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Interview with William G. Booth

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COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 33

INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM G. BOOTH

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 1995



Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 33
Interview with William G. Booth
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott
Thursday, June 15, 1995
Location: Rare Book Room, Kennesaw State College

TS: Mr. Booth, why don't you begin by telling us a little bit about your family tree and how you came to have the blacksmith ledgers that you're donating to our Rare Book Room?

WB: Well, it seems that the ledger was kept by John Stanley Gibson¹ who married a Nancy Harris.² John Stanley was born in 1831. He's the son of Elijah Gibson who married Winifred Stanley, and Elijah must have been born in 1800. John Stanley had a shop here in Big Shanty. Elijah was the first settler in this section [of the county]; he moved in here soon after the land lottery in 1832 or '33.

TS: This is Elijah Gibson?

WB: This is Elijah Gibson, right. My mother who is the granddaughter of John Stanley Gibson tells me that Elijah's father died at sea and Elijah was orphaned and that he was apprenticed to the Roberts family. I don't know how much truth there is; this is hearsay. Wiley Roberts, who was a big landowner in this section -- settled here and had many slaves and had a plantation up north toward Acworth and right on down as far as the Roberts Road way down here at Town Center.

TS: What's called Barrett Parkway now.

WB: Yes. One of his daughters married a McAfee. The McAfee house is where some of Sherman's officers stayed during the War and it's still standing; it has an historical marker for it.

TS: Right. That's Bells Ferry where what used to be Roberts Road and Bells Ferry come together, Barrett Parkway and Bells Ferry today.

WB: Right. That's a part of the old Roberts farm. One of

¹John Stanley Gibson, born 15 August 1831, died 31 July 1883, buried in Kennesaw Cemetery.

²Nancy A. Gibson, born 18 August 1833, died 5 October 1892, buried in Kennesaw Cemetery.

his sons was the manager of the Kennesaw Hotel back before the War. They were a very prominent and very wealthy family. The rumor is that Roberts kind of brought him [Elijah Gibson] along; he must have moved in about the time that Roberts came here. Roberts settled in here, and also there's a Thomas Harris. [My mother's] story was that Thomas was an overseer for Roberts. Roberts had over fifty slaves. He had a lot of slaves and a big plantation. So that's the story that they all came in here very soon after they could buy up some land the year after the Lottery of 1832.

TS: Now, how was Thomas Harris related to John Stanley Gibson?

WB: Well, John Stanley Gibson married Harris's daughter, Nancy A. Harris. Harris had a home up on the old Shiloh Road there leading in [to Kennesaw], and that's where Gibson was too. Gibson was up towards Shiloh and over from Elijah's cabin, which was later moved up to Kennesaw. It's there located now.

TS: The one that they just recently moved into that business complex?

WB: Well, it's right in behind the Methodist Church right beside the museum.

TS: Yes. Right between the Big Shanty Museum and the old Methodist Church.

WB: Yes. They brought that cabin in there...I think that's Elijah's cabin. Probably built along in latter part of the 1830s. He was a tough old guy, Elijah was. They say he broke his leg out working. So he cut him a sapling and strapped it up with some rope and hung on to the mule, and it dragged him back home. But anyway, Elijah had several kids. John Stanley then, who married Nancy Harris -- John Stanley was born about 1831. John Stanley had a wagon shop, and he was pretty literate. He kept ledgers, and you could tell from the ledgers he kept that he was fairly literate. He had a wagon shop and by the time of the Civil War, they said he built a good many gun carriages and things for the Army.

TS: Let's see. John Stanley Gibson would have been about thirty years old then when the Civil War broke out.

WB: Something like that. At least thirty. He was born in '31, and by that time he'd had Fletcher. Fletcher Gibson was born in 1857. Fletcher was about eight years old at the latter part of the War. Fletcher had helped his

father. They stayed pretty busy there working on this military stuff. Then when Sherman came in, the story is they migrated and went to Greene County back over in there where they came from.

TS: Where you say he came from?

