

Daily Life

Food. Cleophus said they raised their own food. They raised pigs, cows, and chickens. The chicken house was out back. It was a “two or three decker” with a slanted tin roof. Cleophus said, “There was tin roofs on everything—the chicken house, the house, and the barn. We had a mesh wire fence built around the chicken house.” Of course, the family also raised vegetables, which Cleophus said his mother canned.

Mother Sewed. Mother made almost everything. She didn’t make the bib overalls. We bought them at Terry’s Department Store in town.

School. Cleophus said, “We had some school. The school was closed at harvest. It started late, April or early May. And in the winter.”

Cleophus said he went first to Horton School, and then, when he moved off the arsenal to the Farley school. He said the school in Farley for Black children was white frame and had two good-sized rooms. One was for the upper grades (up to the 8th grade) and one was for the lower grades. There were two teachers. One was Dave. Cleophus couldn’t remember his last name, but he did remember Rosetta Thornton. He commented, “She was tall, thin, light-skinned, and mean as a rattlesnake.”

Cleophus said there was a tree in the yard, and in the open field, somebody had put up a seesaw and swings. It was right across the road from Farley school for White children (the location of the current Farley school). Cleophus commented, “They had everything on their playground.” The researcher asked if they [the Black children] ever went over to play on that playground after school was out and the White students had gone. Cleophus stated, “We didn’t go on that property. We walked home. They rode the bus. They would taut us, call us names, Nigger and stuff.”

Recreation. When asked what people did for recreation, Cleophus said, “I had four older brothers and three sisters. We always had fun.” Trying to think of what would have been recreation, he came up with the occasional trip to town, drinking (for some people), and listening to the radio. Cleophus said the following (categorized by the author).

Going to town to the Gin:

We didn’t have a car. We didn’t have a car until 1947. We had a horse and wagon. [Did you go to town?] Once in a while. In the fall, when we were picking cotton, we’d take a bale to the gin in town. Daddy would take me along. It was three or four miles out of Huntsville on Lilly Flag. [Was that near the Fleming community?] Yes. Somebody broke in his house and killed his [Fleming’s] wife. The story ran for months. That was probably about 1941 or the beginning of 1942.