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Interviewee: Ralph W. Applewhite
Interviewer: H. T. Holmes

Title: An interview with Ralph W. Applewhite, April 28, 1975 / interviewed by H. T. Holmes

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APPLEWHITE, Ralph W.

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DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
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75-23

NARRATOR: Mr. Ralph W. Applewhite
INTERVIEWER: H. T. Holmes, Mississippi Department of Archives and History
DATE: April 28, 1975
PLACE: Mr. Applewhite's Home in Winona, Mississippi
SUBJECT: Early Winona/Montgomery County History;
Mr. Applewhite's Career in Mississippi Politics and Education

Holmes: Today is Monday, April 28, 1975, and we are in Winona, Mississippi, at the home of Mr. Ralph Applewhite; and we're going to talk to him about whatever he wants to talk about. How about that?

Applewhite: That'd be all right.

Holmes: What I really had in mind this morning was to talk about the history of the area and about your life - you've had a very varied career. Would you mind starting off by telling me when you were born and where?

Applewhite: I was born the twenty-ninth of March, 1889, ten miles southeast of Winona, on what is now Highway 407.

Holmes: Was that on your father's farm, or was it....

Applewhite: Yes, it was. I bought the farm before he died and still own it.

Holmes: Now, what was your father's name?

Applewhite: Joseph Crawford Applewhite.

Holmes: Was he born here?

Applewhite: No, he was born down in Carroll County, three miles on the road between his farm and Vaiden, on some property that his grandfather homesteaded - I reckon is the word I want to use there - when he moved here from Columbia, Mississippi.

Holmes: His grandfather homesteaded it? That goes a long way back, doesn't it?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: To about 1830?

Applewhite: About 1832.

Holmes: Was that around Shongalo?

Applewhite: No, Shongalo is west of Vaiden. It's between - on the road between Vaiden and Kilmichael - the road goes through there about five miles east of Vaiden.

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Holmes: Well, what did you do when you were a young boy back then? What was life like around here?

Applewhite: Well, everybody at our house worked. As soon as we got big enough to go to the field and use a hoe, we started out that way and then graduated into a plow hand, and.....

Holmes: What did you grow, what kind of crops?

Applewhite: We grew row crops, of course, cotton and corn; and all kind of truck - potatoes, sugar cane, sorghum, peas, what have you.

Holmes: Where did you sell - market the products? Winona?

Applewhite: In Winona, mostly. We marketed most of it here.

Holmes: What was Winona like - your earliest reminiscences of it?

Applewhite: Well, I remember that about the first time I ever came here, I spent most of the time watching the trains.

Holmes: Was that the first time you'd seen a train?

Applewhite: Yes, that was the first time I ever saw a train. My daddy just left me down on the street and he went on about his business. When he came back to look for me I was right there still watching the trains switching around.

Holmes: Which train was it, the Illinois Central?

Applewhite: Illinois Central, yes.

Holmes: Steam engine?

Applewhite: Yes, a big old steam engine - big to me. It wasn't very big now, because they had larger ones later, but it was something big to me.

Holmes: What about the Columbus & Greenville Railroad?

Applewhite: Well, it was here then, too. But the depot and the tracks were not uptown. They were east out there just a little way. I didn't see any trains on that track. The ones I saw were on the Illinois Central. It came right through town.

Holmes: Was most of the marketing carried on around that depot?

Applewhite: No, the merchants on Front Street there - the cotton buyers, the people who bought cotton; and the big hardware store there - and there's a big hardware store there now....

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Holmes: Which one is that?

Applewhite: That's the Winona Hardware down on Front. A Boyd runs it now, Red Boyd. He runs the hardware store, and it's been a hardware store all through the years.

Holmes: Well, Front Street hasn't changed that much from what....

Applewhite: No, it hasn't, not a great deal. It's been some fires there, and some rebuilding done, but those buildings were there, then, most of them.

Holmes: Did there not use to be a row of trees down the middle of Front Street?

Applewhite: Not in my day. There may have been before that, but there weren't any trees there.

Holmes: It's just always been open space?

Applewhite: It's always been open.

Holmes: I think I've seen some old pictures of it with some trees there.

Applewhite: There might have been. As I remember it, there was a well right out there between the depot and...there's a loan company there now, but I think there was a drug store there then - People's Drug Store. If I remember correctly there was a well there, a dug well, and a watering trough.

Holmes: In the middle....

Applewhite: Right in the middle of the street, if I remember correctly. It may have been a little further down, further south, but somewhere right along there, there was a well.

Holmes: Like a public watering hole?

Applewhe: It was just a dug well there, with bucket and pulleys, and you could go down and draw you a bucket of water and drink.

Holmes: Were there any saloons on Front Street?

Applewhite: No, there were no saloons there then. There may have been some prior to that time, but there were no saloons in Winona at that time.

Holmes: Do you remember James K. Vardaman being in Winona?

Applewhite: Oh, yes, yes!

Holmes: What house did he live in?

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Applewhite: No, I don't remember when he lived here....

Holmes: Yes, I guess that was in the 1880s....

Applewhite: I can't answer that because I don't know.

