

JOHN GEE BLACK HISTORICAL CENTER, INC.

2018 Newsletter

October-December

As promised in the last newsletter, Arnetta Anderson Dexter's memories of Maple Shade, Gallipolis, Ohio, continues in this newsletter. I found out that she dictated this information to my sister, Rosann Hollinshed. Rosann wrote it down word for word and did not add anything to it. Mom wrote her age, 94, and signed her name on the paper dated February 28, 2009. *Italics added for information.*

ARNETTA'S MEMORIES

A Colored Girl's Memories about Living in Maple Shade

My Memories of the 1937 Flood:

Janet (*my sister*) and I were at home making cookies. Dad, Mom, Ruth, Chris and Joyce (*the rest of Armetta's family*) were at Grandma's (*Eva Lee*) house putting things in the upstairs. Rev. Sagen, a white Methodist preacher, came and said "get out. You have only 15 minutes to leave before the water cuts off every entrance." Everyone in my family loaded in his wagon. He drove us to the Dairy where there were ropes, one on each side. Water was everywhere. He drove the wagon between the two ropes to get to Third Avenue to bring us to Paint Creek Baptist Church. The whole family stayed there. All the pews were removed. Women and children stayed in the sanctuary and the men and boys in the basement. I slept on a cot under the second stained glass window in the front on the left. We ate in the basement. Morris and Clara Sherman cooked the food. Clara helped the WPA (*Works Progress Administration renamed Work Projects Administration in 1939*) girls work. Louise Smith helped take care of babies and the small children like Chris, Ruth and Joyce.

After the flood, we went back home. The only things left in our house were the iron cook stove, one iron bed, and turned upside down on the kitchen floor was the yellow crock bowl where I was making cookie batter. To my surprise, when I flipped it over, the batter was still in it. After seeing all the devastation,

none of my family moved back to Chatham Avenue. We moved to Neal Avenue and my grandparents moved right beside us.

In Maple Shade, we only had two grocery stores, Casto's and Allen's, and there were two gas stations.

The whites held tent revivals near Allen's Grocery Store on Eastern Avenue and we sat on the grass. They would ask us to come inside but only my Dad went. They also passed the hat to us for collection.

Later the medicine show came and was held in the same place as the revival. They took tape worms from people. I saw the tape worm that they took from a young boy named Dale Willis. They lived in Uncle Dandy's house.

At first, we used oil lamps because we had no water or electricity. We caught rain water in a large barrel to wash clothes and do cleaning. When water got low, we paid 50 cents for a bucket of water from Ms. Walters at anytime we needed it. She lived on Eastern Avenue, the only street in Maple Shade with water and electricity. Before we moved, we got water in our front yard through an outside hydrant but no water faucet in the house.

People made sorghum molasses on our street with a donkey and machinery. People would come and watch and some would chew on the sugar cane juice. It smelled sooo good!

The first time I rode in a car was when Captain Russ came to see my grandfather in a new shiny black Cadillac. He asked my grandfather if he could take us for a ride. My cousins, Robert and Howard Lee, my uncle and aunt, Bill and Susie Lee; my sister, Janet, and I rode to Cheshire and back.

Grandpa would let Bill and I ride his horses, Mollie and Nell, to the river on a hot day of work to get refreshed. I had to warn Bill not to hit my horse to make him run because I would fall off. We rode bare back.

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Grandma Eva Lee made apple butter in a 20 gallon brass kettle, flavored with oil of cinnamon after cooking it for hours. Then they sealed them in quart jars. My great grandparents made lye soap in a iron pot. They had two pots--one was used to make soap and the other for meat rendering.

On Memorial Day, my great grandparents would make their decorations out of cardboard crosses and put flowers on them. They would take them to the cemetery to put on the graves of our relatives and friends.

On July 4, the OHE (*Ohio Home for Epileptics*) would feed the families of the boiler room workers. The whole family could come. They had a big dinner with wonderful food, and the best cake I ever ate in my life.

Happy times were when our cousins, the Burton's, from Pt. Pleasant came to visit, who were our age. Later, the Spencers, Gordons, and Grants, my cousins who were little, came; and we would pull them in our big wagon.

At first, our mailbox was on Eastern Avenue on a post, then they put it on our house. Thompson Casey was our first mailman. After him, his brother, John Casey, was our mailman. He was a mailman all his life and retired from the Post Office.

When I was about 8 years old, two young preachers held a revival in the fairground in the grand hall. They were Revs. Hubert J. Spencer and Charles M. Grant. After that, my grandfather let them hold services in his home.

One time they were going to have a tent revival. They wanted to organize a Sunday School and put the tent on John Stewart's property. The first morning about 7 kids came to Sunday School, but a dark cloud came and everyone had to run home. It was a terrible thunderstorm. After the storm, we went back and the tent was torn to pieces, ripped apart. The happy ending to this story was both preachers ended up marrying my aunts, Helen Lee wed Rev. Spencer who moved to Columbus, OH, and Edna Lee married Rev. Grant and moved to

Monaville, WV. People got married young then.

I have many found memories of my childhood--living in Maple Shade and Lincoln School. One thing I will always remember is our 8th grade principal, Mr. Myers, had a vision. He told us some day the business end of Gallipolis would be up in Maple Shade and I lived to see it happen.

Arnetta lived to be 102 years old.

TIP OF THE HAT:

- To the Rio Grande Nursing Class who held class on October 18 at John Gee.

Please send 2019 membership to:

Bobette Braxton, Treasurer
108 Pine Street
Gallipolis, OH 45631

Individual - \$20.00
Family - \$35.00
Nonprofit/Church - \$50.00
Business/Corporation - \$100.00

Thank you for your support over these 20 years. We began in 1998 and are carrying out our mission to educate the community on the accomplishments and history of Black Americans in southeastern Ohio. We wish you, our faithful members, a blessed Christmas season and a healthy and happy 2019.