WB: We think he probably came from over in that section. Anywhere a good many of the folks came over from Greene County. Fletcher helped a good bit, and then he learned blacksmithing. So after they got back then from the War things were pretty slow. But they made a go of it. John Stanley had a store and went together with a Carrie. Those two had the store together. Then the ledger -- you'll see an inventory where one bought out the other. I think John Stanley Gibson sold his share of the store to Carrie, Theodore Carrie.³ The connection between the Carries and the Gibsons was that John Stanley had married a Harris girl, Nancy Harris. The story of the Carries who lived just across the street in the old Carrie house there which is still there...

TS: Right, that's where Big Shanty comes in to Cherokee Street.

WB: Right. And right across the street there is where they moved the old cabin, you know; and Fletcher lived in a little house right next to that.

TS: Right next to the Carrie house?

WB: Across the street. The Carries were right across the street from where [some of] the Gibsons lived. I'm not sure where John Stanley had his shop, but they had this store we think maybe over in town; we're not sure. But anyway he sold out later on to the Carries, but did nothing but just his shop work, he and Fletcher.

TS: Now, you were saying about Nancy Harris, was she somehow related to the Carries?

WB: Yes. Seems that old Gaspard T. Carrie was the son of Joseph Carrie who migrated from Haiti to Augusta, and we have the naturalization papers of Joseph signed by Jones.

TS: Noble Jones?

³Gaspard Theodore Carrie, born 1 January 1820, died 5 February 1902, buried in Kennesaw Cemetery.

WB: Noble Jones, yes. I can bring one of those copies over.

TS: Gaspard, did he use another name?

WB: Gaspard Theodore Carrie. Gaspard married a Blodgett in Augusta. This was Lucy Angeline Blodgett. They had four children and then moved to Penfield. Then at Penfield Lucy Blodgett died. So Gaspard left one of the children with their grandmother and brought three with him. He came on over here and got him a job in Acworth as a printer. Then he spotted one of these Harris girls. So he married one of the Harris girls [Jane]⁴ who was the sister of Nancy. Then sometime later his older son, The, Uncle Theodore,⁵ married another one of these Harris girls [Sarah Zenobia Harris]. So the father and the son married sisters. But anyway, that tied the Harrises up pretty well with the Carries.

TS: The son was called The?

WB: Yes. Uncle The and Theo, Theodore. I remember Uncle The very well.

TS: Do you?

WB: Yes. He had the little store right across from...and he looked after the depot. He was sort of the agent, the depot agent. He wore a derby hat and was a little bit slew-footed and a short fellow, very interesting little fellow. I was just a little kid then. He'd give me candy, and then sometimes he'd pull out the little rubber snakes and scare me.

They were good cooks, the Carries were. Theodore, the old man, they called him Gaspard; I think they called him Judge, Judge Carrie. He helped to run the Lacy Hotel [after railroad service reached Big Shanty in the 1840s].. They'd stop here and get wood and water, and I remember the old water tanks where they'd stop. He helped to run the restaurant. They'd stop and, you know,

⁴Jane E. Carrie, daughter of Thomas and Sarah Harris, wife of G. T. Carrie, born 9 February 1832, died 9 June 1914, buried in Kennesaw Cemetery.

⁵John Theodore Carrie, born 4 September 1846, died 26 December 1928, married Sarah Zenobia Harris, born 1 December 1849, died 19 December 1919. Both are buried in the Kennesaw Cemetery.

get off here.

TS: Yes, at the Lacy Hotel.

WB: Yes. And the girls -- I think they were on duty when they stole the old "General."

TS Andrews' Raid?

WB: Yes, I think the girls were there. They were about ten years old or less. But anyway, that's the story of the Carries.

TS: How did Judge Carrie get to be called Judge? What was he a judge of?