Holmes: Do you happen to know which house he lived in?

Applewhite: No, I don't.

Holmes: What about Dr. Ward. Do you remember him?

Applewhite: Yes, I remember Dr. Ward.

Holmes: What was he like?

Applewhite: Well, he was quite a character. Everybody had a lot of respect for him as a doctor in his practice here. And the old home that he lived in is still here, right there across from the Baptist Church over there. He was quite a politician, took part in it - he never did run for office, but he always took part in the political campaigns.

Holmes: Some studies I've read of James Vardaman suggest that it was Dr. Ward that put all of the racist theories into Vardaman's head.

Applewhite: Well, I've been told that, but I don't remember.

Holmes: You don't remember?

Applewhite: No, they were great friends, I do know that. When Vardaman came here, he always went to see Dr. Ward. They were close friends.

Holmes: How many newspapers were there then, do you remember?

Applewhite: I don't recall....

Holmes: I guess, speaking up to the turn of the century....

Applewhite: I don't recall but the one, the Winona Times. Later there was another paper here but I don't remember the name of it. Seems like it was the Winona Democrat, or something like that. I don't remember. It didn't exist very long.

Holmes: I know that when Vardaman was here he edited one paper that was very strong for prohibition. He and some other people led the fight for prohibition in Winona. I guess that's why there were no saloons in the 1890s.

Applewhite: Well, that was before my day, I reckon.

Holmes: Let's go back to your personal life. What about your early education?

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Applewhite: Well, there was a little school a mile and a half north of our home, and that's the school that I attended most of the time. The school ran from four to five months a year....

Holmes: Did the school have a name?

Applewhite: Yes. Its official name was the Montgomery School, but there were a lot of Herrings out there in that community and everybody referred to it as the Herring School. There were a lot of Herrings out there. Most of the time we had one teacher. Some of the time we had two. When we got above thirty-five or forty children they would go out and get another teacher for part of the year. That is the school I attended, right there.

Holmes: Can you explain to me never having experienced a one-teacher school - I assume it was a one-room school, too - how it worked, how the different students were approached at different levels, or were they?

Applewhite: Yes, they were. They had classes. All the children had classes every day. Of course, the class period wasn't very long - couldn't be. We took in at eight o'clock and turned out at four and had an hour for play time from twelve to one. They started with the first grade and every one of them they had classified as best they could all the way up.

Holmes: Did you sit according to classification?

Applewhite: No, not necessarily. Most were that way - the desks were made so that there were different size desks - homemade desks. The little children sat on the desks that were lower ones and the older children sat on the ones that were a little higher off the floor. They were homemade desks.

Holmes: Yes. Well, did each family make their own desks?

Applewhite: No, they were there at school. I guess when they established the school they all got together, got some lumber and made them. I don't know when, but they were there. And then, while I was going to school out there they made some more desks. They enlarged the school building - it grew there and they had to put another - just added some more to it and put a false partition in there; and, of course, they had to make some more desks. I remember those desks that they made. When there wasn't but one teacher, that partition, they just took it out. It was fixed so they could set it up in there - it had a door in there - and they'd just take it down in two sections and set it back against the wall and just have one room. When they got another teacher they'd scoot that back in there and put the other teacher back in the north end of the school. That's where the little folks stayed, and they had the smaller desks back there.

Holmes: That sounds like we've come full circle in education when you've got open classrooms again in the modern schools of today.

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Applewhite: Yes. They think they've started something, but they've just picked up something that we had.

Holmes: How were the classes conducted with the one teacher with the different levels of students?

Applewhite: Well, he called the class up - they had a great long bench up there at the front and that's where they went up there to recite.

Holmes: What would you recite, your lessons?

Applewhite: The lessons that we had, whatever there was - geography, what-have-you, arithmetic, grammar; and the upper grades, of course, had a literature book, and the lower grades had McGuffy's Reader.

Holmes: While you were reciting were the other students listening, or....

Applewhite: No, they were supposed to go on with their work. Most of the time they were having fights and everything else, I expect, but that's the way it was conducted. When that class got through, it was dismissed, and another one was called up there. In arithmetic, we had one black board - they call them chalk boards now, but this was a black board. The house was sealed, if I remember correctly, with six-inch seal, and they just got some black paint and painted the whole end of the building on the inside, painted it black.

Holmes: ...For a chalk board....

Applewhite: It wasn't a chalk board, it was a black board!

Holmes: That's right, literally a black board!

Applewhite: I've thought about that so many times. That was the only one we had, across the back; I guess that building must have been ten or twelve feet wide. I don't know just how wide it was, but it ran all the way across the end of the school building.

Holmes: What was it made of? Cypress, pine....

Applewhite: No, it was pine. And the erasers - we made those. Most everybody had some sheep then; and the erasers - there was a trick about that. They'd cut a piece of sheep hide and tack it to a block of wood and stretch it tight and tack it on the other end and have a good eraser.

Holmes: That was pretty ingenious....

Applewhite: Yes, well, they had to have something.

Holmes: The ones you buy these days....

