

The Daily Life of Alva Jacobs' Family in the Pond Beat Community

As a boy, Alva lived across the road from Horton School on Parcel D-179, shown as belonging to Booker T. Jacobs on the RSA Real Estate Map. Alva said his mother traded their property there to her brother, Booker T. Jacobs, for property he owned next to Cedar Grove Church (D-198). Since the parcel (D-198) is so much smaller, it is possible that Zera may have obtained the second parcel she owned, D-194, at the time of this trade. Alva was about ten years old when his mother and Booker T. made the trade.

Alva described the house on D-179. It had two rooms in the front—a bedroom on the left and one on the right. The kitchen was one room attached on the back. The house had a front porch but no back porch.

A smokehouse was in back of the house. Alva described it as a “small framed building,” and said it didn’t have a wood floor. The floor was dirt. The well was in back of the house, as was the hen house. The hen house was constructed of a tin roof and poles. It wasn’t framed.

Alva said when the trade of property was made, and Booker moved into “our house.” The house Zera and her children moved to was similar to the one on the land traded to Booker.

According to Alva, “most of us growing up didn’t have a living room.” They had chairs in the bedroom. Some people, when they got ready to eat, they took some of the chairs to the kitchen. The chairs were usually cane-bottom chairs.

When cane bottoms of chairs wore out, people would repair them. Some people cut and split hickory to make chair bottoms. Alva said:

They cut the hickory and took the bark off. You could peel that wood when it was green. It was flexible then. You cut lines down to take the strips off, and then soaked the strips in water to make them soft. The wood had to be green, which was why you used the outer layer. [Note: According to another source, the wood didn’t necessarily have to be green—some people steamed the wood to make it flexible. Hickory was preferred for its tensile strength.]

People also made their own mattresses. The ticking fabric was bought, and then straw was brought from the hay field. The ticking was sewed, and the mattress filled with straw. Some people made feather tics. The women saved the down feathers when they plucked the chickens, but not the tail feathers or the wings! The down feathers were put in a cloth bag and then in boiling water in a big wash pot to sterilize them. The bag of feathers was hung out for a number of days. This was done in the summer when the weather was nice and hot.

The big wash pot was also used for making lye soap and washing clothes. The rubbing board and the lye soap were necessary to clean clothes.