WB: I'm not sure. He must have been a Justice of the Peace or something. He was pretty well respected and looked up to. He was somewhat older. And then he had several children by his second wife. One of them was Ben Carrie, Benjamin Carrie. Ben Carrie's daughter married Burtz. I think some of this land right in here where the college is was owned by the Burtz's, Frank Burtz. But anyway, one of the Carrie girls, the twins, Caroline Evangeline, we called her Carrie, married my grandfather, married William Absalom Booth who had just gotten back from the Civil War. He'd been wounded, wasn't very well-to-do, but he drove a fine white horse and came over and courted the girl. He was somewhat older. So he married the Carrie girl. The other girl never did marry. She was Lucy Angie.⁶ But Caroline Evangeline married William Absalom Booth, and they moved over off Bells Ferry on Booth Road, that's named for the place where they settled. William Absalom had a cousin named John A. who lived in Marietta. The whole Booth clan moved up from Elberton after the War and settled in here.

TS: Now, how does Lucy Blodgett figure in the picture?

WB: Lucy Blodgett was the first wife of Gaspard Carrie. Lucy Angeline Blodgett. The Blodgett family came from Augusta. She must have been a little bit older than Carrie. Lucy was born in 1816. Foster Blodgett must have been her cousin. You know Foster Blodgett, do you from Augusta? Foster Blodgett...

TS: Reconstruction politics.

⁶Lucy Angie Carrie, born 6 October 1850, died 4 October 1926, buried in Kennesaw Cemetery.

WB: He was in with the Bullocks; he knew [Rufus] Bullock and did pretty well. He was a good politician. He fought in the Civil War as a captain. He did a lot of projects in there in Augusta. Then Foster finally got into trouble, you know. They ran old Bullock off, and Foster fell into disrepute then. Anyway, they were right close together there. Foster was a little bit younger than Lucy Angeline, the first wife of Gaspard. Anyway, that takes up the Carrie group. Now their son, the result of the marriage of W.A. Booth -- W.A. had nine kids, had four boys and one of those boys was Eugene, E.T. Booth. The others stayed in and helped the old man farm. He was crippled and he taught school over at Benson [on Bells Ferry Road near Hawkins Store Road]. He was very prominent over at Noonday Baptist Church. He taught penmanship and singing, had his tuning fork and would go around to the different churches and teach singing, especially to the girls.

TS: This was E.T.?

WB: That was old W.A. Yes, he's the old soldier that got wounded in the Battle of Fredericksburg. So he made out, lived, had nine kids and one of the daughters married a Litchfield up at Acworth and other Harriston. Dad married Lucy Gibson. Dad, E.T., was one that walked to school. He would walk from over there to Kennesaw. He finished here at Kennesaw. Then finally he went to Mercer for a few years and then went to Louisville to the Baptist Seminary and got a pretty good education. Then he came back and lived on the farm over near the old home place there and had him forty acres and married Lucy. He taught school here at Kennesaw for three years, and we came over with him. We'd ride to school when the school was here. That was during World War I.

I remember the trucks pulling through here going down the Dixie Highway with the soldiers...that was during World War I. I got through about the fifth grade, fourth or fifth grade, here in Kennesaw. So I was pretty well connected. I learned...I'd borrow Tom Swift books, and we learned about short-wave. The first radio -- we'd make our little crystal sets.

TS: What year were you born?

WB: I was born in 1908. Back when I was about three years old we moved to Kennesaw and lived here for awhile. Then we moved on to Rome, and E.T. Booth, Jr. was born in Rome. But we didn't stay long; we came on back to the farm. Then it was while we were living on the farm there that he would drive over in the buggy, teach school here;

and we'd go back and forth, commute. Then after we'd been here for -- the War ended in about 1917 or '18 -- so we went over to Woodstock. He taught over there, and we'd commute over there for awhile. Then he thought we'd finally move to Woodstock. So that probably broke my relationship, but until we went over to Woodstock I was in pretty close touch with Big Shanty here and Kennesaw.

TS: Where was the family farm that E.T. had?

WB: It was right down at the corner of Booth Road and Bells Ferry, right at the corner. He had forty acres there which has now been made into a subdivision.

TS: Well, there used to be an old house that a Ms. Booth lived in. I think maybe -- did she die recently? That's about where...