Applewhite: I don't know about that. The chalk wasn't like - the crayon wasn't

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like it is now. When they'd brush that stuff off of it they'd get just full of it. They have a dustless crayon now that doesn't do that.

Holmes: Did you buy the crayon?

Applewhite: Yes, the teacher bought the crayon.

Holmes: I thought maybe it was like limestone, or something.

Applewhite: No, they'd buy a box of crayons that would probably last all year.

Holmes: Talking about recitations, were you assigned a lesson to memorize?

Applewhite: No, we were assigned - some of it was, we had to memorize some things in our English - but most of the time they assigned a lesson in history just like they do now. They assigned lessons in mathematical theories just like they assign now.

Holmes: ...And you'd go up to the board to work the problems?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: Well, how long did you stay at that school? Do you remember?

Applewhite: Well, I stayed there until I was sixteen years old, and then I went to Millsaps.

Holmes: It's a good place.

Applewhite: Yes, it is. It was then and still is.

Holmes: I think it was better then than it is now.

Applewhite: Well, in some respects it probably was. It was smaller and....

Holmes: Did you receive a classical education there with Greek and Latin and...?

Applewhite: Yes, a B. A. degree.

Holmes: Did you have Greek and Latin in the school here in Montgomery County?

Applewhite: We had Latin. We didn't have any Greek. And at Millsaps they had the preparatory department - two years - and when I went there, of course, I didn't know any Greek and I had to go down there to get the first year of Greek.

Holmes: How old were you when you entered - sixteen? What year was that?

Applewhite: Sixteen. That was 1905.

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Holmes: Millsaps hadn't been in existence but about eight or ten years then, had it?

Applewhite: I think it was organized in 1892, wasn't it?

Holmes: ...Something like that.

Applewhite: I think that's right.

Holmes: Well, what was life like in Jackson coming from the country? Did you get downtown much? There was a street car, wasn't there, running downtown?

Applewhite: Yes, there was a street car. But we didn't have money enough to ride the street car; we walked.

Holmes: I've done that myself!

Applewhite: Yes. They had board sidewalks....

Holmes: All the way out?

Applewhite: All the way out. There wasn't but a piece of one street that was paved. That was Capitol Street from the Illinois Central depot up to the Old Capitol.

Holmes: Yes, I've seen some old pictures of that street.

Applewhite: It was brick.

Holmes: ...And Town Creek was open and it was always flooding in the springtime.

Applewhite: Yes, Town Creek was open - had a wooden bridge over it right there where it crosses Capitol Street. You can't tell where it is now, but if I remember correctly it was right between the old Heidelberg Hotel and the other hotel up there....

Holmes: ...The Walthall?

Applewhite: The Walthall, right. I think it was sort of right along in that area.

Holmes: You know, they're fixing to relocate the whole thing, just move it from downtown.

Applewhite: The creek? Yes, they're going to side-track it.

Holmes: Do you remember the old Edwards Hotel?

Applewhite: Oh, yes.

Holmes: Did you go in it?

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Applewhite: Oh, yes, we used to go down there and loaf around in the lobby....

Holmes: What was it like? I'm trying to reconstruct the history of that through tapes. There are no written records of it. I can't find too much on the old hotel. That was really three buildings, wasn't it? The one on the corner next to the railroad, and then weren't there two brick annexes?

Applewhite: There may have been. I don't know. All I remember about it is just going down in the lobby. I reckon that was in that main building, the one across from the depot. Seems like it was two or three stories high. I don't know just how high it was.

Holmes: What was in the lobby? Just rocking chairs...?

Applewhite: Just chairs, seats, places...well, everybody travelled by train then, and they'd come in there right at the depot, and most of the travelling public stayed right there.

Holmes: Did they have good food, or did you ever eat there?

Applewhite: Yes, later in my college career we used to go there occasionally to have a bite to eat. There was a restaurant right above there where all the boys ate pretty much of the time - was Sherlds.

Holmes: Was what?

Applewhite: Sherlds.

Holmes: C-H-E-R-Y-L-S?

Applewhite: S-H-E-R-L-D-S. I think that was the way you spelled it. He ran the restaurant there and had good food there. It was just a little way up there, I reckon about where the old Millsaps Building was, right along in there, somewhere. That's where, when we had money enough to go get something to eat downtown, we went. It was cheaper than the Edwards.

Holmes: Oh, really?

Applewhite: Yes, and just as good food. He had a nice restaurant.

Holmes: Do you happen to remember, when you were in Jackson and down at the Edwards, any of the representatives and senators when the legislature was in session?

Applewhite: Oh, yes. We used to go down there occasionally.

Holmes: At the Edwards, I'm talking about. Didn't they all stay there even then?

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Applewhite: A lot of them did, yes. I don't reckon the Edwards could take care of all of them and take care of the travelling public, too, but I'm sure that some of them stayed there. I'm sure they did.

Holmes: What about North State Street between Millsaps and downtown, by Capitol Street?

Applewhite: Well, it was primarily residences.

Holmes: Those big old houses were there then?

Applewhite: Yes. Now, there weren't any buildings on the east side of North State from Fortification north. The last homes on the east side were stopped right there.

