Mississippi Folklife

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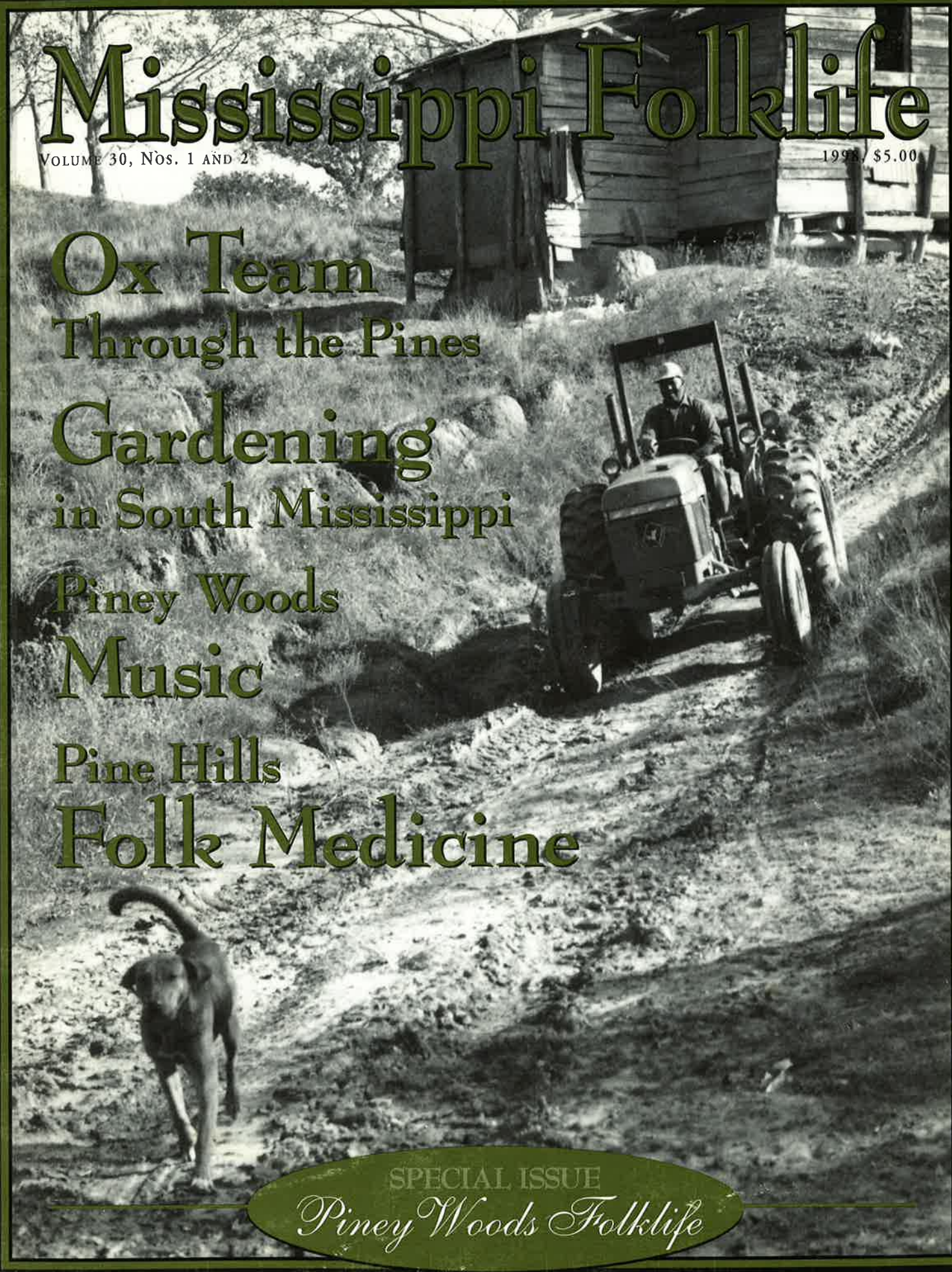


Ox Team Through the Pines

Gardening in South Mississippi

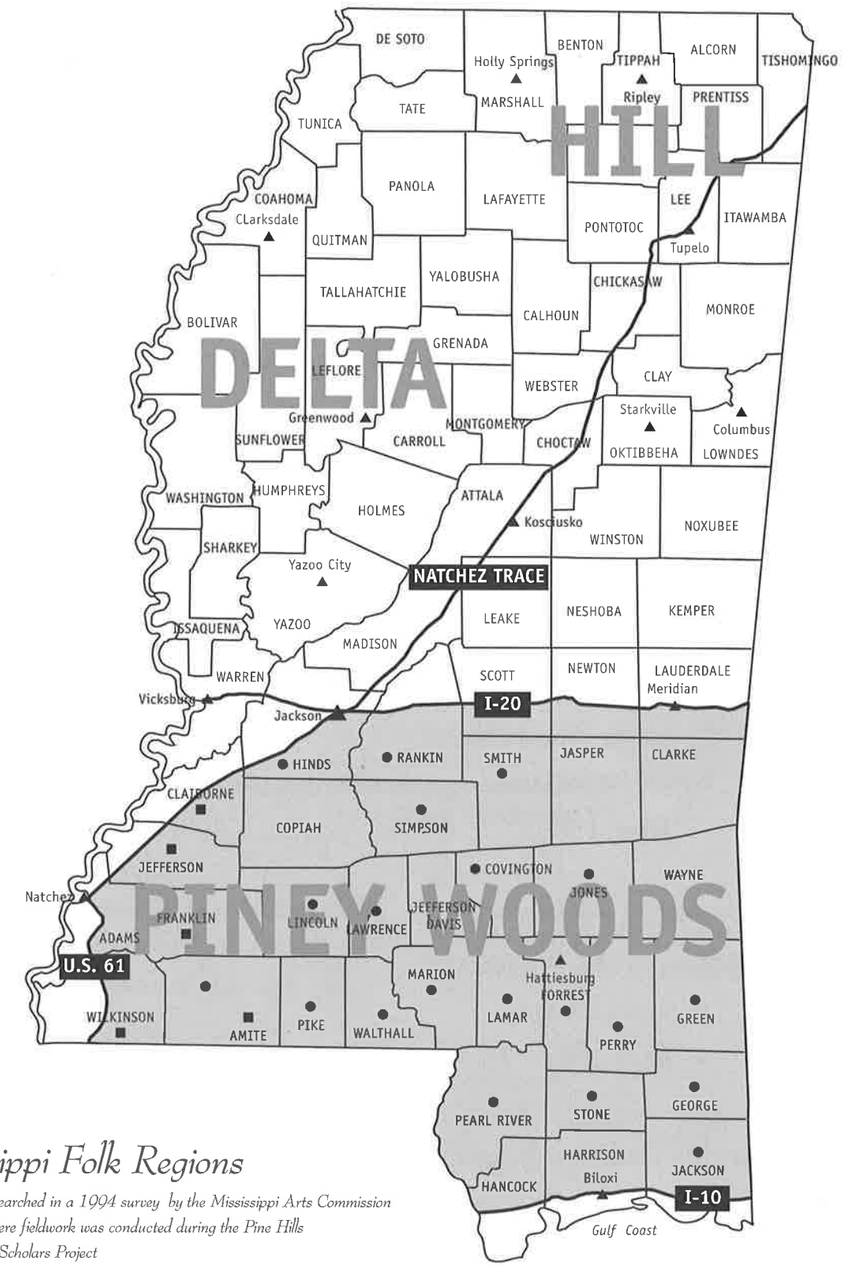
Piney Woods Music

Pine Hills Folk Medicine

SPECIAL ISSUE

Piney Woods Folklife

FOLK REGIONS OF *Mississippi*



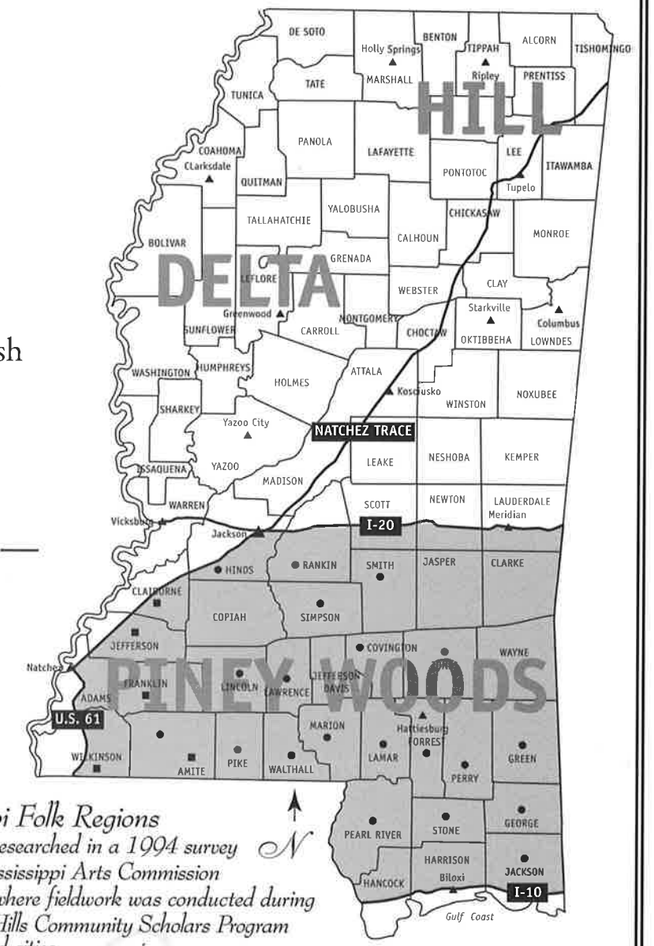
Mississippi Folk Regions

- ■ *Counties researched in a 1994 survey by the Mississippi Arts Commission*
- ● *Counties where fieldwork was conducted during the Pine Hills Community Scholars Project*
- ▲ *Towns and cities*

SPECIAL ISSUE
Piney Woods Folklife

C O N T E N T S

features



Mississippi Folk Regions
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- ● *Counties where fieldwork was conducted during the Pine Hills Community Scholars Program*
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From the cover: Abraham Hunter on his land near Woodville. Photograph by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Commission.

departments

Editor's Note

JUST AS SCHOLARS who write about the American South often emphasize that there are "many Souths" so must we remember that within the state of Mississippi we can find many distinct cultural regions. Among the frequently discussed cultural regions of Mississippi, the Piney Woods is a very distinct region with a long and unique identity.

This special issue of *Mississippi Folklife* presents a very diverse look at the south Mississippi region. Carolyn Ware, a folklorist with the Pine Hills Culture Program at the University of Southern Mississippi, prepared the issue with the help of colleagues and students at Southern Mississippi. I am very grateful to Carolyn for her stellar work and for bringing us a much-needed, focused publication of the traditional life of the Piney Woods. While I have no statistical evidence to support such a claim, I would argue that the Mississippi Delta and the northeastern hill country of Mississippi have received an inordinate amount of attention from folklorists and other cultural historians. Cultural regions like the Piney Woods have received less attention. The Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage and its Pine Hills Culture Program at Southern Mississippi certainly are providing much needed research, interpretation, and community programming to bring new insights to Mississippi folk culture

As this issue of *Mississippi Folklife* heads to the printer I am finishing up my last semester in Oxford before moving to North Carolina where I will be Director of the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. I began editing the *Mississippi Folklore Register* while I was on the faculty of Delta State University. When I moved to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture we changed the name of the publication to *Mississippi Folklife* and the format to more of a special interest magazine. While I will be living in the Piedmont of North Carolina I will continue my own documentary interest and work with Mississippi folk culture. And *Mississippi Folklife,* now in the fifth year, will continue to be published by the Center for Study of Southern Culture. As a project of the Center, *Mississippi Folklife* has benefited greatly from the interdisciplinary academic program in Southern Studies. Graduate students in Southern Studies have contributed articles, edited submissions, searched for appropriate photographs, and written and recruited book reviews. Several graduate students have contributed to this special issue on the Piney Woods. Sarah Torian, a graduate of our M.A. program, and Caroline Herring, who graduates shortly, lent their energy and sharp perspectives to help shape this issue. And as always, Karen Glynn provided needed help with picture research. But certainly the majority of this issue is the result of the vision and work of Carolyn Ware, Charles Bolton, Shana Walton, their students and others at the University of Southern Mississippi. I thank them for their valuable leadership and scholarship, and for letting us collaborate with them on this issue of Mississippi Folklife.

Tom Rankin

Mississippi Folklife

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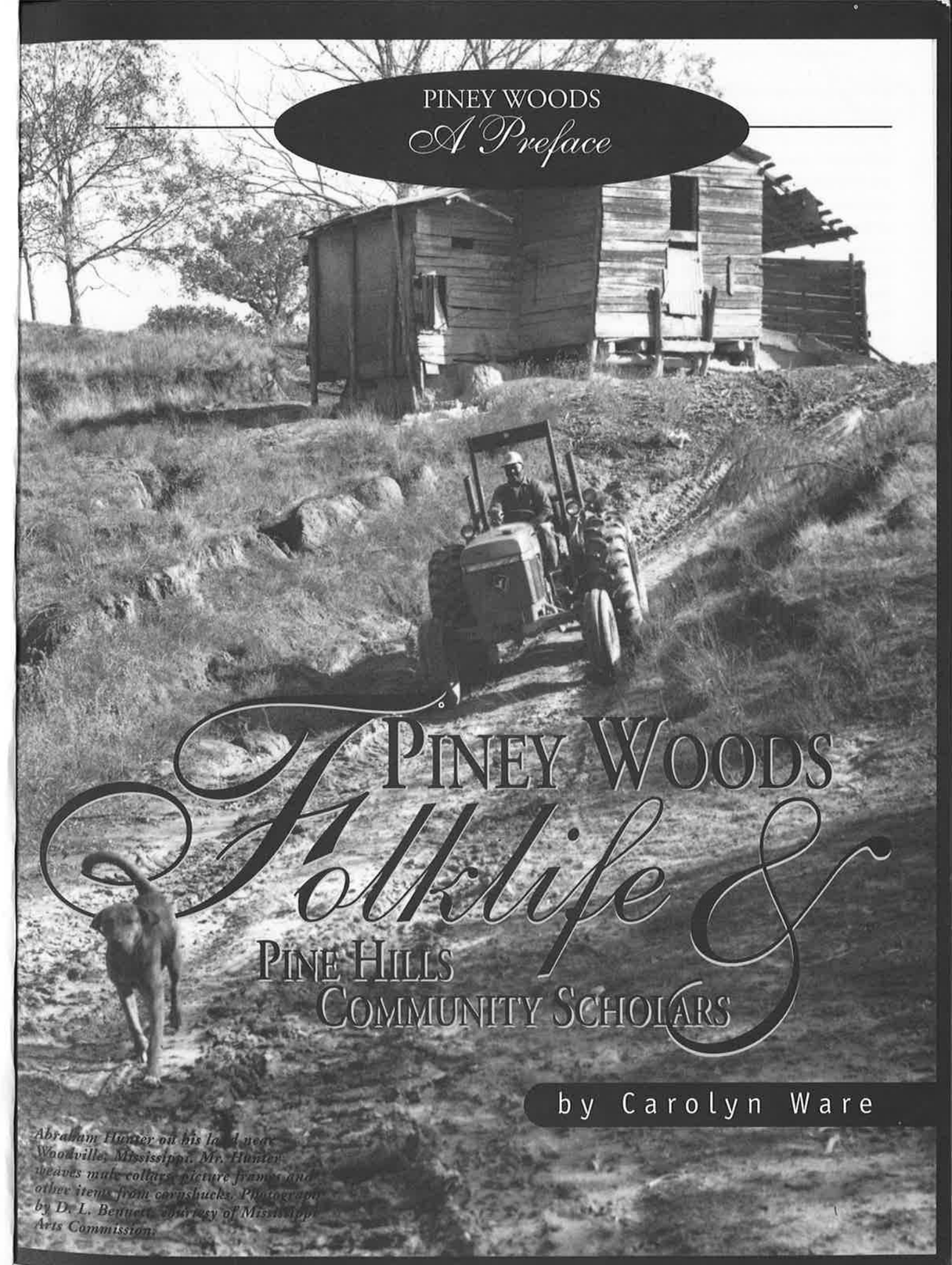


PINEY WOODS *A Preface*

PINEY WOODS *Folklife* & PINE HILLS COMMUNITY SCHOLARS

by Carolyn Ware

Abraham Hunter on his land near Woodville, Mississippi. Mr. Hunter weaves mule collars, picture frames and other items from cornshucks. Photograph by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of Mississippi Arts Commission.

This issue of *Mississippi Folklife* focuses on the history and folk culture of Mississippi's Piney Woods (or Pine Hills) region. The state is often divided into four cultural areas: the Delta, the Hills of northeastern Mississippi, the Gulf Coast, and the Piney Woods of southern Mississippi. Each of these areas refers not only to geographic features but also to a different culture area.

Mississippi's Piney Woods region extends from Interstate 10 to Interstate 20, and from Highway 61 to the Alabama border, encompassing all or part of thirty-five counties. It is part of a larger Piney Woods region that crosses state boundaries to include parts of Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas.

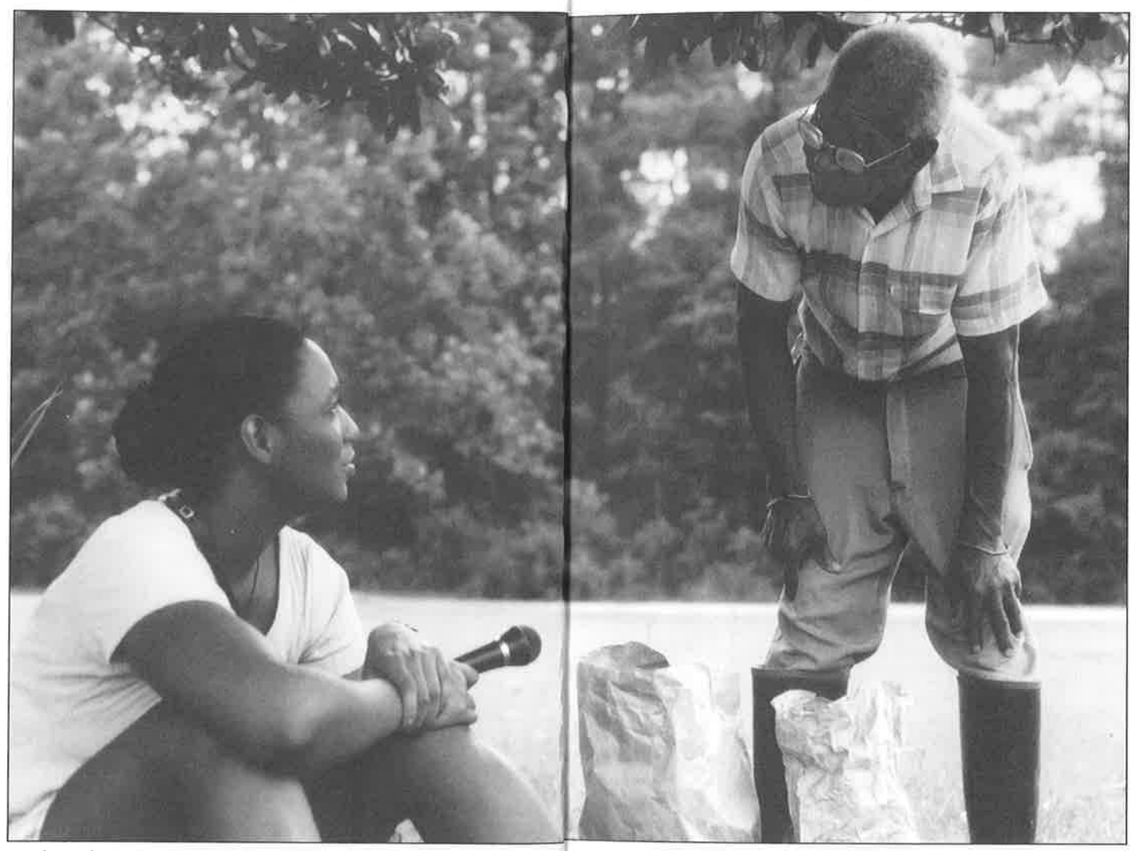
This largely rural area was settled primarily by Anglo-Americans (mainly Scots-Irish) and African-Americans, but it is also home to smaller communities of Choctaw, Lebanese, Greeks, and Syrians. Most residents are Protestant, but there are many other religious groups such as Mennonites, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, and Old German Baptists in Mississippi's Piney Woods Order.

The Piney Woods has a distinctive regional culture that is deeply rooted in a sense of place and shared history. Many of its traditions are common to people throughout the upland South: customs such as quilting, canning, and gospel music are widespread, for example. Other traditions are particularly characteristic of (if not necessarily unique to) the Piney Woods. The region's folklife has been shaped by its history, its mix of peoples, its geography, and its traditional occupations, among other things. The importance of logging, herding, and the railroad industry in the region is still felt. Ox team contests remain popular at community festivals, people still raise Piney Woods cattle, and residents tell stories about life in logging camps in the past. They still sing songs about the railroad, and make mailboxes from railroad signals. The prominence of religion and family in local culture is also evident in the continued popularity of revivals, homecomings, Fifth Sunday singing, dinner on the ground, and singing conventions.

Piney Woods folklife has a texture and taste of its own. Traditional skills, sayings and stories, and certain ways of doing things shape everyday life here. Gospel music, bluegrass and blues; crafts such as cornshuck weaving, making baskets of white oak or pine straw, and making gourd birdhouses; gardening and canning fruits and vegetables; and traditional dishes such as teacakes, barbecue, mayhaw jelly, biscuits with sausage, cornbread, and fried catfish, all remain vital traditions in the region. Piney Woods folklife also includes occupational traditions such as logging and sawmill work; home remedies such as pine top tea and hog's hoof tea; and community events like fish fries, fiddle contests and bluegrass festivals, and family reunions.

These are only a few examples of the many traditions maintained by families, churches, occupational groups and communities in Mississippi's Piney Woods. Many of these customs are shared by most residents of the region. At the same time, the region's various cultural groups have also maintained distinctive traditions within their own communities. Thus, Choctaw River cane basketmaking and stickball, Lebanese *kibbe,* Greek *baklava,* and the celebration of Juneteenth are all part of local culture.

The Piney Woods has a rich and vital folk culture that—like all folklore—is constantly changing and adapting. Yet the region remains one of the South's least documented areas. This volume is intended as a first step toward presenting a fuller view of the region's traditional culture. It is not meant to provide a comprehensive view of Mississippi's Pine Hills culture. Much fieldwork remains to be done; many traditions and folk artists remain undocumented. However, this publication does offer a wide-ranging look at the complexity and resilience of regional culture as viewed from the perspectives of community members and artists, academic scholars, and public folklorists. The following articles and profiles describe a few of the region's many folk traditions, and introduce some of the people keeping them alive.



Andrea Abrams interviewing Leslie Varnado for Pine Hills Community Scholars Program. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

Pine Hills Community Scholars

This special issue focusing on Piney Woods culture is one result of Pine Hills Community Scholars, a documentation project by the Pine Hills Culture Program. This project was designed to provide a more in-depth and comprehensive view of Piney Woods folklife, building upon existing folklife research by other organizations such as the Mississippi Arts Commission, the Mississippi Folklife Project, and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

The Pine Hills Culture Program is part of the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. It was founded in 1996 to document, preserve, and present information about Mississippi's Piney Woods region to the public. An important part of its mission is assisting communities to integrate folklore and folk art into local projects, museums, schools, festivals, and other public presentations.

The community scholars program took place during the summer of 1996. Its aim was to teach people to identify and document their own communities' traditions and artists, and then to present this research to the public through various means, including exhibits, public programs, and local festivals.

Twenty-two community scholars from across southern Mississippi met over three weekends in June and July to learn the basics of conducting folklife fieldwork and oral histories from instructors Charles Bolton, Shana Walton, Deborah Boykin, John Miller, and Carolyn Ware. The community members were joined by five University of Southern Mississippi graduate students enrolled in Dr. Walton's field research seminar.

Next, community scholars and students developed fieldwork projects in their own communities. Each chose a particular aspect of folk culture or an oral history subject, and then interviewed and photographed individuals who carry on these traditions. Topics ranged from Choctaw basketmaking to storytelling, catfish farming and downhome cooking, woodcarving, gardening, old-time fiddling, quilting, singing schools, home remedies, and dinner on the ground. In several cases, community members and graduate students teamed up with community scholars to research shared interests.

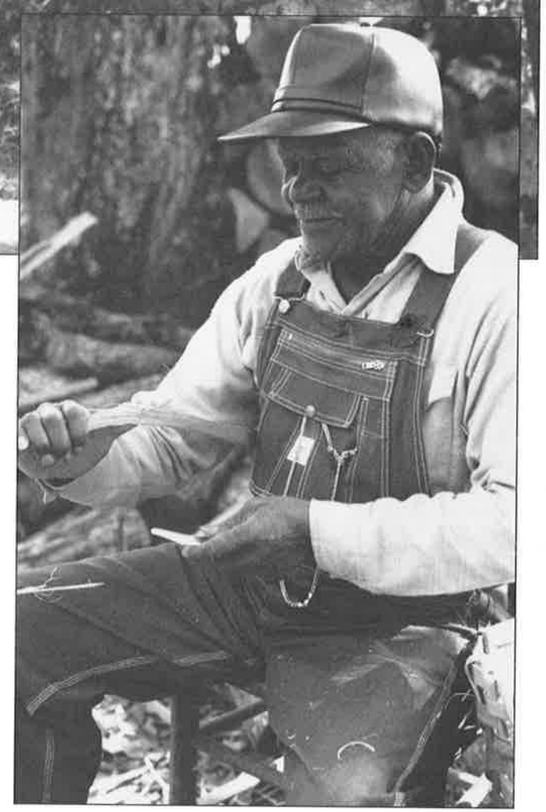
Their fieldwork provided the basis for a series of public and school programs, and a traveling exhibit titled *A Taste of Pine Hills Traditions.* The exhibit visited ten communities in the region during 1997, before returning to Hattiesburg where it is permanently installed at the Walthall Center.

This volume, based largely upon interviews conducted for the project, reflects what community scholars felt was important to document about their own culture. All of the contributors participated in the field school as stu-

Right: Cliff Temple Baptist Church Quilters, Natchez, Mississippi. Above: Oak Grove Baptist Church in Woodville, Mississippi. Photographs by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of Mississippi Arts Commission.

dents, community scholars, or instructors, although some authors draw upon ongoing research projects. Most of the photographs were taken for the Pine Hills Community Scholars project; other photos are courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Commission and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

The issue is divided into two parts. The first section consists of eight articles on different aspects of Piney Woods folklife. The second part, *Piney Woods People and Traditions,* offers a more personal introduction to the region's diversity through brief profiles of some of the people and groups documented. Many of these profiles are written by community scholars based on interviews with people they know well, often relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers. Other profiles are written by Program Coordinator Carolyn Ware, based on tape



Above: W. C. Nickey, Bogue Home, Jones County. Photograph by Martha Garrott. Right: Split Oak basketmaker Richard Thompson. Photograph by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of Mississippi Arts Commission.

recorded interviews by community scholars and on her own fieldwork on regional traditions.

We thank the Mississippi Arts Commission, the Mississippi Humanities Council, the Crosby Memorial Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Community Folklife Program, the University of Southern Mississippi, the Walthall Foundation for their support of the Pine Hills Culture Program, the community scholars project, and this special issue of *Mississippi Folklife*. We are also very grateful to Tom Rankin for his generous cooperation in producing and editing this volume. And finally, we thank all of the community scholars, students, and instructors for their hard work in making this project successful.

Contributors

Jennifer Abraham is a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Andrea Abrams is a doctoral student in Anthropology at Emory University. She previously did graduate work at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Carolyn Beech is a first grade teacher in Pearl River County and has a master's degree in Education. She is an active member of the Poplarville Storytelling Guild.

Charles C. Bolton is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Mississippi.

Deborah Boykin is Archivist and Cultural Planner for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw. She previously served as Folk Arts Director for the Mississippi Arts Commission for seven years.

Jeramé Cramer is a graduate student in Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University. He participated in the Pine Hills Community Scholars Program while studying at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Eloise Jones, a retired nurse, is a member of the Hattiesburg Area Historical Society and of the South Mississippi Genealogical Society.

Jacq Jones is president of the Hattiesburg Area Historical Society and a member of the Hattiesburg Historic Neighborhood Association.

Henry Ledet is Director of the Lincoln Lawrence Franklin Regional Libraries and past president of the Brookhaven Trust for the Preservation of History, Culture and the Arts.

John Miller, an Instructor in the English Language Institute at the University of Southern Mississippi, has conducted field research on place names and sawmill traditions. He has published articles on place names, language, and the Okatomi River.

Damian Morgan is a freelance photographer and frequent contributor to Hattiesburg's *Advertiser News*.

Cheryl Romayne Rape is a librarian for the Liberty Public Library and a columnist for *The Southern Herald*.

Pamela R. Taylor is Director of Alumni Affairs at Tougaloo College.

Carolyn Ware received her doctorate in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania and is coordinator of the Pine Hills Culture Program.

Valerie Wells is Editor for Hattiesburg's *Advertiser News*.

Irmgard Wolfe is Preservation Librarian and Cataloguer at the University of Southern Mississippi, where she is a graduate student in Anthropology.

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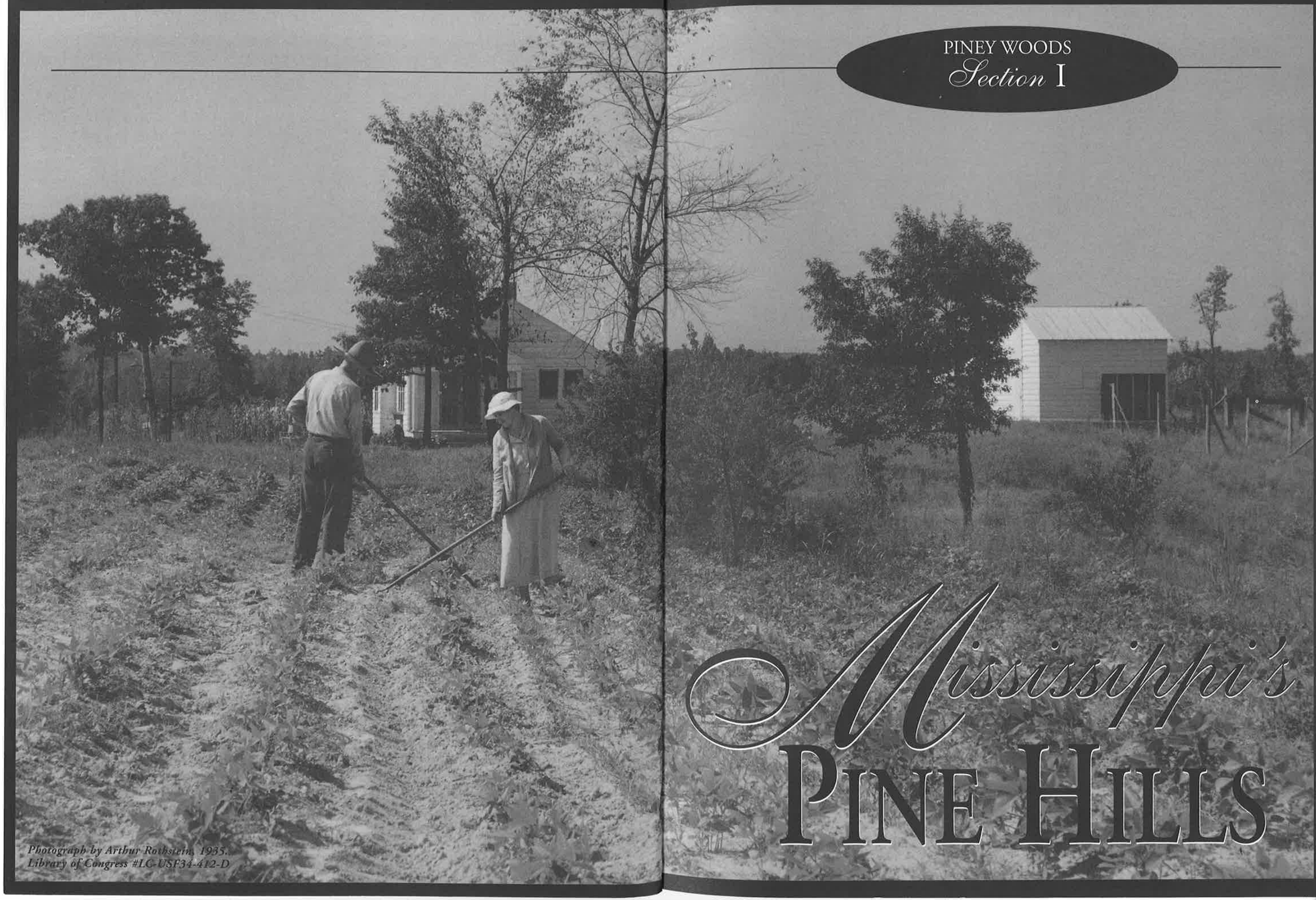
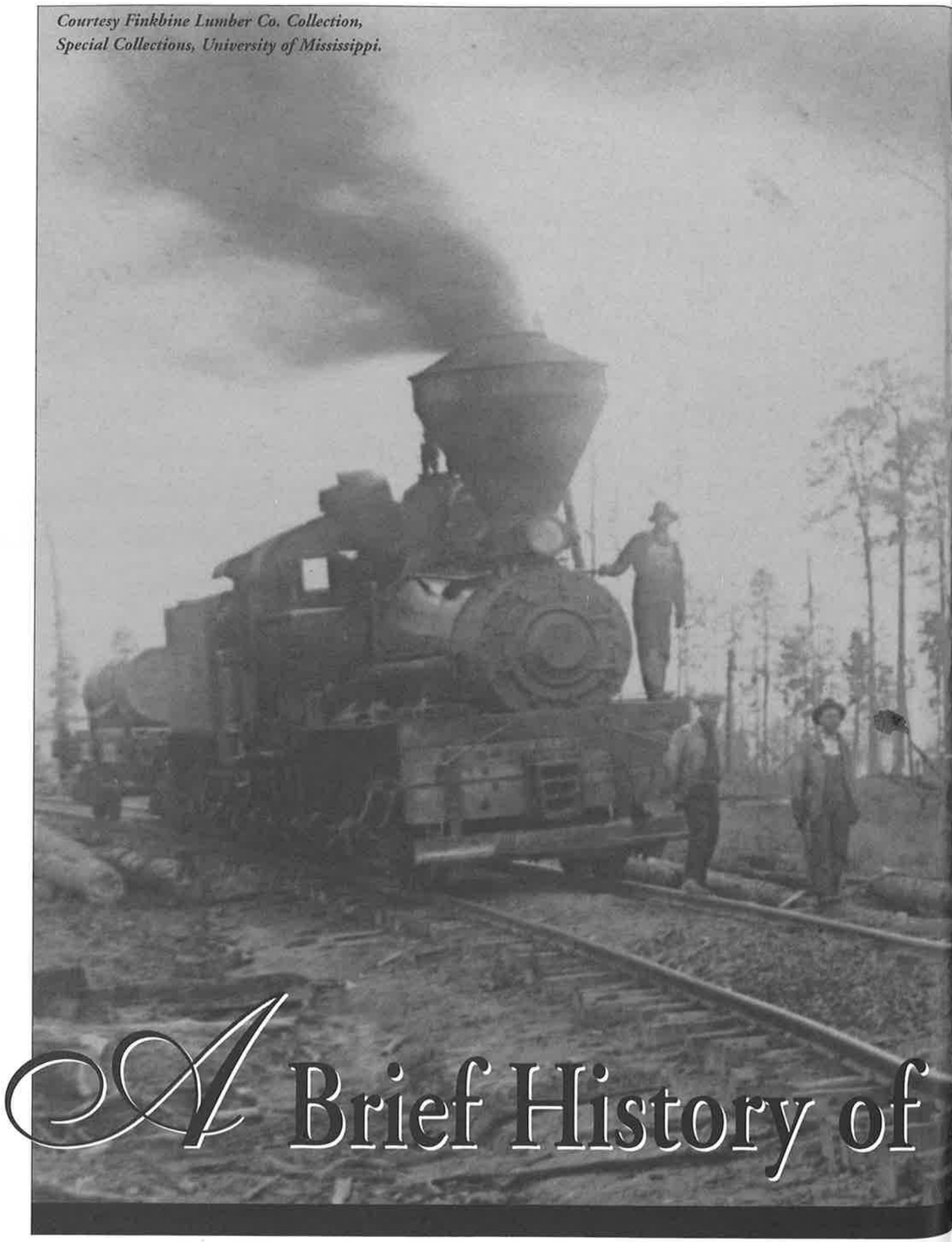
- Deborah Boykin
- John Miller
- Shana Walton
- Carolyn Ware

PINEY WOODS
Section I



Photograph by Arthur Rothstein, 1935.
Library of Congress #LC-USF34-412-D

Mississippi's PINE HILLS



Courtesy Finkbine Lumber Co. Collection, Special Collections, University of Mississippi.