WB: The Carrie, the last sister...the old house up there just before you get, you know, the new highway through there, 575, right there at the corner of 575, that old house up there, that was where the Booths lived, that was the old Booth house.

TS: So that's where E.T. lived?

WB: That's where E.T. was born, and that's where I was born.

TS: You were born in that house?

WB: Yes, we were both born there. And old W.A., William Absalom, I think he practically built that place. He had some help from his brothers.

TS: Well, now who was the Ms. Booth who was living in that house until recently?

WB: That was Carrie, my aunt.

TS: Your aunt.

WB: Aunt Sister we called her. That was Carrie. Carrie and Bertie stayed there with Millard, one of the older uncles. They stayed there with my grandmother until she died. Then they kept on living there, you see.

TS: So Carrie never got married?

WB: No, Carrie didn't marry. And Bertie didn't marry, and Millard didn't marry. Millard Seale. Cliff did marry. Cliff was, next to Dad, the youngest. Cliff was quite the outgoing one. He wouldn't stay at home. He married

a McNeeley right across the street from him. His son Ralph's daughter is Patricia Cook. That's the one that's a secretary here at the College and been here for a good many years. So, anyway, those boys though they had lived pretty hard. It was difficult. This was the time of the Depression, you know, and we called it the Panic back then. Those boys would hunt and fish down the Noonday Creek. We just grew up, you know...but they kept something to eat there by hunting and all; they were good marksmen. Dad was a very good marksman; he was a good shot. Loved to fish. He went into the ministry then, and he would preach. He pastored several churches around, and he would preach and teach.

TS: What denomination?

WB: It was Baptist. He was over at Noonday. Then he preached there at Woodstock and taught school there at Woodstock. So he stayed there at Woodstock and taught from the '20's on up. He taught all of us; he would take us on up through tenth grade. We learned Latin, three years of Latin. We'd take one more year. I'd ride the train up to my last year in Canton. Some of the folks would finish their last year at Canton and some would be in Marietta, but we were a part of Woodstock then from about the mid-20's on till Dad died. He stayed there until he was ninety years old.

TS: What was Woodstock like then?

WB: Woodstock was...when we moved in there we hit just at the boost, right when it was going good. Cotton was high, and everything was going fine. They had warehouses all over the place. The railroad didn't go through over there until around 1890. Then after the railroad went through there things began to boom, you know, the big cotton buying. Woodstock was the cotton buying center for maybe over a hundred miles, a five-mile radius around there. The first families to settle in there [included] the Fowlers. Mark Fowler settled there around 1840. Then another Fowler, his brother, settled down in Cobb County down two or three miles below. The Fowlers were related to the Durhams. The Fowlers and Durhams owned land all the way across the...and then the Bensons were tied with them. So one of the fellows married a Bentley and I think it could be a little bit related to this Bentley.

TS: To Fred Bentley?

WB: Right.

TS: Did you say Benson or Bentley?

WB: There were Bensons, yes.

TS: But also Bentleys?

WB: Yes. Bentley. There's one Bentley that one of the Fowlers married here, but one of [the Fowlers had a mill up here on the Tate Creek right up there at Bells Ferry. It was his daughter that Fletcher married. Fletcher married one of those Fowlers.

TS: Fletcher, who's the son of John Stanley?

WB: Yes.

TS: Married a Fowler?

WB: Yes, and she was related to the Greshams. The Greshams, the cemetery, and all that; that was one of her great-grandmothers was a Gresham. He married Nancy. He married the [daughter of the] Fowler who had the mill, Thomas Fowler, over at Tate Creek. So mother was kin to everybody over there; the Bensons, the Fowlers and everybody's cousin. So it helped us out when we got to either Woodstock or ...that was sort of two cities, you see, I was between Woodstock and Kennesaw; so we knew people very well.

TS: Did it seem like a long way from Kennesaw to Woodstock or a short distance?

WB: No, we lived about half way between on Bells Ferry. There was a little school right there named Benson School right were they tore that down.

TS: Yes, I know exactly where that was.