Holmes: Belhaven had not yet been developed?

Applewhite: Yes, it was out there in the woods - way out. It wasn't where it is now. I've forgotten the name of the street that went out there to it, it was about two or three blocks out there....

Holmes: Was it Jefferson...?

Applewhite: No, I don't remember....

Holmes: ...Or Greymont, or something? And the Insane Asylum was out there....

Applewhite: Yes, it was where the Medical Center is now, a big old rambling brick building.

Holmes: Well, if you entered Millsaps in 1905, you graduated, what, 1909?

Applewhite: 1909.

Holmes: What did you take a degree in?

Applewhite: I just had a B. A. degree.

Holmes: You didn't have a major then, just general....

Applewhite: There wasn't any such thing as a major then. That came later. There was a prescribed course that you took, outlined in the catalog, and you took that for a B. A. degree. If you took a B. S. degree you took some of those things, but other things - you took more science. And then they had another degree there, Ph. B. They discarded that.

Holmes: Bachelor of Philosophy?

Applewhite: I don't know what those boys took. There weren't very many of them that took that, but a few of them did. I just don't know. They took some of the things that we took in the B. A. degree, but they

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didn't take any Latin and Greek. They took modern languages. And the B. S. degree folks could take modern languages. They could elect the other but they didn't. They took French and German. Those were the two modern languages that they had there then.

Holmes: They still have those, and I think they've got Spanish now.

Applewhite: Yes, they do have.

Holmes: Were there any other people from this area at Millsaps then?

Applewhite: Yes, there were a few. My brother was there. He went ahead of me and he graduated from there in 1907, my oldest brother; and then there was a Townsend boy, Harmon Townsend, he's dead. John Allen - I don't know whether you remember him or not, he's been dead a few years - he went down there. They didn't graduate, neither one of them. Henry Frizell, from Poplar Creek. He graduated in 1910. He taught school here for a number of years. I guess that was about all that were from right around here. I don't recall anybody else. There were some boys from over in Webster County down there, the McGaheys - related to the McGahey that's here now, and Tom Bailey....

Holmes: Oh, really?

Applewhite: Yes, he was in my class. Then there were some boys from down in Attala, the Ruff boys, Bob Ruff and Tom and Clyde. Clyde's still living. He's a doctor in Kosciusko. Tom made a lawyer, over in Lexington, and he passed away several years ago; and Bob was a preacher.

Holmes: ...A pretty illustrious family for the Ruff boys!

Applewhite: And the Wassons all went down there.

Holmes: Watsons?

Applewhite: Wassons.

Holmes: Wassons.

Applewhite: You know the Spencer Wassons? The oldest one graduated there before I went. Lovett, I think that was his name - L. P. - and D. R. Wasson, he was a preacher, too, was in my class awhile and he had to drop out and finished a year later. I don't know why he dropped out, maybe finances.

Holmes: What did you do after you graduated?

Applewhite: Well, I came home and my first year out, I stayed at home, and then I went out in Texas. I worked out there a year with an uncle of

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mine, an aunt of mine, in the mercantile business; and then I came back home and farmed for a while, and then got into politics. I taught school one year out there at the agricultural high school at Kilmichael. I taught math and history.

Holmes: What was your first political....

Applewhite: ...County superintendent....

Holmes: County superintendent.

Applewhite: Yes, I ran for that office in 1915 and was defeated. Then the war broke out, and I got ants in my britches and joined the Army!

Holmes: Did you go overseas?

Applewhite: Yes. I went overseas with a replacement unit to artillery headquarters, and it was dispersed, and those men were sent in every direction.

Holmes: How did Winona react to World War I? Did they agree to join in the war?

Applewhite: So far as I know, they did. I didn't hear them complaining about it. I didn't hear anybody say anything about it except we were in it and the boys all went along. Of course, they came along with the Selective Service thing and organized a national armory with that. I didn't wait for that. I just went on in the regular Army. I felt like if I waited for that draft they were liable to put me in some branch of the service that I didn't want to get in, and I felt like the branch I went in was where I could do the most good; and Coast Artillery - that's what it was then, it's not Coast Artillery any more - those fellows in there, if they went anywhere, the officers especially, they had to have some mathematics and some science in order to get any officer personnel. If you ever made it, you had to have that. I found out later that there was an extreme shortage of officers in the Coast Artillery. They just couldn't get them. I went to Officers' Training Camp. I went in the Army in July of 1917, and went to Officers' Training Camp at Monroe, Virginia, in January of '18, and was commissioned in the latter part of March, and then was sent to San Diego, California, to Fort Rosenkranz; and while there, the request came from the Adjutant General for us to write somebody back home who had had some math and some science and could make an officer.

Holmes: They were that desperate?

Applewhite: Yes, they were that desperate. I wrote to two or three men back here. One was my roommate, Ed Brewer. He was from Black Hawk and was practicing law then up at Grenada, and he didn't get in. I wrote to Edison Locke from out here at Kilmichael, and he joined and was commissioned. He went right on up. I knew he could make

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it because he went down to Millsaps after I finished. He went down there and was a bright boy and he knew math and he knew science. He went into the training camp right after he went into the Army and was commissioned.