A Brief History of Mississippi's Pine Hills

by Charles Bolton

The Pine Hills of Mississippi is part of a larger distinct geographical region that stretches from south Georgia to east Texas. The area is characterized by gently rolling hills (averaging an elevation of three to five hundred feet above sea level), longleaf pine trees, and a sandy clay soil that is productive but not rich. Because of this geography, the historical development of the Pine Hills diverged in important ways from other subregions of the South.

In fact, some of the most typical notions of the "South," such as antebellum plantation slavery and postbellum sharecropping, played little role in the Pine Hills' evolution. At the same time, this locale has shared many attributes common to the larger South: ruralism, widespread poverty, and racial conflict.

Like much of North America, the Pine Hills of Mississippi was originally home to native Americans. Part of the Choctaw tribe initially settled in south Mississippi, establishing a number of villages on the Leaf and Chickasawhay Rivers and their tributaries. These largely autonomous settlements practiced subsistence agriculture—supplemented by hunting and gathering—for centuries before the arrival of Europeans in the eighteenth century. But more than a century of contact with the market economy of the Europeans and Americans created Choctaw debt and dependence, destroyed the hunting-horticulture subsistence economy of the tribe, and eventually led to the cession of practically all Choctaw land to the U.S. government. Although most of the Choctaws were removed to Indian Territory in Oklahoma following the land cessions of the early nineteenth century, hundreds stayed behind. Today, those Choctaws that resisted removal have grown to over seven thousand, have reconstituted their tribe as the Mississippi Band of Choctaws, and continue to occupy a number of settlements in east-central Mississippi, including one in the Pine Hills, the Bogue Homa community.

Courtesy Finkbine Lumber Co. Collection, Special Collections, University of Mississippi.

White resettlement of Mississippi's Pine Hills began in the early nineteenth century after the 1805 Treaty of Mount Dexter, in which the Choctaws ceded four million acres of south Mississippi land to the U.S. government, and after the War of 1812, when foreign claims to West Florida were definitively extinguished. Settlers of Scots-Irish ancestry from Georgia and the Carolinas initially flooded into the area; by 1820, Mississippi's Piney Woods had a population of ten thousand, two thousand of which were African-American slaves. But many of these first residents soon moved further north to the new and more fertile Choctaw and Chickasaw cessions opened in the early 1830s. Consequently, by the time J.F.H. Claiborne visited the area in the early 1840s, he could describe the area as sparsely settled and a number of former county seats as virtual ghost towns. This characterization was essentially accurate. In 1860, for example, Jones County contained just over four hundred families, while a hill county farther north, such as Tishomingo, was home to almost twenty-five hundred households.

Most of the residents living in the Pine Hills after 1840 were white nonslaveholders. Given the relatively poor soils of the area, it is not surprising that plantation agriculture did not flourish in south Mississippi. While some settlers built small family farms, most turned to livestock herding to make a living. Most herders did not bother to purchase the land their herds ran on; in fact, homesteaders did not claim much of the land in the Pine Hills until the 1870s. Most livestock tenders in the region did grow a stand of corn and a vegetable garden on a piece of unclaimed land, but they focused most of their efforts on maintaining and increasing the size of their livestock herds. Perry County's Henry Dearman was a fairly typical resident. In 1850 although he possessed no land, he had fifty cattle and eighty hogs grazing on the open range of the pine forests. Every year, herders like Dearman would gather a segment of their livestock from the forests—identified by brands registered at the county courthouse—and drive them to markets in Mobile, New Orleans, or the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Antebellum travellers visiting the Piney Woods described the local population as a group of lazy and unambitious people who came to the region to avoid the more bustling cotton economy that characterized much of the rest of the South. Certainly, the herding lifestyle required less work than that of staple-crop agriculture, though not necessarily less risk. Despite the perceptions of travellers like Claiborne, the stock tenders of the Piney Woods likely did not come to the region to avoid the travails of the cotton economy. Nor were they drop-outs from antebellum society trying to recapture some idyllic Celtic pastoral world. They were apparently as keen on making a profit as any cotton farmer who came to the Old Southwest frontier. As historian Bradley Bond has pointed out, if the Piney Woods livestock herders had been seeking a life free of the vagaries of the emerging market economy, they would have raised more corn and less livestock, for many herders probably did not plant enough grain to cover family subsistence needs. But they continued to raise huge herds throughout much of the antebellum period, hoping to make up the shortfall in food through the profits from selling their livestock.

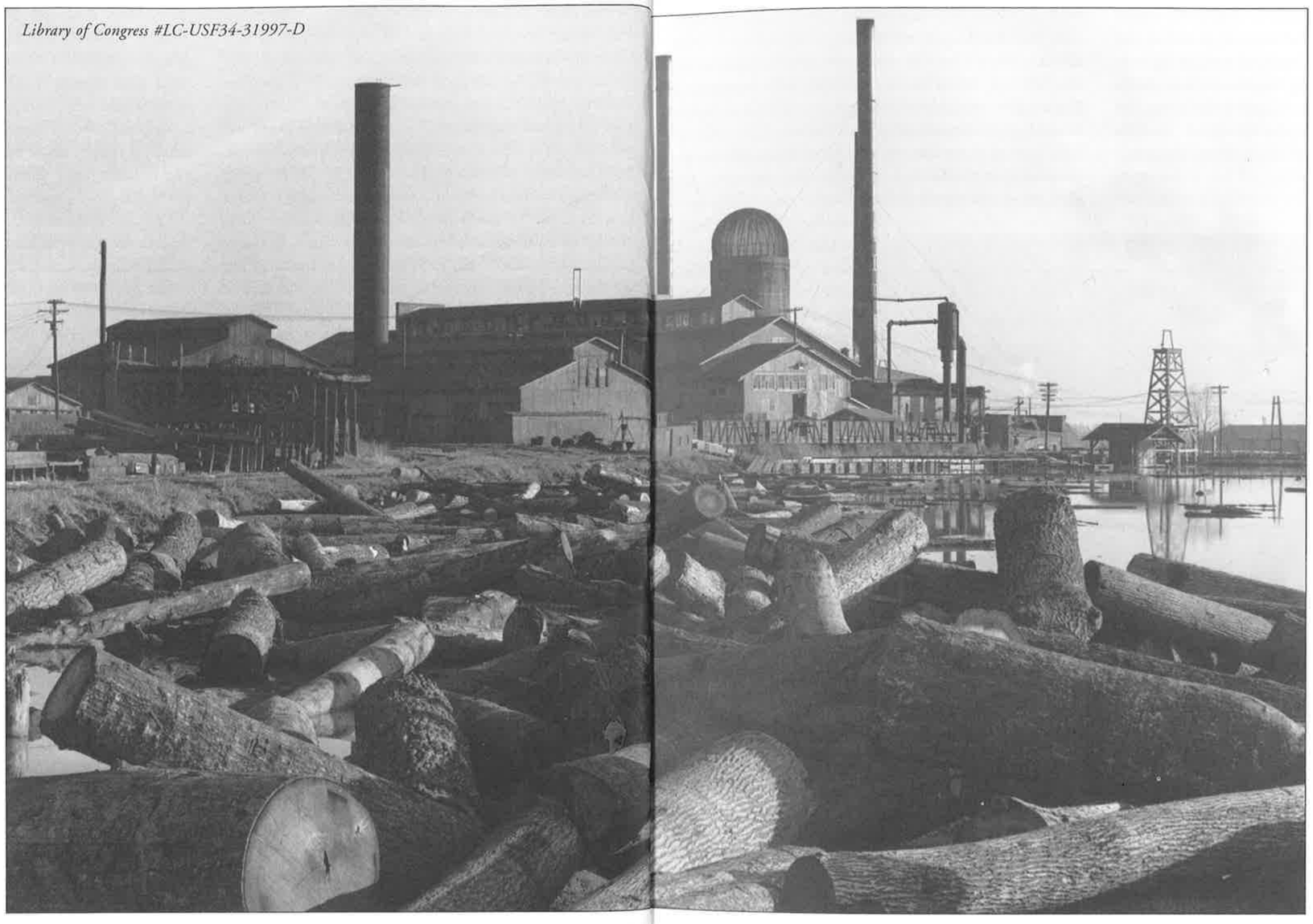
The livestock culture continued to be important in south Mississippi for more than a century; in fact, much of the area preserved the open range until the 1960s. As early as the late 1850s, however, the herding culture of the Piney Woods was already giving way to a new type of work, cutting native pine trees and shipping the logs via local creeks and rivers to sawmills on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Although lumbering was already important to the economy of south Mississippi by the time of the Civil War, technological and transportation improvements after the war accelerated the maturation of the area's timber industry. By the turn of the century, a labyrinth of rail lines crisscrossed the Pine Hills and provided the means for transporting the region's pine trees to northern markets. At the same time, the development of tools such as the band saw, the steam skidder, and steam log loaders eased some of the rigors of an inherently labor-intensive operation. Since the Pine Hills was sparsely settled and even many of those occupants merely camped on public land, speculators (many from other states) rushed into the pine forests to take advantage of the profits to be made from clear cutting the forests. For instance, one Michigan speculator, Delos Blodgett, acquired 721,000 acres in south Mississippi (most of it in present-day Pearl River County) during the 1880s. Blodgett and other lumbermen with smaller holdings had virtually cleared the area of pine trees by the 1920s. The rapid, clear-cutting of the Pine Hills forest can obviously be attributed to greed, but local and state tax policies also contributed to this rapid deforestation. High taxes on standing timber made landowners move quickly to cut the valuable trees down and discouraged them from establishing any plans for reforestation.

Courtesy Finkbine Lumber Co. Collection, Special Collections, University of Mississippi.

At the peak of the timber boom, Mississippi was third in the nation in lumber production, with two-thirds of this output coming from the Pine Hills. Little of the wealth generated by this harvesting of the Pine Hills forest actually benefited local residents, but the cutting of the forest altered the economy of the region permanently. For one thing, cities and towns, such as Hattiesburg, McComb, Brookhaven, Laurel, Picayune, and numerous other smaller villages sprang up on the railroad lines to service the growing industry, bringing an initial wave of urbanization—with all its problems and opportunities—to the previously-isolated Piney Woods.

After they cut out most of the trees, some landowners tried to sell out to small farmers, but as in earlier years, few saw much promise in farming the relatively-poor soils of the Pine Hills. Other owners, such as L.O. Crosby of Pearl River County—who in 1916 acquired much of the Blodgett tract—sought alternative uses for their land. The Crosby family experimented with growing a variety of fruit trees on their cutover land but ultimately found the greatest success raising tung trees, the source of an oil used in paints and other chemical concoctions. When foreign production of tung oil dried up during World War II, L. O. Crosby Jr. and other tung growers succeeded in making the tung industry the cornerstone of Pearl River County's economy, transforming the county from one of the state's poorest in the 1940s to one of its most affluent by the mid-1950s and, in the process, providing jobs for hundreds of whites in local tung mills and thou-

sands of blacks as tung pickers. Tung-based prosperity, however, was short lived, as the industry declined in the 1960s due to competition from new foreign producers in South America and a devastating hurricane in 1969 that wiped out an entire year's crop. Still other landowners, including the Crosby family, eventually started growing new pine trees, perhaps the most suitable use for the south Mississippi land. A change in state tax policy and improved technology made reforestation and second-growth timber production increasingly more viable. In 1940 Mississippi passed a severance tax law, which provided for the taxation of trees only after they were severed from the land. William H. Mason of Laurel perfected a process before World War II for manufacturing building materials from young, second-growth pine trees (the origins of the Masonite Company still in operation in Laurel), and in the 1960s, another procedure made possible the manufacturing of plywood from Southern pine (previously Douglas fir had been used). Today, the fast-growing trees of the third, fourth and fifth forests of south Mississippi are producing as much timber as the first forest ever did. The production process, however, is now almost completely mechanized, and the ownership of the forests still resides largely in the hands of outsiders, now primarily multinational corporations such as Weyerhauser or International Paper.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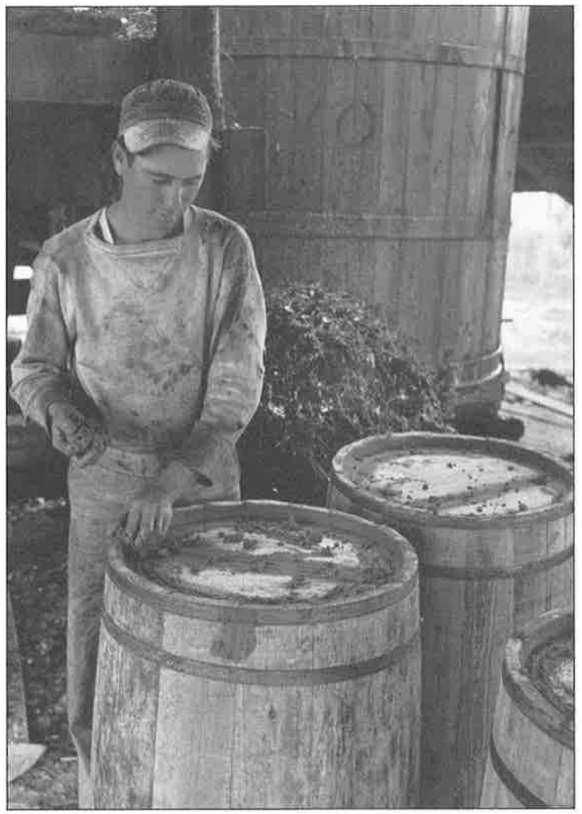
While livestock and especially timber remain important to the economy of the Pine Hills, since World War II the region has also benefitted from the infusion of federal money as part of the military-industrial complex associated with World War II and the subsequent Cold War. The location of facilities such as Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg—the largest National Guard training center in the nation—and Stennis Space Center in northern Hancock County has pumped capital into an essentially poor region and has boosted the performance of at least part of the Pine Hills' economy.

Since the economy of the Pine Hills was never focused on plantation agriculture, the area has always remained a white-majority area in a state that was for much of its history a black-majority state. During the antebellum period, south Mississippi had few African-American residents. Virtually no free blacks lived anywhere in the state (only 773 of 437,404 blacks were free in 1860), and most of this small population was concentrated in Natchez, Vicksburg, or Jackson. The slave population of the Piney Woods was also small; only about 20 percent of area families owned slaves, and most of these slaveowners held less than five bondspeople. Most of these enslaved blacks worked as herders or sawyers rather than agricultural laborers. While the work of Piney Woods slaves was probably less demanding than that of their Delta counterparts engaged in clearing and working cotton plantations, slave life in the Pine Hills also had its own particular negative attributes. For one thing, slaves in south Mississippi probably came into closer contact with their masters, sometimes eating at the same table as their masters or even sleeping under the same roof. While such arrangements might have sometimes offered better living conditions than the often meager provisions of plantation life, such intimate contact also meant closer supervision of daily life than that experienced by plantation slaves. In addition, slaves in white-majority districts such as the Pine Hills received none of the community support and fellowship that sprang from the slave communities of the plantation districts.

Because of the small African-American population in the Pine Hills before the Civil War, the region experienced little of the racial turmoil during the Reconstruction years that accompanied black emancipa-

tion and black political mobilization. While the federal government's actions in most of Mississippi during the late 1860s and early 1870s centered around how or whether to support the fledgling Republican party in the state (primarily supported by African Americans), the U.S. government's main concern in the Pine Hills focused on keeping timber thiefs from denuding public land.{1}

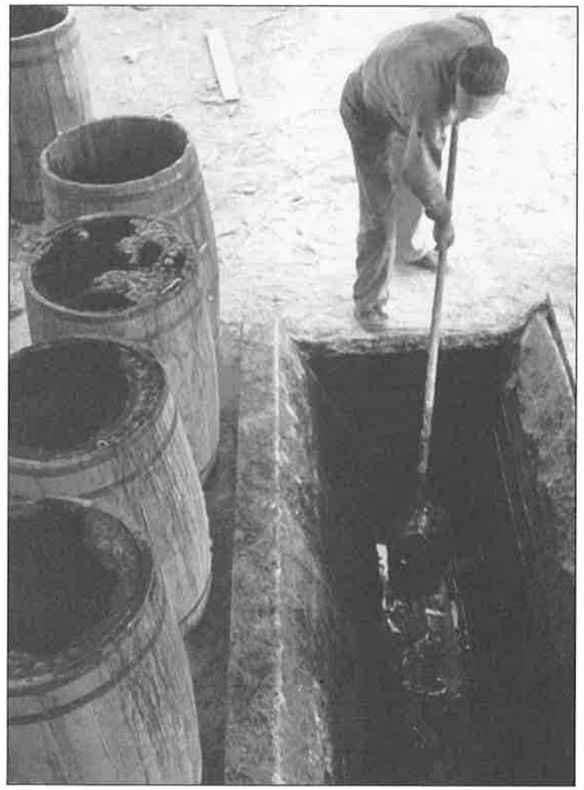
The black population of the Pine Hills increased during the late nineteenth century as African Americans migrated to the area looking for work in the expanding timber industry. Local whites were not always anxious to attract these black timber workers, but other attempts, such as efforts to attract European immigrants, generally failed. Some foreign immigrants who came to south Mississippi stayed, forming the nucleus of the various small ethnic communities still living in the region today, but most left the region as quickly as they came, disdaining the locale as too hot and too dry (in terms of the availability of alcoholic beverages, not the condition of the soil). Freedpeople, however, were looking for jobs other than farming, and they proved hard-working and reliable. African-American workers eventually toiled in all aspects of the timber industry, though they were especially concentrated in the turpentine operations that accompanied the logging of the pine forests.



Turpentine still, Stateline, Mississippi. Photograph by Russell Lee, 1939. Library of Congress #LC-USF 33-11905-M1.

This migration of African Americans into the Pine Hills took place against the backdrop of perhaps the darkest period of race relations in the state's history—the era of segregation, disfranchisement, and racial violence. While the Pine Hills experienced this nadir of race relations just like the rest of Mississippi, race relations were different in the Pine Hills compared to other parts of the state, such as the Delta. On one level, fewer numbers of blacks often meant less confrontation. Whites in south Mississippi, for instance, never viewed voting by African Americans as the serious problem Delta whites did for the simple reason that blacks in the Pine Hills never had the numbers to affect politics in any major way. At the same time, greater economic equality between black and white in the Pine Hills oftentimes sparked racial violence. For example, in the Pine Hills, among those blacks who farmed, the majority were owners rather than tenants, unlike the pattern throughout the rest of the state. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, secret bands of whites known as whitecaps reacted to this evidence of black independence by terrorizing black landowners and some tenants as well, killing at least a dozen African Americans and running scores more off their land. Racial tensions also grew particularly intense during economic hard times. During the depression of 1907-1911, the competition for jobs in the south Mississippi timber industry became intense, and the rivalry often pitted impoverished whites against equally poor black workers. For instance, when a Lumberton sawmill responded to the economic downturn by cutting wages, whites walked off the job in protest. The mill hired black workers at a reduced wage, but the white workers soon returned with guns to force the black workers to leave the mill. Like other parts of the state, the Pine Hills enforced a strict code of racial segregation, even in the numerous temporary labor camps that housed the black and white workers of the timber industry.As in other parts of the South, segregation, disfranchisement, and racial violence ultimately drove thousands of blacks from south Mississippi during the first half of the twentieth century, making the area even more of a white man's country.

Ultimately, the kind of paternalistic race relations that characterized the Delta was simply not possible in the Pine Hills. In the Delta, a white upper class ruled over an impoverished black mass by a system of distributing and withholding favors and privileges, imposing an oppressive system on African Americans but one in which racial control was often tempered by a sense of noblesse oblige. The Pine Hills, however, had little experience with slavery (the institution that spawned paternalistic social relations), many blacks in the region did not need white benefactors, and many area whites were in no economic position to bestow benevolence on anyone. The result was that race relations in the Pine Hills were imbued with more emotion and intensity than in the Delta, and the conflicts that did occur in south Mississippi were often extremely violent.



Scooping up the resin from settling vat, resin is then poured into barrels for shipping, Stateline, Mississippi. Photograph by Russell Lee, 1939. Library of Congress #LC-USF 33-11905-M1.

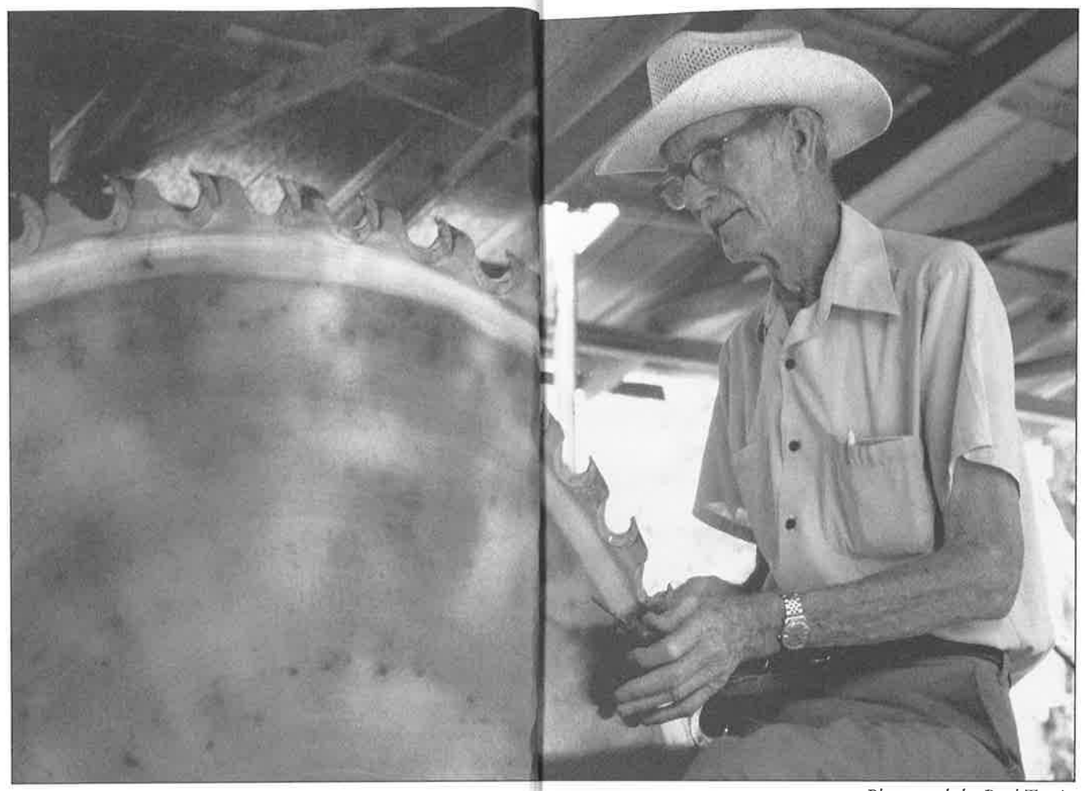
In many ways, the civil rights era bears out this difference in race relations between the Delta and the Pine Hills. Even though most of the civil rights protests in Mississippi took place outside of the Piney Woods, the highest incidence of Ku Klux Klan violence in the state during the 1950s and 1960s took place in some of the Pine Hills' predominantly white counties. The lynching of Mack Charles Parker in Poplarville in 1959 served as a warning to south Mississippi's black population that any attempt to alter the racial status quo in the wake of the *Brown* decision would be met with a swift and violent response. Of course, Delta whites also used violence against local blacks who supported civil rights, but the Delta opponents of the black freedom struggle also used more subtle and less violent forms of persuasion, such as the Citizens' Council, which harassed black civil rights supporters through economic intimidation, a tactic less available to the white community in the Pine Hills, where a greater degree of economic equality had always existed between the races. Even in those Pine Hills communities that had very active local movements, such as Hattiesburg or McComb, at least part of the violence surrounding civil rights' protests involved white resentment over the relative economic prosperity of local blacks. In Hattiesburg, Vernon Dahmer, a flourishing farmer and businessman, was killed for helping local blacks register to vote. The mixed-race and relatively independent community he came from, the Kelley Settlement near Hattiesburg, had long aroused the suspicion of local whites. When local NAACP activists in southwest Mississippi invited SNCC workers to organize a voter registration drive in 1961, the effort met with violent resistance. The most notable casualty of this early civil rights drive was Herbert Lee, who was shot in broad daylight in Amite County by a sitting state legislator, E. H. Hurst. Although Hurst clearly objected to Lee's civil rights involvement, Hurst and Lee had also grown up together, and Hurst apparently har-

bored deep resentment over Lee's ability, as a black man, to achieve a measure of economic success.

The economic and racial differences that existed between the Pine Hills and other parts of Mississippi, such as the Delta, also had a political component. As early as 1809, the white nonslaveholders who settled along the Pearl River, where most of the early Pine Hills communities were concentrated, petitioned Congress to have their district separated from the Natchez district, which was dominated by wealthy, slaveowning cotton planters. Although Congress denied this petition, Pine Hills residents had good reason to believe their interests diverged sharply from those of the Natchez nabobs, who dominated the Mississippi constitutional convention of 1817 and used their inordinate influence in state government to ensure that projects such as internal improvements catered primarily to the needs of the river counties. The constitutional revision of 1832 diminished the power of Natchez planters somewhat, but a political rivalry continued to smolder between the plantation districts of Mississippi and the hill sections of the state—both the Pine Hills and the hill district in northeast Mississippi—well into the twentieth century.

Not even the Civil War totally smoothed the sectional antagonisms of Mississippi politics. Many in the Pine Hills lamented the conflict as a "rich man's war and poor man's fight." Some Pine Hills men simply could not spare four years from the duties associated with providing for their families to fight in distant battles. For example, a group of Marion County volunteers claimed they were willing to fight in the war "if we could get time in the spring to make bread for our families."{2} Others, however, actively fought against the Confederacy. In Jones County, Newt Knight organized the Free State of Jones, a haven for Confederate deserters and southern unionists for much of the war. In Greene County, a group of nonslaveholders declared in 1861 "that they will fight for Lincoln when an opportunity offers." The group's leaders, the McLeod brothers, called Jefferson Davis "a murdering scamp & traitor" and compared the slaves to the children of Israel and said they were meant to be free.

After Reconstruction and the establishment of a one-party state in Mississippi, two factions developed within the Democratic party that continued the long-standing political rivalry between the plantation counties and the Hill districts of south and east Mississippi. With African Americans virtually eliminated from the political life of the state, the economically prosperous, racially patrician, and politically conservative Delta sought to exercise power over the economically poor, racially emotional, and politically populist Hill sections of the state. For much of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Delta interests prevailed, but after the progressive political reforms of the early twentieth century, especially the introduction of the direct primary in 1902, the Hills managed to elect some of their champions to office in the early twentieth century, most notably James K. Vardaman and Theodore Bilbo. Bilbo, a native of Pearl River County, served two terms as governor and later went to the U.S. Senate in the 1930s. He gained power by appealing to the common men of the Hills through a crude discourse purposely calculated to offend the elite sensibilities of Deltans and by railing against the timber companies and railroads that oppressed the plain folk of the Pine Hills. Bilbo and Vardaman, however, were not all blustery rhetoric. Both pushed through important reforms that improved the lives of at least the white population of the Hills, with measures such as corporate regulation, changes in the tax code that benefitted the average



Photograph by Paul Travis.

Mississippian, better rural roads, and improved support for white public education. This intraparty Delta/Hills competition continued until the civil rights revolution undermined one-party rule in the South, though class issues receded by the 1920s and 1930s as both factions eventually adopted the general tenets of business progressivism. When the Republican party reemerged in the 1960s, white-majority areas of the state, such as the Pine Hills, made the move to the Republican party—the political organization least associated with black civil rights—with relative ease.

The history of Mississippi's Pine Hills suggests that the South, and Mississippi, has had many faces. Not all of them conform to the popular images of what constitutes "the South." But livestock tenders, lumber barons, black landowners, and politically progressive (for whites-only) "rednecks" are as much a part of Mississippi's past as the more familiar antebellum slave plantation and the post-bellum cotton cropper.

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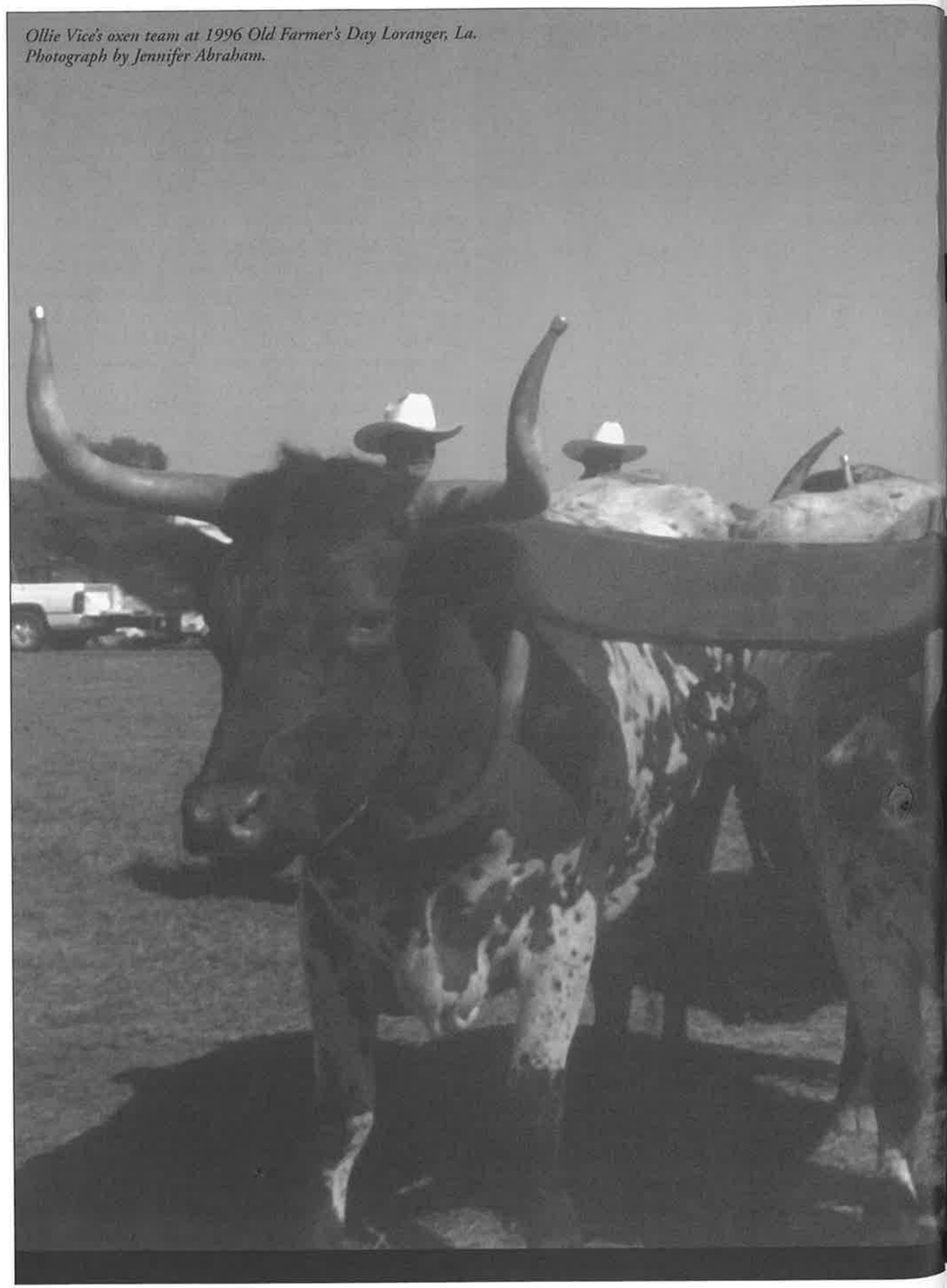
FOOTNOTES

{1} On the four rolls of microfilm of Letters Received by the Department of Justice from Mississippi, 1871-1884, M970, Record Group 60, General Records of the Department of Justice, National Archives, Washington, D.C., most of the letters discuss the chaos surrounding Reconstruction, but practically all of the letters from south Mississippi deal with questions surrounding the issue of timber rights to federal land.

