

## CHARLES WELLS

Interview May 2005

Charles Wells is the son of William R. Wells (born June 24, 1888) and Roberta Adella (Birdie) Perkins Wells (born 1890 and died 1937). The Wells family share croppered on land by Weeden Mountain, which Charles Wells said was called Young Mountain. The location of their house was not identified by parcel on the Army Real Estate Map, but a description of the area is given.

**Where Charles Lived.** The house Charles lived in as a boy with his parents and brothers and sisters (Joseph, David, Robert, Perry, Arthur, Telette, and Nancy) had four rooms, two in the front and two in the back, and a fifth room that was the kitchen built on the right side of the back. The house was built on corner stones, had a tin roof, and 3 inch wide batten siding. The house had a fireplace that was shared between two rooms as well as a small Warm Morning heater.

A road went behind the house where they lived. Charles said he and the other boys would walk and look for “fossils—fish bones.” Nearby was an old house, on the edge of the mountain. The old house was in poor shape. Men would go there to gamble. The boards in the floor had spaces between them so wide that when the gamblers dropped coins, the coins would fall through to the ground beneath the floorboards. The boys would go up and rake under the house with a hoe. Charles noted they had buffalo nickels back then. He said once they found a half-dime when they raked.

Right behind that old house was a “huge cave.” That was how the boys thought of it back then, but in thinking about it, Charles said it would have been a sinkhole. He said you could throw a rock in it, and it seemed like it dropped a minute or two. Charles worked on RSA in the 1950s (developing double base propellants to fuel the Nike, boosters for the shuttle and bazooka type rockets for the Army) and knew that the Army had put dye in the sinkhole to see where it would come out—the dye came out in the Tennessee River close to Triana.

**Train to Huntsville.** On Saturday mornings Charles’s family would get dressed up and catch the train to go to Huntsville and shop. They would go in the morning and return in the afternoon. Sometimes they would take a mule and buggy. They did not have an automobile. There were six sons and two daughters in the Wells family.

**Home-made Clothes.** Charles’s mother made clothes from flour sacks. Charles said he was 4-10-7 because his mother used fertilizer sacks for making his underwear and sometimes the bleach didn’t get it all [the numbers] off. He recalled his mother washing clothes. His mother had a # 3 washtub, a scrubbing board, and a big black pot. She boiled the clothes in the pot over the fire and poked them with a paddle. He said his dad got their first washer. It had a little gasoline motor. During gas rationing, they used their ration to buy gas for the washing machine.