Holmes: Well, in your missionary work you "done good" for him!

Applewhite: Yes, I got one man in! You see, out in San Diego we were just so short that the officer personnel for a company was five: One captain and two first lieutenants and two seconds. That was the officer personnel. They had departments and each one had something to do, and we had one officer. That's all. He was everything - had to do everything. And what we did there, we'd get busy and train them and send them overseas; just as fast as we'd get them trained, we'd send them out. Then they'd send another bunch in.

Holmes: So they were really being sent over green, weren't they, or with no experience?

Applewhite: Well, we had a training program there and they were pretty well-trained, except one bunch we got in from Oklahoma that we couldn't do anything with. They were sent over in an ammunition train. They could handle shells and get them up to the front. They were just poor soldiers. They just couldn't do it. Most of those men, as I say, were from Oklahoma.

Holmes: Were there any Indians among them?

Applewhite: No, I never did have any Indians.

Holmes: You know, historians say that World War I marked the emergence of the United States as a world power; and the great changes it wrought in the social structure in the United States. Can you cite any differences in Montgomery County before and after the war?

Applewhite: No, I don't know that I can. During World War I, like we said a while ago, everybody pitched in, and they did the same thing in World War II. There was some little bickering around in World War II about the proceedings, but not much. And then the last conflict that we had, as you know, some folks just didn't go along with it. The Korean War - they didn't call it a war but that was what it was - and the VietNam War - they didn't call that a war but that's what it was....

Holmes: A very divisive conflict....

Applewhite: Yes. And you know, people just didn't go along with it as much as they did the other. Everybody fell in in World War I. They had the Red Cross and they had all those bond sales and that stuff, and everybody just fell in. Every time they had one here in Winona it went over. No question, it just went right over!

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Holmes: ...And after the war, life returned to normal as it was before?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: There really wasn't that much change?

Applewhite: No, there wasn't much change that I could see.

Holmes: In the period up to the war, tell me some things about the agriculture, how it was done. I guess people farmed with a mule....

Applewhite: Yes, mules.

Holmes: The farms were small?

Applewhite: Most of them were, yes, most of the farms were small. A fellow had a pair of mules and a few plow tools and he went right along and got out there and made a living. Of course, he couldn't do that now, but they did it then. A right funny thing happened. We had a big yoke of oxen out there on the farm. In the spring of the year when we had hauling to do or had to go to town after things such as fertilizer and things like that, those oxen got the job. They were big and they could walk as fast as a mule; and you could just load your wagon up with what you wanted to bring back and put them in the road and they'd go. They'd go in the mud or anything else. It didn't bother them, they just went right on. We had a piece of land down there that my daddy took in that was turfy. It was just the worst turf you ever saw. We had a big old disc that worked four mules to it; he wanted to disc it but he couldn't spare the mules; they were busy with something else. I told him, I said, "Let's plow those oxen." "Aw," he said, "You can't plow an ox." I said, "I don't know why, they pull the wagon." So I hooked them up to that thing and got up on it. But first, I laid my land off. I stayed along with them. You could tell them "gee" and "haw" and they'd mind you, they just walked right along. I laid my land off and then got up on the disc and rode it.

Holmes: Wait a minute. What do you mean when you lay the land off?

Applewhite: It's a great big piece of land, you see, and you lay it off in strips. You cut that strip and move on and lay off another one and cut that. Do you see what I mean? You go up this way and get the length and lay off another one and on until you get through.

Holmes: ...Like marking off a section and plowing it and....

Applewhite: That's right, you mark it off in small plots; and I got up on the disc and we went to town!

Holmes: ...With the oxen.

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Applewhite: With the oxen. It cut that land up so pretty. And every time after that if there was any discing to do....

(End of Side One)

...When you get your land cut up that pretty, a mule will bog down in it. His feet will bog down in it and he'll get leg... but you know, an ox...feet - doesn't bother him, doesn't bother at all. He'll just walk right on there just like on hard ground.

Holmes: I guess an ox, then, is a little stronger than a mule.

Applewhite: Yes, those were big oxen. I guess those steers weighed fifteen hundred pounds apiece. They were big. We raised them right there on the farm. We started to working them when they were suckling calves.

Holmes: ...Well! Trained them then.

Applewhite: ...Put a yoke on them, tied their tails together to keep them from turning the yoke, and we got them trained, and they just grew up there!

Holmes: At what point did modern agricultural methods start coming into Montgomery County? At what point did the training the boys received at the agricultural and mechanical college begin to show a result over here?

Applewhite: I reckon that was in the late '30s when they had the big...we had a county agent here all along, but they didn't do what they do now. They'd get out and talk to those farmers; but farmers were kind of leery of that, they didn't fall in for it much. But as they went along and developed, they got into it; and they depend a lot now on county agents' advice - a lot more than they did then. I think that's due to the fact the farmers are better - well, they are better educated and they know a lot more about farming now than they did then. And then, back there, we didn't have to fight insects like they have to now.

Holmes: Why?