{2} William J. Rankin to Governor John Pettus, June 12, 1861, Governor's Record, Record Group 27, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.



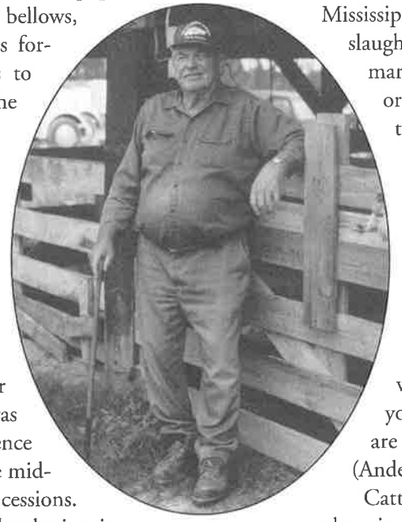
Ollie Vice's oxen team at 1996 Old Farmer's Day Loranger, La.
Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

Been Driving an Ox Team through the Pines

by Jeramé Cramer

Piney Woods community festivals often feature competitions of ox-team driving, an occupational skill once important among loggers but no longer necessary in today's more mechanized timber industry. Stories of life in the logging camps half a century ago are also a popular kind of regional folklore. Although the timber industry has changed greatly over the years, ox-team driving and logging camps remain symbolically important in the region. University of Southern Mississippi student Jeramé Cramer's article on ox-team driving gives us a valuable historical perspective on Piney Woods occupational folklore. Over a six- month period, he interviewed members of several families from Forrest, George, Jackson, and Perry counties who share a long history of raising, caring for, and working oxen. He talked with older men who once worked as ox drivers, as well as with several individuals who still maintain the tradition of ox driving and related crafts such as yoke making and blacksmithing.

"Whoa Henry! Whoa Spot! Whoa I said!" and 8,000 pounds of power come to a halt. Two huge oxen, paired by a wooden collar or yoke, are linked to two other pairs of oxen by iron chains. The oxen wait for a voice command from the ox-team driver, who stands on the left hand side of the team. The oxen, each of which weighs almost 2,000 pounds, stand poised. The driver surveys the forest floor and then pops his leather ox whip in the air and bellows, "Let's go Henry!" The team lurches forward slowly and the driver begins to navigate the eight oxen through the pine canopy.



The use of oxen by humans spans thousands of years and several continents. From approximately the mid-1800s to the 1940s, oxen were a familiar sight in the Piney Woods of southern Mississippi. Oxen were the most common work animals on farms and in the logging woods, especially for families of lesser economic means. The use of oxen was widespread among the rural subsistence farmers who settled the region in the mid-to-late 1800s after the Choctaw cessions. Nollie Hickman, in his history of lumbering in the longleaf belt titled *Mississippi Harvest,* states that "Ox driving was one of the oldest occupations in the back country" (1962:132).

Oxen were used to work both the "po-folk" farms of southwestern Mississippi and—from the postbellum period onwards—African American family farms. Both black and white families regarded the horse and even the mule as luxuries. One Lamar County farmer, Edward Vesley, recalled neighbors gathering at a home to admire a horse that had been purchased by a local farmer when he was a child.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century, the "woods cow" was essential to subsistence for many rural farmers in south Mississippi. A woods cow could be milked, slaughtered for beef and hide, driven to markets on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, or "broke" in order to be used as an ox to plow a garden or pull a wagon. Ollie Vice said, "We used to milk them old Piney Woods cows when I was a boy. That is where we got our milk" (Vice 6/23/96). Forrest County resident Reverend I.O. Anderson, now 85 years old, recalled, "I would use the single yoke for working him [an ox] to a wagon or to the plow or whatever you want to pull by hisself. Some ox are better than mules plowing" (Anderson 9/23/96).

Cattle, unlike horses or mules, were prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1840, for example, "no fewer than twenty-five of the thirty-two counties of southern Mississippi contained more than four times as many beef cattle and hogs as people. Greene and Perry counties had thirteen times as many cows and pigs as people; Jones and Smith counties had nearly eleven times as many" (McWhiney 1988:69).

In Mississippi and elsewhere in the South, large herds of cattle were permitted to roam across an open range until the 1930s (McWhiney 1988:61). This practice of open range herding permitted cattlemen to graze their cattle on the tall prairie-like grasses that grew under the virgin longleaf forest canopy.

Another explanation offered for the prevalence of cattle and oxen in the Pine Hills region is that the early European settlers brought many of the cultural features of their Old World farms to the southern American frontier (McWhiney 1988). The remote, rolling hills of the deep South allowed the transfer of many traditional pastoral practices from Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and rural England, such as open range herding and the use of oxen. According to McWhiney, "Throughout the eighteenth century much of Scotland was open range. A visitor reported that Highlanders opposed enclosures as 'a much more expensive way of grazing their Cattle than letting them run as they do in the Hills'" (McWhiney 1988:58).

Possible African influences on Southern herding practices are often overlooked because of the misconception that slavery destroyed all vestiges of African culture. However, many African groups also possess a long pastoral history. Rural African American farms in the deep South share many of cultural and structural features with rural white farmsteads (see Westmacott 1992, for example.)

Ollie Vice, a life-long resident of Helena, Mississippi, raises oxen as his father and uncle did before him. Ollie uses some of his seventy head of local "Piney Woods cattle" as oxen. In an interview with the author, he stated that wild cows were found throughout the woods of southern Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. These cattle, known as "Piney-Woods Red Stroke" or "Florida Cracker Cattle," resemble Texas Longhorns but have a shorter horn span.

Left: Ox team driver Ollie Vice outside his stable in Helena, Mississippi. Ollie Vice learned to make ox yokes from his father as a boy, and still makes yokes and bows from his father's patterns, using locally found black gum for the yoke and hickory for the bows. Photography by Jennifer Abraham. Above: Bruce Conway making an ox yoke in Richton, Mississippi. To make a yoke, Mr. Conway draws the pattern from memory onto a piece of wood that has been squared off at the sawmill. Here, he measures out and marks the pattern on a piece of black gum. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

Ox driver Bruce Conway comes from a long line of drivers. His grandfather, James Jefferson Conway; his father, Bura Conway; and two uncles were all ox drivers. Bruce said of Piney Woods cattle, "They are a native cattle that's been here since, I guess, since the Mayflower. The original old cattle. They have always been known as 'Piney Wood Scrub' or 'Red Stroke'" (Conway 8/2/96). Although the Columbus expeditions may not have introduced cattle into the southern region of the United States, the wild "woods cows" probably did originate in early Spanish expeditions in the region and in French colonization in Louisiana and Mississippi (Clark and Guice 1996).

Local cattlemen defined an ox as simply a castrated male animal, a steer. But most drivers have a more specific definition. They insist that the word "ox" implies a male cow that obeys and understands voice commands. South Mississippi ox drivers established a cultural definition that distinguishes a cow from an ox. Ollie Vice defined an ox as a "castrated male and you to got break them, learn him. You yoke him up and go to working them" (Vice 6/23/96).

Bruce Conway stated, "I start breaking them when they're about six months. I can break a pair where I can drive them in about three months." When asked how he breaks an ox, he responded, "Well, that's a hard question to answer. I just start working them. The

first thing I do is catch them and tie them and teach them to stand tied and gentle where they don't run off when I walk up or fight me.... Then I yoke them and let them get used to wearing the yoke. And soon as they get used to wearing the yoke and walking together, then I start trying to drive them, and I put a restraint on them where if they try to run off, I can restrain them. First of all, you should teach them to walk without running off with a restraint, which is a halter and lead rope. Then you learn with a halter and lead rope to go by voice commands. Voice command is what drives them" (Bruce Conway 8/2/96).

Rev. I. O. Anderson holding a single ox yoke used to hold one ox rather than a pair. Rev. Anderson made this yoke 30 or 40 years ago from black gum, and did the metalwork himself. Photograph by Jeramé Cramer. Opposite (top): Ox team hauling pulpwood, Mississippi. Photograph by Dorothea Lange, 1935-1938. Library of Congress #LC-USF34-17703-C. Opposite (inset): Speckled Piney Woods cow. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

Voice commands, like those used with mules, guide the oxen left, right, forward, backwards, and to a halt. Teams of two to thirty oxen, especially the front "lead pair," are navigated through the pine canopy by voice command, using both words and tone. I.O. Anderson said of ox driving, "Ox, like I said, you had talk to them. You couldn't guide them like you did a horse, they could go back 'Gee, Haw, Back,' or something like that. 'Back, go back, Tony!' I would tell him like that. I'd say 'Whoa!' and he would stop. 'Let's go Tony!' I talk to him like talking to somebody more than anything else" (Anderson 6/23/96).

Each ox in the team is given a name. "They all have a name just like you have a name and they know it as well you know yours. They learn it," according to Reverend Anderson.

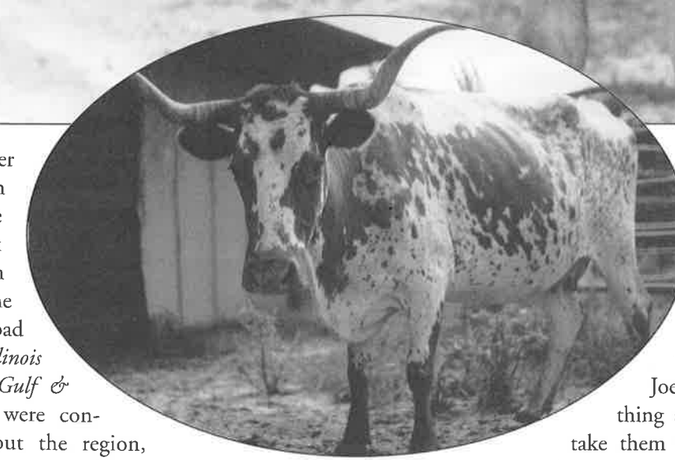
Bruce Conway's ninety-six year old father Bura Conway described driving a team: "You call them by name and tell them to get up. Call his name and he'll abide by it. You want to go to the right, you tell them, that's them lead or head oxen, 'Back Spot! Get back Spot!' and he'll turn to the right. And if you're calling them to you, you say 'Whoa Spot! Whoa Spot!' and motion the whip and he will come back to you" (Conway 7/14/96).

This study of ox drivers in southern Mississippi revealed that they learned team driving informally, usually by observing an uncle or father. Drivers began learning the craft as children by watching and assisting. Often, by the time they reached the age of eight or ten (in Reverend Anderson's case) or at twelve (like Bura Conway), they were driving a pair of oxen on their own.

All of the ox drivers interviewed arranged their teams in a similar manner. The oxen need to be "matched" or "paired with a companion" (Anderson 6/23/96). If a team has four pairs of oxen, or "four yoke," the first pair is the "lead," the second pair is the "first swing," the third is "second swing," and the rear pair is called the "tongue if you were pulling a wagon, or if you are pulling logs, it's the chain steers," Bruce Conway explained (Conway 8/2/96). The rear pair often included the largest and strongest oxen in the team. "You put your big steers on the tongue of a wagon because they have to hold that wagon downhill and the bigger they are the better they are.... Normally, you put your smaller ones in the front because they're faster, but depends on which pair you got trained well enough to be in the front. They're the lead. Wherever they go, the rest of them are going to follow. If they are pretty well receptive in learning, fast and smart and listen, they make the best leads" (Bruce Conway 8/2/96).

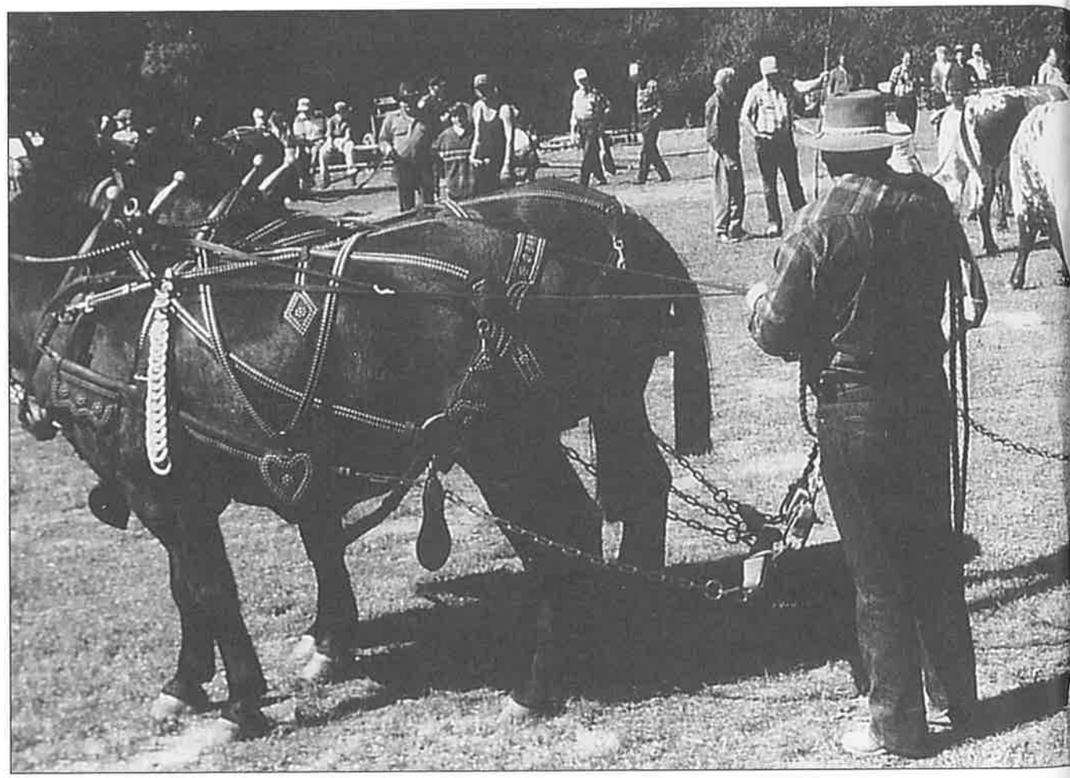
During the 1840s, commercial forest industries dependent on water transportation appeared along the coastal shoreline of the Gulf of Mexico, and along streams and rivers emptying into the Mississippi Sound (Hickman 1986:79). Jackson County resident Ollie Vice, and ninety-six year old George County resident Louis Habard, both observed that timber was initially cut adjacent to the creeks and streams so that it could be pegged together into "cribs" and rafted down rivers to mills on the Gulf Coast.

As the land adjacent to rivers and creeks such as the Pascagoula River and Black Creek was cleared, timber was cut from deeper in the interior, then carried to the bank's edge by ox cart (Hickman 1986). During the 1880s, major railroad lines such as the *Illinois Central* and the *Gulf & Ship Island lines* were constructed throughout the region, and these became the main form of transportation of timber. Although horses and mules were used to haul felled trees from the logging woods to the dummy line, most lumber companies used oxen to remove timber because of their strength and relatively low cost, and because of the topography. Oxen were especially useful in the swampy and boggy conditions found in the hardwood bottomlands of south Mississippi. In a 1976 interview with Orley Claudill, Joe Refer said, "Another thing about oxen, you could take them in the woods on soft ground. You see, you can't work a mule on soft ground; they're scared of mud and their feet are little. But, you can take an old ox and he's not scared of it, they're a woods animal. You can put one out in a swamp where the mud is that deep and he can't pull too much in that mud, but he'll go through it and pull every pound he



can in there. They can get around in the woods, over logs or anything. They're a woods type. Woods is natural for a cow, you see; or that type of cattle. These things that we've got in these pastures [today], he might break his neck if he was out in the woods now against a big log; they don't know nothing about it, but in them days they was." (Refer 1976:12).

Oxen became a valued resource and skillful drivers were hired on contract or directly by the mill owner to haul lumber from the forest. Cattlemen raised ox teams for use in the "log woods." If an individual did not have a team, he could rent one. From the 1920s to the 1950s, Reverend I.O. Anderson's father, Vic Anderson, owned between 130 and 150 oxen that he rented out. Vic provided yokes and chains, but the renter was responsible for feeding and maintenance of the oxen. Reverend Anderson recalled, "If a horn was broken it was twenty dollars extra, an eye out was an extra fifty dollars" (Anderson 9/23/96).

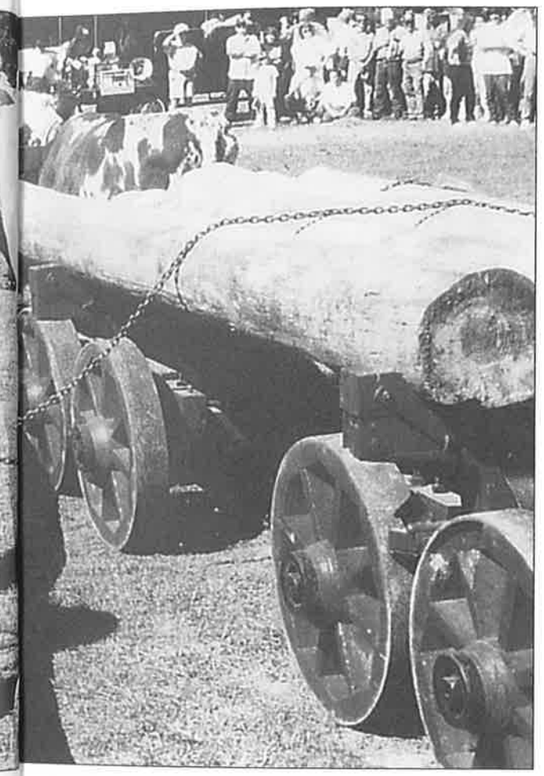


Mule and oxen teams at the Pecan Festival in Richton, Mississippi. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

Timber barons brought with them a system of capitalism and economic abuse. As oral historian William Montell states regarding the lumber industry in the upper South, "The exploitation of local timber resources resulted in the introduction of twentieth-century economic standards into an area of previously self-sufficient households" (Montell 1986:192). The plain folk farmer of the Piney Woods and recently freed African Americans sought steady wages and what was often the only employment available, logging. They brought with them occupational crafts and skills from the farm or plantation.

Like many of the workers in the log woods, nearly 50 percent of the ox drivers in south Mississippi were African American (Hickman 1986; Reid 1996). Ox drivers in southern Mississippi at the turn of the century earned approximately a dollar to two dollars a day for hauling timber.

The drivers often worked in lumber camps and at night kept their oxen in ox lots, roped-off corrals in the log woods. "The thing I remember so clearly about growing up in the camp was them big oxen," said Lawrence county resident Willie B. Reid (Reid 1996). Most of the older ox-team drivers recalled stories of growing up in a lumber camp. Ollie Vice said, "I spent half my life in a log camp. I remember being just a boy and sitting next to my uncle in the camp car" (Vice 6/23/96).



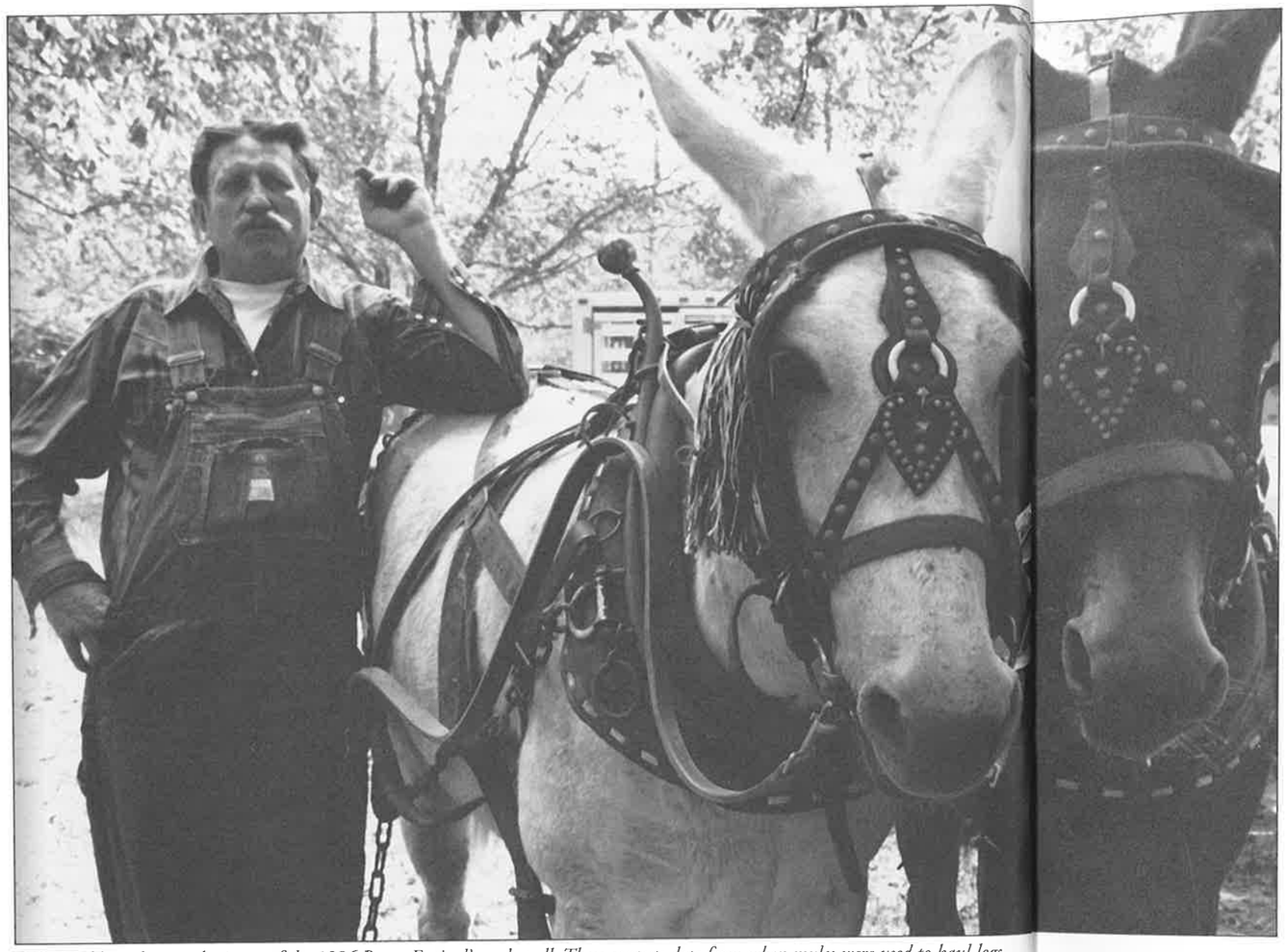
Timber camps housed ox drivers, log sawyers, cooks, and other log crews as well as their wives and children. These camp communities were completely mobile. Some workers lived in "houses on wheels," which were simply railroad boxcars converted into living quarters and placed along the rail spurs. Mrs. Reid described her family's camp car as being approximately ten by twenty feet in size. It consisted of three rooms connected in a L shape, with a tarp hanging between the flat roofs to form a walkway (Reid 1996). The logger in the woods still maintained a vital link to the family farm, and camp residents recall traveling from farm to timber camp and back again to the farm.

Oxen initially hauled timber in a large two-wheel cart, later in a four-wheel wagon, and eventually in the eight-wheel Lindsey Log wagon built in Laurel, Mississippi in the early 1900s (Habard 11/2/96). Logs were loaded onto the wagon by separating the lead pair of oxen and then hooking them to a chain and log, which was pulled up a pair of skid poles. Drivers noted that some ox teams were so well trained they could arrange themselves in order.

Occupational crafts such as blacksmithing and woodworking were important in the log woods. Most of the ironware used in logging had to be hand-forged, yokes had to be hand-cut, and logging equipment such as the Lindsey ox wagon had to be restored and rebuilt frequently. Rural farmers brought many of these skills from their homes into the logging camps. Bruce Conway stated that "everything on my father's team was hand-crafted except for the chain" (Conway 8/2/96). Bura Conway and Vic Anderson purchased the majority of their yokes, tongs, and hooks from Ed Fairley, an African American blacksmith from Brooklyn, Mississippi. When he was younger, Reverend Anderson crafted several yokes from local black gum and bows out of hickory, using a foot adze.

Bruce Conway learned to make ox yokes and to blacksmith from observing Ed Fairley. Bruce can construct seven different sizes of ox yokes from memory. "You select wood which is not knotted, and straight, and at least five foot long. I'll cut it and take it to a sawmill and have them square it, and then I draw it out and cut it out from memory" (Conway 8/2/96). Ollie Vice cuts the neck shape for ox yokes out of black gum, using one of his father's two yoke patterns which are over a century old. The smaller pattern is used for young oxen, and the larger for full grown oxen. Ollie Vice also blacksmiths all of his iron rings, staples, and hooks, as well as restoring Lindsey log wagons and two-wheel log carts from memory.

Ox bows are inserted through holes in the yoke. Once in place, they wrap around the neck of each ox and lock into the yoke by means of a staple. The bows are crafted by hand from hickory and are approximately one to two inches in diameter. An individual shaping a bow typically used a bender, "working [the wood] green, cut it green and work it that day" (Conway 8/2/96). The hickory is slowly bent until the curvature matches the holes



Billy Medders, the proud winner of the 1996 Pecan Festival's mule pull. These contests date from when mules were used to haul logs. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

on the ox yoke, and then metal wire is wrapped around the bow to hold its shape.

Some local ox drivers also braid their own leather ox whips. These traditional skills were needed in the log woods, so most logging camps had a blacksmith shop; some even had a machine shop.

The history and local lore surrounding ox team driving in the Pine Hills of south Mississippi reaches back to the rural farmsteads that dotted the region a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago. The use of oxen illustrates the colonization and transplanting of culture by settlers who practiced upon a semi-pastoral economy. Residents' dependence on and relationship with cattle for many aspects of farmstead life further emphasizes the pastoral tradition of this region. The folk occupation of ox team driving, like the region's economy, represents a matrix of the pastoral farming ways adapted to the wage economy of timber harvesting.

Chopped and sawed down, the virgin longleaf pine forest of the southern United States began to disappear around the turn of the century. Mechanization accelerated this process and replaced the older, traditional forms of logging. As oxen began to be replaced by mules and Norman horses, and eventually by mechanized equipment such as skidders and tractors, the folk occupation of ox driving declined in the region. Because cattle are now raised almost exclusively for the beef market and because aesthetics in today's cattle industry have changed, ox drivers claim that the Piney Woods breed is fast disappearing along with the traditional occupation of ox driving. However, a few families like the Conways and the Vices still maintain oxen and the craft of yoke making. The "yoked-up" Piney Woods cows are still displayed at regional festivals and a few local families still raise and care for the "old timey woods cows."

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At companies like the Rutland Lumber Company in Covington County, the work is increasingly technical and mechanized. Trucks, forklifts, cranes, computers, and band saws have replaced the oxen, mules, log carts, and circular saws of the past century. Despite mechanization, however, lumbermen learn skills, terminology, and knowledge central to their work from more experienced workers as well as through more formal means. This working knowledge is handed down through both instruction and imitation.

John Miller offers a modern-day perspective on the industry by focusing on one particular work environment, the Rutland Lumber Company. In four decades, the company has evolved from a "peckerwood sawmill" to a business producing hardwood lumber that is marketed internationally as well as domestically. Over a period of several months, Miller conducted interviews with the company's owner and many of his employees. In this article, he provides a careful description of some of the jobs, work processes, and techniques important in the lumber industry today.

In the early 1900s, a Mr. Schroeder, then owner of the Easterlin Lumber Company in Covington County, named the local post office for his daughter Ora. This was the beginning of the sawmill town of Ora, Mississippi. Over the years, the nearby county seat of Collins has gradually absorbed Ora, but the town continues to thrive around a sawmill, the Rutland Lumber Company. This operation, employing some ninety-odd workers of white, black, and Mexican heritages, maintains the Piney Woods sawmill tradition in Ora.

Willis Rutland and his son Sherrill founded the mill in 1956. Willis had recently returned to the work force after serving as Covington County Sheriff, and Sherrill had just completed his tour of duty with the U.S. Navy. At that time, the mill produced rough-cut pine for a primarily local market. This operation has been described as a *peckerwood sawmill,* meaning that it employed a minimal number of hands producing a limited number of boards.

In 1978, Leslie Rutland, the third generation of the family to own Rutland Lumber Company, assumed control of the business.As a recent graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, he returned home with a degree in marketing and a degree of vision that his father Sherrill and grandfather Willis might find disconcerting.Leslie's background in the timber industry was diverse. From an early age, he had begun learning the production process, doing various jobs such as stacking lumber, scaling logs, driving a forklift and a truck, cutting blocks, running an edger, and building pallets.

Although this region of southern Mississippi is known for its profusion of pine timber, Leslie turned his business in a new direction. Because his capital was limited, he sought to harvest a cheaper raw material than pine. He turned to hardwood production, as the price of raw hardwood at that time was about half that of pine.

In an interview with the author, Leslie Rutland described the traditional aspects of his occupation, including some of the skills, knowledge and terms that lumbermen learn from one another. One example is the *Doyle Scale Rule,* a formula used in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. Using this formula, a yard manager takes the small end diameter of a log minus four, then squares the figure, divides it by sixteen, and finally multiplies this by the length of the log, to compute the number of board feet the log contains. Over time, a skilled worker can learn to estimate board feet visually, but marketing demands require that each log undergo this evaluation.

Of course, marketing demands enter the picture long before logs ever reach this stage of the process. The forester, working in concert with the land owner and the mill owner, assesses the value of standing timber. In an interview at his home, Howard Pickering, forester for Rutland Timber Company, talked about how he became a forester and explained the process known as *cruising timber.*

Howard's early experience in the timber industry was cutting pulpwood in his high school days. Later, he drove a truck for a few years before hiring on with Masonite's woodlands department as a compass man, a sort of assistant forester. During this period, he attended forestry classes at Jones County Junior College although he had already obtained a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education from The University of Southern Mississippi. However, Howard felt that work experience was far more important to his learning forestry than classroom instruction.

Left: James Ezell of Rutland Lumber Company. Above (top): A log being debarked at Rutland Lumber Company. Above (bottom): Logs being placed on debarker at Rutland Lumber Company. Photographs by Damian Morgan.

His tools include a good pair of boots, a diameter tape, a compass, a clinometer (for measuring the height of trees), and of course, a dependable pickup truck. The compass serves to keep him on a straight line as he cruises. He uses the tape to measure trees' circumferences at shoulder height, and his truck and boots provide his means of transportation. The term *cruising timber* is misleading, as it involves miles of walking rather than riding.

When the forester begins his cruise, he first needs to check the direction of drainage. In this region, most watersheds run from north to south; hence most foresters run their compass lines from east to west in order to cross the drains. The timber growing in the bottoms is larger than that along the ridges. In order to get an accurate cross section, he must cross the drains since the elevation at which a tree grows can affect not only its size, but in some species, its grade as well.

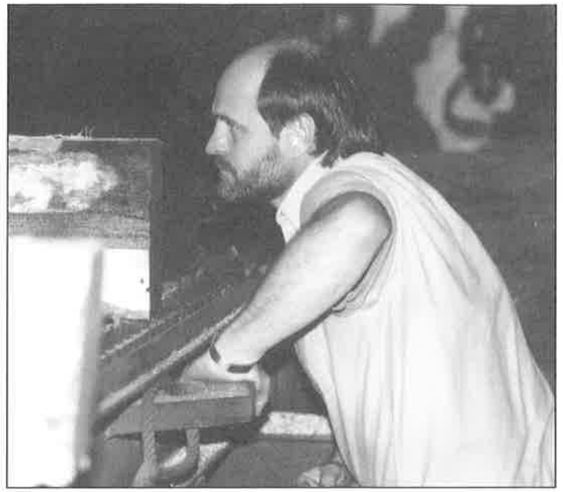
Once the direction of drainage has been determined, the forester must measure and tally plots. He usually goes to the corner of a forty-acre tract of land, and then comes off the corner two and a half chains along a compass line. A *chain* is a measure of distance that equals sixty-six feet. At this point, he makes a perpendicular turn and goes one chain. This establishes the first plot. From this point, the forester tallies every tree in a 52.7 foot radius according to species, height, and circumference. These figures along with the grade according to clarity of the trunk are recorded on a plot card.

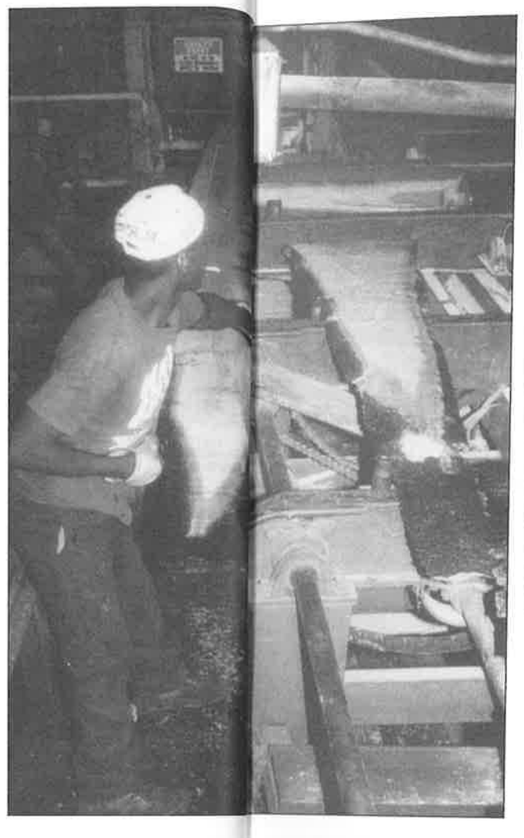
From this plot, the forester proceeds two chains and repeats the tallying process. Each plot gives one-fifth of an acre of cruising. On a forty-acre tract, forty plots are measured and tallied, resulting in eight acres or 20 percent of the tract actually being tallied. When this tally is turned in at the mill, the figures are multiplied by five, and factors such as size, grade, and species are factored in to arrive at an appraisal of the timber's worth. The mill owner then makes a bid on the timber.

