

Alva said most people killed hogs and cured the meat. In the smoke house behind their house, they hung hams, shoulders, the “middlin’” and jowls. Alva defined the middlin’ as being the meat from the center of the back around to the stomach. He said to cure the meat they cut wood chips and put them in to smoke.

Alva’s family didn’t have a refrigerator; they put milk and butter in the spring to keep it cool. Some people would put things in the well bucket to keep cool. They lowered it down to the water. Sometimes they would get ice from town and make ice cream. They made it in a washtub, using milk from the cow. They put in the ice, the salt, and more ice.

There was no electricity. People used kerosene lamps. They cooked on a wood stove. They didn’t use candles. In both Booker and Zera’s houses, a fireplace was between the two rooms in front; it provided heat, opening in each room.

Grocery Store. Alva mentioned the grocery store near Horton’s school. He knew Mr. (Arthur) Turner owned it and they went there, but he also said his mother bought things from the “Rolling Store.” Zera sold chickens and eggs to the rolling store when it came around. She traded them for salt, pepper, and sugar. If she had a little left after she traded for those, she got the kids some candy. However, Zera grew vegetables and canned them. Most food was produced at home and not bought.

Crops. Alva said they raised cotton and planted corn to feed the stock. The cotton had to be hauled all the way to Huntsville. When asked if he knew of a gin on what is now arsenal land, Alva said there was one in Mullins flat, called Bates gin. Black people took their cotton downtown. [The gin downtown was owned by the Black people—many families had certificates (shares) in it.]

Selling Turkeys. Alva’s family raised turkeys and did well selling them at Christmas and Thanksgiving. He said they would load up the wagon and take them downtown. They parked the wagon at Big Springs. Alva and his brother would stay with the wagon while his uncle walked around delivering the turkeys. Then they would go to the town square to a place where they had good hamburgers. “Colored people” went in one door of the restaurant and Whites went in another one. There was a partition between them.

Stills. When asked about stills, Alva said he knew people in the neighborhood had them because when the police came and broke them up, he could hear shooting in the woods. One area where he heard this commotion was a wooded area not far from the back of the house where he lived, in the woods that went to the creek that separated Mullins Flat and Pond Beat. [The researcher speculated this was on property owned by Kirby Cartwright, a White landowner who did not live on the land but had sharecroppers.]

Church. Zera and Dock and their family went to Cedar Grove Church.

School. Alva went to nearby Horton School. He lived by the school yard. He remembers teachers Savoy (female) McCauley and Henry Torrence. Then he went to