WB: You know where Benson was? Well, that was Dad's school. Dad taught there for two or three years, and I went to school there one year. Old W.A. taught there and some of his sisters taught there at Benson. Benson School was the center. They made a Sunday School there. Grandpa Booth was superintendent of it. Daddy bought his forty acres from the Bensons; the Bensons owned that land. So the Fowlers were right up above us there on the Shallowford Road. Right north of us was a Fowler place up there; so the Fowlers, Bensons...

TS: The Fowlers were on Shallowford Road?

WB: Yes, there was one of the Fowlers was up there. That was

the fellow that later on moved to Marietta and made the Dr. Fowler. That set of Fowlers [descend] from Mack Fowler, and a whole bunch of them [are] down in Marietta. The Bensons were big...we would run down to Marietta...we knew a lot of the Bensons and the Fowlers and all.

TS: I've done a little bit of research on a man named Isom Gresham who was...

WB: He was one of the slaves, and when the Greshams freed the slaves he gave old Isom Gresham some land over there and helped him out. Yes, Isom's wife used to cook the best pound cakes and the best fruit cakes and they'd all go over...

TS: Millie?

WB: Yes. And they would have lunch with her, and she'd feed them, you know. So everybody loved...one of her daughters married Walter Jackson. Jackson was our neighbor, and Walt used to babysit for us. And then the Slocum, John Slocum lived right across the street from me. His wife was Aunt Priscilla, and Aunt Priscilla used to give me honey cakes. Boy, I loved to go down and visit Aunt Priscilla. She had all kinds of herbs she would hang on the wall; she had little different kinds of bitter root and things that she...but Aunt Priscilla...and right across from where John Slocum lived Walt...we grew up with Walt. Walt talked very proper. He would say, "I has." He never would say, "I have." "I has". "Has you seen so-and-so?" But Walt Jackson was quite a character. All those were our neighbors right by my next door neighbors. Walt Jackson lived right back of us, Slocum down below us.

Old Tom Lowe lived back on back there, and Tom Lowe asked Uncle Millard this: "Mr. Millard, what would you do if your..." -- it was his second wife and she was an old uppity, uppity darkie from Marietta and he said -- "What would you do if your wife called you a bald-headed old S.O.B.?" Millard said, "I don't know Tom, I can't help you much; since I'm a bachelor I can't help you." But one of the little girls turned out pretty well. I don't know if she ever found out about Tom or not. There were two of them, Alf Lowe and Tom Lowe. Alf was pretty bad to drink. The Chastain boys, the Chastains lived right across there. They were the big buddies; the Chastain boys and the Booth boys practically grew up together.

TS: Now, we have an interview with Alfie Chastain. She married Howard Chastain and lived where Chastain Lakes is.

WB: We called it Howard's Branch, you know...

TS: Howard's Branch?

WB: The Chastain's Branch, Put's Branch. Howard was...oh, boy, they were great fisherman. Dad and them would seine. They'd get in Noonday Creek and seine all the way to Woodstock and walk out. I remember we were seining once; I'd go along and carry the fish. I learned to swim that way. I stepped off in a hole where's it's real deep. I'd take an old toe sack, and they'd put the fish in there.

One of the Chastain boys, Troy, the younger one, came to Dad and asked him about [majors]. He was going to college and Dad tutored him awhile. And he said, "Well, you better take agriculture if you're going to Georgia." So he went to Georgia and took agriculture and married a wealthy gal in Atlanta and had a big fertilizer plant. The Chastain Park that they have down there in Atlanta, he donated the land for that. Bill Chastain ran a dairy over here, and their land went on over to the rock quarry. Those guys that had the rock quarry, now, they really cleaned up you know.

TS: We interviewed Cassie [Bill Chastain's wife].

WB: Cassie was one of mother's big friends. Mother and Cassie would visit each other. Mother was quite a -- she was almost as bad as Fletcher about...Fletch had a great imagination. By the way, Fletcher showed up later. After he'd been gone for years, he came back and lived with us for a while.