At this stage, a logger is called to harvest the timber. Some loggers focus on production. Their operations involve heavy equipment such as skidders, bulldozers, and eighteen wheelers. They usually clearcut tracts. In other situations where quality of the land is an issue, a *quality logger* is called in to thin the trees. In this process, care must be taken to harvest without damaging the remaining trees and to leave the land in good shape.

When the log finally arrives at the mill, it is unloaded and scaled, and the actual price is calculated according to the number of board feet it contains. Prices for timber fluctuate, but the going price on any given day is not determined by the price of lumber. Weather is a basic factor in determining the value of timber because it directly

affects the availability of logs. When the bottoms are too wet to log, the mill must continue to operate. This will result in mill owners paying more for a log than they can gain from its sale. This "loss of minimization," as Leslie Rutland calls it, results in operating at a loss when logs are scarce. Because of overhead, operating at a loss is more economical than shutting down operations. Transportation costs limit the region that can supply a mill, and there is little overlap between the areas harvested by two mills.





From left to right: Mill foreman Gerald Buffington checks the plane on a cant at Rutland Lumber Company. Mill hand feeding boards into the edger. View from a resaw console of cants being cut into boards at Rutland Lumber Company. Photographs by Damian Morgan.

After the load of logs is paid for, they are stored under water to preserve them. Large sprayers constantly soak mountainous piles of green logs to minimize grey sap stain and prevent rot or insect infestation. When a log leaves the piles, it is sawed into the desired lengths, and with three or four other logs is transported by forklift to the mill, where it is run through a debarker. These logs are then placed on a conveyor chain which carries each one to the head rig. Here the head sawyer squares the log into cants with a large, computerized band saw. In the last few years, Rutland has converted from the traditional circular saw to the computerized band saw, resulting in less sawdust and more quality lumber. Computer optimization has reduced the variable of human error.

From the head rig, the cant falls on a conveyor that carries it to a resaw (another band saw) that cuts it into the various thicknesses and widths. Any boards with irregular edges are then fed by hand into the edger guided by a laser. Next the ends are trimmed by a trimmer. Trimming is done in two feet increments plus two inches, to allow for shrinkage. Hence, a twelve-foot board is trimmed at twelve feet and two inches, a ten-foot board at ten feet and two inches, and so on.

As the board leaves the mill via the conveyor, it falls onto the green chain, where it is inspected and then removed by hand and stacked according to length and grade. These stacks of lumber are then lifted with a forklift and dipped in a mixture of fungicide and pesticide. From the dipping vat, the forklift then transports the stack to a stacker, where it is restacked on cured stacking sticks. These dry sticks are about one inch square and four feet long. They are placed about two feet apart between the layers of boards. If green lumber is stacked on green lumber, the air-drying process is compromised, resulting in decay from fungus. Lumber takes from ninety to 120 days to air dry. After it leaves the air-drying stage on the yard, the lumber is ready for the dry kiln.

Kiln operator Van Williamson has been with Rutland Lumber Company for eight years, and he learned to operate the kiln from Leslie Rutland. Although he uses various tools such as a forklift, chain saw, band saw, moisture gauge, and hand-held computer, he considers his most basic tools to be humidity and ventilation control. He begins by taking wafer cuts for samples. These three-eighths-inch cross sections are weighed and then heated in a conventional oven for two to twenty-four hours. After removing them from the oven, Williamson weighs the cross sections to determine the moisture content of the lumber. Once he knows this, he can determine how long the air-dried lumber should remain in the kiln, what temperature should be maintained during the curing process, and how much moisture is needed to stabilize the moisture content of the lumber. After the original moisture is cooked out of the lumber, a given quantity must be replaced to relieve stress such as honeycombing, and cause the closure of season checks in boards. Kiln dried lumber should be kilned to 6% to 8% moisture content, according to the hardwood rule. The lumber remains in the kiln for about a week before it is ready for the shipping chain, where it will be graded again and packaged for shipping.

The shipping chain is where lumber is sorted according to grade. Shipping inspector James Ezell described his background in timber and lumber production, his role as shipping inspector, and the significance of grading lumber in an interview with the author. As a child in the 1930s, Ezell grew up around a sawmill owned and run by his grandfather, A.D. Butler. At that time, the Pine Hills region was still covered with stands of first and second growth timber. He worked with his grandfather to produce rough-cut pine for home construction. Builders would order their cuts according to the size and type of building they were constructing. James said that many homes built during the 1930s and 1940s contained some of the finest timber ever harvested in southern Mississippi.

After high school, and three years in the navy, James spent three years studying electronics in Louisville, Kentucky, and three years studying accounting and business at Southern Business College in Vicksburg. Later, he became a green chain inspector, yard manager, and purchaser, and also worked for Anderson Tulley, harvesting some of the last deep swamp cypress along the Mississippi River north of Vicksburg. He later worked for Seminary Wood Yard before coming to the Rutland Lumber Company in the late 1970s.

As Leslie Rutland began to expand into the higher grades of hardwood, he hired James Ezell to help him establish the use of a shipping chain so that they could get the maximum yield from the finished product. In the process of final inspection, the shipping inspector must be conscious of various flaws that can reduce grade. *Stick chatter* is one example. This defect is caused when a board develops a series of fissures under the stacking sticks due to moisture. *Case hardening* is a flaw caused when kiln-dried lumber dries too quickly, causing the outside to harden and warp the board. *Wind shake* is a stretching of the grain caused when trees are stretched by high winds. These and other flaws can cause a board to be of an inferior grade, so they are often cut out of the board to increase its grade and value. For instance, a sixteen-foot board may be graded as a *3-A common* because of knots on one end. These knots can be cut off at four feet, for example, resulting in a *number 1 common* that is twelve feet long and worth more than the original sixteen-foot board.

The clarity of a board is perhaps one of the most basic determiners of its grade. The highest grade is *first*

Green chain inspector inspecting boards as they leave the mill at Rutland Lumber Company. Photograph by Damian Morgan.

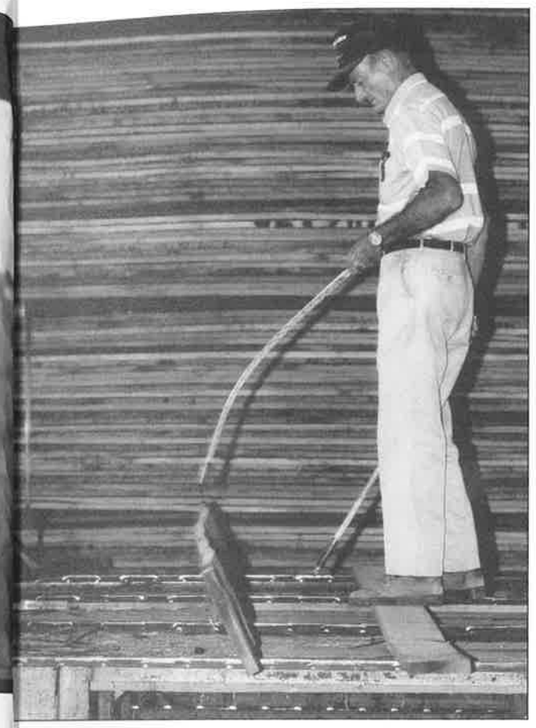
grade; next is second grade lumber. Rutland does not market these two grades separately, but instead aims at packages of first and second grade, called *FAS.* This grade is sought after by manufacturers of fine furniture and molding, where a tight grain is important. *Number 1 common* may have a few visual blemishes in it because it is typically used for framing furniture, where a strong structure is more important than cosmetic appearance. Next are *number 2* and *number 3-A common,* which are cut into smaller lengths more suitable for flooring in the case of species such as red oak.

James Ezell spends his days walking along a conveyor some fifty feet long. In one hand he holds a three-foot stick that holds marking chalk on its tip. In the other is his turning stick, which is about the same length. The end in his hand is about one inch around and smoothed off to form a handle. On the other end is a metal hook used to flip boards. This hook is graduated to indicate the thickness of the board, which can be read by the inspector as he hooks the board to flip it. From the hook up to the handle are rows of numbers that allow the inspector to factor length and width to arrive at the number of board feet, or amount of surface cut. The inspector must be able to flip a board once or twice, compute surface cut, locate defects, and apply the National Hardwood Lumber Association's regulations to determine the grade and length of each board before it is packed for shipping. The final inspection can take only a matter of seconds since production is an incessant process. Usually four men stay busy cutting ends and stacking while another stays busy feeding boards to the conveyor. The inspector is the all-important link among them.

From here, lumber is dry-stored awaiting an order. When the order is filled, kiln-dried lumber is loaded on eighteen wheelers and covered tightly with tarps to keep it dry.

Most of the lumber that Leslie Rutland ships now goes to the domestic molding, furniture, and flooring markets. In the past, he has exported his hardwood to as far as Asia, Europe, and South America.

He predicts fewer workers and more computer optimization in the industry's future. In the months since he was first interviewed, he has added a planer mill to his operation. The planer mill will allow him to improve the



James Ezell inspecting boards on the shipping chain. Photograph by Damian Morgan.

quality of his lumber to an even higher level and eliminates transportation costs to and from a planer when a purchaser needs his lumber planed.

Despite changes over the years, the sawmill tradition continues in the Pine Hills region, as essential skills and knowledge are handed down from one generation to the next. James Ezell has recently passed the role of shipping chain inspector on to his son Chris. Van Williamson's son Graham, who is sixteen years old, has set his sights on becoming a forester.

Of course, there are many other jobs that form vital links in this process. One of the most fundamental is that of mill foreman. Although this is a slot that Leslie Rutland can fill, he relies on another man to be responsible for the operation from debarker to green chain. A mill foreman is required to keep this aspect running, which requires a knowledge not only of what a quality product should be but also of how to maintain and repair the complex machinery needed for state-of-the-art production. The yard foreman must maintain a series of logistics to ensure safe, speedy movement from one stage across the yard to the next. The saw filer must maintain the head rig and resaw blades, keeping them sharp enough to ensure precision. The salesman must make sure that orders can be and are filled to customers' satisfaction, and the innumerable workers must continue physical support for each operation.

These sawmill tradition bearers share a common knowledge of species, grade, and cut of timber.Each must understand certain aspects of the other's duties in order to prevent problems that can impede the production process.

The resilience of the southern forest is a valuable resource that appears fragile at times. However, the people who maintain the sawmill industry regard this resource with the kind of respect that can only be acquired through a daily involvement with it and an expert knowledge of its worth. As James Ezell said, "The more an inspector works with trees, the more he learns to appreciate what is beneath their barks. It grows on a man."

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Sawmill Terms

Stick chatter flaw in kiln-dried post oak; a series of small splits under stacking sticks.

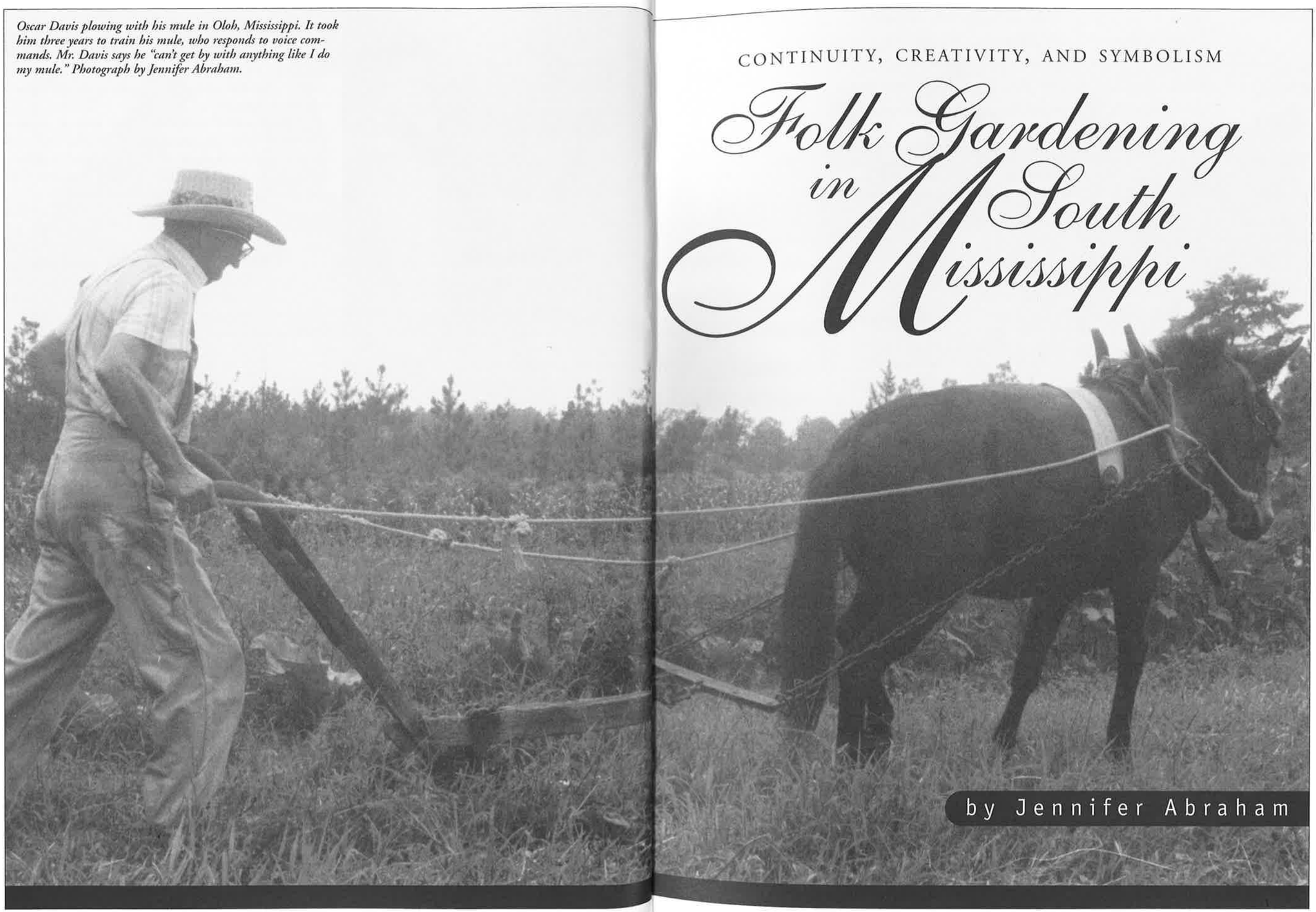
Case hardening flaw caused when kiln-dried lumber dries too quickly, causing the outside to harden and warp the board.

Wind shake stretching of the grain caused when trees are stretched by high winds.

Chain measure of distance equaling sixty-six feet.

Peckerwood sawmill sawmill that employs a small number of hands producing a limited number of boards.

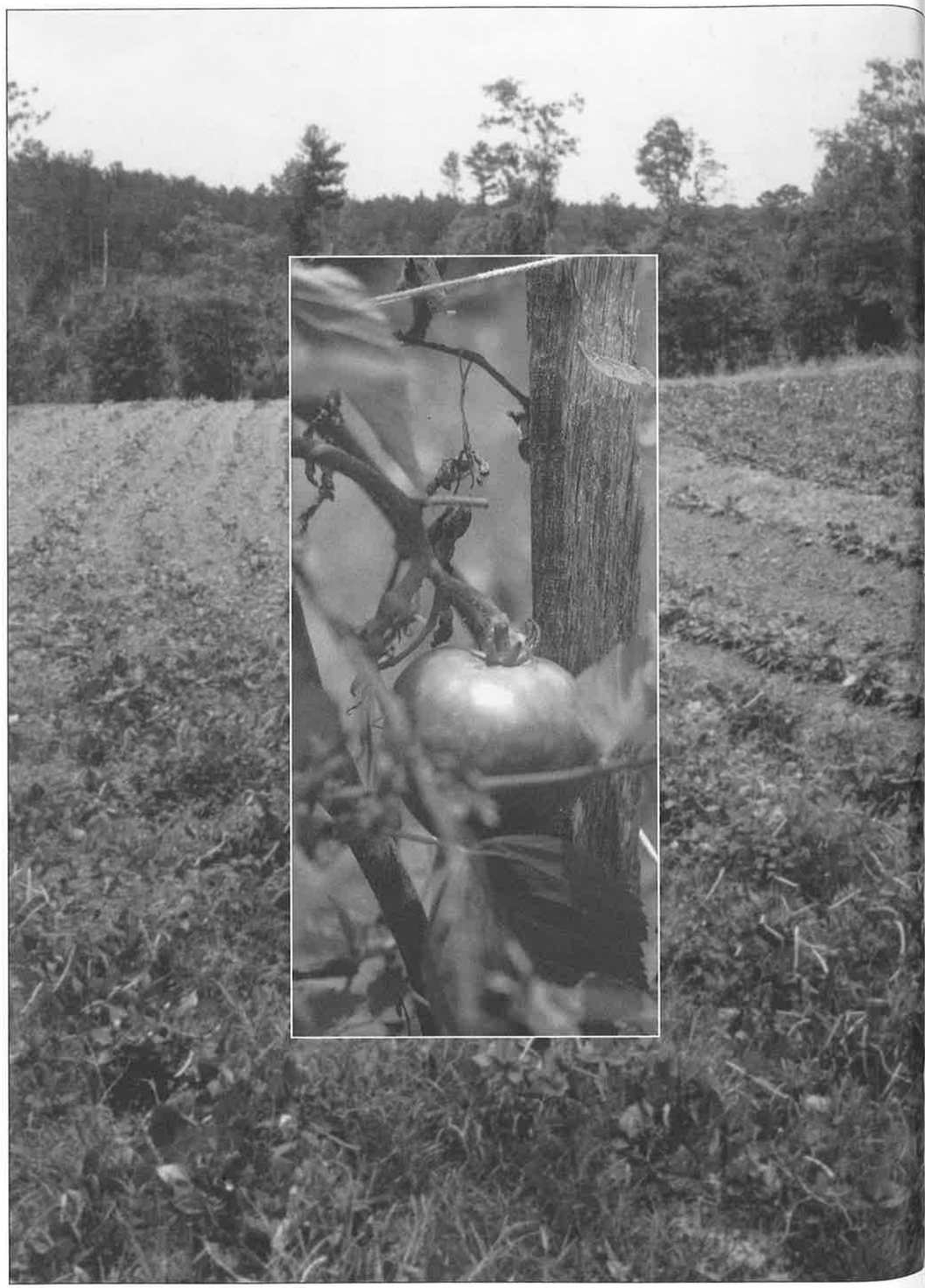
Oscar Davis plowing with his mule in Oloh, Mississippi. It took him three years to train his mule, who responds to voice commands. Mr. Davis says he "can't get by with anything like I do my mule." Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.



CONTINUITY, CREATIVITY, AND SYMBOLISM

Folk Gardening in South Mississippi

by Jennifer Abraham



Gardening is often overlooked as a folk tradition.
But the ways people garden—what they plant and when, how they arrange their gardens,
and the techniques they use—are all strongly influenced by tradition, and are often learned from parents and grandparents.
Perhaps gardening's closest ties to tradition lie in the reasons why people continue to garden today,
when growing fresh produce often costs more than buying it in a supermarket.

University of Southern Mississippi graduate student Jennifer Abraham's article on gardening traditions
examines the connections between land use and historical, ethnic, and regional factors.
It draws upon folklife studies, archaeology and history, as well as on Abraham's fieldwork
with gardeners in several southern Mississippi counties.
Using the gardeners' own words as much as possible,
she looks at gardening as a form of symbolic expression and cultural continuity.
She shows us gardeners' creative uses and recycling of available resources,
and discusses the underlying values that make gardening meaningful.

The Historical and Cultural Roots of Piney Woods Gardeners

Drive down any road in any part of southern Mississippi at almost any time of year, and you will see gardens. Flower gardens, vegetable gardens, gardens in town that fit snugly in between the garage and the front sidewalk, backyard gardens, gardens along the railroad tracks, gardens sitting across a small rural road from the main house, and gardens dotted with scarecrows and extending for many acres. Although the contents and arrangements of yards and gardens are generally visible from the road, the cultural and historical factors that shape the land are not as readily apparent.

Gardening's ties to the traditional past include cultivation methods and food preservation practices, among other things. These skills and knowledge are passed down from one generation to the next, orally and through imitation of performance. Gardening practices are subject to changes over time. But despite adaptation, a cultural continuity remains that makes gardening and related customs traditional (Ware 1996).

For instance, canning was once the primary means of storing surplus food for winter use. Today, deep freezers are now more commonly used to preserve food, but many people also still can their own vegetables and fruits. Where mules, plows, and hoes once were used to break and till the land, a mechanized tiller may be used today. What is traditional about the gardens and gardeners in this study is how people learn cultivation practices, what they learn, the values associated with gardening, and the shared cultural history of these Southern rural areas.

Many different groups have contributed knowledge about land use and cultivation over the years: Native Americans; the French who formed agricultural settlements on the Gulf Coast; early migrations of Celtic, Scottish, Irish, English, and Finnish farmers and herders from the eastern seaboard; and later migrations of African American freed slaves who moved to the Piney Woods in search of work. All these groups contributed knowledge not only about how to work the land but plant species as well.

South Mississippi's population is marked not only by cultural diversity but also by cultural blending. Turn-of-the-century south Mississippians shared similar geographic and geological environments and needs. Interaction among surrounding communities took place economically, socially, religiously, and politically to varying extents, but people depended primarily on their own land for immediate subsistence needs. The land and its resources were used efficiently in order to live. Knowledge about cultivation of the land and preservation of its yield was vital for survival.

In the past, the entire family was involved in some way with the garden. Different roles were determined by gender and age. Typically, responsibility for gathering fruit from the wild and from orchards or arbors belonged to the children. Although the mother of the family

Left (background): Freshly planted rows in Varnado fall garden. Inset: Betterboy tomato in Robert Lee Abrams' garden. Photographs by Jennifer Abraham.

collected fruit as well, one of her main outdoor tasks was taking care of the garden. Men were primarily responsible for breaking the ground in spring, but women cultivated and harvested the garden. Many informants recalled that as children they were excluded from the family's garden, which their mothers would work by themselves.

Historically, a farmstead is defined as a piece of land maintained by a family that meets most of its own production and subsistence needs. Time has changed the ways in which people meet these needs, but many components of the farmstead remain evident today. Most readily apparent are the material structures made of peeled or sawn logs such as main dwellings and outbuildings such as a barn, smokehouse, storm cellar, corn crib, potato shed, outhouse, and livestock pens.

The way that south Mississippi farmsteads were arranged spatially in the late 1800s and early 1900s centered around the family's daily needs, as generally a farmstead contained one or more gardens, an orchard or tree grove, a stream, and a wooded area full of wild fruits, berries, and some game. There was a well or a cistern near the main dwelling, and various outbuildings used for food storage such as the potato shed or smokehouse, tool storage such as a shed, and household maintenance such as a wash shed. Livestock were raised to sell at market or used to work the fields and haul logs. Mules, horses, and oxen were also used to help cultivate and fertilize the garden that in turn fed the family and livestock. Gardens and gardeners played a large part in subsistence on the farmstead, whatever its size or location.

Physical Changes And Continuity of Ideas in Traditional South Mississippi Gardens

The yard's functional importance has decreased over time. Canning is now often done in the kitchen or not done at all. The upkeep of chickens, hogs, and cattle is still quite prevalent. Livestock laws require fences to keep animals on the property, and enclosure of yards by fences is more common than it once was. Thus, the physical separation of livestock from the yard is more marked than in the past, when frequently only the garden was fenced off. Women and children no longer sweep dirt yards with a hoe and broom. Instead, grass now covers the yard and is regularly mowed—usually by men.

Many people still sit on the porch or under a tree to shell peas. Children still play around the house and woods surrounding the yard, and social gatherings on weekends and special occasions still take place in yards. In the past, many activities took place in the yard and often overlapped. Despite industrialization, the post-World War II introduction of electricity, and the widespread availability of household appliances, many of the social uses of the yard remain. But the primary food and material production activities have moved into the kitchen or the marketplace.

Pike County's Rosa Taylor, now seventy-six years old, talks not only about changes in garden technology and the modern reliance on machinery and chemicals, but also of changes in common knowledge about gardening. She says, "I'll tell you one thing, baby, things have changed so from when I come along to now, just like day light and dark. We planted our crops with mules. We didn't have this tractor work. And plus when you got ready to plant your stuff, you wait 'til the full moon or dark night and go by the signs. And go back in the almanac and get the signs and you plant.... You plant your beans on the full moon, and then if you are planting a root crop, you would plant it on the drawing [waning] of the moon. They don't do that no more. When they get the plow ready, they say 'I don't believe in all that.' But it's true, you work by them signs. If you don't, the crops just don't do as good" (Taylor 7/10/96).

Emphasizing the importance of rotating crops, she says:

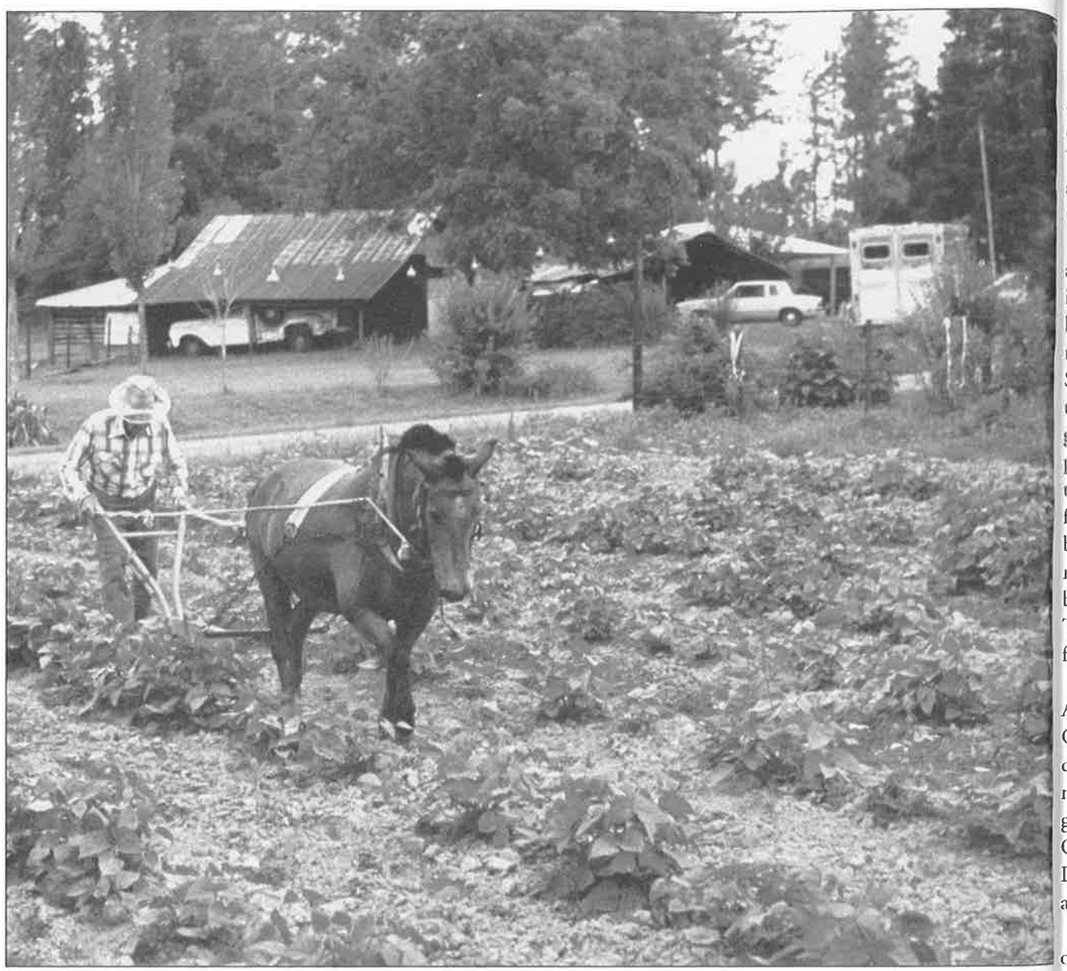
> It ain't a good idea to plant your garden in the same place every year. Peas this year, cucumbers and squash there, and put your squash in another place. People can't make their gardens like they used to because they plant in the same place. And you need to change it. You have you about four to five rows of cantaloupe, you wouldn't put them cantaloupe about five to six rows beyond the watermelon. It needs about four to five rows' distance so that they wouldn't drift to one another. When the vines get tangled up together, well watermelon ain't got its taste because its drifted with that. When my peas and butter beans quit, I always disk the ground and let it lay there a while. Then when it lays there a while, I start my fall garden about the 15th or 20th of August—that gives me six weeks to grow me a fall garden. It takes about six weeks for the spring into the summer, six weeks for summer into fall, you end up in July with your spring garden. Have it broke up and disked, plant it, work it, and start gathering it for the fall and before frost comes, you get six weeks out of it (Taylor 7/10/96).

Rosa Taylor remarks on the continuity and success of methods that she, her neighbors, and her family have used through time. She also comments that people who are returning to organic gardening are adopting these traditional methods, and points out that she never had to learn from a book. According to Rosa, "old timey" gardeners have always been conscientious. In fact, all of the gardeners interviewed are very hesitant to use fertilizer other than chicken or cow manure or some other form of organic fertilizer. When they do use artificial fertilizers, they are very conservative in their usage.

Responsibilities in the garden also have changed. As mentioned above, women were the primary caretakers on the traditional farmstead, in part because of rigid, gender-related economic and social roles. These roles have since changed somewhat. Although tasks are still divided according to gender and age to some extent, in general there is more flexibility today among traditional gardeners.

Stepping into an individual's yard and garden, you see creativity and adaptability as well as continuity. Robert Abrams learned how to garden as a child growing up with his grandmother, and he plants, cultivates, and harvests his crops according to his grandmother's and his father's teachings. And just like his grandmother, he takes great joy in sharing his yield with his family and community. But weather patterns have changed so that floods, freezes, and dry spells are harder to predict. The water supply in Wiggins is low, and plants can easily burn in the hot sun. Based on a principle that he learned by watching and participating in while growing up, today Robert Abrams makes the most of his natural and cultural environment. Despite gentle ribbing from friends and family, he lets weeds grow freely around his corn, sweet potatoes, squash, tomatoes, and onions

Above: Mr. Grady in his truck with bushels of silver crowder and pink-eyed peas. Inset: Mrs. Grady picking garlic from her garden in Wiggins, Mississippi. The Gradys have a large garden away from the house, and a smaller garden near their house. Their chicken coop is visible in the background. Photographs by Jennifer Abraham.



Henry Farve plowing butter beans with his work horse in Oloh, Mississippi. Now 90, Henry Farve grew up on a farmstead in Lamar County and has been gardening "ever since I was big enough." He has lived on his houselot for more than 50 years, and still prefers to plow his garden using a pony. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

to provide his plants with moisture and insulation from the summer heat.

People are no longer as dependent on their own gardens for food as they once were, but many of the gardeners interviewed described the current social functions of the yard as similar to when they were growing up. The yard is a place for gardening activities, child's play, meditation, relaxation, practicing hobbies like woodcarving, playing music, and social interaction. People noted that fewer chores take place in the yard than in the past.

In all cases studied, the garden is located either in the yard or adjacent to it. As in the past, sizes of gardens vary according to the amount of land. Although func tional factors such as the number of people and livestod to feed has decreased in importance over time, they ar still relevant to content and size. The Ridgeways c Lamar County, and the Gradys and Robert Abrams c Stone County all grow field corn to feed their livestock Walter and Wilter Abrams of Forrest County, who live i smaller areas with no livestock, have smaller gardens. A of those interviewed use their gardens to feed themselve as well as people outside of their immediate household although their gardens were not the sole means o obtaining food.

As in the past, gardens are still located relatively close to the main dwelling, and often winter garden plots are adjacent to the kitchen. This utilitarian use of space is only one characteristic of the relationship traditional Piney Woods gardeners have with their environment. Gardeners skillfully adapt their gardens to the land. If the land curves, the garden curves; if the land slopes, the garden slopes.

Families often have more than one garden, divided according to plant type. For instance, the Farves of Oloh in Lamar County have a flower garden behind the main house and also maintain a vegetable garden across the road. Thelma and Bertrand Smith of Pike County have three gardens: one containing gourds and melons, one with peas and beans, and one with tomatoes and flowers. The first two gardens were broken by Bertrand Smith with his mule and are maintained by both Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Thelma Smith keeps up the flower and tomato garden.

Oscar Davis lives in rural Lamar County, where he plants spring, summer, and fall vegetable gardens. He still cultivates his garden with a mule, just as his father once did. Photograph by Jennifer Abraham.

Walter and Wilter Abrams, residents of Forrest County, have a vegetable garden close to the kitchen that is maintained by Walter. They also have a potted flower garden in the front yard that Walter tends for his wife. Oscar Davis, who lives alone, has a main garden across Davis Road, patches of watermelon in front of his house, and no flowers.

The Ridgeways separated their gardens into a front one containing sunflowers, corn, and squash, and a back garden containing melons, peas, tomatoes, and beans. Flowers surround the house in hotbeds. Mr. Ridgeway maintains the large cornfield down the road as well as the gourd garden, while Eugenia Ridgeway looks after the sweet corn and flowers. The Gradys have a large garden peripheral to the house where they grow peas, butter beans, and corn. They have a smaller garden immediately near their house where garlic, onions, peas and melons are readily available. Flowers grow in hotbeds made of tires, in pots on the porch and along the side of the house.