Applewhite: Because they weren't here! See, we didn't have boll weevils way back yonder when I was a boy. Oh, there'd be a few boll worms that would come around, but nobody paid any attention to them. And we didn't have a lot of the things that we have now that we have to spray for and do away with. People didn't spray fruit trees back then. They didn't have that scale that gets on them. It wasn't here; and the fruit on the trees, the worms didn't get into it like they do now. Just wasn't there!

Holmes: I wish they weren't now!

Applewhite: ...And the fruit trees lived longer than they do now.

Holmes: Were there very many fruit orchards?

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MOAH

Applewhite: There were a few, yes, not on a commercial basis. But everybody had some fruit trees around on the place, and they canned that fruit!

Holmes: Yes, there are some pear trees on our place that my grandfather planted way back....

Applewhite: Yes. They had pears, had apples, had plums - the plums were just wild out there - blackberries, they're there now. I saw some blooming the other day.

Holmes: Yes, it's a pretty sight - when they're blooming and when they're in a bowl full of milk!

Applewhite: Yes, that's right. Or when they're in a pie! Or when they're in a jam!

Holmes: They're just pretty any way!

Applewhite: Yes, it is! Or jelly - and, I'm going to say wine!

Holmes: I've never had any blackberry wine.

Applewhite: Well, I have. I've had a lot of it.

Holmes: Is that the same thing as blackberry acid?

Applewhite: No, acid's not fermented. There's no alcohol in acid. A lot of people used to make that acid. It's very nice to drink, has a good taste, but no alcohol content. With wine, you see, you ferment those berries, and it creates alcohol.

Holmes: Was there ever much whiskey or wine-making around here? I mean besides moonshining.

Applewhite: No.

Holmes: People just never did go into making wine - a little blackberry....

Applewhite: No. A few people make a few bottles of wine every year like I used to, but not on a commercial basis.

Holmes: What about moonshine?

Applewhite: Well, there's always been some of that like there is now. When I was a boy I never did know where it was, but I'm sure there was some around here. Later on, I used to run into them every once in a while.

Holmes: Let me ask you some more about early education in the county. At the time you were in school until the time you ran your first race for superintendent, I imagine there was very little change in the educational system.

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Applewhite: Very little.

Holmes: Now, could the white people in Montgomery County, the white kids, receive an adequate education if they wanted it; you know, like the school, like your education at Herring School - Montgomery School - was adequate for Millsaps?

Applewhite: Well, I had to take an examination, but I passed it.

Holmes: Probably it gave you an adequate background then.

Applewhite: I went down there and took the examination. Of course, I didn't take the Greek exam. They had the Greek written up on the board there, but I didn't take it because I didn't know anything about that. And I knew I'd have to go back down in the "prep" department to get that Greek. I knew that, knew it when I left home. But they had that exam written up there on the board. They didn't have any sheets to hand out. They didn't have mimeographs then; and I don't know whether they had a typewriter at Millsaps then or not. I don't recall one.

Holmes: That's when everybody could write and people could read their writing!

Applewhite: The instructor just wrote the exam on the board.

Holmes: Was that in Murrah Hall?

Applewhite: No, it was up there in the old administration building that burned. It was where the administration building is now, a three-story building.

Holmes: I think I may have seen a picture of it.

Applewhite: Yes. It burned down after I left there.

Holmes: How many other schools were there in the county back then, do you remember? A goodly number?

Applewhite: When I went into the county superintendent's office, there were thirty-five.

Holmes: What year was that when you went in?

Applewhite: 1920.

Holmes: That was your second time to run?

Applewhite: I ran in 1919 and was elected, and there were thirty-five white schools in the county and, I think, thirty-six Negro schools.

Holmes: What was the enrollment?

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Applewhite: I declare, I don't know. I just don't have any idea.

Holmes: Of course, Montgomery County had more population then than they do now from the censuses that I've seen.

Applewhite: Probably so....

Holmes: At the turn of the century I think that the populations of Winona and Jackson were approximately the same. Jackson was a very small village way back then.

Applewhite: I know it.

Holmes: They were both between three and five thousand.

Applewhite: Well, I don't know what the school attendance, school enrollment was. They had the separate school district here at Winona, way back there. When I went into office the agricultural high school was established. It was out at Kilmichael, still a boarding school - had two dormitories.

Holmes: It had already been established?

Applewhite: Oh, yes, it was established about 1911, or '10, '12, somewhere along there.

Holmes: The separate school system was established when?

Applewhite: Here? I don't know, it was here. Mr. Shaw was here, O. A. Shaw.

Holmes: He was from Winona?

Applewhite: No, he was born and reared down in Carroll County.

Holmes: What prompted you to run for superintendent?

Applewhite: Well, people asked me to run. They just came and asked me to run; and first, it didn't appeal to me at all, but they just kept on coming to me and asking me to run, so I said, "Well, if that's the case, I'll just get in!"

Holmes: You were pretty young though, then, weren't you?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: That's interesting!

Applewhite: That was in 1915. I was twenty-four, I guess.

Holmes: How was it to campaign at such an early age? How did you campaign?

Applewhite: I rode the county on a horse.

