

LIZZIE JOINER WARD (1900-2000)

Interviewed in 1999

Lizzie (Bessie) Ward was 99 years old at the time of the interview. She was born in 1900. Mrs. Ward lived with her caregiver, Lucille Rooks, who was her niece. Lizzie Ward was in frail health. She was helped to a wheelchair to sit with the researcher for the interview. However, her mind was still clear. The researcher talked with her no more than an hour so that she did not become overtired. Mrs. Ward passed away a few months after the interview. Her life encompassed the entire 20th century and entered the 21st.

Lizzie Ward said she was born on the Timmons plantation, and so was her mother. She said her grandfather on her daddy's side was William Timmons, and "Grandma on Daddy's side was a slave. We always stayed on his [Timmons] place." She said Timmons had a white wife, but he had children by her grandmother, whose name was Luisa [spelled as Mrs. Ward pronounced it]. Asked if she remembered the name of Timmons' White wife, Lizzie thought a bit and said it was Annie Latham

Lizzie Ward said her father was Alex Joiner. Her mother was Pearlie Jacobs. She said her mother "wasn't white, but she was set aside as a free nation." When the researcher asked what that meant, Mrs. Ward responded, "That's what I was told." Due to her frail condition, Mrs. Ward wasn't pressed for further explanation. The researcher did not want to stress her. In considering this later, the researcher concluded that since Mrs. Ward didn't consider her mother White or Black, and since "set apart as a free nation" was a term used in connection with Indian land, Mrs. Ward was probably referring to a Native American heritage that was associated with Luisa.

Lizzie Ward said her mother (Pearlie Jacobs) had wanted to be buried at the Jacobs Cemetery, but she couldn't be buried there. Mrs. Ward explained:

It [Jacobs Cemetery] was near the river and the backwater came in and stood. Timmons [cemetery] was higher up. There was one little stone in the colored cemetery, my brother, Claudie Joiner. He was in World War I.

According to Lizzie, the last ones buried in the "colored cemetery" were Jim Turner, Aaron Tate, and Joe Walker.

Lizzie Ward said she was raised by her sisters and brothers. She said,

My mother died when I was two years old. She died because she had milk leg. Her milk went down her leg. She had a baby born. When the baby died, she would milk out the milk on a brick.

[Note: Milk leg is basically a form of phlebitis. The white color led people to believe that milk had gone into the leg. The medical definition is: a swollen condition of the leg, usually in puerperal women, caused by an inflammation of veins, and characterized by a white appearance occasioned by an accumulation of serum and sometimes pus in the cellular tissue. Milk leg is also a colloquial term for a painful swelling of