An understanding of the land goes beyond contour and space. A gardener must know what to plant where, when and how. Walter Abrams spoke of how he always has something growing all year round, and described his conscientious upkeep of soil through crop rotation: "Where I planted my corn and peas last year, I planted my squash and okra this year, and I usually grow turnips and mustards where I grew tomatoes, and I replant peas and beans in summer—same as spring" (Walter Abrams 6/27/96).

Henry Farve took full responsibility for tending the garden when his father passed on. He continues to cultivate his garden with a mule and plow, as his father did. The rows of Mr. Farve's garden follow the curve of the land as corn, tomato, and bean stalks shoot towards the summer sun. Mixed among his corn and tomatoes are sunflowers; zinnias and marigolds grow among his beans, peas and okra. Asked about the splashes of colorful flowers among the different shades of green, brown, red and yellow vines and fruit, Henry Farve explained that he had "nothing to do" with any kind of flower that didn't yield a vegetable; his wife planted the flowers and continues to tend to them (Interview with the author, June 1996). Does she do so because of the flowers' insect-repelling nature, because they are aesthetically pleasing, because her family had taught her, or for all three reasons?

All of those interviewed traced their gardening practices to former generations. The transmission of techniques and knowledge about what to plant, when to plant, how to plant, how much to fertilize, when to pick, and how to preserve is an important part of the traditional garden's continuity. Thelma Smith echoed many of the gardeners' comments when she talked about the knowledge of those who'd come before. "We always plant, as the elderly people say, by the moon.... My mother told us you always plant peas in the new moon, and you won't have insects or stains on them. To me it's actually true.... We always try to follow the signs of the older people gave us. Whatever they told us, that's what we did, you know, went by the signs, when to plant this, or when to harvest that or whatever. So that's what we did. You really want to get some good things, you ask the elders" (Smith 7/10/96).

Gardens Reflect Values

More than methods, tools, land, and livestock are passed

from grandparents and parents to the families growing up under their guidance. The ideal of self sufficiency has long been associated with land cultivation and agrarianism. In this region and era, many elderly informants associate the ability to feed their families with memories of the Depression years. People commented time and again, "We may have been poor, but we were never hungry."

Thelma Smith sees her garden as representing honest self sufficiency. She says,

> I plant squash even though my children don't like it too well. I plant so that my children will see the plants grow and know. There's a lot of things you show your children—that there's always a way to survive with out having to go get it dishonestly. Especially if you're in the country, you can survive.... I had decided one summer that the children were gonna sell peas—that's the summer I worked harder than the children. I decided that this was one summer that the children, they won't stay in the bed half the day, you know. And I tried to get them up early in the morning while its cool, and pick the peas so they could go in the neighborhood and sell peas so they could have some spendin' money, you know, teach them how to work. That's basically what I was doing, was just teaching em how to work. I teach them that it's honest. Anyway I ended up doing the work, and they ended up getting the money. I picked the peas, sell em to the neighbors, and I'd get back and they'd say, "How much did we make?" (Smith 7/10/96).

Library of Congress #LC-USF 34-412-D. Photograph by Arthur Rothstein.

Although most people have access to produce markets today, they still maintain the gardening tradition. In fact, many of those interviewed say that the expense of gardening is equal to or greater than the cost of market produce; certainly it requires more effort. So why are traditional gardens so prevalent? Thelma Smith says, "I was talking to my daughter in-law and son the other day, and [there's] something about getting your hands dirty. I said, 'You know, it's good to be able to, you know, to go out there and get your hands in the dirt.'" She continued:

> Whatever makes in the garden, I try to share with somebody before I use it myself, I give it to some of the elderly people or do that first, and then the next time, I'll get it and bring it inside the house for the family, that's just my philosophy about it. I feel the more I give, the more I'm gonna receive, the more that will come back to me and I like to give first. Every time I go in my garden, I 'm gonna give somebody something. I'm out there quiet, I love being in the garden because that's just a good time for meditation, you know just get out early in the morning while the wind is blowing everything is quiet and peaceful and I'm just thinkin' while I'm gathering these peas and beans and whatever, who else would enjoy some of this. I never go to my garden to gather anything unless I make sure that I give somebody somethin' out of that garden (Smith 7/10/96).

Nancy Hall of Pike County says of her attraction to gardening, "There's been years when I couldn't get out to my garden, and those were sad times. When it comes spring, you might think, well I'm not going to have a garden this year, you know at the end of the garden season, you might think that. But after the winter and when the spring comes and it warms up you cannot help it, you start looking for seed, you start looking for plants, wanting to get out there and put something in the earth" (Hall 7/10/96).

Robert Abrams considers the sense of community h gets from sharing his produce an important aspect of ga dening, and he emphasizes the personal fulfillment gives him. He said, "Even though I have my garden, can't be self sufficient. People need each other. And som people have no values these days. That's the reason I kee my garden, there's just certain things I won't turn loos You see, things in this world that can move as fast as it wants, but there's just certain things I won't turn loose.... A lot of people think its work— that's not work. Everyone needs to hold on to something. I do everything when I'm in my garden. I sit there sometimes, sit there and look at it, sit there and pray, sit there and read. My garden, it's what keeps me sane sometimes. Probably be as crazy as a bedbug if I didn't" (Robert Abrams 7/12/96).

Conclusion

Although modernization has not changed the value of self sufficiency, it has changed the ways that most people attain, produce, and consume food, eventually making self sufficiency more of a myth or an ideal than a reality. Commercial fruit and vegetable production, and canned and frozen goods are the modern replacement for the kitchen garden (Knobloch:70), and fruit and vegetable industries have changed people's relationship to foods. There is more reliance on the market system, and seed saving has been replaced by commercial seed production and marketing.

It is not enough to say that these African American, Native American, and European American gardeners have maintained a relationship with their traditions and with their land. Rather, it is important to note the principle of reciprocity at work and the ways in which this is reflected in their gardens. A sense of small-scale vernacular environmentalism is evident in the southern Mississippi countryside, as Piney Woods gardeners attempt to take care of the land so that it will, in return, take care of them. A sense of familial and community reciprocity also is perpetuated through the giving and sharing of produce. It is through these gardens and gardeners that one can see a reflection of values and cultural and historical roots, as well as the maintenance of successful production techniques.

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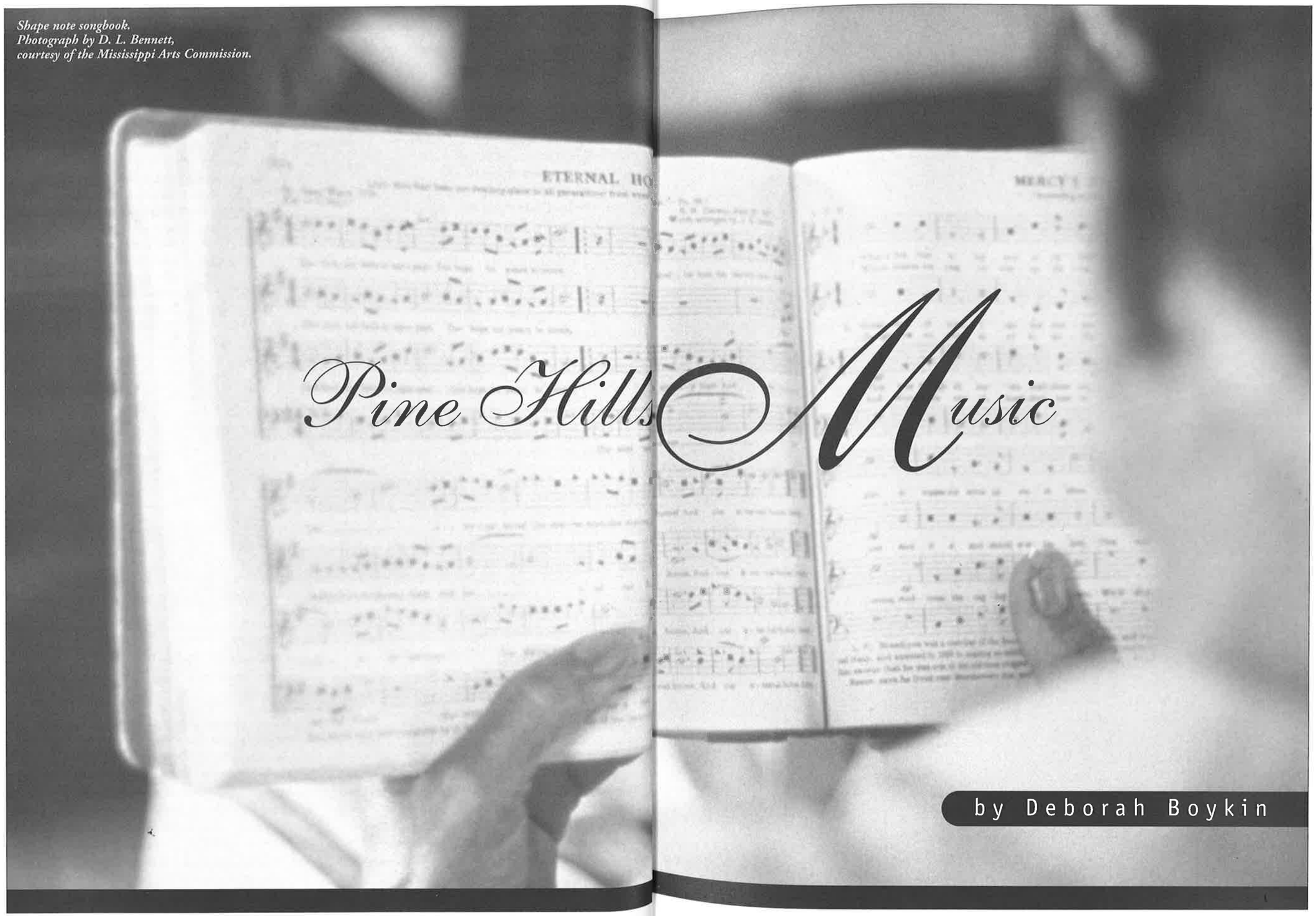
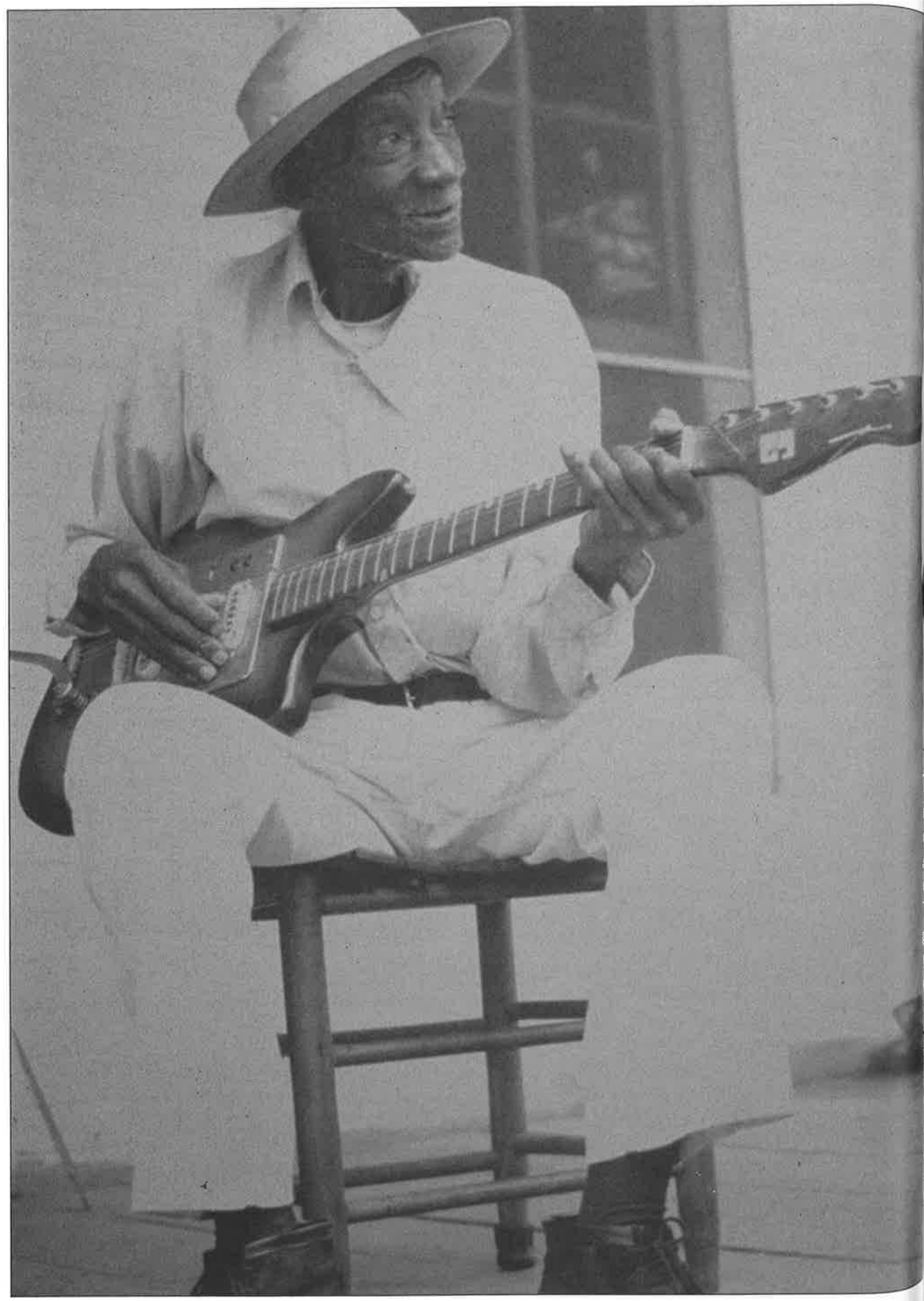


Shape note songbook.
Photograph by D. L. Bennett,
courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Commission.

Pine Hills Music

by Deborah Boykin



Traditional music in Mississippi's Pine Hills includes a variety of forms, both sacred and secular, public and private. Gospel music, the blues, old-time string band music, and bluegrass all remain culturally important in the region. Ballad singing is less widespread than it once was, but some people still perform ballads they learned years ago.

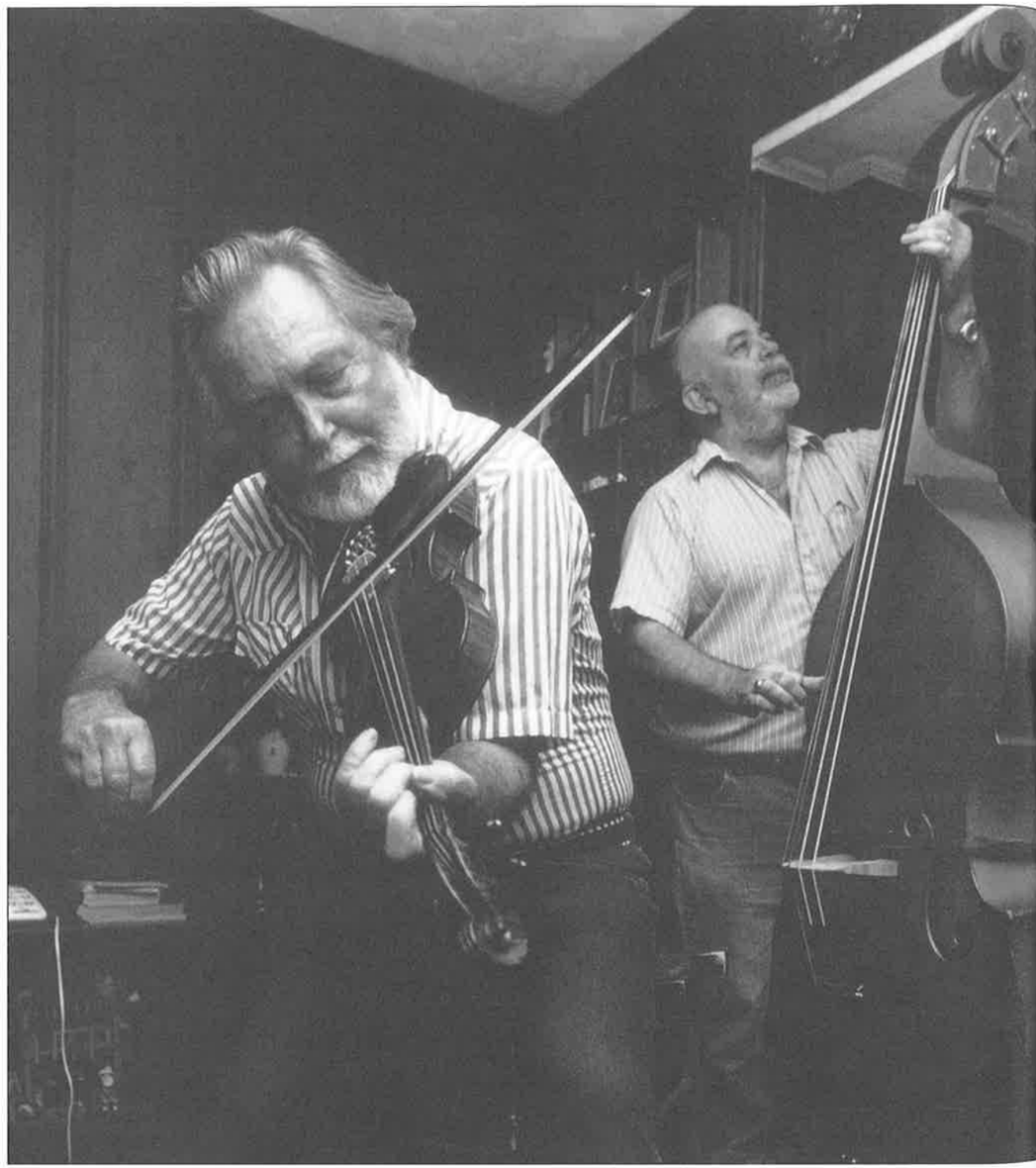
Deborah Boykin, former Folk Arts Director for the Mississippi Arts Commission, is an archivist and cultural planner for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw. Her article is an overview of the different kinds of traditional music in the region and the social contexts in which they are performed. She also discusses the influence of radio on traditional performers, and introduces some of the musicians (past and present) who have helped to shape and maintain these musical styles.

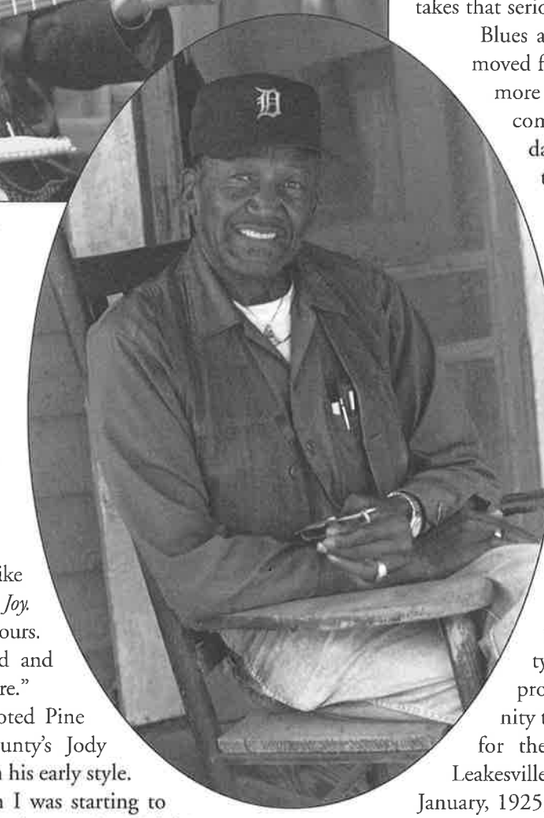
Few art forms illustrate both the constancy and fluidity of tradition better than music. Traditional music mirrors the cultural heritage of a group of people; it also demonstrates the ways in which they incorporate new elements into their traditions. The traditional music of Mississippi's Pine Hills is no exception. Scots-Irish and African American influences are predominant in both sacred and secular musical traditions. Pine Hills traditional musicians include in their repertoires tunes and songs that have been played and sung in the region for generations. They also play tunes brought to the airwaves by musicians like themselves, fiddlers and bluesmen, gospel singers and preachers whose music was based in the homes, square dances, house parties, churches and gospel singings of the Pine Hills.

Left: Blues guitarist Scott Dunbar of Wilkinson County. Photograph courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Commission. Above: Piney Woods fiddler Lamar Smith as one of Tommy Gentry's Texas Plainsmen, photographed at radio station WBRC in Birmingham, Alabama in 1939. Photograph courtesy of Lamar Smith.

Old-time string music, especially fiddling, is a deeply rooted Pine Hills tradition. For decades, most of the region's population was scattered across the countryside, living in farm communities or small towns that grew up around the timber industry. String band music was a way to pass the time at home after a day's work and to get the community dancing on Saturday evening.

The music often "runs in families" like the Wallaces of McCall's Creek, the Denmark family from Greene





Left: Fiddler Jack Youngblood jamming with Lonnie Craft on guitar and Charlie Harrison on bass. Photograph by Damian Morgan. Above: Don Womble, Natchez, Mississippi. Photograph by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Commission. Right: Blues pianist and singer Charles Nelson of McCalls Creek, Mississippi. Photograph by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Council.

County, and the Felters of Wilkinson County. "I learned to play by experience," recalls banjo player Larry Wallace. "My grandfather was an old-time fiddler and my daddy backed him on guitar. We didn't have a banjo player, so I decided to learn that. My teachers were my father and grandfather, so everything I play has that old-time style."

Not every aspiring fiddler was lucky enough to be bor into a musical family, but other musicians in the commu nity were generous with their time and knowledge. Lama Wells, who grew up in Sullivan's Hollow, learned his fir fiddle tunes from a friend who lived on a neighboring far in Smith County. "We didn't have formal music lessons," h says. "Oscar Sullivan was a neighbor of ours, and he'd com up and teach me tunes he knew, like *Bully of the Town* and *Soldier's Joy.* We'd sit on that front porch for hours. Oscar taught me what he could and encouraged me to go on from there."

George Cecil McLeod, a noted Pine Hills fiddler, cites Greene County's Jody Denmark as a major influence on his early style. "I learned a lot from him when I was starting to play. Often, I'd walk over to their place to play with him, and I'd always come away with something new."

The same is true of the region's blues musicians. Blues in the Pine Hills combines the Delta's country blues traditions with New Orleans blues piano styles. The music of pianist Charles Nelson of Franklin County and guitarists Wakefield "Big Moody" Coney of McComb and Tommy "T-Bone" Pruitt of Hattiesburg reflects these influences. Like their counterparts in old-time music, these musicians learned from others in the community, a legacy that Wakefield Coney feels obligated to continue. "He's really good about working with young people who want to learn," says Percy Bryant, whose annual Bryant's Farm Blues Festival features a number of Pine Hills musicians. "He knows that someone has to keep the music going and he takes that seriously."

Blues and old-time music both moved from the front porch to a more public setting when the community gathered for dances. Most Pine Hills traditional musicians first performed in public when they played for square dances and house parties. "People had to make their own entertainment then," Lamar Smith notes. "Everyone in the community would come out for those dances. It was good practice, too, because they'd keep you playing."

Fiddle contests, which grew in popularity in the 20th century, provided another opportunity to perform. The program for the 1996 Fiddle Fest in Leakesville contains a copy of a January, 1925, article from the *Greene County Herald* which describes a Henry Ford-sponsored "old-time dance and fiddle contest" held at the Churchwell Motor Company. The contest was part of Ford's efforts to foster interest in old-time music and dance, but the Greene County sponsor found that "the contest was of very little interest on account of all the fid-

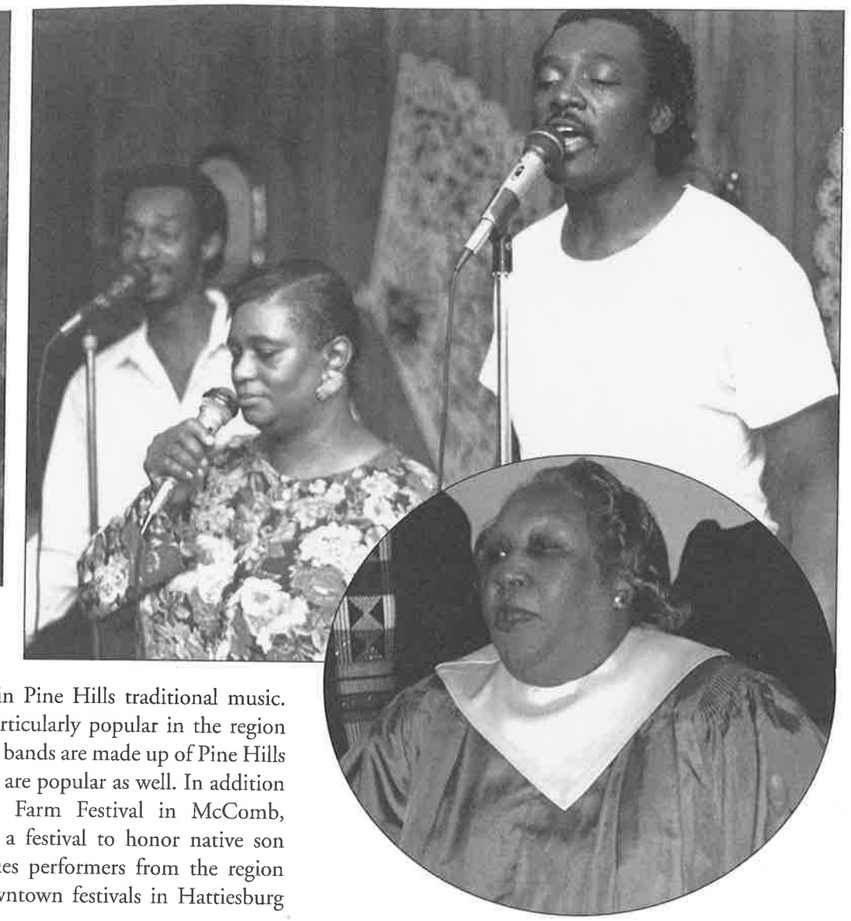
From left to right: New Sounds of Joy at Bethel Baptist Church, Natchez, Mississippi. Antioch Baptist Church, Natchez, Mississippi. Essie Veal with the Veal Brothers, Gloster, Mississippi. Gospel singer Pinkie Rounds of Natchez, Mississippi. Photographs by D. L. Bennett, courtesy of the Mississippi Arts Commission.

dlers present deciding that they had rather dance than contest for the premiums offered." Three members of the Denmark family provided music for the dancers, and the article mentions that "Box Denmark was awarded the premium for the oldest fiddler, while Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ball were awarded the prize offered for the oldest couple dancing."

Pine Hills traditional music began to reach an even wider audience with the popularity of radio in the 1920s and '30s. Many of the region's fiddlers found performing on the radio an attractive alternative to farming or timber work. According to Lamar Smith, "We regarded the folks who played on the radio almost like home town heroes." Smith achieved this status in the 1930s, playing first in Jackson and then on WBRC in Birmingham, Alabama, as one of Tommy Gentry's Texas Plainsmen. Purvis fiddler Jack Youngblood played around the Southeast, too, performing in a radio band called the Virginia Hillbillies. "We played on an early morning show out of Atlanta, called the Crossroads Folliers," he told interviewer Do Anderson.

Radio and phonograph records brought tradition string music to a wide audience. At the same time, brought together musicians from around the southea prompting an exchange of styles and a period of innov tion in old-time music. Perhaps the most influential these performers was Bill Monroe, a mandolin player fro Rosine, Kentucky. Bluegrass music, which combined el ments of old-time and blues, has grown in popularity ar influenced the styles and repertoire of several generatio of Pine Hills musicians. Chubby Wise and Kenny Bak both of whom played with Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Bo are often cited as influences by Pine Hills fiddlers.

In the early 1970s, Monroe was one of the sponso of an annual bluegrass festival held at Chatom, Alabam near the Greene County line. Pine Hills musicians oft performed at this festival and many of them proud recall playing with Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys.



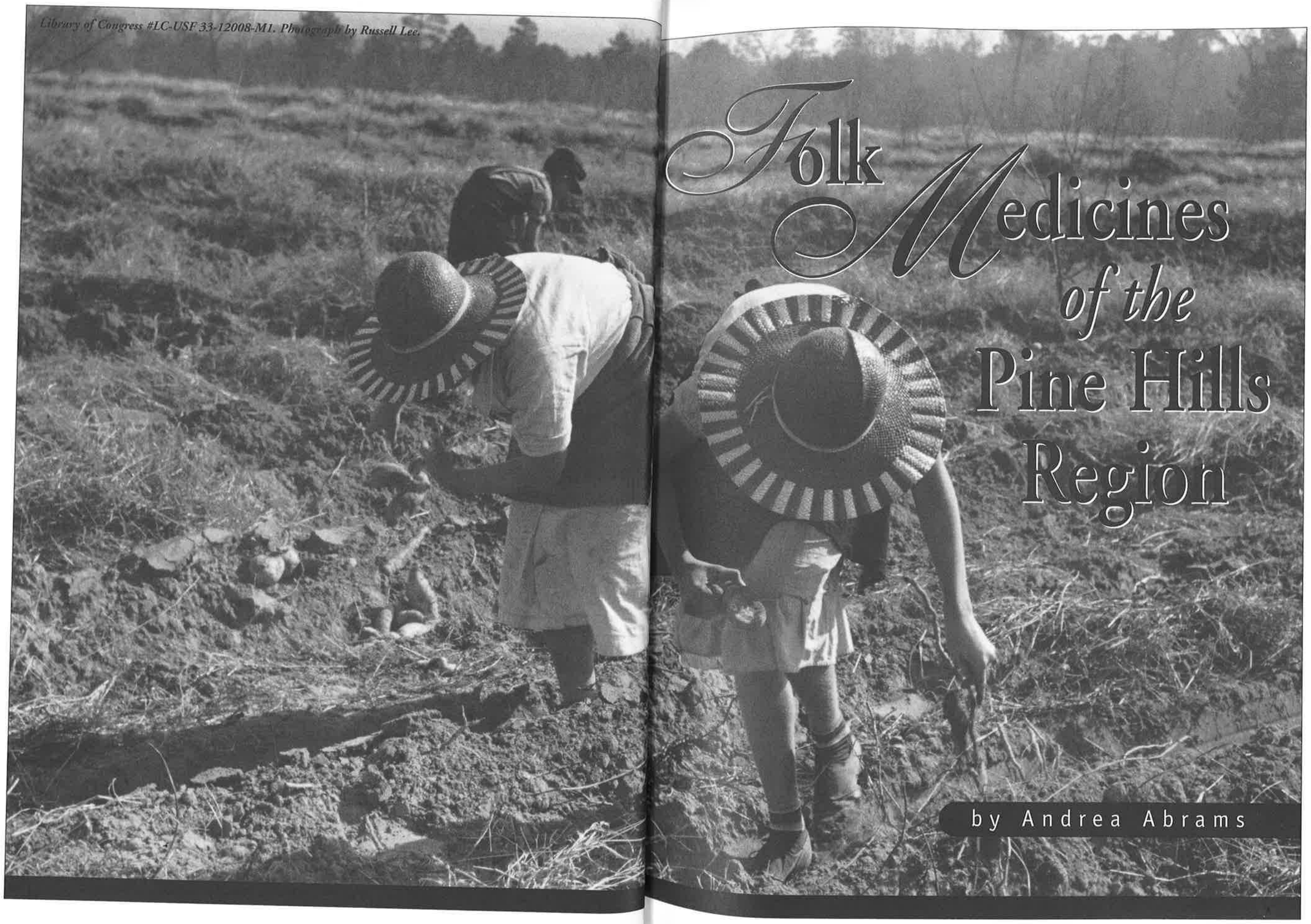
Festivals continue to play an important role in Pine Hills traditional music. Bluegrass festivals are particularly popular in the region and many of the featured bands are made up of Pine Hills musicians. Blues festivals are popular as well. In addition to the annual Bryant's Farm Festival in McComb, Hazlehurst has initiated a festival to honor native son Robert Johnson and blues performers from the region frequently appear at downtown festivals in Hattiesburg and Meridian.

Traditional sacred music also flourishes in the Pine Hills. Day-long gospel singings are common. As in other forms of traditional music, many gospel groups are family-based. One example is the Veal Family of Gloster, a family group who combines traditional songs and harmonies with contemporary instrumentation, using drums and electric guitars.

African-American shape-note music is less common than gospel, but it may be found in some Pine Hills churches. Shape-note singing is usually taught in week-long "singing schools" held in the church, but in the small Marion County community of Foxworth, young students are learning this singular style of congregational singing in an after-school program sponsored by Dorothy's Day Care. "We wanted to have some kind of music education in our after-school program," explained day care director Dorothy Lewis. "It occurred to us that we had the perfect opportunity to teach this old style of singing that has deep roots in our community."

Probably the most common setting for sacred music in rural churches is the singing and "dinner on the ground." Many Pine Hills churches set aside one Sunday each month for extended services with members of the congregation bringing food for a shared midday meal.

Bringing the community together, whether for recreation or worship, is probably the defining characteristic of Pine Hills traditional music. Blues, old-time, bluegrass, and gospel music then, are all closely associated with events and activities that foster a sense of community identity for those who play the music or who listen or dance to it.