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Holmes: ...Visited all the farmers....

Applewhite: Yes. I'd leave Monday morning and come back in Friday.

Holmes: That was a full-time job in itself. Did you spend the night at farmers' houses?

Applewhite: Yes, I spent the night with them, ate dinner with them somewhere. I never did go without dinner!

Holmes: Did you have a platform or were you just running on your....

Applewhite: I was just running on my qualifications as an educator. I talked to them abut getting rid of some of those little old schools out there and combining them; and, of course, some of them didn't like that at all. They said, "No, we want this school just like it is."

Holmes: That was the neighborhood school plan!

Applewhite: Yes, everybody walked and they just couldn't conceive the idea of going to school in a covered wagon - that was what we did when we first started to consolidate those schools.

Holmes: How were the schools supported, by tax money?

Applewhite: Up until 1920, no....

(Tape interference)

Holmes: ...I think we were talking about how the schools were supported....

Applewhite: Yes. Well, there was no tax levy. They were supported by the state, and the only thing we got from the county was the poll tax.

Holmes: What about sixteenth section land?

Applewhite: That didn't amount to anything. That was turned in down there. I reckon they paid the rent on it, I don't know whether they did or not but there was no record of it. We couldn't use that money anyway. It was put in those funds there and I don't know what the purpose of it was - to help the schools; but we never did use any of that money. We never could get hold of it, someway. It was probably for buildings or something. I don't know what it was for. Anyway, we didn't get that until later. Then in 1919, at the time they had the general election, they had a thing on the ticket there for a two-mill tax levy to support the schools; and the budget for the Montgomery County school system, I remember that very well, was thirty-five thousand dollars!

Holmes: In 1919?

Applewhite: In 1920...1919, yes.

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Holmes: Did they adopt the two-mill levy?

Applewhite: Yes, they voted it in by a small majority. A lot of folks didn't want it.

Holmes: They never do want taxes!

Applewhite: No! So we got that two-mill; they called it "school extension" and that added a month's schooling. With state funds and the poll tax funds they could run it five months, and then we'd have another month - six months. The agricultural high school ran eight months and the school here in the city ran nine. They had an eight-mill tax levy here in the city to support the school. And there was a two-mill tax on the county for the support of the agricultural high school.

Holmes: In addition to the....

Applewhite: ...In addition to the other two, yes, that was voted for school extension.

Holmes: Well, did you in your first term, and the years prior to that, find that county people were willing to support education?

Applewhite: In a way they were, yes. Some of them were. Now, when I went into office there was a consolidated school put into operation at Alva the year before. They were just getting it under way in a small way, and they had a little tax levy up there to support that. From that, I picked it up and started to advertising - started to talking to the folks about consolidating the schools, and we consolidated some of them. We had one at Eskridge and had one at Poplar Creek, and I believe that was all. Later on, they consolidated some more after I went out of office. They picked it up and carried it on.

Holmes: How long were you in office then?

Applewhite: I was there two years that time. Mr. Shaw went to Ole Miss in 1920 and Mr. Frizell came here, he was already here and he stayed here two years, and he didn't offer for reelection; and the Board of Trustees of the school came to me and asked me to take it; and I resigned from the office of the county superintendent and took over here in '22.

Holmes: And how long were you....

Applewhite: I was here four years.

Holmes: What was the difference in support in the city schools as opposed to the county schools?

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Applewhite: Well, they had more funds and they had more children and they had more equipment, and it was just a better set-up than it was out in the county. So far as equipment to teach school and to operate a school like they do now, they just didn't have it. It just wasn't out there; and they had more of that kind of thing here, and while I was here I started a program and had an election. They voted the first bond issue down to build a high school here - they voted it down - and we went right back and put it up again. My program was to do away with that old building. It was just falling apart - and just build a nice building - and do away with that thing! But when they came back they decided to renovate that old building and build the high school that you attended.

Holmes: Back then? I didn't know it was that old!

Applewhite: Yes, in the '20s.

Holmes: I didn't realize it was built then!

Applewhite: Well, that old three-story building was still there when you went to school, wasn't it?

Holmes: No, sir, it had been torn down.

Appwhite: Well, they tore that down and built an addition to the old high school.

Holmes: Now, the three-story building was in front of the high school that's there now, was it not, closer to the street?

Applewhite: Yes, it was kind of north of it.

Holmes: I don't remember that building at all.

Applewhite: Well, they tore it down finally. They ought to have torn it down back there when I asked them to, but they didn't. They spent a lot of money on that thing, and it never was worth anything. It just never was. It was poorly ventilated and just - well, it was good when they built it; they thought it was the very thing to do! Then I left here after that bond issue. Back there then when a fellow got into a bond issue he made some enemies. I could have stayed, the Board wanted me to stay, but I decided it was best for the school and best for me and best for everybody for me just to get out and let somebody else come in and take over with the new building and put his program to work, and that's what I did.

Holmes: What did you go into then?

Applewhite: I went to Benton, the agricultural high school down in Yazoo County.

Holmes: Were you married then?

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Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: When did you get married? We skipped that important part of your life!

