be a free ferry and somebody bought it and he charged customers to come over. He had several people working for him in the store, bookkeepers, and he would ride down to Tchula to visit my mother on horseback, and they had a shooting scrape in there and seems to me like they shot his head bookkeepers or something.

Jr. - Now I recall that he was shot also and that he, the story as I remember it years ago, he bought this ferry in competition. He ordered a ferry which he told the ferry operator he was going to put in and operate a free ferry again so they wouldn't have to pay to cross the river, that there was a lot of business on the west bank of the Yazoo there that came to his store and it would pay him to have a free ferry.

Sr. - That's right and that's what the fellow shot him about.

Jr. - So he did order this free ferry, ordered the ferry, and had it operating and that caused this shooting?

Sr. - That's right. Then he went from there on back to Hemingway after he married.

Jr. - Let me ask you just a little bit about that shooting scrape. As I recall, from earlier days, you told me that he was in the office of the store and that this fellow came in. Do you remember the fellow's name?

Sr. - No I don't Bill.

Jr. - The man that did the shooting, that had the ferry, he brought several of his gang in there and they shot up nearly every clerk in the store. Is that right?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - And I recall he had approximately about eight clerks at that time.

Sr. - Seven, yes.

Jr. - And that your daddy went to his desk to get his pistol and while he was reaching in the drawer this fellow shot him through the body and through both arms, is that right?

Sr. - I believe it was.

Jr. - And that he jumped out of the window and ran through the field and he was shot again with a rifle and the bullet went through both legs. You told me that you remember seeing the scars on him.

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Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - Is that the Rising Sun ferry incident?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - He was going with your mother prior to this shooting. Was he not?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - And after the shooting he managed to get back to Tchula and she nursed him while he was recuperating?

Sr. - I don't know about that. But I know that they married and they moved to Hemingway and he took over the store there.

Jr. - Do you know how your daddy met your mother?

Sr. - No I don't Bill.

Jr. - Your parents moved to Jackson in 1905. You say that he scouted Oxford first but moved to Jackson. What really made him move to Jackson and not Oxford?

Sr. - He thought that there were better opportunities in Jackson than there were in Oxford and he made a wise decision.

Jr. - He sure did. He picked the best town. Well, having enough foresight to move to Jackson rather than Oxford, did he sell his store at Hemingway?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - Do you recall who bought it?

Sr. - The Ruscos, two fellows named Rusco - Walter and John Rusco.

Jr. - Walter and John, that must be Hub's kinfolk?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - Well now when your daddy came to Jackson in 1905, he sold his store, he had a little cash, what did he do with his cash when he came to Jackson?

Sr. - Well he bought the home on McTyere at the end of the block and he bought some property over there where we've got the McCarty Subdivision.

Jr. - He bought some property by the Illinois Central Railroad which you made into the McCarty Subdivision, that's presently negro property.

Sr. - He bought that property on Adelle Street where the old Jackson Mercantile building was built.

Jr. - That's on the corner of Adelle and Grayson which is now North Lamar.

Sr. - Yes. He had some other property back in there and he sold it all. He had some money in 1907. He and Mr. Jeff Magee was a good friend of his. He was going to buy that property for \$5,000 where Lamar Street goes on down towards Capitol back to Pearl. There was a big old tin barn out there that was vacant. Mr. Magee was going to buy that for \$5,000. He had \$7,500 in the old Merchants Bank where the First Federal is now, but that year they wouldn't let them take out but \$100 a month out of the bank.

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Jr. - You mean to prevent a run on the bank?

Sr. - Yes.

Jr. - Well let me ask you about this other property that he had. Now he had some property in Greenwood, didn't he?

Sr. - Yes, Greenwood.

Jr. - Did he inherit that or buy that property?

Sr. - He bought it.

Jr. - That was where the old cotton brokerage offices used to be, where Leflore Dry Cleaners is now. He owned that block?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - Well now do you know what education he had?

Sr. - No Bill I don't. He didn't have much school education, I mean college. I don't think he had any college education.

Jr. - Well now did he originate the Jackson Mercantile?

Sr. - Yes when he got to Jackson he organized the Jackson Mercantile Company with two more fellows.

Jr. - Do you remember their names?

Sr. - Billy Sistrunk was one of them and another one I can't think of his name, he had a store down there on West Street where Mahaffey's is now, you know that cleaners (Snow White)

Jr. - That's right by Jitney #13?

Sr. - That's right and then they ran that about a year.

Jr. - In other words Jackson Mercantile was open there where Snow White Cleaners is?

Sr. - That's right and he had it incorporated. It ran about a year so he took it and moved it over in the old wood building there that used to be an old barn on the corner of McTyere and Lamar now.

Jr. - McTyere well that was right near the home wasn't it?

Sr. - Yes.

Jr. - Well now this old store in the barn, he moved it off of West Street to McTyere. Do you know why he moved it? It looks like to me that West Street was a lot better street than McTyere Street.

Sr. - It wasn't on West Street. It was on the corner of Lamar - the barn was on the corner of Lamar and McTyere. We lived on McTyere about a half block west of West Street.

Jr. - Now that was the Mercantile, that was after it moved from West Street, is that right?

Sr. - That's right.

Jr. - But it was named Jackson Mercantile on West Street in the old Snow White building there?

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