

in cars. Our first car was a Cole and an Auburn.

MILLER: Yes.

(End of Side 1, Tape 1)

WORTHINGTON: A Cole and an Auburn and later on I remember Fords, which we used to travel back and forth , and come to Greenville in.

MILLER: Did you all ride the train very much before the roads were paved?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, we did and I think we used the steamboats a good deal. I don't recall myself travelling on them when I got up larger, but I know the older ones did. They went back and forth to New Orleans, to St. Louis a great deal.

MILLER: You had relatives in St. Louis?

WORTHINGTON: My father's sister, Mrs. Leroy Valliant.

MILLER: And then your mother's relatives.

WORTHINGTON: In New Orleans.

MILLER: Did the school become larger while you were teaching there? The Chatham School?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, a great many more came in and as I recall we had students from Glen Allen, Longwood, all around Leota --

MILLER: Down to the Issaquena line.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, I would think so.

MILLER: And Lake Jackson.

WORTHINGTON: Of course we had the Steins who lived right there at Chatham that went there.

MILLER: Yes. Were you there during the 1927 flood?

WORTHINGTON: No, I was in Hattiesburg attending the Teachers' College down there and I spent about two years and got a three year's certificate, a life certificate to teach.

MILLER: Now, I know that your plantation was on high ground, because I know that was one reason it was chosen. Did you have much water during the flood?

WORTHINGTON: No. Now, I did not see the flood, but my mother and sisters, Amelie and Lucy, came on to Jackson and stayed, and then from Jackson they came to Hattiesburg. Maisie was in college at that time but I don't think the water got any further than maybe even Chatham. It didn't get anywhere around Leota.

MILLER: That's what I had heard, which was very fortunate.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, and then you couldn't get out anywhere, just ride the levee --

MILLER: Well, now, after then you came on back to teach, after you were down at Hattiesburg.

WORTHINGTON: Yes. Then, of course, our place was taken in 1931.

MILLER: Was it 1931 or 1933?

WORTHINGTON: I guess the contract was let and it was in 1933 when we moved into Greenville.

MILLER: Well, now, that's something that I'm interested in. Now, what I have heard about the house that

Isaac Worthington built was a large brick house and that was around 1888?

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: And that because of all the construction work up and down the river, some of the land was being flooded on Worthington Point.

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: So, they tore that house down, didn't they and built a levee? And, so that was when the family moved.

WORTHINGTON: The family moved. They tore down the house. My grandmother, I understand, died in the family home, and then my father and I guess that's when the Worthington land that I know of -- His sister had property and built on the outside, not the inside, of the new levee and a lot of the doors and windows and things from the old home that could be salvaged and moved were put into the new home --

MILLER: Into the new house, yes, and this was the house that you grew up in?

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: So, the levee in 1888 took some of the Worthington land and you all had to move back and then in 1933 they moved the levee again and threw Worthington Point almost completely out?

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: And so that was when you all moved to Greenville?

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

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MILLER: I believe you all made a claim for the damage done during the Civil War? I saw that in a paper the other day, but nothing ever came of it?

WORTHINGTON: No, no we never did get anything.

MILLER: And then they made a claim, for the damages done to the property from all the levees, around 1890?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, because with the flooding in there they couldn't raise the cotton and crops.

MILLER: Nothing came of that either.

WORTHINGTON: No, nothing came of that.

MILLER: When you all were children I know that practically everything went on, on the plantation - hog killing and all that stuff.

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: What all do you remember going on - that usually goes on on a plantation?

WORTHINGTON: Well, of course, there were the preparation as the seasons changed, preparing for the coming of winter and, of course, even getting the groceries and the stock, of course, we had the smokehouse and the hogs were killed and cured and salted down. I can remember our store room. I guess it was brought in by boat in the early years and later on the railroad. Everything was in barrels or big cans, like the lard. The sugar was in a great big barrel and the same way with the flour and all those things that we'd get like that. Even I can remember in later years, the Goyer Company put the cookies and

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things in great big quantities. The store room was always kept locked. I remember my mother with the keys, coming down and opening it up, taking out all the things that were needed for the meals and giving them to the cook for that day. That was just a routine, every day it was done. It was locked up after she got through getting the quantity of flour and everything else that was needed.

MILLER: And then washing? Did they wash right there at the house or did you have somebody else on the place?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, we had them washing and ironing and then --

MILLER: A lot of that went on.

WORTHINGTON: Oh, yes, indeed. We have a cistern, of course, where we got the water.