TS: Fletch is the son of...

WB: Fletcher, that's my grandpa.

TS: He left for awhile and then came back?

WB: Yes, he turned up again, and he'd tell us the wildest tales about things that happened here. He said when he was a boy after the Civil War they had a job gathering up the bones up on Kennesaw Mountain [after the battle]. They'd gather the bones up and take them down to the cemetery. [He] said, some of the guys, they'd look to find skulls; and they'd find gold teeth and pop out the teeth, you know, and save the gold fillings. Back then all the fillings and all the dental work was gold, you know.

TS: Fletcher would have been about eight or nine at the time?

WB: Well, no, then after the War was over he was about fifteen years old. When they were gathering up the bones it was all over.

TS: For the National Cemetery.

WB: Yes. He had his job of gathering the bones, but anyway he told tales. Old Fletcher would tell us pretty wild tales. Mother was like Fletch. She liked to write scenarios and send them off to be made into movies.

TS: What was your mother's name?

WB: Lucy Gibson. That was Fletcher's daughter. Her mother was a Fowler, and her grandmother was a Gresham. So they were all pretty well mixed together there. But the Chastains -- Whit was the father of the Chastain boys. I remember he'd always drive a team of horses and have their heads up high, you know. He was a sport and a big politician.

Then the cars came. We had a T-model Ford at the time we went to Woodstock. We went over and we had us a car then, but until then we'd run to see the cars go by. I remember how we'd run to see the threshing machines go by. They had the sorghum mill down on Bells Ferry there at the forks, right across at John Slocum's yard almost on...

TS: When you say the forks, what do you mean?

WB: That was where Booth Road hit Bells Ferry. Right there was the sorghum mill. And they'd make sorghum syrup and pour the skimmings on a big old hole and then they'd ferment...some of these guys would go down and stick a syphon down in there and suck that stuff out and drink it. They'd get really drunk off the skimmings.

TS: Did Booth Road always run the same direction?

WB: Yes, it cut across...it used to be almost a private road. I remember that the folks that lived on it would work it. They'd get together and they'd work the roads every so often. All of them were dirt roads then, but it was suddenly a connector that cut across, instead of going up to Benson School and hitting Shallowford and coming across it cut across and made the loop in there, you see. For awhile Booth was about the only...I think later on we had some more on that road but we had it pretty well to ourselves over on that side.

TS: It went across Bells Ferry?

WB: It "t'd" into Bells Ferry. It goes down and hits Bells Ferry and then goes from Bells Ferry and then comes up and hits Shallowford. Shallowford pulls across from the Benson School right straight on across out Shallowford on that Shiloh. It turns to Shiloh.

TS: Yes, I know what you're talking about.

WB: So it hits Shiloh Road there. Crowder lived right there at the corner. One time one irate guy came in wanting to go over and beat Dad up or shoot him because he whipped his boy at school over at Kennesaw; and Crowder said, "Oh, no, you don't want to go over there now." He said, "Those Booth boys are all dead shots and if you can hit one of them you just might as well give up; they'll find you. They'll hunt you down and shoot you." So he talked that old guy out, and he went on back home. That was Brother Crowder.

TS: Tell me what happened to the blacksmith shop after John Stanley Gibson died in 1883?

WB: I'm not sure where the shop was. I talked to some of the Carrie girls just a while ago to ask them where was the shop. I'm not sure where the shop was here.

TS: Well, what happened to it after John Stanley Gibson died?

WB: Well, after he died and Fletcher went off...Fletcher ran it for awhile; and then Fletcher went off; and I think somebody else took it over or something. It disappeared. They moved it over to another place.

TS: Well, the schools must have been pretty good in this area, weren't they? It seems like you got a pretty good education.

WB: Well, I got my education from Dad pretty well. I went to first and second grades at Benson and then came over here then and went to third, fourth and fifth at the Kennesaw School. And Dad was the principal. He'd carry them through the tenth grade and teach them Latin and all that stuff. Then I went on through. I remember I had a Dr. Lester here in Woodstock. There was a Dr. Lester and a Dr. Ellis; and Dr. Ellis was our main doctor; Dr. Lester was his daughter who taught the fifth grade. I remember her. After we'd been here we went back over to Woodstock.

