

Oral history with 71 year old male, Kentucky (Transcription)

<unintelligible text> Lees College Library Jackson Kentucky 41369---iou Tape by Sara Tudiver

AN INTERVIEW WITH <unintelligible text> by: Sara Tudiver

<unintelligible text> was born on February 2, 1900, and brought up in a Dutch-speaking home. As a young man of 23 he came to Buckhorn, Kentucky, for a visit and stayed to make his home in the mountains for close to 50 years. With his and his wife's aid, the Morris Fork Presbyterian Church grew and the community became noted for its yearly fairs, many clubs and beautiful church building. "Uncle Same" also taught at Lees College for three years and is well known throughout the area. He and his wife <unintelligible text>, now live in Berea, Kentucky, where he is a pastor of White's Memorial Presbyterian Church.

In a recent interview he shared many of his early recollections with us.

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"One day there came a missionary to our church in New Jersey and he spoke about the fact that there were many areas in our own country that were still untouched with the gospel as well as other opportunities. And, very soon after that, a friend of mine who had a mission station at Buckhorn, Kentucky, asked me to come down. This was where Witherspoon College was located and the president at the time was Dr. Murdock."

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<unintelligible text> went down for a summer vacation in June, 1923. "I hoed corn in the fields with the boys and girls and taught Sunday School on Sunday. Then I also went up to Bowlingtown, where Buckhorn Lake is now located, and I would go to the Freeman Fork of Long's Creek, which ran into the Kentucky River. After this I taught school for a month at Cow Creek in Owsley County. I taught thirty freshmen it, what they called the Athenian Academy."

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When he returned to Freeman's Fork the people wanted him to come and teach their children. They said:

"'We will board you,' and I said, 'Well, if you'll board me, I'll come over.'" The most wonderful thing about this was that you never felt crowded. The welcome was always so genuine. And, there was always an abundance of food no matter how poor they were."

Some of the older people of the community wanted <unintelligible text> to teach them. He told them, "If you can come at night --" and they told him, "We'll come at night."

"So in the same little school house the fathers and mothers came at night and they used pine torches and had one kerosine lamp... They used Sears-Roebuck catalogues, Calfey's rural arithmetic and the Gospel of John for their textbooks. During the day I used just anything I could find because I had brought no materials with me, but these fathers and mothers in the night school amazed me by their ability to learn and I realized the potential of the mountain people."

"By February of 1924, I was also teaching on the other side of the mountain -- you see there wasn't anybody there to do it. And I was teaching three schools and then on Sundays I'd ride a horse from Buckhorn part of the time and go to three places out in

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Owsley County, I'd be out until dark, going to these different centers where there was nobody and there was such a good response and the children were so bright."

After he had done this for awhile he felt as if he ought to go home. He did go home for awhile but soon returned. This time he got his own cabin.

"I lived there for a while with my dog and I had one teacup and one

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teaspoon and folks brought in things. Then, one of my travels took me over to Leslie County where I was introduced to this young nurse, <unintelligible text>. We made the mistake of walking down to the post office together and some lady saw us and had a dream that night that this young man, who rode in on horseback, and this nurse were going to get married. We'd heard about the dream and rather than have that woman going through life not believing in dreams my wife proposed to me. Well to make a long story short, we did get married and I took her over to Morris Fork. By that time I was starting to build a little house. She came in as a bride to an unfinished house made of green lumber."

We asked <unintelligible text> about the first community fair at Morris Fork.

"It was held in 1930 and wasn't too big that year. It did grow to where it looked more like a county fair than a community fair. We had handicrafts as well as canned goods. We would have booths in which the whole family would display what the children had done at school, what the mothers had made and what the fathers had made- and then we'd give prizes for the family booth. We never gave cash prizes. What we would do is we would have a score sheet and we would total the number of points a family got -- the points would come through the ribbons -- there would be a red ribbon, a white ribbon, a blue ribbon, a purple ribbon -- and one had a certain number of points."

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<unintelligible text> tells of the many times he stayed overnight with the families of his students and he is able to evoke the setting and the mood of the evenings spent together.

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"... I went up this long, rough creek with this boy, with boulders that were as big as this desk, and the water was streaming down, and the hillside came down this way right to the creek, and you either had to walk in the creek or you jumped on these boulders. And this house was right at the main head of it. And I was just amazed that the child could get to school. But I got there and had a wonderful welcome from the grandmother and the grandfather, and his mother and his father, and I forget how many children there were in the family, living in two rooms, not a window in the cabin, and this was late in the fall and it was already getting quite cold. And, the grandmother had made a cake in an iron skillet under the coals in the fireplace and they had a big pitcher of creamy milk -- they had milked their cow that evening and this creamy milk and that cake that had been baked in a skillet were two of the most delicious things I think I had tasted. We sat at that table with snowflakes coming across the table while we were trying to eat our supper, and then we went into this other room which had two or three beds in it and the fireplace. It had a spinning wheel and there was a fire in the fireplace

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