MILLER: Now what did you do for lights? I know early that you had lamps.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, but later on, as most people did, they had what I believe was called a Delco plant.

MILLER: Yes. That was very satisfactory.

WORTHINGTON: Yes. And of course we didn't have running water in the house until late years and it wasn't by any means all over the house. We had a bathroom later on but before it was all from the cistern and the pumps.

MILLER: Yes. And an outdoor privy? No indoor plumbing.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, that's right.

MILLER: I know you all did a lot of swimming down there.

WORTHINGTON: Nearly every day, the girls in the family I'll say -- The horses were brought in and saddled and ready for us to take our afternoon ride, which we rode for three or four miles.

MILLER: Did you go around and visit in the neighborhood?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, those who were there we visited and, of course, the family came back and forth. The sisters who were married and lived - like Tenie lived at Wayside. They'd come home on Sundays and we'd go back with them, and we used to have watermelon cuttings and fights and washing your face. You had your school activities after you got up larger, your dances --

MILLER: Where did you have your dances, at home or at school?

WORTHINGTON: There were some in the school building but as for public dances the brothers went, but we didn't go, the girls didn't go.

MILLER: Now where were the public dances?

WORTHINGTON: I don't remember. I know they used to go to Rosedale a great deal and, of course, here in Greenville. I grew up with my brothers though. I can remember going coon hunting, possum hunting at night, with the dogs and all that.

MILLER: Did you go crawfishing?

WORTHINGTON: Oh, yes. We'd catch crawfish and build a little fire and take a can with some water and cook the crawfish tails and eat them right out of that tin can.

MILLER: And how about frog gigging?

WORTHINGTON: I went one time with the brothers and I turned sick and I could not stand to hear the frogs croak or whatever they do when you gig them. Another thing we used to do when the river came up and the seep water came - of course there were a lot of ditches and they would get filled from the overflow of the river, the backwater, and fish would just come swimming down there, and they would stand on the fish bank with gigs and gig those fish, the big buffalo and I believe they called them carp.

MILLER: Yes. When the water came up real high how close was it to your house?

WORTHINGTON: Oh, I guess it was a half a mile or three quarters. It was a slough in front of the house to the west. The levee was right there. It usually would just fill up. It was just clear, clear - the seep water was just crystal clear. It's not muddy like most of our Mississippi water but that's another thing that I can well remember - riding the horses going with the boys to get the cattle. When we spoke of the island, that was the property on the inside after the levees had been moved back. The cattle stayed there and grazed but when the water came up they had to be brought in closer and we used to get them across, swim horses through the slough, with rattlesnakes

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hanging from the trees, but we were never bitten and in this day I wouldn't do it but didn't think anything of it then.

MILLER: Did you hunt or shoot?

WORTHINGTON: No. I didn't.

MILLER: Just left that to the boys?

WORTHINGTON: That's right.

MILLER: I imagine you had plenty of game to eat all the time, didn't you?

WORTHINGTON: Oh, yes. We had, of course, geese and duck and quail and dove and some squirrel - rabbits - we had rabbits but we had a pet squirrel and I don't think any of us were very keen on eating squirrel - so we didn't have that.

MILLER: How did you happen to have a pet squirrel?

WORTHINGTON: It was caught when it was small and we fed him and he grew up.

MILLER: Did you have a cage for him?

WORTHINGTON: Yes, we had some kind of a cage for him. Oh, yes, we had every kind of little wild thing. We'd try to raise little wild rabbits, you know, but they don't live as pets. We had chickens, ducks --

MILLER: Caroline, when you were reading us the letter that your father wrote-- I know he was ill at the time and I think died not too long after that - You were telling me that he was buried down there in the family cemetery and there were eight of the men on the place who dug the grave and carried the casket to the cemetery --

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WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: Now, where was the cemetery? Was it close to your house?

WORTHINGTON: I would say it was a distance of two blocks, whatever that would be - quite a distance. It was a little family cemetery with an iron fence, white fence around it.

MILLER: And you remember who those men were.

WORTHINGTON: I don't remember all the names. I can tell you some of them. One was Joe Gentile, Will Smith, Henry Bealer, Zack Polk, Hezekiah Jackson, Jim Reid, Peter Nixon, Manuel Davis and Leroy Matthews. They were all - he had selected and asked - when he knew his illness was terminal and he had asked that this be done. Now that was the one who always cut his hair for him and shaved him also.

MILLER: Do you know what has happened to any of these men? I know you all moved away in 1933 and that's been a long time.