Then from Woodstock on after I got up to the sixth or seventh grade I was under Dad all the way. He took me through the seventh grade right on through the tenth.

Everybody would be in one big room; and we'd all listen to the others and learn a whole lot, you know. You could learn your Latin, and he taught us and introduced us to medieval history and English history and through plane geometry and solid geometry. I took through Cicero; so I had a pretty good background. Then my brother, E.T. Booth, Jr., was almost four years younger than I am; but he skipped a grade or two; and he took Dad's course all the way through. Then he went to Reinhardt College for a year; and then he went to Georgia and finished in '32.

After I went through I took a year at Canton and then went to Locust Grove Institute down in Locust Grove, Georgia and then finished there. My Uncle Charlie Gibson who was a dispatcher on the railroad over in Hattiesburg, Mississippi had me to come over to Hattiesburg and go to school over there. So I went over there, and he got me into Mississippi Teachers College. I had gotten me a work scholarship; so in about a couple of years -- I finished in 1928 -- I finished over there and taught a couple of years then in Mississippi and then came back home to Woodstock and taught a year here at Kennesaw. Then I decided Bilbo had messed up the accreditation on the Mississippi colleges; so I better get it straightened out. I went to a year of Georgia. So I finished over at Georgia...

TS: The University of Georgia?

WB: ...in '32, we both finished in '32. So I had two four-year degrees, one from Mississippi College and one from Georgia. Then after I'd finished at Georgia I taught school then. In '37 Dad went to county superintendent of Cherokee County and I stepped in and took his place here. I'd taught around several places here in Cherokee. I taught a year here, I taught over at Blackwell for a year, and I taught over at Holly Springs and another little school up in Cherokee and then back and got on at Woodstock. I went in as principal there at the little school in Woodstock and married, and my wife helped me. She's an Agnes Scott girl, and so we taught together.

TS: What's your wife's name?

WB: Alice Chamlee. She's an old family from Cherokee. The Chamlees came in there, the first settlers into Cherokee County. Her mother was a Michael. Her [mother's] sister was Moina Michael, the famous poppy lady, and had fame over at the University of Georgia for years, Moina Michael. Then another sister was Mae Michael who helped run Statesboro for a long time, Georgia Teachers' College; she was sort of the boss down there. And she

was there when Jake Ward was there for a little while. She helped show Jake what to do.

TS: Is that right? I've got an interview with Jake Ward.

WB: You do? He was a good friend of mine. I knew Jake; I knew his brother. We used to run around together. Fact is, Jake kind of courted my wife a little bit. Then he finally married a girl from up in New York, I think, when he was teaching at West Point. My brother got his Rhodes Scholarship and came back to Columbia University and helped build a cyclotron and worked in the physics department. He was working there when they split one of the atoms. He helped split an atom with the cyclotron, and later on he got into the Manhattan Project and got on with helping to set up the gaseous diffusion method of extracting uranium. He worked for that plant in...

TS: Oak Ridge?

WB: Oak Ridge, yes. He was connected to Oak Ridge quite a bit. After that Manhattan Project was over he was [involved in other nuclear projects]. Then I know he went over to the Bikini [Atoll], and he was there when they did the hydrogen explosion. He came back and then he got on with NATO and spent a couple of years in Italy working with NATO. Then he came back and got on with American Optical for awhile. Then was Dean over at Stetson College across the Hudson there. Then he's retired now though.

TS: Where'd he get his doctorate?

WB: He got his doctorate at Oxford.

TS: While he was on the Rhodes Scholarship?

WB: Yes. He did a good bit of work at Cambridge. He did physics, you know. He worked with Fermi. I remember during the War they flew over at night in a bomber one time to check up on radar, the black box, and so he was quite involved. We were right proud of him. Dr. E.T. Booth, Jr. He married a Savannah girl, Saffold. They have two girls. They had a daughter, two kids. One of them's a pretty good musician, a violinist.

