

Wesley Thomas was visited in the home of his son, John Thomas. He wanted to tell about his life and how he came to move to the land that is now the arsenal. His story provides insight to life as it was in the 1930's. Many of those who came to rent or sharecrop on the arsenal may have had stories similar to his. This is the story of Wesley Thomas as he told it:

The Thomas clan lived all around Spring Valley. When I was in junior high there, we made a deal with the school to cut the firewood one summer. We cut the wood for winter, for \$1 a cord. I was going to have some Christmas money.

I had an older sister married and lived in Tuscumbia. She worked at Lucille's Beauty Parlor. She was a Mrs. Mitchell. She said, "Go by Lucille's and get a doll for Ruby Shelton Thomas." After getting my shoes half soled, I like to wore them out that day.

I walked to town. I got me some cartridges for my pistol [fire crackers], went by Lucille's and told them about the doll. "It's at my house," she said." Fine with me. It was far out there to her house. So I said, "Fine with me," because I'd already walked 12 miles to Tuscumbia, and I went home.

Mother was at the door. I guess she saw me coming. I told her the circumstances. She said, "Well, I guess that baby won't have anything for Santa Claus to bring her tonight."

The woman lived out on the far edge of town. I walked back 13 or 14 miles that night.

The Move to Limestone County

We moved to Limestone County to the old Mason Farm where the nuclear plant is in 1932. We were about to starve to death. Then there was an old gent down at Littleville who rented the farm. He'd done pretty good in lumber, so he rented the Mason farm for 60 bales of cotton, and he subleased it [to us].

He financed us. Every week my mother sent him a list of groceries we needed. When we sold the crop, we'd give him a fourth.

A couple of gentlemen had bought farmland, 3000 acres in Limestone County, from First National Bank in Birmingham. He leased 1,500 acres of it. Mr. Swinea had the other 1,500 acres that he rented. [...and this neighbor had a daughter, who Wesley met and married.]