WORTHINGTON: Of course, this Will Smith followed the family. When the Leota property was taken by the government to make the cut-off, Leroy, the brother who had taken care of the place after my father's death - Leroy began when he was twenty-one doing that. He had bought a place on Lake Washington and Will moved out there with him and he died out there. These others -- now the families are still some of them around. I think the Nixon family is somewhere around Lake Washington

or Longwood or Chatham. Some are in Greenville.

MILLER: Now your brother, Andre, still has a place on Lake Washington, doesn't he?

WORTHINGTON: That's the place Leroy started living on and when he died, Andre came from Iowa, where he was working, teaching, and then Andre carried on. Andre still has the place.

MILLER: Do you ever go back down to Worthington Point?

WORTHINGTON: I went about two years ago but it is just worn over land that you cannot recognize a spot. Now there are some buildings still at Leota where the Elkas store was. I believe the old store is there too. It's just closed up, nailed up, and I don't know what they put in it now. It doesn't look the same.

MILLER: Caroline, do you remember at any time that anybody said where the old road that came down from Greenville was, that went to Princeton?

WORTHINGTON: No. I remember my father saying that as a young man that he used to ride a horse to Greenville to the dances that were given, as he loved dancing.

MILLER: He'd ride a horse --

WORTHINGTON: He'd ride a horse. Well, at that time they followed whatever I thought the levee -

MILLER: Yes, and the old road came down the levee.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, it did.

MILLER: I suppose he'd spend the night when he'd ride

up here?

WORTHINGTON: He'd stay with the Miller family.

MILLER: Of course, he had plenty of relatives.

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: Well, now, when your older brothers started going to dances, did they have to ride the train or was that after the time of automobiles?

WORTHINGTON: I think that was at the time cars were here.

MILLER: The Lake Washington community was settled by the Worthingtons and the Johnsons and the Wards and the Flournoys and there were some others.

WORTHINGTON: Yes.

MILLER: But of all those families only the Erwins and Andre Worthing are the original settlers, isn't that correct? That are down there?

WORTHINGTON: Yes. Of course, Andre is not on the original land that was owned by the Worthingtons but now Erwins are.

MILLER: Yes. Well, Caroline, I think we've about covered everything. Can you think of anything we have missed?

WORTHINGTON: No, and I have enjoyed it.

MILLER: I've enjoyed it very much and I appreciate your doing this. Oh, I know, there was one thing I wanted to ask you about. Did you have a post office at Leota and since there wasn't a train to Leota, how did they get the mail?

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WORTHINGTON: From Erwin.

MILLER: From Erwin.

WORTHINGTON: Foote and Erwin. The train came --
Yes, they had a station there.

MILLER: Well, how did they bring it over?

WORTHINGTON: With a horse and buggy.

MILLER: Horse and buggy and later on I suppose
automobiles --

WORTHINGTON: That's right, and there was a little
post office there that the Buckners, who were related to us,
Mamie and Louise Buckner ran. Of course, their father and
mother lived there before. I don't recall when they lived
there.

MILLER: Now when did Leota stop being a post office,
do you know? Of course it's still inside the levee, isn't it?
I mean it's still on this side.

WORTHINGTON: It's on this side. I don't, I just
can't tell you.

MILLER: Of course, at one time Leota was an important
steamboat landing.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, very important.

MILLER: I understand the property owners had to take
their mail on down to a post office on the other side of Lake
Jackson too.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, they had a little one.

MILLER: Do you know what the name of that post office

was?

WORTHINGTON: Somewhere along there it was called Woodstock. I wouldn't be surprised if that wasn't it.

MILLER: Did you ever hear of a place called Cuffee?

WORTHINGTON: No. And, of course, mail was carried by skiff across the river, back and forth from Arkansas.

MILLER: Oh, now, I had heard that. That was from Leota Landing. The would take it from Leota --

WORTHINGTON: And to some place --

MILLER: To Grand Lake, Arkansas. I believe that your brother Andre said that sometimes he and his brother would paddle it over there in a skiff.

WORTHINGTON: There were skiffs, because I remember them telling about how dangerous it was - the whirlpools in the river and some would drown when the weather was bad.

MILLER: True? Really.

WORTHINGTON: Yes, darkies. They weren't whites that did that, rowing the boats.

MILLER: Yes. It wasn't usually white people that did that. I suppose when Andre did it, it was because they wanted to.

WORTHINGTON: No. I guess it was contracted, maybe with whites because they could have hired somebody else.

MILLER: Yes. Well, I believe that does get it, and thanks so much.

WORTHINGTON: I enjoyed it.

(End of Interview)
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