TS: Well, now, you got your second degree at UGA in 1942?

WB: Oh, yes, then I went on and finally worked my Master's off at Emory. So I have a Master's degree from Emory.

TS: Jake Ward was probably at Emory then about the time you

were there, wasn't he?

WB: No, he couldn't have been. Let's see. He [had] finished there. I did most of my work in summer school. I'd run in on summer schools and worked it off. I never did take off a year to do that, I just did summer school extension work. I was principal; and while I was teaching, during vacation time I'd go to...

TS: So you were going to Emory while you were a principal at Woodstock?

WB: Yes, so it was unbroken. So I stayed on there from about '38 until July, '72.

TS: Until 1972? And you were principal all that time?

WB: Principal and teacher, flunky.

TS: And so principal from '37?

WB: Yes, we took over at '37 on up until I retired.

TS: In '72. That's a long time.

WB: Yes, and Dad was there from '25 up till '37; so we had a span there of fifty years really of just Booths. The schools changed quite a bit. While I was in they dropped it down to the ninth grade, and finally they dropped it on down [to the] eighth grade. It was eighth when I left; and then soon after I left they dropped it down to [the fifth grade]. We had middle schools come out. They named one of the middle schools for Dad, you know.

TS: Right. Booth Middle School.

WB: Because Dad was there so long. He stayed and taught school and passed through the church at the same time. One of the old girls told her daddy, "I don't want to go to church. I have to listen to him all day at school. I don't want to listen to him again at...". But anyway, he lived a pretty interesting life. Back then members of the church had one Sunday a month. The Methodists had a Sunday; and the Presbyterians had a Sunday; and everybody would go together on the fifth one. But Dad had two or three other churches. He had Ballground and Woodstock and Locust Grove and Olive Springs.

TS: Olive Springs? That's a long way.

WB: That's Olive down in...

- TS: In Cobb County?
- WB: And then Locust Grove is right on across over there right close to it. He pastored all those churches and pastored Noonday for awhile.
- TS: Tell me about Smith Johnson.
- WB: Smith married my sister, Christine; and they had three children, two girls and a boy. Then my sister died, and he's married again. One of the girls [is] in Germany. I know Smith and them just went over and visited with them. The boy made his doctorate and finished at Emory. He's with NASA. He's married and got a couple of kids, but that's Smith, Jr.
- TS: Smith, Jr. got a doctorate from Emory?
- WB: Yes, he's a medical doctor. He checks out the astronauts before they leave and when they get down. He's one of the doctors there.
- TS: Now, Smith Johnson was a banker?
- WB: Yes, Smith's a banker and a land owner. He owns a good deal of property over there and still does. He's retired now.
- TS: Which bank was it?
- WB: It was a Woodstock bank. He's now retired. He was in the War. He was in the Pacific. He was on a ship that got sunk on him there one time in the Phillipines, but he loves to travel around and meet with all the boys.
- TS: Tell me, if I could change the subject a little bit, how the blacksmith ledgers have just stayed in the family down through the years?
- WB: Yes, Mother had them and stuck them away somewhere. Then after she died, I found them there. So I stuck them away in a safe place, and I happened to find them. I was afraid the old bugs would get in them, you know, to eat the paper; so I decided I'd send them over and let you look at them to see if they'd be of any use to you and be of any interest. Elaine [Hubbard] said she'd do so so [in letting the college know about the ledgers]. I'm glad we've ended up in a good place.
- TS: Well, I'm looking forward to telling students about them, so that they can do some projects with them.

WB: Well, if they would like to check on some of the families that were living in this neighborhood...I noticed he had, well, Chastains and the Booths and different ones, the Fowlers, different ones, you know. Some of the Roberts had an account with him. It's interesting to see what accounts they had.

TS: Well, we really appreciate your giving us those ledgers. Thank you very much.

WB: I've enjoyed it. I hope it can be of some use, and I'm certainly very happy about the way it's set up.

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