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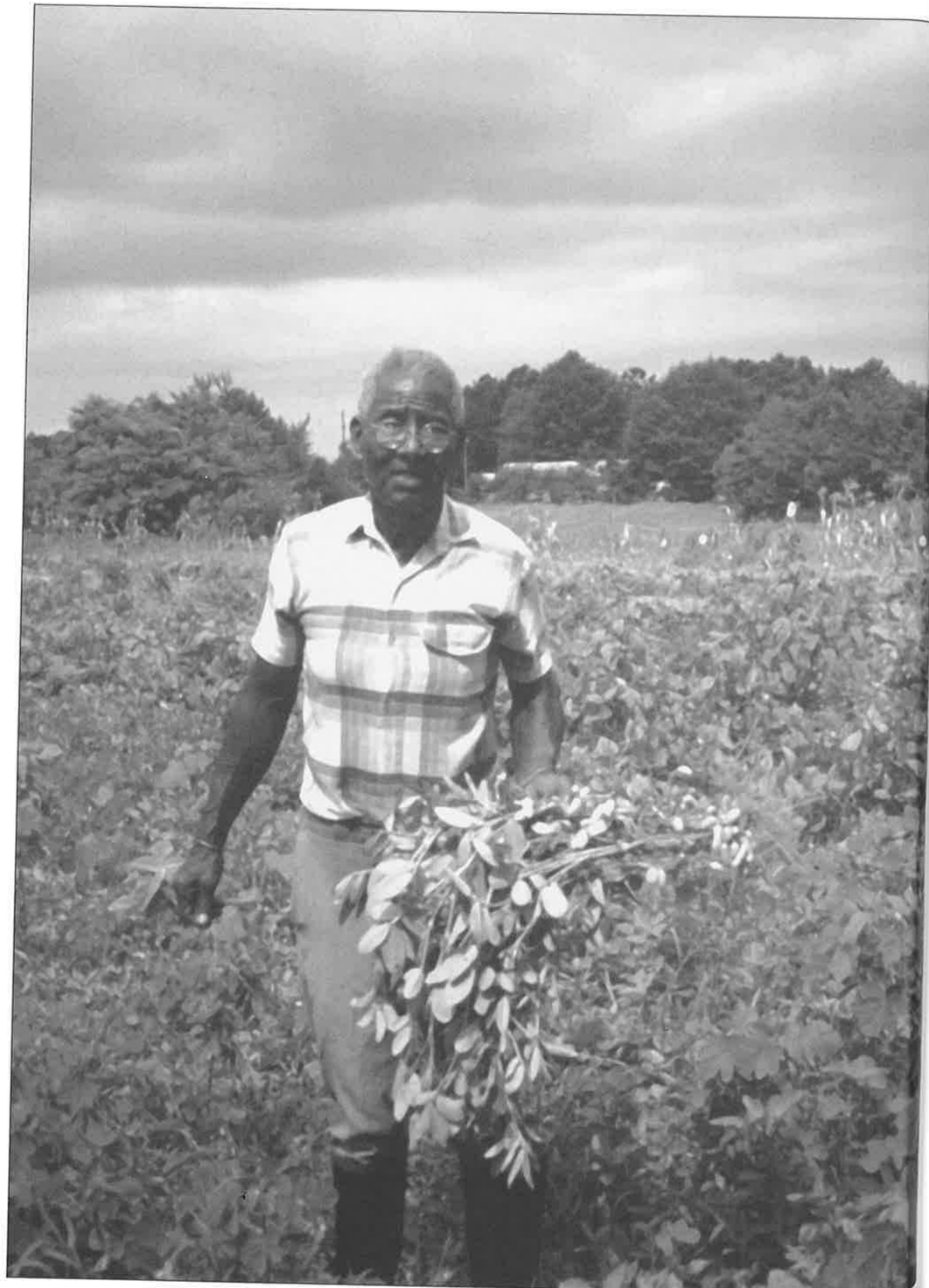
Folk Medicines of the Pine Hills Region

by Andrea Abrams



Folk medicine encompasses a range of practices, beliefs, and attitudes about health and illness.
One common kind of folk medicine is the remedies widely known and used by many people within a community.
Most folk medical systems also have practitioners known for their special skills or gifts in healing;
often these people go through an apprenticeship with a more experienced healer.
Midwives are an example of folk medical specialists once common in the Piney Woods.

Descriptions of southern folk medicine (especially among rural African Americans) often focus on specialized practitioners such as root doctors or bonesetters (see Hyatt 1970-78, Dorson 1964, and Hand 1976, for example.)
But the use of home remedies by nonspecialists is an equally important aspect of traditional medicine.

In this article, graduate student Andrea Abrams discusses folk medical remedies familiar to many people in the region. She draws upon her own fieldwork and that of community scholars Pamela Taylor and N.W. Carpenter to describe home remedies among both African Americans and Anglo Americans. Her article examines not only what remedies are traditionally used for certain ailments, but also underlying values and beliefs that reflect a larger worldview.

Folk medical traditions exist among all socioeconomic and cultural groups, although as David Hufford (1988) has observed, studies of folk medicine often concentrate on rural populations and marginalized ethnic groups.
Doctors are widely available today, but many people still prefer folk medical treatments for certain ailments.
People often have a "hierarchy of health resources" (Hufford 1988:250) that includes traditional remedies in addition to modern medicine and alternative treatments such as chiropractic or homeopathy.

Interest in traditional and alternative medical systems has increased in recent years. Many people have become somewhat disillusioned with conventional western medicine, realizing that it cannot cure all ailments and that effective treatments exist outside of the medical establishment. Increasingly, people are both recalling remedies described by their grandparents and becoming familiar with cures used in other cultures. For example, many of us know that garlic lowers blood pressure and have become familiar with acupuncture.

Neither this knowledge nor interest is new. In the recent past, people depended on folk medicine as much as, or more than, they did on conventional doctors. This is certainly true of Mississippi's Pine Hills region. Although much research has been conducted on rural healing traditions in the South, little attention has focused on practices particular to southern Mississippi[1].

During the summer of 1996, I conducted field research on medical traditions in southern Mississippi. As part of the Pine Hills Community Scholars Program, I worked with community scholars Pamela Taylor and N. W. Carpenter. Among us, we interviewed more than a dozen residents—black and white, male and female—who ranged in age from 55 to 85. These tradition bearers have lived in the Pine Hills region most of their lives. Retired cooks, school teachers, farmers, loggers and nurses, all had a rich and varied knowledge of healing traditions.

One result of this fieldwork project was a better understanding not only of the region's folk medical practices, but also of who uses these traditional remedies and why they prefer them to conventional medicine. In particular, I sought to explore the roles of gender, ethnicity, and class in the use and transmission of these traditions.

Hill defines folk medicine as "a cultural system using herbs, roots, over-the-counter drugs, and folk specialists" to achieve health (1989:472). Knowledge about the medicines is passed down informally from generation to generation and often no special training is required. Folk medical practices are especially

Left: Leslie Varnado with his peanut plants. Mr. Varnado maintains a large garden and can describe the medicinal value of many of the plants he grows. He grows several different plants to use as cures for arthritis. Photograph by Andrea Abrams.

well documented among the poor of many cultural backgrounds in both rural and urban areas.

The individuals interviewed for this project described primarily home remedies that are used to treat routine ailments such as headaches, colds, diarrhea, warts and minor cuts. They noted that few people in the early- to mid- 1900s (the period during which most were children) could afford to consult a doctor for such common complaints. Both black and white people had similar knowledge, as members of both groups tended to be poor. In fact, although segregation was still an important factor during this period, informants made little or no distinction between black and white healing traditions.

Both white and black interviewees mentioned a core repertoire of medicines made from plants, animal substances, and household items such as turpentine. Pine top tea, mullein tea, parched hog's hooves tea and cow manure tea were effective treatments for colds, for example. Another common cure for colds was described by Mr. Walter Abrams of Hattiesburg. He explained, "Before we'd go to bed, they'd take tallow—that's cow fat—and they'd put a little turpentine in it. Then they'd take a rag and grease that rag good and warm it to the fire. And put it on your chest. That was for colds."

To cure a fever, all recommended bitterweed tea. Dampened collard greens placed upon the forehead were reported to cure headaches. Blackberry juice had a calming effect on diarrhea.

For minor cuts, fresh dirt or soot from the fireplace was used. However, those interviewed no longer recommend this treatment because today's dirt contains so many chemicals.

While ethnicity was not seen as significant in whether people used folk medical remedies, socioeconomic status was a more meaningful factor. Wilter Abrams, wife of Walter Abrams, is a retired cook and mother of five. Summarizing the situation, she said of earlier generations, "They were raised in the country and they just didn't have money. So they had to learn these things, how to treat their children to keep them well and healthy."

Most informants reported that they rarely saw the doctor as children because they could not afford to do so. As one explained, "We never went to a doctor. The only time we would go to a doctor was if we would cut or hurt ourselves to where we would have to have stitches. Then they would take us." This sentiment was echoed by others. Doctors were only consulted for severe illnesses or for acute trauma to the body—such as broken bones or wounds that required stitches. Otherwise, there was u ally a home remedy to cure the problem. Walter Abra aged seventy-two, insisted that "The first doctor I wen was when I went into the service."

One of the first questions I asked during intervi concerned who administered the folk medicines. M of the research on healing traditions of the South— especially on African American traditions—refers to ditional healers known by such names as "hoodoo doc voodoo doctor, herb doctor, root doctor and conju (Hill 1989:472). Interestingly, the Pine Hills reside interviewed for this project made little or no mention these kinds of healers. Most did not recall individu who possessed an extensive repertoire of specialized he ing knowledge. With the exception of midwives and few especially gifted healers, they did not describe s cialists who could be considered the community folk d tor[2].

Some people, however, were recognized as particul ly skilled or knowledgeable. One informant recalled man who could cure especially severe colds and flu af conventional doctors had failed to do so. Ms. Jeanet Davis recalled that her mother, Allie Davis, was partic larly learned about gynecological problems. Mrs. Da said, "We used to have friends, they would ask me to Mama what to do for certain things and she would tell They'd ask about when their periods wouldn't come fr And she'd give them some ginger tea or something li that."

Midwives played an important part in folk medic care earlier this century. Many of the informants w delivered by midwives, who were usually trained by old midwives.

For the most part, though, parents, grandparen aunts and uncles attended to the health of their own ch dren and kin in this region. Remedies such as pine str tea for colds or bitterweed baths for fever were known and used by, most of the residents of the community w found themselves in the role of caretaker.

It might be expected that women, as the prima caretakers, possessed most of the medical know-ho However, according to the informants, men were just likely to know the recipes for various teas and salves were women. Wilter Abrams recalled that "during th winter, our father made a cough syrup with red onio and sugar. He would slice the onions real thin and th cover them with sugar and leave that overnight. And th next morning he would get up and he would give all o us a spoonful of the cough syrup."

Inset: Sarah Burton Taylor picking pine straw for pine top tea, a common home remedy in the Pine Hills. Above: Making pine top tea. Photographs by Pamela Taylor.

In fact, many of the informants told of remedies that they learned from their fathers. Albert "Uncle Brother" Burton, sixty-odd years old and living in Jackson, clearly remembers his father's healing knowledge. He recounted, "Daddy, he knew when to go get those sassafras roots. You couldn't get them but a certain time of the moon.... I think that's when the moon was wasting.... If you dug them up the wrong time of the moon, they would hurt you, make you sicker."

It was often the case that the males of the family had more specialized knowledge about ingredients. Both women and men knew about those plants that grew in the gardens or in the front yard, but it tended to be the males who knew when and where to find the roots and weeds that grew only in the forests. Perhaps this was because men tended to spend more time in the woods and thus were more familiar with the seasonality of forest vegetation. It was commonly believed that certain plants (such as the sassafras roots described by Albert Burton) could only be picked during certain times of the day, month or year. Otherwise, they were considered ineffective or even dangerous. This belief that some medicinal plants must be collected under particular conditions is a common one in folk medical systems. In Mississippi's Pine Hills, it was usually the men who knew when and what to pick.

One of the most interesting findings of this field research was the informants' shared perceptions of general health, especially in regard to children. Without exception, those interviewed claimed that children in the past simply did not become sick as often as they do today. Many attribute their low incidence of illness to the healthier lifestyles they had as children. There were fewer pollutants in the

soil and water, fewer hormones in the milk and eggs, and more home cooked and well balanced meals. Albert Burton criticized the modern dependence upon fast foods: "I think our systems were just a little different from people now. Everything now is fast, fast food. They only cook things for a little while. Back in them days you would put on a pot of peas in the morning and cook them all day. We'd come home from school and the peas would have a liquor that looked like gravy. They don't do that anymore. Women got tired of staying in the kitchen all day, I guess."

In addition, the informants insisted that when they were young, children simply did not suffer from certain ailments such as headaches, sinus problems, backaches and stress. Mr. Burton joked, "We didn't get headaches. They didn't allow children to have headaches back then."

When questioned about illnesses particular to children, most informants possessed scant information. Catnip tea for colic, teething and sour stomach, and sardine oil rubbed on the throat and chest for the mumps were among the few recollections. Wilter Abrams did recall a treatment for injured feet. She said, "Children went barefoot a lot. And they would step on rocks and different things like that. And they would get things on their feet called stone bruises. They would take oxygen soap and get it wet. Then put a penny in that soap and tie it on your foot. And that would cure that bruise on your foot."

Doris Anderson Mixon of New Augusta, Mississippi, displays a box of red jalapeno peppers traditionally used for cough remedies. Now over 80, she learned a wide variety of folk remedies from her parents and other family members, neighbors, and others. Photograph by N. W. Carpenter.

Significantly, although most of the informants were between the ages of 55 and 85, much of the information recovered tended to be from childhood memories. Some of the informants used the treatments with their own children, but rarely did they use any of them personally as adults. Even so, most of the remembered traditions were not specifically for children; for the most part they consisted of teas for headaches, stomach ailments, and colds, or salves for congestions, minor cuts, and abrasions. So although most of the remedies the informants remembered were appropriate for adults and could be used for ailments from which they currently suffer, these tradition bearers rarely use their knowledge today to treat themselves or others.

One of the reasons given for the decline in practicing traditional healing methods was the current scarcity of ingredients. Sarah Burton Taylor, sister of Albert Burton, explained, "We used to just go out there and pick the weeds because they were growing all around us. You don't see them now because people have plowed up and dug up everything. You don't see the weeds and things like you used to. People done dug those things up and let everybody put it in a jar. Now you have to buy it and pay more money for it. We used to just go out there and pick it and make our own medicines.... God gave us everything right there. But the people tore it down. And really what we did was hurt ourselves."

At the same time that ingredients for folk remedies are becoming harder to find, equally effective (and more convenient) commercial treatments are now more readily available. People no longer need to go through the relatively labor-intensive procedures of producing traditional teas and salves when remedies such as Advil, Pepto Bismol and Vicks Vapo Rub are already prepared and waiting on the local store shelf.

A final significant factor is that doctors are now more accessible to most people. A general increase in residents' standard of living, insurance, and government programs have made doctors more affordable. For the most part, people did not go to the doctor forty or eighty years ago because they simply could not afford to do so. Home remedies were often a matter of necessity rather than choice. This is no longer the case to the extent it once was.

Despite the decline in use reported by these individuals, however, folk medical practices are persistent and prevalent in the United States. Their use is not linked to a particular segment of the population, nor do they survive only among the ignorant and the poor. Today, folk medicine is used by the old and young, the rich and poor, many of whom feel that orthodox medicine does not meet all of their needs.

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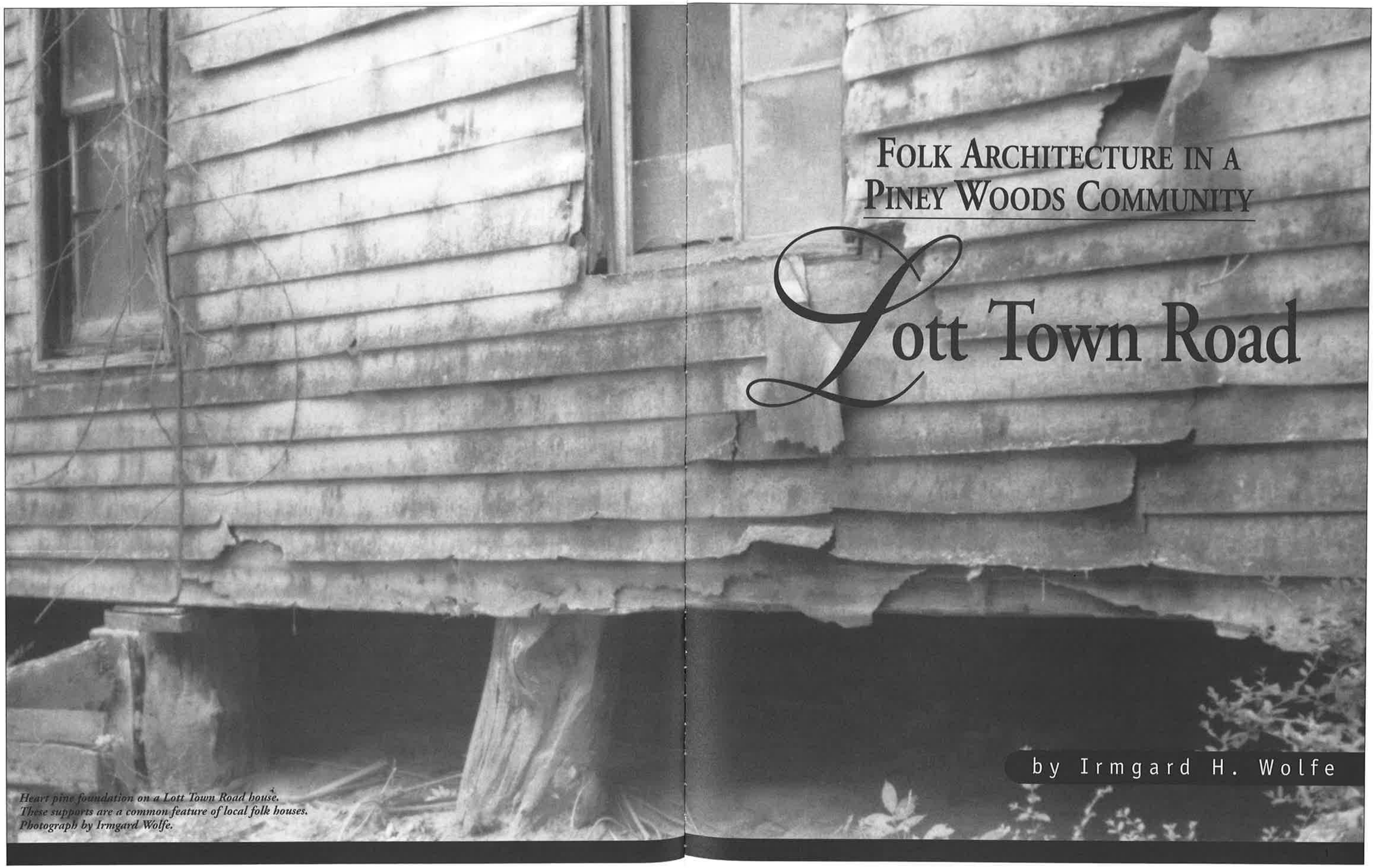
ENDNOTES

[1] Editor's note: For a historical perspective on Pine Hills home remedies, see Perry A. Snyder's "Remedies of the Piney Woods Pioneer" (*Mississippi Folklore Register 7,* no. 1, Spring 1973: 11-14) which is drawn in part from the Works Projects Administrations' *Source Material for Mississippi Folklore.* Ella Ruth Hall compared home remedies collected in Mississippi (several from the Piney Woods) with those documented in North Carolina in her article "A Comparison of Selected Mississippi and North Carolina Remedies" (*Mississippi Folklore Register 5,* no.4, Winter 1971:94-113).

[2] Editor's note: Many of the specialists documented in the South (such as hoodoo and voodoo doctors, conjurers and root workers) incorporate religious and magical elements into their healing practices. It may be that these and other kinds of folk doctors are not culturally important in Mississippi's Pine Hills today, or it may be that people talk less openly about such healers than they do about home remedies.



Folk Architecture in a Piney Woods Community

Lott Town Road

by Irmgard H. Wolfe

Heart pine foundation on a Lott Town Road house. These supports are a common feature of local folk houses. Photograph by Irmgard Wolfe.

Folk architecture reflects the needs, esthetics, and resources of the people who build and use it (Black 1976). Patterns, building techniques, and materials vary from place to place, determined in part by climate, geography, and cultural preferences. In Mississippi's Piney Woods, dogtrot and shotgun houses were once the most common folk house styles. Houses were usually built from native pine, and huge heart pine blocks often served as foundation supports. Regional folk architecture also includes churches, barns and sheds, smokehouses, and other kinds of buildings. In the past, some families used mobile logging camp cars as temporary housing, an example of the ingenuity and skill in recycling available materials that characterizes folk housing.

Irmgard Wolfe, a University of Southern Mississippi catalogue librarian and graduate student, studied the traditional architecture of one rural Piney Woods community, photographing a number of its homes and interviewing their owners. In this article, she describes in detail some of the older houses that exemplify local folk architecture. She also discusses changes in the community's physical and social landscape that reflect larger changes in the region.

Lott Town Road is a small country road located about 16 miles north of Hattiesburg, between Rawls Springs and Sumrall. The road extends in a northwesterly direction from Highway 42 to Highway 589 roughly parallel to the Bouie River and ends at the New Hope Baptist Church. The Lotts settled along a five-mile stretch of this road, beginning at the Covington County line and ending at a small pond next to the road.

For this research project, I looked at most of the houses on this road, with the earliest dating to the 1890s, and the latest being trailers set up in the 1980s. While taking pictures of most of the structures, I spoke with six residents and their spouses. In addition, I recorded two lengthy oral histories, one with Ms. Barbara Lott and one with Mrs. Clifford Aultman. Architecture and settlement patterns reflect the transformation of the community from animal husbandry, subsistence agriculture, and small-scale logging to a suburban satellite of Hattiesburg.

Pioneer era: 1880 to World War I

The Lott Town Road area is typical for the settlement of the Mississippi Piney Woods area. The land was claimed by white settlers around 1880, at a time when the traditional small logging and sawmill operations were already being displaced by large mechanized lumber mills, and railroads replaced rivers as means of transportation. The earliest dwelling, erected by Absalom Jack Lott before 1880, was demolished in 1981 or 1982. Pictures taken at that time and still in the possession of Barbara Lott show the house to have been of the folk style commonly called "hall and parlor" or Tidewater South type (McAlester and McAlester 1986:94-95).

These houses usually consist of one story, with a full-length front porch under the roof and outside chimneys on both gable ends. The construction of this folk style used heavy timber framing with mortise and tenon joints. As a rule, the kitchen was located some distance behind the main structure, but often connected by a breeze way or a covered walk. This breeze way was usually later enclosed and formed the familiar L- or T-shaped floor plan of this folk style. Barbara Lott remembers the house very well and provided a detailed description of its layout.

One family dwelling of the early period still stands on Lott Town Road. It was built around 1899 by the present tenant's father, Ed Lott. The original structure consisted of one large and very high room (with a 17 foot ceiling)—very similar to a dogtrot, although it is not a log house, but clad with horizontal pine boards (Black 1976:6). Another room was soon added on, a mirror image of the original one and of equal height. The rooms are separated by a doorway, instead of the open passage typical for traditional two-pen dogtrots. Later, the detached kitchen was enclosed and other rooms were added in the typical L-formation; the additions can be easily identified, since their ceilings are only about ten feet high. The house still sits on most of its original foundations, vertical sections of large heart pines. The oldest addition still has its original brick chimney, but the older chimney at the other gable end has been replaced. The roof and the porch floor were replaced repeatedly, but in the style of the house; the only somewhat jarring alteration was undertaken 34 years ago, when the wooden porch posts were replaced with cast-iron supports.

The original smokehouse is in use as a storage shed and the outhouse was moved behind the kitchen, also for storage. The house is surrounded by 79 acres which are used for livestock grazing and a garden. The whole property is still in an estate shared by Mr. Ed Lott's surviving six daughters. The present occupants moved in 34 years ago to take care of the wife's mother and stayed on; they are now in their eighties and represent the oldest generation of Lotts still living on Lott Town Road.

The other surviving house of this period on Lott Town Road is located about two miles to the north. This house is smaller and seems to be of a somewhat later date (circa 1910); it has been covered with asbestos siding and roofed with asphalt shingles, but the original pine log foundations are still in place. This house also conforms to the "hall and parlor" type with a detached kitchen later incorporated into an L-shaped addition. The house shows an extended, slightly dropped porch with a shed-style roof. The chimney on one gable end has collapsed. The erstwhile home of Clarence and Edna Lott, it now stands empty. Clarence Lott died some time ago and Edna Lott, now in her nineties, lives in a nursing home in Hattiesburg. A smokehouse of the period and a later shed stand behind the house. A small double-pen log barn of the same period is located across the road.

Utility buildings, such as barns, smokehouses and corncribs, still exist with all the old houses and in some cases have survived the demolition of the dwellings. The frequency, and to a degree, the relatively small size of these structures attest to the prevalence of subsistence agriculture at the time of settlement as well as to its ongoing importance. Mrs. Clifford Aultman, who was born in 1904, remembers helping milk the family's fifteen Jersey cows and using a device for separating the cream from the milk before she set off to school in the mornings. Her mother then sent the cream to the local dairy and sold the skim milk to a peddler who in turn supplied the sawmill at Sumrall (Aultman 1996). Two generations later, Barbara Lott grew up in the same area. She still recalls the free-ranging cattle and the cultivation of corn, various field peas and similar crops from her childhood, and she mentioned that this kind of farming had been practiced by her great-grandfather (Lott 1996).

The earliest settlers also exploited the prime natural resource of the area, the virgin pine timber. The felled trees were at first milled in the area. Local saw mills, probably driven by small turbines (Newton 1986:161), were once situated on most rivers in the area and the lumber used for the oldest houses was sawn at such a mill. In order to realize money from lumber operations, the early settlers had to float the logs down the Bouie River to the Coast or to Mobile. Sometimes, logs were lost during their journey downstream. Mr. Murchison, a resident of Lott Town Road, has pulled some of these so-called "sinker logs" out of the Bouie River and used these timbers with their characteristic spike holes for his own cabin by the river. Mrs. Clifford Aultman is old enough to still have seen the tall pines as a young child, and she vividly recalls how "the wind would blow and these old big pines would make that roaring racket in the wind, and it would scare me and I didn't want to be out away from the family, because I thought it was like a lion or something; it would roar" (Aultman 1996).

Small-scale lumber operations in this area were, however, soon displaced by the big lumber companies in Hattiesburg, which systematically harvested the trees, milled the wood in large mechanized saw mills and transported their product by railroad all over the United States. The people of Lott Town Road then took employment in the company logging camps, where women as well as men worked. Barbara Lott's grandmother held a position comparable to housekeeper in the camp where her husband worked. She supervised a number of women who cooked, washed and took care of the bunkhouses. Barbara Lott's father was born in 1913 in this camp at Gum Swamp, which was located between Melby and Sumrall on a railroad spur. When Mrs. Clifford Aultman married at age seventeen, her then nineteen-year-old husband "worked with his Daddy in the logging business; they logged on the other side of Sumrall, at Bassfield and up in there...they were logging until they cut all that timber out" (Aultman 1996).

1919 to World War II

By this time, the lumber industry in the Piney Woods region had already exhausted most of the resources and South Mississippi experienced a recession. The First World War seems not to have made much of an impact on the people on Lott Town Road, other than being another station in the economic decline leading to the Great Depression. During the Depression, the Piney Woods region paid the price for clear-cutting the forests. Without the jobs provided by the lumber industry, the settlers had to scramble for a living; many of them lost their money during those years. Some families left; only the names, such as "the old Gold place" and "the Short

place" were remembered for a while by their neighbors. The soils of the region were not really suitable for intensive agriculture, so raising livestock and expanding subsistence agriculture to yield marketable crops were the most promising strategies. Barbara Lott's grandfather tried many of these possibilities: he raised cattle, and planted strawberries and other fruit as well as peaches to sell in Hattiesburg. This typical pattern persisted with various crops until the advent of big national grocery chains closed off this market to local farmers.

As the original pioneers died during the 1920s and 1930s, landholdings were split up among the descendants; usually the widow kept the house or the oldest son inherited it. Houses erected on the divided plots during that period show strong influences of the national bungalow style mixed with elements from the traditional Southern shotgun cottage, but were usually still designed and built in the folk tradition. When Ms. Lott's grandfather needed a house during the 1930s, he had it built by a relative, his wife's brother. Although the house was constructed from local heart pine, its dimensions reflect the prevalence of mass-produced stock lumber then available and modern framing techniques. Although this particular house was remodeled by its present owner, Ms. Lott's brother Kenny Lott, its basic layout and character have not been altered. A house located in the general neighborhood and built by Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Aultman during the late 1950s shows how long this style remained popular. This house too was constructed by a local builder (a Mr. Kitchens) without a plan and shows the characteristic features of this type.

These one-story houses are oriented with their roof ridges at a right angle to the road, rather than parallel as was the case with the older Tidewater type. The entrance door is usually centered in the gable front. The roofs have a low pitch and if there is an outside chimney, it is located on the side or the back of the structure. Technological advances such as cast-iron stoves, metal ducting and central heating systems had by that time rendered heat-radiating brick chimneys unnecessary. A porch is attached to the front-facing gable with a separate roof, which usually shows the same pitch as the house roof, although shed roofs can also be found. The porch on Kenny Lott's house was a bit narrower than the house front, whereas Mrs. Aultman's porch spans the full width. The porch supports tend to be simple posts or columns, sometimes with attached waist-high railings. The houses are raised on brick or masonry piers and covered with horizontal wood siding.

When Barbara Lott described the layout of this house (at 3 Lott Town Rd.) where she and her siblings had spent most of their childhood, she listed five rooms. The house can be categorized as a so-called double -pile cottage (Jackle 1989: 213); such a structure is two rooms wide, and two or three rooms long. Often, the living room fronting on to the road is wider than the bedroom opposite, so that the front door, which opens directly into the living room, is centered. There is no central hallway; the rooms lead directly into each other. The interior arrangement of rooms does not necessarily have to be symmetrical, nor are all the rooms the same width, but the kitchen is located invariably at the very back. Ms. Lott also mentioned that there was no back porch at her grandmother's house, only steps to the garden. Mrs. Aultman's original house followed the same typical layout; a later expansion in the form of an "L" juts out behind the kitchen, but the basic form is still quite evident. Compact, uncomplicated and economical to build with stock lumber, the double pile cottage was very popular in this region. Due to its simple square or slightly rectangular footprint, this plan can be adapted to narrow lots and can easily be expanded later with additions at the rear or to the side. These cottages could be considered as the last true folk house style with a strong regional flavor. The Second World War represented the beginning of a different way of life for the people of Lott Town Road. Many of the men had either joined the service or had been drafted, and for many of them, military service represented the first extended contact with the world outside the South and exposed them to different living styles.

Edna Lott's house. Photograph by Irmgard Wolfe.

1945 TO THE PRESENT

The postwar period brought with it a fundamental change for the Lower South. The transformation of a predominantly agrarian economy into an industrial one was also reflected in housing trends. Altered fashions in house design, different ways of construction and new materials changed the character of housing in the United States. The phenomenal growth in mass communications disseminated the new styles and stock plans nationwide and helped form the tastes and preferences of home owners. Life on Lott Town Road did not alter immediately after 1945, but slowly, the cumulative effects of improved services such as water and electricity, increased mobility, and the accelerated shift to an industrial economic base had an effect.

For most of America, the decades following the end of the war meant unparalleled prosperity. This was, however, not the case for most of the rural Piney Woods region. With each generation, the landholdings had been subdivided, until individual plots became too small for profitable cultivation. Many of the men stayed on in the armed forces and only returned after retirement. This meant that not only during but also after the war the community of Lott Town Road consisted largely of older

From left to right: Nannie Mae Aultman. Mrs. Aultman's ancestral home on Lott Town Road with heart pine foundations. Some are huge, cut from old, first growth pine trees. Mrs. Clifford Aultman's current house, a bungalow built in the 1940s. Photographs by Irmgard Wolfe.

people and women (with children) — either widows or the left-behind wives of men still in the Service. As Barbara Lott remembers, it was very hard for those women to keep up farming.

In retrospect, it is clear that the 1960s marked a watershed in the development of Lott Town Road. Most inhabitants could no longer make a living close to their home. The older people stayed, but the younger ones moved away, although they might eventually return. Growing crops and keeping livestock increasingly became a sideline, used to supplement the main income from a job in Hattiesburg or a town even further away. The Lotts had held on to their land, and even though some acreage had to be sold during the Depression, it was bought by another family member. But now, Lott Town residents started to sell to "outsiders," initially very reluctantly and only in the case of an emergency. The Murchisons bought land in 1969 from a widowed Lott descendant—they had seen the sale notice in the newspaper. They do, however, have ties to the area, because Mrs. Murchison is from Seminary, a small town a few miles to the north, and her family had belonged to the New Hope Church, as did most of the Lotts.

During the 1960s, some of the oldest wooden houses were torn down or destroyed by fire. With one exception, the dwellings now built on Lott Town Road no longer followed folk traditions. These new houses conformed to the postwar national trend in housing design, namely the ranch house. This single-story or split-level design became very popular in housing developments all over America. The ranch house is somewhat reminiscent of the bungalow style, but lacks the raised

basement, sitting instead most often on a slab of concrete (Jackle 1989:183). Instead of the traditional front porch, more often than not a picture window faces the street; a patio in the rear now accommodates outdoor living. These designs, which still constitute the most popular houses, are built from stock lumber, using simplified construction methods such as platform framing and prefabricated roof trusses. Wood boards are no longer the preferred siding material; brick and various other siding materials, often in sheet form, are used instead. Central heating has rendered chimneys and fireplaces optional, and central air conditioning has had a profound impact on the social patterns of the neighborhood. Basically, these houses are indistinguishable from suburban dwellings anywhere in the United States.

The last group of dwellings was erected during the 1980s, when land changed hands after the death of another generation. Except for one sizeable tract, the

individual parcels of land now ranged from five to ten acres, and the transition from making a living through agriculture to employment as wage earner was by now complete. Now, the most common form of housing consists of trailers, both for Lott descendants and non-related residents. These pre-fabricated mobile homes have been called the folk houses of our own era (McAlester 1986:496), and they certainly fulfill the same functions: trailers are relatively inexpensive, simple in their layout and not dependent on architectural design or elaborate detailing. Like another traditional southern folk style, the so-called "shotgun" cottage, trailers present a simple but very adaptable floor plan. Shotgun cottages are single-story houses oriented at a right angle to the road; they are one-room wide and two or more rooms long. They have gable-front roofs and a front door that opens into the first room; there are no interior hallways. This linear layout posed some awkward problems with access, so later shotgun cottages often had an additional exterior door from one of the middle rooms. Most prefabricated mobile homes show a very similar floor plan, but invariably the entrance is located in the long side of the trailer and there may be very short hallways between the central living room-kitchen combination to bedrooms and bathrooms.

