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### Oral History Interview: Earl Balderson

Earl Balderson

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ORAL HISTORY

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Date July 10, 1976

E H Balderson  
(Signature - Interviewee)  
Sandyville W. Va  
Address

Date July 10, 1976

Connie S. Well  
(Signature - Witness)

Earl Balderson

CSW: This interview is being conducted with Earl Balderson of Lockhart, West Virginia. Uh, Mr. Balderson was born in Jackson County on March 30, 1896. Uh, he owned the General Store at Lockhart for 53 years. Uh, the interview is being conducted by Connie Wells on July 10, 1976. Uh, Mr. Balderson, where were you born?

EHB: Born in Jackson County.

CSW: Where in Jackson County?

EHB: In, on Falling Timber.

CSW: Okay, and you said something about how it got its name.

EHB: Oh, I think, uh, that sounds like falling timber in there and I think that's the way it got its name, from that sound in the trees there, it sounds like timber falling all the time.

CSW: Uh, uh. Um, how many people were in your family?

EHB: There were 13 children.

CSW: Uh, huh, what were the names of the children?

EHB: Well, you want the names of them?

CSW: Uh, huh. The ones you can think of.

EHB: Well there was Edny, she was the oldest. Luther was the second. Marsh was third, Sam was fourth, and I was the Fifth, no Mary was the fifth and I was the sixth. Don't know whether I can name them all or not.

CSW: Well, that's alright.

EHB: There was Evert, Evert, and Clairie and Olie and Bruce and Gus and Virgil and Donna. That's all of them I think.

CSW: Okay. Uh, what was it like growing up in the area of Falling Timber?

EHB: Well, I, I, we moved out of there when I was just a year old.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: We moved back on the hill there, on Balderson Ridge.

CSW: Is that in Lockhart, close to Lockhart?

EHB: Yeah, bout fiye miles from Lockhart.

CSW: Uh, huh. Oh, where did you go to school?

EHB: Uh, they call that school Morning Star out there.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: I believe Morning Star.

CSW: Okay, uh, what type of school was it or what was it like?

EHB: Oh it was, it was a one room school [CSW: Uh, huh.] and there was several, well it was a big school and they taught all grades from, from the first to the eighth grade there.

CSW: Okay, what did you, uh, do after leaving school? Did you get a job or a . . .

EHB: Yeah, I went to, I worked at a New Britain Pennsylvania in a steel mill, [CSW: Uh, huh.] and then I came back home and went to school another year and, and taught school the next winter.

CSW: Uh, huh. Where did you teach?

EHB: Upper Turkey Fork, [CSW: Uh, huh.] in Jackson County.

CSW: What was it like as a teacher there? What kind of a school was it?

EHB: Oh, just, just kind of a school we's used to, it was a one room school and I had all grades to teach.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: It was a small school.

CSW: How many, uh, students did you have?

EHB: I think about 20. Uh, uh, well, well it was large then for that kind of school.

CSW: And what did you do after you, uh, stopped teaching?

EHB: I went the army.

CSW: Uh, huh. Where were you in the army?

EHB: In Camp Mead in the army, [CSW: Uh, huh.] in the military police.

CSW: Uh, huh. What was your job in the military police?

EHB: Uh, guard duty, [CSW: Uh, huh.] we had a 150 head of horses and of course on guard duty there while we was, we used as mounties.

CSW: Okay. Is there anything else you remember as a military policeman?

EHB: Oh when they, when they, uh, start your discharging from the army they put us on the police duty down at Baltimore to help the policemen.

CSW: Uh, huh, okay, what did you do after leaving army?

EHB: I came back home and went to Charleston and got a job.

CSW: Where did you, uh, work in Charleston?

EHB: I worked, I, I got a job at the Owens bottle factory first.

CSW: What did you, what type of work did you do there?

EHB: Labor.

CSW: Okay, uh, then after that?

EHB: I went to, I left the Naval, Naval Ordnance Plant and went to or not the Naval Ordnance Plant but the bottle company and I went to South Charleston and worked at the Naval Ordnance Company till, [CSW: Okay, till . . .] they shut down.

CSW: Uh, huh. What type of work did you for Naval Ordnance Plant.

EHB: I was, uh, let's see what I, I worked with the linesman, uh, putting up wiring.

CSW: What type of working conditions did you, [EHB: Huh?] what type of working conditions did you find at this?

EHB: Uh, they was much better at the Nayal Qrdinance Plant than had been at the oter places. Didn't haye to work as hard and, and got a little better pay.

CSW: Uh, huh. How long did you work there?

EHB: I expect about 8 months. I can't remember.

CSW: Uh, huh. um okay. What other types of jobs did you do after?

EHB: When the Naval Ordnance Plant shut down I worked for a hardware company in West Charleston till I quit that and came up here and bought this store.

CSW: Uh, huh. Uh, where was the, the hardware located?

EHB: Uh, on, uh, Charleston Street where Virginia comes into Charleston Street, oh, down in West Charleston.

CSW: Uh, what kind of work did you do there, what was your . . .

EHB: Uh, I was, I just worked in the store there and I just sold things outside for 'em. I drove the, I drove a truck.