Mobile homes are derived from the travel trailers of the 1930s and were meant for camping and traveling from one trailer park in a scenic location to the next (Wallis 1991:38-39). The trailers on Lott Town Road however owe little to that tradition; instead of representing moving around, they are part of a long-established stable community. Descendants have set up mobile homes on inherited land or share lots with their parents and grandparents.

Barbara Lott described a typical pattern when she explained how she came back home: "We split the land up and so we all had our little piece of, of Grandma's land and I cut my trees and started fixing it so I could move up here. I wanted to live here, I just always felt like that, I wasn't at home when I was away from here, and I wanted to live here, on Grandma's land. And so I finally got it ready and got me a trailer and moved it up here" (Lott 1996). In a way, trailers might be considered a traditional housing style in the Piney Woods area, since "houses on wheels"—box cars converted into living quarters—had been used extensively in the lumber camps in the early twentieth century. Other types of portable shacks were set up to accommodate families and were then slid onto log cars for transport to the next location (Hoffman 1992:324).

Trailers represent the last step in the shift from regional and distinctive folk architecture to national housing forms. While ranch houses are at least constructed locally, so that despite their stock plans they can be varied somewhat according to location and climate, the prefabricated mobile homes enforce standardization and often lend a sadly unimaginative uniformity to the landscape. Some of the residents of Lott Town Road have modified their trailers by adding porches with steps, and in one case, an additional roof which incorporates a full-length veranda; other trailers have been left unmodified. Lott Town Road demonstrates in a relatively concentrated area a process repeated all over the Piney Woods region. Changes in domestic architecture reflect the profound economic transformation the South underwent during and after the Second World War, when a basically rural structure gave way to modern industrialization.

Lott Town Road consists not only of a group of houses, but also of a remarkably homogeneous population. Because of the small number of people in the sample, there is a clear feeling of generations succeeding each other, without the overlap encountered in a more random sample. The passing of the generations finds an outward expression in the housing designs. The changing social fabric of Lott Town Road has been noted by some of the inhabitants. As Ms. Lott explains: "They don't visit one another, they don't visit with us, they just kind of keep to themselves. That's just the way it is. But before, people would stop and visit and get together, have get-togethers. I don't know, it was friendlier" (Lott 1996). The gravitational pull of Hattiesburg, which began with the railroads and accelerated with the advent of the automobile, is transforming the community into a suburb, and this change makes Lott Town Road attractive for outsiders. The Lotts do not want to sell their land, although economic circumstances have in the past forced some family members to do so. There seems to be a realization among the family that smaller plots are more vulnerable, so some bigger tracts are still held as unsettled estates to avoid dispersal.

This pattern repeats itself in the whole region — the descendants of the original pioneers can no longer make a living off the land as their forefathers did, but their sense of community lives on and is reinforced by nostalgic remembrances of a seemingly simpler and more satisfying past. This sentiment is reflected in the fate of the oldest houses in the area: as the elderly owners die or move to town for medical reasons, the old houses are deserted, but will not be torn down. Mrs. Aultman put it

well: "When the old people died the houses began to fade away." The house in which she was born shares that fate; when asked about her plans she said: "We don't want it torn down and it's going to fall down — but we just can't tear it down!" (Aultman 1996). In the case of houses which were demolished, wood was often salvaged and reused in the construction of new homes to keep some tangible remains of the family's past. When Barbara Lott talked about the demolition of one of the original houses she pointed out: "He (Glenn Lott) took real pains, he was real careful with it and he saved the wood and he used it to finish the inside of his house; you know, that wood that was still in good condition" (Lott 1996). Interestingly, some of the new residents, such as Mr. Murchison, have followed this custom out of an interest in the history of the area.

All residents, newcomers as well as Lott family members, agree that the community identity still exists, although they differ in their assessment of its strength. Mrs. Aultman who lives close to Lott Town Road and is related to the Lotts, does not notice much of the old community spirit: "The neighbors are not like they used to be ... we don't have any fellowship with them, we just pass and they pass and wave, and that's as far as it goes" (Aultman 1996). Barbara Lott remembers when only Lotts or people married to Lotts lived on the road which originally had no name and she pointed out that her father, George Lott, had named the road when he nailed up a sign saying "Lott Town" as a young man. Keeping this feeling of community alive is seen as increasingly difficult, especially so after the two women who had kept the community together during the Second World War and the postwar period either died or went to a nursing home. All the Lotts interviewed put the present ratio of Lotts to outsiders at 50 percent. Of the eighteen residences on Lott Town Road, nine belong to direct descendants, four to people remotely related by marriage and five to outsiders.

The increasing loss of community cohesion is acutely felt by Barbara Lott, who blames it on television. The charge could with equal justice be leveled at modern housing design and technology. The traditional houses of the Lower South all featured raised front porches, which served as a hall and an extension of the living room; during the summer months, most day-to-day activities took place on the porch. These porches were equipped with swings and rocking chairs, and sitting on the porch served as a signal to passers-by to stop and visit. Barbara Lott fondly recalled this custom: "When I was young, everybody would be sitting out on the porch; everyday, after they got their work done, they'd sit out on the porch and talk to one another, and they would watch for people coming by. That might not sound like entertainment, but that was entertainment then. You'd sit out there and hope somebody came by. And people would stop and talk to you, if you were out on your porch" (Lott 1996). The ranch houses of the 1960s dispensed with front porches, and air conditioning has induced most people to stay inside, sadly to the detriment of community life.

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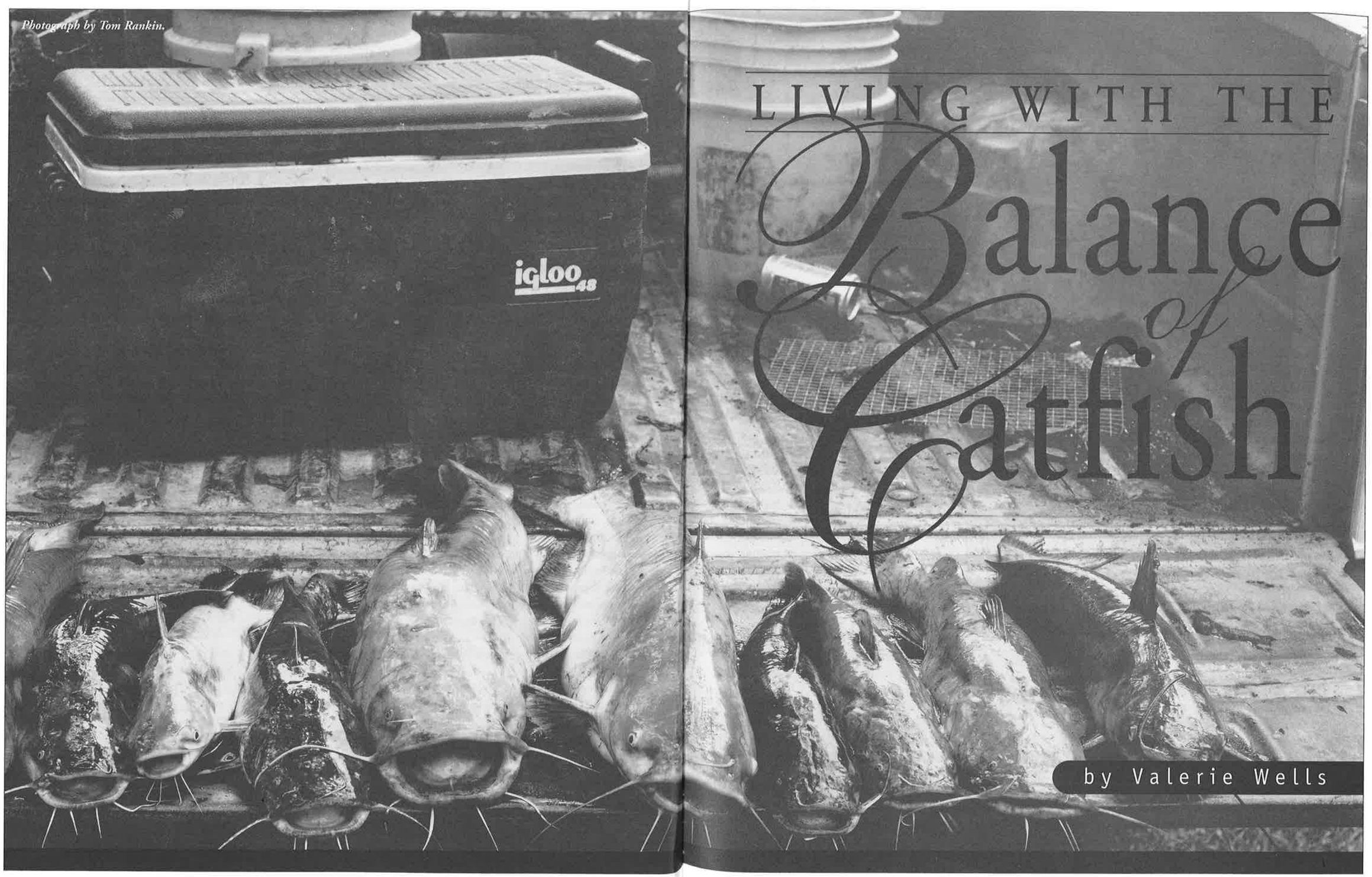
Interviews

Ms. Barbara Lott.
Interview by author, June 30, 1996, in her trailer on Lott Town Road, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Tape recording and transcript.

Mrs. Clifford Aultman.
Interview by author, July 15, 1996, in her house on Clifford Aultman Road, Sumrall, Mississippi. Tape recording.



Photograph by Tom Rankin.

LIVING WITH THE Balance of Catfish

by Valerie Wells

Barbecue, cornbread, mayhaw jelly, biscuits and sausage, purple-hull peas, canned preserves, teacakes, turnip and collard greens, and fried green tomatoes are only a few familiar examples of traditional Pine Hills dishes. The region's foodways include not only the kinds of food customarily served, but also traditional means of cultivating, preparing, and preserving food, and the events during which food is shared.

Fried catfish is an important staple in Piney Woods cooking, and fish fries often provide the focus for bringing friends and family together for a special meal. Catfish ponds make fresh fish more available to many people; at the same time, they provide sport for those who want to catch their own.

Journalist and community scholar Valerie Wells interviewed her uncle, Jimmy Anderson, who runs a catfish pond in George County for fun rather than profit. Her article gives an interesting and up-close view of catfish farming and its significance in Jimmy Anderson's life.

With his dogs riding in the passenger side, he drives a few hundred feet down to a well-manicured lake with benches and a landscaped background. Geese, turkeys, guineas and ducks roam around. At the end of the small pier is a screened-in room with a small bed, a small television set and some fish food.

Sixty-year-old Jimmy Anderson built the lake and created the setting for his parents. To get to his place in George County near the Escatawpa River, you have to go down a clay road all the way to the end. Just when you think the road has ended and you are lost, you keep going. You drive through the woods to Jimmy's hidden house.

He built the small, three-room house himself. He also built the small screened "house" on the pond. He even built the pond. He would rather you call it a lake. He takes a lot of pride in this park he has created. The retired utility company employee is not a farmer and does not make money from his efforts.

This is just for fun.

Jimmy built his three-and-a-half-acre catfish lake in 1990. He has four thousand catfish fingerlings, brim and bass.

"I bought bass and caught bass. It's real expensive to buy. Some I bought for 80 cents to $1.85. I tried to get shell crackers for years. The other fish were so large, I had to get copper nose. To start with, I bought hybrid brim. They grew a pound in a year but didn't reproduce. I have two different kinds of blue gill. I didn't know that until I got a book. They have different spines on their back."

When he was growing up in this same community, few people had fishing ponds. "What ponds were here were pollywog. Nobody around here raised chow catfish for market until I was grown," he said.

"Me and Daddy and Mama owned a lot at Silver Run Lake. We fished up there and fishing was real good. The people in charge of the association were from off, like New Orleans, Hattiesburg, Jackson. Their concerns was more with the looks than the fishing. Instead of keeping the lake fit for fish, they spent money on docks and swimming areas."

"We had a pontoon with chickens on it. We'd take lawn chairs out," he said. That's where he and his family would fish.

"Then they wanted to build a park where we had it and wanted us to more." That was in 1985.

"That's when I decided I would build a lake for Mama and Daddy. I had saved up money to buy a new truck. I needed it to build a pond," he said. "And I'm proud of it."

Jimmy said it cost $10,000 to build the pond, which is less than a pick-up truck would have cost. It has increased the value of his property, whereas a pick-up truck would have devalued by now, he said.

"I had a neighbor up the road who builds ponds. He let me decide on a lot of stuff. If I ever have to drain it, the valves are below the dam," he said.

Natural water flows into the pond. "We filled that lake up in a week. No rain at all, just springs."

"One reason that pond is successful is my dad. He bought the feed. He fed them everyday through the week. Sunday was the only day he didn't come. He got attached to feeding," he said. Jimmy's father died two years ago.

Jimmy's parents would come three times a week to fish at the pond. "They've always enjoyed just fishing, not eating the fish. Mama might eat two brim. None of us are big fish eaters. We just like to catch them." His mother, in her eighties, still comes often with lots of other people.

"A lot of my neighbors come here. Uncle Bobby and Aunt Nadine, their kids and grandkids. I've never charged anybody. At night people slip in. They wouldn't have to do it, that's what bugs me. They catch bass and throw them back."

"I had that little house. Daddy liked to watch the news and lay on the bed. Mama could fish. I kept it mowed good along the edge, real good."

The pond has sixteen tons of lime in it. "In this area, they claim you need three tons per acre. This area is so sandy and all. When my lake would fluctuate, it would smell foul."

The art and science of keeping a balance seems simple enough to Jimmy.

"People forget basic science. If they ask any old Mississippi catfish farmer about acid rain, they could have spread lime and saved money on lawsuits."

"If you have too much algae, the fish will have an off flavor. Most people don't fertilize to keep them from having an off flavor."

He only uses a little fertilizer in his lake.

"I got a disease in it one time. The catfish had algae on their skin. I called MSU," he said. A specialist at Mississippi State University told him he needed ninety pounds of potassium permanganate to cure the condition. He did it and it burned the skin off his fish. Fish would jump out of the water and Jimmy saw the raw, white flesh.

"It ate the skin off. It'd make you want to get a gun and put them out of their misery. A neighbor said the skin would grow back. I lost 400 to 500 fish in a twelve-day period. Besides being disheartening and all that, it was a loss."

"The water was clear. I fed it extra and fertilized it back. We put salt in it. We looked for signs on brim. In two or three days, those spots disappeared."

"When I treat, I put 100 pounds of salt in. We've had good luck. When we get a lot of rain, fresh water, that's when brim get red spots."

Two little branches feed into Jimmy's lake. "That makes a difference. The fish taste a lot better. It's hard to keep the pH balance right. It's worth it for the taste of the fish."

Left: Pine Hills home cooking. Lucille Anderson prepares a meal of cornbread, fried green tomatoes, squash, corn, and fried catfish. Above: (top) Jimmy Anderson at his aunt Lucille Anderson's kitchen table in Shipman, George County. Above: (lower) Lucille Anderson in her kitchen with freshly baked cornbread. Photographs by Valerie Wells.

He uses no poison to kill ants or weeds. He doesn't want to risk the balance of the pond.

"I planted grass, brown-top nelly. I put some centipede around the edges. I spreaded hay on my dam," he said.

"It's a lot of fun to watch grownups catch fish. Especially Mama. She gets excited. The only person I know who gets more excited than Mama is Aunt Idaree. It's still a lot of fun. It tickles me to death. They'll be playing them brim. They'll pull them to the surface."

Jimmy said children learn how to fish naturally.

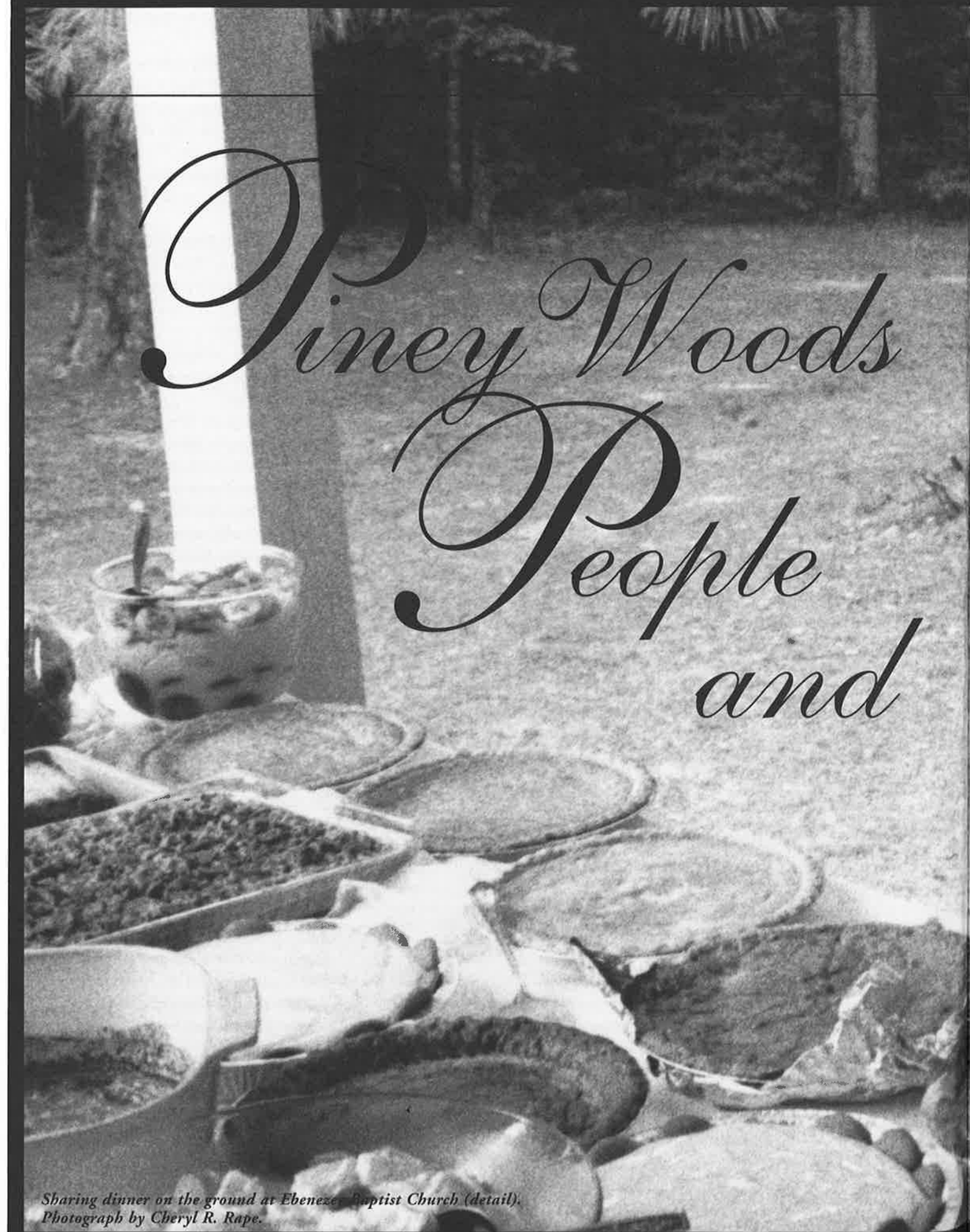
"You got to bring them. People are so busy and all. They'll like fishing. Give them the opportunity. You got to watch them, though. If a young one drowned in my pond, it would ruin it for me. If you bring them, they'll fish. It's rewarding to see kids catch fish."

He often tells little boys, "You have to keep reminding them to bring you back." A circle of PVC pipe is secured to the pier. This holds the feed in a ten to fifteen-foot area, keeping the lake clean and making it easy to catch fish.

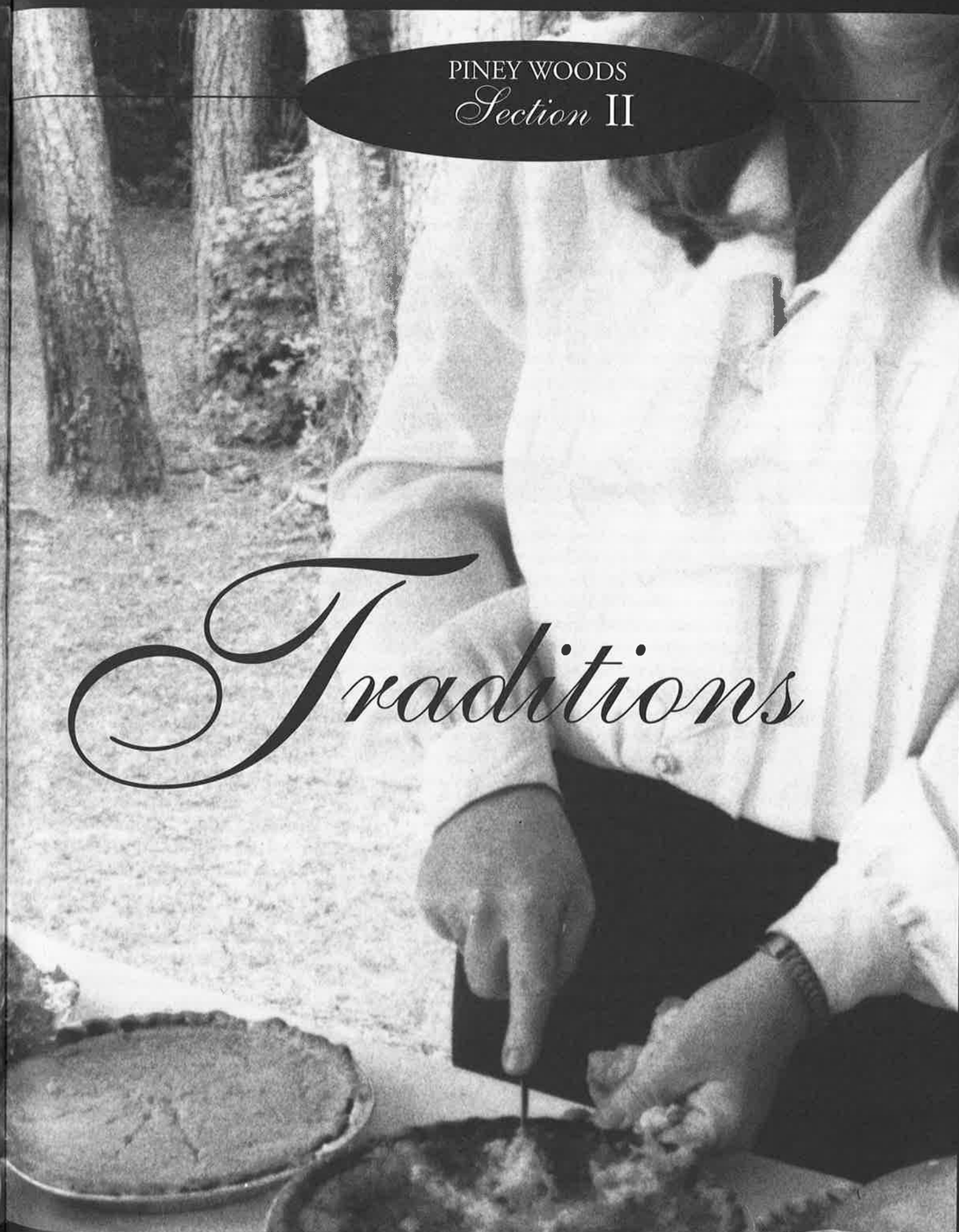
"We use crickets more than anything else," he said about the best bait. He also uses chicken livers, but crickets seem to work the best.

Fish can be cleaned right at the lake in Jimmy's screened house. "I got a sink. I got a hook on a tree to scale them. The heads I throw in a crawfish trap or just throw away. No waste."

Piney Woods People and Traditions



Sharing dinner on the ground at Ebenezer Baptist Church (detail). Photograph by Cheryl R. Rape.



Following are biographical sketches of some of the individuals, groups, and organizations documented for the Pine Hills Community Scholars Program.

Most of the people profiled carry on cultural traditions such as folk medicine, music, cooking, crafts, or religious practices. Others are community historians with a wealth of knowledge about their community's history, cultural institutions, and architecture. All offer insights into aspects of everyday life—in the present and recent past—in Mississippi's Piney Woods.

Many of the following pieces are written by community scholars who interviewed people in their own communities—their relatives, neighbors, friends, or pastors—whose culture they share. Some people chose to write personal narratives describing their own cultural experiences. Other community scholars and the program coordinator wrote about artists from different cultural backgrounds. The traditions and people described below, and the ways in which the authors describe them, reflect traditional values and customs that remain important in the region.

compiled by Carolyn Ware

SARAH BURTON TAYLOR,
Home Remedies
Jackson, Hinds County

Mrs. Sarah Burton Taylor has a practical, commonsense way of looking at the world. Her beautiful smile and laughing eyes let visitors know that she doesn't meet any strangers. She has the energy of a twenty-five-year-old, and her physician once stated that she is in better shape than many of his much younger patients. Mrs. Taylor's philosophy on good health is to eat right, drink plenty of water, and get enough exercise and sleep. She rarely eats out because "you can't tell what they put in the food."

Mrs. Taylor was born in 1929 in Madison County, near the Hinds and Madison County line. She and her seven siblings spent most of their lives living in and around Jackson. She remembers watching her father go to the woods or the field to bring back roots and leaves for making teas and compresses. Her mother prepared the home remedies. Mrs. Taylor believes that many of the medicines now sold in pharmacies are watered-down versions of these teas. "That would explain why you have to keep going back to the doctor," she reasons. While she believes in seeking the advice of a physician when ill, she thinks that you should "take it with a grain of salt" and use common sense before making a final decision.

Mrs. Taylor continues to use home remedies today, but she says that she doesn't see many of the herbs that were used during her childhood. She worries that many of the herbs may be lost forever because the woods and fields have been replaced by concrete and asphalt. She believes that progress is not always good for us, and that more people are ill today because they are not as close to God and the land as they were in the past.

—BY PAMELA R. TAYLOR

NELL KELLER,
Yeast Roll Making
Petal, Forrest County

Nell Blackwelder Keller's father was a Presbyterian minister who loved homemade bread; in fact, he refused to eat store-bought white bread. His wife, Ethel Blackwelder, was happy to spoil her husband by making yeast rolls or bread for him every day.

During the Depression years, Reverend Blackwelder accepted a call to serve three area churches in Petal, Eatonville, and New Augusta. The minutes of the Eatonville Presbyterian Church record that the church agreed to pay him $100 a year "in order to relieve you of worldly cares." He also held services at the Wiggins Presbyterian Church whenever he could manage. Times were hard for everyone during these years.

Mrs. Blackwelder, a devoted wife and mother, was always prepared for the many visitors who stopped by to see the pastor. She was always well dressed and had something baked, just in case. It was a pleasure to come to their home in the mornings as the yeast was rising, filling the air with a delicious aroma. No one had to be called twice to the dinner table at her house.

As the Blackwelders grew older and became unable to care for themselves, their daughter Nell Keller (who lived next door to her parents) continued to bake bread for her father every day as long as he lived. Nell has become quite famous for her bread and roll making. At church socials and other events, she is asked to bring her homemade rolls. Community members who are ill or have special needs often receive a treat from her kitchen.

On a roll-making day, a pleasing aroma escapes through the windows and doors just as it did a generation ago. Mrs. Keller prepares the dough in the same manner she learned from her mother, using the same utensils, the same ingredients, and even the same bowls her mother used for letting the dough rest and rise. She also uses the tin can her mother saved, as it is just the right size to cut the rolls.

Today's fast-paced lifestyles often leave little time for traditions such as breadmaking. Many commercial bread products boast of nutritional values, taste, and quality, but they lack the special yeasty smell and mouth-watering taste of Nell Keller's homemade rolls.

—BY ELOISE JONES

CATHERINE RUTLEDGE MILLER,
Piney Woods Rural Life
Ozona, Pearl River County

Catherine Rutledge Miller has lived in the Piney Woods all of her life and has many stories to tell about life in this area during the past eighty years. The daughter of Amanda May Harrell and Bishop Leroy Rutledge, she was born in 1915 in the Rocky Branch community, in a house on land homesteaded by her grandparents, William Rutledge and Mary Elizabeth Miller.

William Rutledge was a Methodist minister who founded the Advance Methodist and the Hickory Grove Methodist churches, both of which still exist. Every year, Catherine returns to the Hickory Grove Church for Homecoming and dinner on the ground.

Catherine Rutledge Miller was the oldest of five children. Her father, Bishop Rutledge, did what was called "public" work. A sawyer in a sawmill, he said of himself that he was a "master saw filer" and a "jack of all trades." Mrs. Miller recalls working on their farm and hiring out to neighbors for fifty cents a day. The family raised their own food and ground their own cornmeal and grits, but did not farm commercially. A hired man who stayed with the Rutledges to help out with the farming was also the community barber. His shop was the family's front porch, where he kept his barber chair.

Catherine started school at Oloh and graduated at Sumrall, after attending several other schools including Hickory Grove, Improve, and Rocky Branch. All were within a stone's throw of each other, she says. After graduating, she moved to Pearl River County in 1938 to stay with her married sister, Mary Alma Keller, in Picayune. Catherine went to work in the Shirt Factory in Picayune for $2.50 a week. She soon met and married Clifford Clinton "Tip" Miller, and the couple moved to the Ozona community where they raised five children. Although Tip was a carpenter rather than a farmer, the family always had a vegetable garden for their own use, a cow for milk, and chickens for eggs and for Sunday dinners.

Mrs. Miller now lives alone in the home that her husband built for them, and she remains very active in her church and community. She enjoys visiting with friends and neighbors and talking about current events as well as events of the past. Her interest in, and love and compassion for her neighbors make her a loved and respected member of the community that she calls home.

—BY CAROLYN BEECH

WILLIAM F. CRAWFORD,
Brookhaven History and Architecture
Brookhaven, Lincoln County

William F. Crawford, a native of Brookhaven, is a retired banker and former Chairman of the Board of State Bank and Trust Company. For about twenty years, he raised and showed Tennessee walking horses, including several world champions.

Mr. Crawford is an expert on Brookhaven's history and architecture. He is a direct descendent of A.E. Moreton, a Civil War captain who came to Brookhaven to build Whitworth College and wound up settling there and building houses that set the tone for what is now called the Victorian District of Brookhaven. William Crawford's home, one of many built by Captain Moreton, has been placed on the National Register of Historical

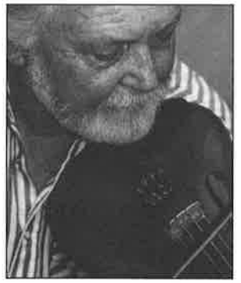
Places because of its importance as a touchstone of area history and the care it has received. Over the years, it has been maintained to near museum standards, with modern conveniences carefully and unobtrusively added.

Most of the houses built by Captain Moreton are Queen Anne Free Classic style. They are one and a half or two stories, of white clapboard with generous porches. Many details of room layout are similar yet somewhat unique. For example, each house contains a back hall used as what we would today call a family room. Windows were specially designed to allow adults to walk through them for indoor-outdoor living in the hot months. As in most early homes, the kitchen was not attached to the main house, limiting the danger of fire and heat from cooking. Service buildings stood on the expansive grounds of each house, illustrating the movement from densely spaced urban townhouses to suburban villa neighborhoods within Brookhaven's city limits.

Large yards encouraged an interest in gardening not permitted in more urbanized settings. Plants were used not only as ornaments but also to provide shade and wind breaks. The A.E. Moreton house featured a partially underground greenhouse, as well as a goldfish pond. Gardeners tended to use hardy plants such as crepe myrtle, old roses (not hybrids), Southern smilax (vine), cape jasmine (gardenia), wild azalea (not the current ornamentals), and other plants now considered almost native. Bulbs were used extensively, including jonquils, narcissus, hyacinth, and Easter lilies. Cutting gardens were also grown and used extensively in the home. Trees lined the streets, providing a complete canopy by the first half of this century.

While the traffic on the streets is now much noisier, and bungalows and other modern homes have filled in the spaces between the old landmarks, Brookhaven still exhibits the grace and charm of that prosperous era. Jackson Street, where all of these homes are located, is especially fine.

—BY HENRY LEDET



JACK YOUNGBLOOD,
Bluegrass Fiddling
Purvis, Lamar County

Now seventy-five, Jack Youngblood still remembers his first fiddle. "I started guitar when I was seven, then Daddy got me a fiddle when I was twelve. I guess he really got it for himself, but I sort of took it over," he says. "Something about the fiddle made me let the guitar go."

That was in Oneonta, Alabama, where his father had a handle mill. Youngblood picked up the fiddle naturally. "The only way I learned was I would listen to the Opry on Saturday night. Most songs I could listen once and copy it." When he was fifteen, he won a fiddlers' contest in Birmingham, and joined Tex Dunn and His Virginia Hillbillies, a band from Indiana that had moved to Birmingham and needed a fiddle to go with its dobro. They played local radio shows and school auditoriums, and Youngblood says, "I stayed two years with them."

In the late 1930s, Youngblood's family moved to Taloweh, Mississippi, just south of Purvis. He continued playing with the Virginia Hillbillies, returning home when they weren't playing. He did the same with many other bands over a long career of touring, until he retired about 12 years ago. "I've been back and forth my whole life playing," he says.

Over the years, he played with Lefty Frizell (for a year) and with Bill Monroe (for nine months), among others. "I was the first to play *Cheyenne,"* a tune that later became one of Bill Monroe's first hits and most popular songs. "We were backstage in Little Rock in an auditorium, and we just worked it up there and played it that night. It went over so well we added it to the show."

By this time, Youngblood was married to Vondel, his wife of more than fifty years. He came home because he couldn't get paid regular enough to suit him. He played his "swing fiddle and country" for years in clubs across the South.