CSW: Did you deliver all over Charleston or just in the, [EHB: Huh?] did you drive or deliver all over Charleston?

EHB: No, just the West side.

CSW: Okay then you purchased your store at, at Lockhart?

EHB: Huh?

CSW: Then you purchased your store at Lockhart?

EHB: Yeah.

CSW: Uh, when did you, uh, buy the store?

EHB: Back in 1921, [CSW: Uh, huh.] in July.

CSW: Uh, what do you remember about the early years of buying the store. You said it was in 1921, didn't you?

EHB: I didn't and, I didn't know anything about running business and I started in there on my own and, and times were pretty hard I know but we got along pretty good.

CSW: How did you go about getting the supplies for your store?

EHB: We trucked most of it out of Rayenswood, er, hauled it with a team out of Rayenswood.

CSW: How long did it take to get the supplies?

EHB: It took all day to make a trip to Rayenswood and back.

CSW: Uh, huh. Who did you buy them from in Rayenswood? Do you remember?

EHB: I bought my groceries from the Rayenswood grocery company.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: I bought dry goods from Ritter in Huntington and it was shipped out on a train out to Sandyyville and, and picked up and we picked up and hauled it from there.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: Of course I can remember the first order I bought from Welch Ritter was, uh, my wife and me borrowed a horse, a team and drove to Rayenswood and, and went to sale and down there. Bought an order of goods and, and we worried about how much it was gonna cost and talked about it on the way home and I said I figured it would cost about \$300 or \$400. It was \$800 when we got the bill.

CSW: Uh, not too long after you, uh, purchased the store the Depression occurred. Uh, did that have a big effect on you?

EHB: Yeah, uh, that had a pretty big effect on my business. I had, I had pretty good business as long as I could credit people, but nobody had any money, they could buy but you couldn't pay.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: And lot of stores broke up during the Depression but I managed to keep going and going.

CSW: Did it have a big effect on the people in this community?

EHB: Yeah, yeah, most people in this community broke themselves up trying to feed their cattle and buy feed or 'em they kept back in them times people kept chickens and selling eggs they'd sell eggs for 8 cents a dozen case of eggs didn't bring very much but you could get a poke of groceries then for a little.

CSW: Yeah, I guess prices have changed quite alot over in the last now few years.

EHB: Yeah now, 8 cents of eggs at 8 cents a dozen wouldn't amount to much.

CSW: No. How long did you own your store at Lockhart?

EHB: Fifty-three and one half.

CSW: Uh, huh. Uh, what were some of the changes that took place over all those years that you remember?

EHB: When I first started in the store everybody had chickens and eggs to sell and turkeys.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: I was able to take enough turkeys to spend all day at it. Now there ain't none in the country.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: The kids didn't know what a bottle of pop was.

CSW: Yeah.

EHB: I bought a, I bought a case of pop and, and the boys, they wanted to, to taste it. They had never tasted pop. One kid said for me to save a bottle for him and he'd go and get his nickle and dimes.

CSW: It was a nickel a bottle then?

EHB: Yeah. That's, that's the biggest thing there is changed.

CSW: Uh, huh. Prices have changed. Can you think of any things that happened to you while you were running the store.

EHB: Uh, I got robbed a time or two. People broke in the store a couple of times [CSW: Uh, huh. ], I never 'em.

CSW: Did you, uh, lose a lot of things from the store or just money?

EHB: Oh. people got pretty bad about taking stuff and stealing it there towards the last I didn't have no help and couldn't watch very close and just pretty near stole me out'a my home.

CSW: Uh, huh. Do you remember some of the type of people who came into, into the store or were they all from just the Lockhart area or did they come from other places.

EHB: Oh, they come from, they from, they wasn't none of them right around close here.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: They, they broke in store and stole stuff.

CSW: What was Lockhart like when you moyed here?

EHB: Oh, it was about the same as it is now. Wasn't very many. The Burkes, the Burkes was about all that lived right in Lockhart.



CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: An old woman lived in this house I'm living in. She always wanted to do everything for herself and one rainy, er, cold weather and icy she went out to get a bucket of coal and fell down out there in the, in the building in the, the drain and I happen to be outside and heard her a hollering and I run on out there and picked her up and helped her in the house.

CSW: Uh, huh. Who was she? Do you remember her name?

EHB: Yeah, it was Ory Burke.

CSW: Oh, okay. Who were some of the other people that lived in the community when you moved here?

EHB: Azeberry Weekly lived up on the hill here and Taddy [CSW: Uh, huh.] and . . .

CSW: That Taddy Weekly?

EHB: Yeah, that was Azeberry's boy, [CSW: Uh, huh.] and John Lockhart live on up the road a little piece. Maywood Thomas family moved back on the hill there and a, the Van Fossens/Balderson lived on out the hill a piece, Fench's lived on the hill there.

CSW: I guess most of those people there descendents of [EHB: Huh?], I guess their family still lives in this area, don't they?

EHB: Yeah, uh, huh. Yeah, there's some of the, of the younger set lives here, Thompsons live up the holler out here and they still live there.

CSW: Uh, huh.

EHB: That is Burton and the kids. Corns still live around here.

CSW: Mr. Balderson, I don't want to tire you so we'll end the interviewing now. Thank you very much.