His biggest influence in style was Curly Fox, whom he knew from his days in Birmingham. He says, "Curly Fox is the greatest showman ever. I loved the way he played a double shuffle. He's my all-time idol. He was really the one."

It wasn't until he retired that Youngblood took up the acoustic bluegrass music that he plays so well today. "I enjoyed playing Hank Williams and Jim Reeves and stuff like that when I was younger. Now I love bluegrass better than all that." Alison Krauss is his favorite fiddler today. "She's got a feeling taking a break no one has got."

These days, he plays mostly on Thursday nights with his friends Charlie Harrison of Columbia (on bass) and Lonnie Craft of Hattiesburg (on guitar), and anyone else who happens by. He says, "My mother used to say all the time, 'Quit that see-sawing and do something!'"

—BY DAMIAN MORGAN,
based on fieldwork by Doug Anderson and Damian Morgan

SARAH GILLESPIE,
History of Hattiesburg and Sacred Heart School
Hattiesburg, Forrest County

The Sacred Heart Catholic Church and its parochial school have played an important role in shaping Hattiesburg's Historic Neighborhood for almost a century. Sarah Gillespie's oral history account of the church and the neighborhood sheds light on the history and development of the city, as well as the cultural importance of family, education, and religion in the region.

Sarah Ellen Gillespie's family has lived one block or closer to Sacred Heart Catholic Church since it was founded. Miss Gillespie says that the neighborhood has "always been a mixture" of denominations. Within a six-block area of Hattiesburg's historic neighborhood is a cluster of six early churches representing six denominations, and all remain active. A number of Catholics moved to the area to be near the Sacred Heart Catholic School and the church, and Catholic families continue to live in the neighborhood, although they remain a minority.

Sitting in the "amen corner" of the present beautiful church for a recent interview, Sarah talked about her own family and other local families, the Catholic school, and religion. Her mother was an orphan who came to Hattiesburg to live with her aunt, Miss Ella Scanlan, at her boarding house. Before marrying, she worked as a teacher and then as a legal secretary. Sarah's father was born in what she describes as "a wide place in the road" called Egypt (in Chickasaw County), and came to Hattiesburg in 1900. He was Southern District buyer for Yellow Pine Lumber Company when mills were "close enough to throw a baseball." The couple, who married in 1917, both liked to play cards and were members of the Club Forrest. She, a Catholic, was a member of Sacred Heart's congregation, while he attended the First Baptist Church.

The church parish was organized around 1890 by three brothers from Ireland named Doherty. The first masses were conducted in Mrs. Katzensteins's house once a month by a priest who traveled on horseback from Paulding.

The first Sacred Heart Catholic Church, built in 1900, was a wooden structure across the street from the church's present location. The Sacred Heart school, built next to the church, attracted Catholic families to the area. In the late 1920s and early '30s when Sarah attended the school, seven nuns—all excellent teachers, she recalls—taught "primer" through twelfth grade.

The present brick church was built in 1927, when Father Innis (a German-born priest) was pastor. Five beautiful stained glass windows installed during construction are Germanmade. The impressive faux marble altar arrived in sections, and Sarah remembers the top piece on the floor reminding her of an Indian tepee. In 1953, Father John Martin led a rejuvenation of the church, and American-made stained glass windows were added. Sacred Heart's sanctuary is probably the largest Catholic sanctuary in Mississippi.

The first resident priest arrived in 1900. At one time the church had three priests, but today a general shortage of priests (and nuns) once again limits the church to one pastor, Father George Murphy. The congregation has grown from two Sunday masses in 1900 to one mass on Saturday, three on Sunday, and a daily mass. Mass is said in the vernacular style, and the priest faces the congregation; an altar rail no longer separates priest and congregation.

According to Sarah Gillespie, "The Church doesn't have a bunch of picky rules. People do." Changes in rules have come about because of the changing times.

She is Catholic because of her cultural heritage: primarily Scots from a long line of Presbyterians and Episcopalians, with a little bit of Irish ancestry—enough to be Catholic. When asked to name priests, nuns, parishioners, or others who were role models, Sarah admits that of course her parents influenced her. Influence by anyone else, she says, was through "a process of osmosis, not any consciousness on my part. It just sort of oozed into my pores somehow or another."

—BY JACQ JONES

BERTHA PARKER, *Midwifery*
Tougaloo, Madison County

Bertha Parker, now eighty-one, is a retired midwife who began helping to deliver babies at the age of twelve. Her father's mother was a midwife who always carried a suitcase or grip with her when delivering babies. Mrs. Parker remembers that when she was eight years old, "I asked her what she had in the grip, and she told me she brings the baby in the grip.... So she said, 'I found the baby out in the woods.' So one day I watched her come and I peeked over in her grip, and I said, 'There ain't no baby in here!'.... I wanted to know where they came from."

Instead of punishing Bertha for looking in her case, her grandmother decided to teach the girl. "That was my first teaching, when I was eight years old, from my grandmother." When she was twelve, her grandmother took her along to a delivery. "That was the first baby I seen

born," she says, and when she was allowed to hold the child after it was weighed, "That was one of the happiest times of my life.... And after that, everywhere she went to deliver a baby.... she took me with her."

"We had a doctor in town named Dr. Lee Jones," Mrs. Parker recalled in an interview with Pamela Taylor. He traveled in a buggy, and often took Bertha Parker with him to visit expectant mothers. Dr. Jones was "the first person who gave me . . . all I had for my midwife bag." In her bag was "everything you need" for a birth, including towels, tape, and Lysol. The few medicines she carried included castor oil, epsom salts, and milk of magnesia. Before baby oil was widely available, she used butter or lard to "grease" the baby.

When she first began working with her grandmother, Board of Health licensing for midwives did not yet exist. Soon after Mrs. Parker married, the department began requiring licenses, and she received hers after taking an exam. At the age of nineteen, she was considered very young by other midwives.

She and her husband lived on a farm after they married, and they had two daughters of their own. Mrs. Parker remembers that sometimes she was so tired after delivering a baby, she would fall asleep in the cotton fields on the way back home. When her husband complained that she spent too much time away from home "waiting on babies," she began bringing expectant mothers into her own house, often using boxes and dresser drawers as cribs. Sometimes she didn't have a bed free in the house, and she once had two babies arrive ten minutes apart. Another time, she had three babies to deliver at once. At times like these, she could call on one of the two doctors she worked closely with to help her, or ask her daughters to help. And she says, "God sure helped me . . . . I knew that God was my helper."

Mrs. Parker's responsibilities did not end with childbirth. The new mother sometimes stayed with her for five days after the birth, and she checked on the mother and child regularly for the first month. Premature babies stayed longer, since she always made sure that they gained six pounds before they left; one baby remained at her house for two months.

Payment for her services varied over the years. Poor families often paid her "just whatever they had" for delivering a baby, and she might receive a chicken from the yard or five dollars. "Sometimes I'd get a dollar, and sometimes I wouldn't get no penny.... I got a mule one time, [for delivering] four babies." She recalls, "The highest I ever got was $150 before I stopped." Money was not the most important reward for the work she loved. Mrs. Parker says of being a midwife, "You know, I can't help but be thankful of God. And God has blessed me, He has overblessed me some.... And I sure loved it."

Mrs. Parker says that she has been "east, west, north or south" to deliver babies, to many different places in Mississippi and as far away as Memphis. During her long career, she assisted in 1,919 births recorded by the Board of Health. Mrs. Parker remembers many of these births in great detail, often down to the babies' birth weights.

She stopped delivering babies on her own in 1972 after a car wreck, and then assisted other midwives for another seven years before retiring altogether. Today, one of her daughters is a nurse, and the other is a child-care worker. Mrs. Parker says proudly that she delivered "every one" of her grandchildren.

—BY CAROLYN WARE,
based on fieldwork by
Pamela R. Taylor

SEBIA HUGHES,
Quilting
Mendenhall,
Simpson County

Sebia Hughes, born in 1911, is a resident of the Walter Jones community near Mendenhall, Mississippi. She has been quilting for more than sixty years, and quilting has been a tradition in her family for several generations. Mrs. Hughes began learning at the age of nine from her grandmother, Margaret Dodd, a direct slave descendant. She in turn has taught one of her daughters and a son to quilt.

Her grandmother taught her to quilt first by letting her thread the needle and eventually letting her try stitching. Although none of her sisters learned to quilt, Sebia became interested in quilting and "trying to do like my grandmother," she said in an interview with Mertha Rankin Sanders. After marrying at sixteen, she made quilts to keep her husband, Charlie, and their eleven children warm.

Mrs. Hughes makes her quilts at home, often in the winter months, using fabrics such as cotton, muslin, and (in the past) flour sacks. She uses many traditional pieced quilt patterns such as the *double wedding ring, fan, eight-pointed star,* and *trip around the world* patterns as well as newer ones. It takes her at least two days to piece a quilt, and all of her sewing is done by hand.

Mrs. Hughes says that her inspiration in quilting comes from "just doing it and showing it" to others, and she especially enjoys making quilts for her grandchildren. She often tries new patterns she sees in other people's quilts. In addition to her intricate pieced and quilted "fancy" quilts, Mrs. Hughes sometimes made tacked quilts for her family's use.

Sebia Hughes's quilts have won two first prizes at the Simpson County Fair and have been displayed at Tougaloo College. In addition, she is an excellent cook and gardener who cans her own preserves. She raises chickens, ducks, guineas, cows, and goats, and also remains active in church work.

—by Carolyn Ware,
based on fieldwork by
Mertha R. Sanders

LOUISE WALLACE,
Choctaw Cane Basketmaking
Bogue Homa,
Jones County

The Bogue Homa Choctaw reservation in Jones County is small, with about 300 residents, and fewer tribal members here speak Choctaw than in the larger Choctaw community near Philadelphia, Mississippi. However, a number of people do maintain important cultural traditions such as crafting stickball sticks, grinding hominy with a mortar and pestle, doing beadwork, and weaving traditional baskets from strips of swamp (or river) cane. Basketmaking is among the most significant and marketable cultural skills among the Mississippi Band of Choctaw. Girls usually learn to make traditional cane baskets when they are young from older relatives or neighbors.

Louise Wallace's mother, Lonie Dixon, was a skilled basketmaker, but Louise says "I was grown when I first made a basket." She learned from several people, primarily her sister Martha Jim (who lives next door), after her mother became ill. Mrs. Wallace says, "I wanted to learn it from her, but it was already too late...she was in the hospital. So I got my sister to show me so I could show her I can make baskets." She learned mostly by observing her sister. After dreaming that she had made an egg basket, she completed one the next day, although she described this first effort as a "little wobbly." Since then, she has become a skilled and prolific basketmaker who can make both single-weave and double-weave baskets. She says that she makes baskets shaped like her mother's and aunt's, as her aunt "showed me a lot."

Before beginning a basket, she cuts lengths of swamp cane she finds "anywhere," along the side of the road or in the swamp, looking at the plant's leaf sheaths to tell if the cane is ready to cut. Cane is harder to get these days, as private land is often posted.

When she brings the cane home, she first cuts the length in half, then in quarters. Next, she strips off the smooth outer layer with a butcher knife and lets the strips dry before dying them. Her mother made her own dyes from plants, but Mrs. Wallace (like most basketmakers today) uses commercial fabric dyes.

Today, the family basketmaking tradition spans three generations, as her niece also makes baskets. Louise Wallace's daughter has not yet learned the skill, but Mrs. Wallace says of Choctaw basketmaking that "it will continue" as people "teach their children and grandchildren and all. Because most of the time they want to learn how. They just don't have no patience."

Louise Wallace also does beadwork and sometimes cooks traditional Choctaw dishes such as hominy, fry bread, or rabbit for special occasions. Like many women in the region, she also plants a garden and cans when she has time.

—by Carolyn Ware,
based on fieldwork by
Martha Garrott

BERDIE STEVE
Choctaw Cane Basketmaking
Bogue Homa, Jones County

Berdie Steve is a Choctaw basketmaker who, like Louise Wallace, learned to make baskets as an adult. Mrs. Steve's mother, Zonie Nickey Thomas, was not a basketmaker, and Berdie taught herself by observing other basketmakers (particularly Lonie Wallace, Louise Wallace's mother) and by practicing. She sometimes uses traditional Choctaw weaving techniques to make unconventionally shaped baskets such as a shopping bag basket.

She estimates that she learned to weave baskets in the early 1970s, when she was in her early thirties. She says that she more or less learned it on her own, "nobody really taught me. But I just watched Miss Lonie Wallace work on her baskets during that summer. And that was about it." She says that she learned more from simply observing than from Mrs. Wallace's instructions, because "I didn't understand a lot of the language she used. Like she could count the numbers, like she would be telling people, 'You need to go over two or four,' but the way she explained it, I didn't understand her." At that time, she says, she was not seriously interested in making baskets on her own.

In an interview with Martha Garrot, Berdie Steve said, "What really got me involved [in basketmaking] is...I was trying to find my own identity" and to better understand her cultural heritage. She says, "I just started getting interested in learning more about my background. And the more I talked to people such as like my parents ...I just started wondering more about basketweaving. So I started getting into basketmaking." She continues, "As time went along, the more I learned about baskets, it just got more interesting. And I found out the more I went along, not only does it have a lot of art value, it's got a lot of history. There's a lot to be learned. I just kept on going." She says that it took her about four years to perfect her skill.

To gather the cane, she says "We have to go looking for that swamp cane. We usually find it out in dark, swampy areas." She usually feels the cane to see if it's ready to cut, and she says that "you can look at it and sort of tell how mature they are."

Her baskets are different from those of most other basketmakers because "I use odd numbers to weave. The other baskets that I've seen, they use even numbers, like they weave in two or four. But I use all odd numbers like one, three, seven and nine. And mine all start on the diamond shape. Now, on the sides, they look about the same. But it's the way that I start out with mine, it's different."

—BY CAROLYN WARE,
based on fieldwork by
Martha Garrott

PEARL RIVER SOUTH SINGING CONVENTION,

Shape-note Singing

Marion and Walthall Counties

The Pearl River South Singing Convention brings together members of four African American church congregations—Little Rock Baptist Church, Sunflower Baptist Church, Mount Bethel Baptist Church, and Mount Olive Baptist Church—in Walthall and Marion Counties to sing hymns in the old style of gospel music known as shape-note singing. Founded in 1916, the convention meets four times a year at one of the member churches for singing practice, worship, and fellowship. Although the group is smaller than it once was, its members work hard to carry on their community tradition of shape-note singing and to "spread this kind of singing for the Lord" so that "the Lord will get the glory," Deacon A.C. Smiley says. Many of the members have been singing together for years. Deacon Smiley, Field Teacher for the convention, says proudly, "We have some singers that know what they're doing. I thank God for them. We've been down through the years together."

Unaccompanied shape-note gospel singing (also known as Sacred Harp music or sometimes as *fa-so-la* or *do-re-mi* singing) is traditional to both black and white congregations in Mississippi. In the nineteenth century, shape-note singing became widespread in the Piney Woods and other parts of the South, where singing schools were organized to teach the system.

The Pearl River South Singing Convention uses a notation system of seven shapes, each identified by a syllable *(do, re, mi, fa, so, la, and ti)* representing a particular musical note. Mr. Smiley, who joined the convention more than 50 years ago, explains that "We sing by the counts and the beats, not by the piano," because the music dates to a time before most rural churches had pianos. The convention learned this kind of singing from Professor W.E. Taylor in the 1940s or so, and "at the time that he taught us this singing, we didn't have a piano around. This singing is on the piano, but we didn't get it that way. And we've been putting it out the way we got it all these years." In learning shape-note singing, Mr. Smiley says that the singers "must have the notes first," before they learn the words to old hymns such as *Lord, I Want to Be Ready* or newer ones such as *When I Get to Heaven, I'm Going to Have It Made* or *Things Are Going to Get Better After a While.*

A meeting of the convention typically begins with Sunday school at 10 a.m., followed by a program of prayer, musical offerings, a sermon, remarks by convention officers and calls for petitionary letters, recognition of visitors to the service, and final reports by the various committees. The women of the church then serve a hearty home-cooked dinner.

In addition to Deacon Smiley, current officers of the Pearl River South Singing Convention include Mrs. Floree Smith (President), Deacon Hertis Brown (Vice-President), Mrs. Learne Brown (Secretary), Mrs. Doretha Oatis (Corresponding Secretary), Mrs. Daisy Guy (Treasurer), Brother Artis Mongo (Superintendent), Brother Darsey B. Wiley (Assistant Teacher), and Reverend James E. Wells (Advisor.)

—BY CAROLYN WARE

GEORGE CECIL MCLEOD, JR., *Old Time Fiddling*

Leakesville, Greene County

Fiddler and former State Senator George Cecil McLeod was born on February 28, 1927, in Greene County into a very musical family. His mother played the piano, his uncle M.L. Griffen was a popular old-time fiddler, and all of his cousins participated in the making of music for social occasions. "The young folks would gather up on Friday and Saturday night in Leakesville. They'd clean the furniture out of one bedroom, and they'd use that or the hall to have dances. Mama and Daddy would carry my brother and sister and me over there to the dances.... I'd sit on a little box or stool at the back of the door or the corner. I can't remember just how old I'd been.... I can remember hearing some of those fiddle tunes and it'd just make chill bumps go up and down my spine..., so I've wanted to play as long as I can remember."

George Cecil took violin lessons from his school's band director for a few months when he was in the tenth grade. He continued to learn to play by listening to his uncle perform, by listening to Grand Ole Opry and other radio shows, and by taking lessons from Jody Denmark, a highly regarded local fiddler. He memorized fiddle tunes by whistling their melodies over and over, and he still plays many of these tunes today. He continued to play music during his service in the Navy, and was part of a string band while in college.

He plays a variety of music, from old-time hoedown or square dance tunes to rags, songs about the Civil War, old hymns, traditional Scottish tunes, and bluegrass standards. Many he learned from his uncle, grandfather, Jody Denmark, and other fiddlers, and from radio broadcasts fifty years ago. He won his first fiddling contest in 1949, has produced several records, and once performed at the Grand Ole Opry as Bill Monroe's guest. He is known as the "Fiddling Senator" to both his fans and his political supporters.

—BY JENNIFER ABRAHAM

DARBUN MENNONITE CHURCH,

Mennonite Traditions

Darbun, Walthall County

Southern Mississippi is home to a close-knit community of Mennonite families, a community that has steadily grown since the Andrew Yoder family moved to Walthall County from Ohio (by way of British Columbia) in 1969. About fifteen Mennonite families now make their homes in Marion and Walthall counties and attend the Darbun Mennonite Church. A Conservative (rather than Old Order) Mennonite church, the Darbun church is part of the Pilgrim Mennonite Conference, a Pennsylvania-based church conference with fourteen member churches.

The Darbun congregation holds evening revival meetings annually. The church also runs a school for members' children. Families don't typically carry insurance, and "we work together as a church to support each other" in times of need, Connie Hursh says.

David Yoder explains that "our religion is not just a Sunday religion but it should be lived throughout the week." Mennonites try to live a Biblical way of life, to "live out the scripture" as Wayne and Connie Hursh say. Simplicity is highly valued in their "plain" way of living. David's wife Sarah explains that living "plain" means in part "not following worldly fashion" in clothing, entertainment, and other areas. She adds that the Mennonite life is "very precious to me" and "something I want to cling to."

Several of the local families make their livings as dairy farmers, and one as a chicken farmer. Others do construction work or lawn maintenance, program computers, drive trucks, run a bakery or an electrical supply store. Most families still raise livestock and keep gardens. They work together cooperatively in their farming, sharing equipment and manpower; "we try to help each other," the Yoders say.

Family is central to the Mennonite community. Weddings, funerals and family reunions are big events, and large family gatherings are common at Easter, Good Friday, Ascension Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. A few families still speak the Pennsylvania Dutch language at home.

Most Mennonite women are skilled at handwork: they quilt, crochet, and make their families' clothes. Although men's clothing is sometimes bought and then altered for a straight cut, Mennonite women sew their own dresses and their children's clothes. Sarah Yoder uses commercial dress patterns and then adds an apron-like addition to the front. She is one of the few people locally to make the Mennonite head coverings of nylon net that all Mennonite women wear.

Music is an important part of family life and worship among Mennonites. Families often hold a daily devotion with Bible reading and singing. Some families have an organ, piano, or accordion to accompany singing at home. They learn the four-part harmony that characterizes traditional Mennonite music by ear, but many also read music.

Church services and revivals feature a good deal of singing, unaccompanied by instruments. Many of hymns sung are those also popular in Baptist and Methodist churches, standards such as *Amazing Grace* and *Blessed Assurance.*

Traditional Mennonite (or "Dutch") home cooking is "not real fancy," the Hurshs say. It is simply seasoned; Sarah Yoder says that they "like their salt and pepper and that's it." Staples include noodles, mashed potatoes, bread, and beef (preserved by canning or freezing.) Connie Hursh says that she cooks dishes such as meatloaf, mashed potatoes, vegetables (corn, peas, and beans with little seasoning), pies, and casseroles for her family. Most families keep a garden for growing corn, beans, tomatoes, onions, lettuce, and other vegetables. Mennonite women do "a lot of canning and freezing," Mrs. Hursh says; they can vegetables, preserves and meat. They also bake their own bread and rolls. Mothers teach their daughters to cook, can, bake, and garden, preparing them to be good homemakers. They also want their children to be self-sufficient and to enjoy work as a part of life.

Living in Mississippi has affected the way some local Mennonite families cook and garden. Sara Yoder still makes her own egg noodles, for example, but the family also eats Southern dishes such as okra and gumbo, and noodles are often replaced by rice.

Mennonites are well known for their homemade breads, rolls and desserts. In 1996, Matthew Miller opened the Dutch Bakery in downtown Columbia. Staffed by Mr. Miller, Wayne Hursh, and other members of the local Mennonite community, the bakery is famous for its homestyle baked goods such as pies and cinnamon rolls. It offers a wide array of traditional breads, sweet rolls, cakes (including homemade Twinkies), noodles, pretzels, jams and jellies, pickles and preserves, as well as packaged bulk goods such as dried fruit and candies. The bakery also carries crafts such as quilted wall hangings, tapes of Mennonite singing, and—as a means of community outreach—free publications about the Mennonite faith.

—BY CAROLYN WARE

ALVIN HALL AND MARY JANE RAPE,
Revival at Ebenezer Baptist Church
Liberty, Amite County

Down a shady, winding country lane, in a clearing, proudly stands Ebenezer Baptist Church, a symbol of the Creator and a beacon to all. Recently, it was time for homecoming at Ebenezer (one hundred and eighty-eight years after the church was established in 1809) and I was invited.

Brother Alvin Hall, the church's pastor, told me in a recent interview, "Many years ago, the church started having an annual revival at Ebenezer beginning on the fourth Sunday in July each summer. Since in those days most of the members of the church were cotton farmers, there was good reason for this particular time for revival each year. Most of all the crop was laid by, and people had some time to give a week or even more to going to church every day before picking time in the fall."

"But there were other good reasons for revival at this particular time, too," he said. "The spring-hatched chickens were frying size, the weather was warm enough to baptize in the creek, and watermelons and other goodies from the garden were ready to eat. No wonder the tradition of dinner on the grounds was born to begin revival with an 'all day at church' on the beginning Sunday. People who have any connection with Ebenezer and people who have no connection at all are invited to come and celebrate homecoming with us."

The revival at Ebenezer Baptist Church (located just off Highway 569 near the Louisiana state line) is a living tradition, one that has changed over the years but still thrives today. Plans and preparations for the homecoming actually begin a year in advance, as someone invariably suggests, "We need a new piano before the next revival," or "We need to remodel the kitchen." Ideas are planted and grow throughout the year, and one by one plans are carried out.

Several weeks before the revival begins, church members of all ages gather at the church on an appointed day to clean the church and churchyard. They scrub tables, benches, and the floor of the picnic shed where the meal is served.

News of the revival begins well in advance. Friends, relatives, members who have not been to church in a while, and former members are all invited by word of mouth, telephone calls, postcards or letters. Announcements are also put in the newspapers. Postcards and letters are not used as often today, because the telephone is faster and less trouble.

Special events like revival and dinner on the ground bring community members together to worship, sing, and share a meal and fellowship. At Ebenezer Baptist Church, a very healing, spiritual place, revival remains an important tradition that is central to our lives. On the morning of the big day, a feeling of welcoming grace permeates the air.

Mary Jane Rape, born in 1924, has been a member of Ebenezer all her life and has an excellent memory of days gone by. When I interviewed her, Mrs. Rape described the tradition of revival at her church both as it is today and as it was in the old days. She says, "It is an all-day event. We have Sunday school at 10:00, preaching at 11:00, then we eat dinner on the ground."

For dinner on the ground, a wide variety of foods are spread out on picnic tables under a shed. Mrs. Rape says, "Everybody usually brings whatever they want to bring to the revival. It's always plenty to eat and more, too." She always makes chicken and dressing, saying that "it has been a tradition down through the years, and it is always eaten." She continues, "I used to take fried chicken every year. Mammy [her mother-in-law, Ola Delphine Rape], when she was living, would bring the pies and cakes. Mammy baked the pies and cakes and kept them in her pie safe until time to take them to the revival."

She continues, "I always get up around 5:00 a.m.—everybody does—and begin cooking a hen or cutting up chicken to fry. We'd cook the cakes and pies the day before."

In the past, each family brought a tablecloth for spreading their food on. Mrs. Rape says, "All the daughters-in-law would bring food to put on their families' tablecloth.... Mammy used to have a long woven or wicker basket that she packed for the meal at church. The tablecloth was folded over the top of the basket to keep out insects and help hold the warmth of the food." She adds, "People who didn't have baskets to bring their food in brought it boxed. I don't fix as much as I used to now, so I just cover it with tin foil or set it in pie pans and put it in my car."

Mrs. Rape recalls that long, high, wooden tables were used for dinner on the ground in the past. "The tables were made of two-by-fours and two-by-sixes with plywood across the top of the frame, and it was over waist high. They were painted white.... Everybody would bring their tablecloths." Once located at the north end of the church near a spring, the tables were later moved south of the church, and were finally taken down and replaced by a pavilion. Mrs. Rape says, "We didn't want the old long tables torn down. It was the grounds committee's decision to tear them down." Today, the food is carried to the picnic tables under the shed and "all of the desserts are put on one table and everything else is put on another table."

"People used to bring tea or Kool Aid—no Cokes" to drink with their meals, she says. "Mr. Bully Rape or Mr. Pop (Dean) Neyland washed the Number Three washtub the day before, and all the tea was poured in the tub. A block of ice from the ice house was put in the tub of tea to keep the tea cold and another was chipped for ice for the glasses." Mr. Jehu Dunn served the tea, using a metal dipper with a long handle.

After everyone had eaten, "The food was all packed away and the ladies of the church washed the dishes that were used in the kitchen. Then we had a singing and another short sermon," Mrs. Rape remembers.

To accompany the gospel singing, "We did have an

organ—a pump organ. Mrs. Liza Jones played it and was the pianist for forty years. Back then we mostly sang the old songs. Some of the old books are still there but have no backs on them.... Oh yes, I liked the kind of music that we sang then.... I personally do miss singing the old songs. The new song books still have some of the old songs in them."

"The revival used to last all week," she continued, and we'd all decide who would cook supper for the regular preacher and his family and the visiting preacher. We always enjoyed it."

The service begins with a prayer and the knowledge that the revival is a time to devote specifically to God. "What you believe about God affects your life," the pastor said. "The revival is a time to get yourself straight with God. During this time we not only get our lives back on the path, but we reach out to other people. Call someone and invite them to come to church. Revivals bring families and friends together to form a spiritual support group."

During the church's most recent revival, the congregation sang several songs, and then Brother Hall extended a welcome. "I am at home when I come here," he said. "Please feel loved and welcome and wanted here. After the service, we will spill out and eat all over and you are welcome to join us for the homecoming. If you are a guest and didn't bring any food with you, don't worry, for we have never, ever, ever not had enough for everyone to eat."

In the auditorium with its beaded-board ceiling, cream-colored walls, and wavy-glassed windows, Pop Neyland (a deacon in the church) led the congregation in a prayer. Then two deacons passed the collection plates until they were piled to overflowing with offerings.

The homecoming is attended by people of various ages, from the newest baby to the very old. Someone always fixes a plate for those who can't help themselves. Some people are so aged that we wonder how they summoned the strength to come to the gathering one more time, yet they are there, for this day is very important to them.

The homecoming stirred memories for one man, who recalled, "When I was twenty years old I had decided that I would never marry, and then I met her, and I knew that she was the one—the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with." Beside the older gentleman sat a pretty lady with a sweet smile and white, wavy hair.

Mrs. Velma White brought a coconut pie to this year's homecoming, made from her grandmother's recipe. Her recipe is more than a hundred years old and is as follows:

Coconut Pie
1 1/2 cup sugar
1 1/2 tablespoon cornstarch
3 eggs
1/4 cup margarine, melted
1/4 cup milk, evaporated
1/2 cup coconut

Combine sugar and cornstarch. Add eggs, butter, milk and coconut.

Beat until smooth. Pour into unbaked pie crust. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes then 315 degrees for 10 minutes. For a deep pie crust, bake for 15 minutes.

Mrs. Velma also brings a bowl of cut corn to each homecoming. She grows the corn and pulls the ears at just the right stage of growth for maximum tenderness. She then cuts the corn off the cob and cooks it to perfection. Among ten different bowls of corn, I can always find hers.

One change in the tradition is that people used to bring heaping platters of home fried chicken, but now they bring chicken from Danny's Fried Chicken or Kentucky Fried Chicken, along with some home-fried chicken. Changes have also been made in the wooded setting, but the tradition of homecoming lives on at Ebenezer, as we share a wonderful meal outside the church and enjoy the fare as a warm summer rain provides music for our meal.

—BY CHERYL ROMAYNE

MISSISSIPPI ARTS COMMISSION

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RECORDINGS, FILMS AND VIDEOS

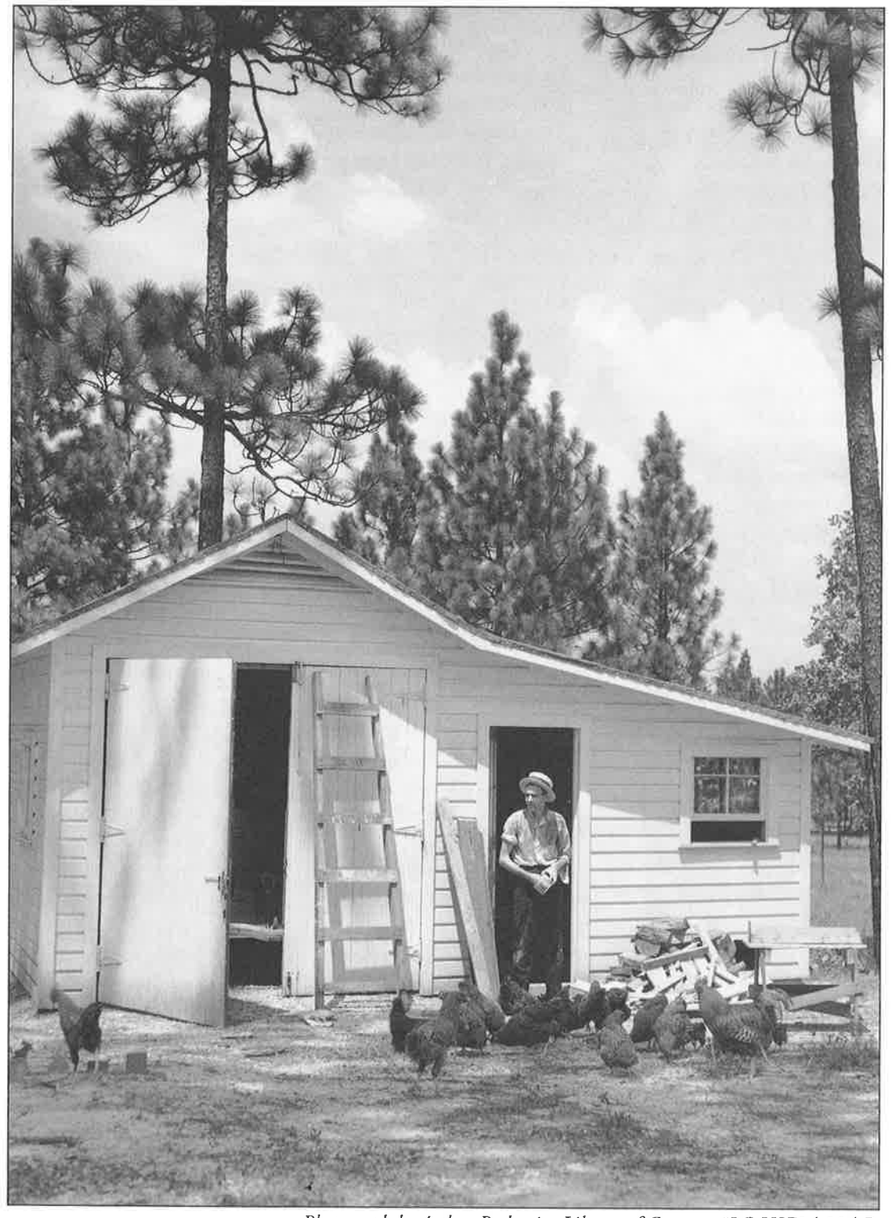
Fannie Bell Chapman: Gospel Singer (42 minutes.) Focuses on a gospel singer, faith healer and family leader from Centreville, Miss. (Center for Southern Folklore).

Great Big Yam Potatoes: Anglo-American Fiddle Music from Mississippi. Record album. Twelve fiddlers (some from the Piney Woods), 42 tunes, recorded in 1939 for the WPA and Library of Congress. (Center for the Study of Southern Culture)

The Fiddling Senator: George Cecil McLeod, Jr. Record album. Fiddle tunes performed by former State Senator George Cecil McLeod, Jr. of Greene County, recorded in 1979.

Mississippi Sawyers. Record album by Sawyer Records featuring several Mississippi fiddlers.

Parting Hand



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