Applewhite: I got married in '22 - I think it was '22 - '21 maybe. I don't know. We celebrated our fiftieth anniversary here a few years ago!

Holmes: My goodness!

Applewhite: We had two children.

Holmes: How long did you stay in Yazoo County?

Applewhite: Two years. I went from there to New Albany.

Holmes: How was it being in all these different places, being in the different areas of the state in educational work?

Applewhite: Well, I enjoyed it. I got to know different set-ups, got to know how people worked to make the schools go. Now, down in Yazoo County, I had good facilities down there except the buildings. Some of the buildings had burned, and one burned while I was there; but we got along - it was a small school - and did some nice work down there, I thought. It was different from anything I ever had. It had an agricultural course and home economics, had a commercial department, and things like that that I had never had, and....

Holmes: You were the superintendent?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: Were the people about the same as they were here in support of education?

Applewhite: No, they were more liberal down there than they were here, a lot more.

Holmes: Do you mean in attitudes and spending money?

Applewhite: Yes, they had all the schools - most of them had been consolidated, and they were just going right along. The roads were better down there than they were here and....

Holmes: It was a richer county, too.

Applewhite: Yes. And they had more money to operate on. Most all the roads were gravelled, and you could travel anywhere in Yazoo County you wanted to go anytime. It was just a better set-up. The outlook was better, and the attitude of the people was better, and they had more to operate with. Like you said, that's a pretty wealthy

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county and they didn't mind spending some money for the schools, not at all.

Holmes: Why was Montgomery County not - why did the people here not have that progressive attitude?

Applewhite: I've often wondered. I don't know.

Holmes: Was that unique for this area, the hill area?

Applewhite: Well, I guess it was, yes; for the most part you might say that's true.

Holmes: Was New Albany like that?

Applewhite: No, up there New Albany had separate school districts; and when I went up there all the schools had been consolidated; and that county had hard-surfaced roads. They didn't have any trouble getting about. The attitude up there when I went there was better than it was here when I was here. The attitude changed through the years, and they're more forward-looking now in supporting the schools, a whole lot more than they were then.

Holmes: Here?

Applewhite: Here. It's all changed. It was a gradual change, just a very gradual change. It wasn't anything overnight, it just grew step by step.

Holmes: It was a long hard road for educators!

Applewhite: Yes, that's right.

Holmes: What about the dual school system, the Negro and white schools? We briefly touched on that a while ago. I was thinking about in 1920, that period of time.

Applewhite: Well, the great struggle with the Negro schools back there then was that we didn't have the teachers. They didn't know anything.

Holmes: Was there a college for Negro teachers in Mississippi then?

Applewhite: Yes, there were....

Holmes: Alcorn...?

Applewhite: Yes, it was down there then, and Tougaloo was down there; and they probably had this school up there at Holly Springs, had two up there.

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Holmes: Rust....

Applewhite: Rust and that other school up there. They had two up there. But as I recall, I didn't have any of those folks from up there, that graduated there, in the school system. I believe there was one, there was one out here at Kilmichael. I've forgotten this boy's name, he's dead now. He graduated down at Alcorn, but he was poorly equipped. We had teachers' examination in the county then. Questions were sent out from the State Department of Education; and we'd hold those exams, and we'd pick our teachers out from that. Those teachers did know - well, they just hadn't had the opportunity to learn anything. What we tried to do was to get teachers out there who would be honest and teach them a little something.

Holmes: Did you ever attempt, or was it taboo at that time, to have a white person teaching Negro kids?

Applewhite: No, we never tried that. I don't expect I could have gotten one to do it. I'm sure I couldn't have. I didn't try.

Holmes: I didn't know what the situation was, whether....

Applewhite: No, that wasn't ever tried.

Holmes: Did you have much trouble getting support for the black schools?

Applewhite: No, it was all in the pool with the other, you know. Of course, they paid those teachers on the basis of the type of license they had - first, second, and third grade license - and it was stipulated in the statute there what a first grade - high grade - the first grade and the second grade and the third grade license - it was stipulated the maximum amount you could pay them; and most of those had second and third, very few of them could make the first grade license. They didn't have algebra in the examination at that time, but they put it in later, and couldn't any of them do that. Oh, maybe two or three of them could. They never had gone to school, never had a chance. So we had a hard pull with those schools. We got an English teacher the second year I was in the office there to work with those teachers; and she was - the one I had was good. She had been to college; and she got out there with those teachers, and she'd help them outline their work; and then she'd visit them back to see that they carried it out; and she was just marvelous! She was better at it than I was! She could talk their language a whole lot better than I could although I was born and reared with them - raised on a farm there with them all my life, and I could get along with them; but she could pinpoint things better than I could.

Holmes: How much were the teachers paid then? Do you remember?

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Applewhite: Well, the white teachers with a first grade license...professional license...were paid about sixty dollars a month, and the Negroes were paid around twenty to thirty, depending on the type of license they had. That's all we could pay them under the law!

Holmes: That was for the third grade license.

Applewhite: Third - first, second and third - it varied from twenty to thirty, right along in that area, maybe thirty-five. I don't know just what it was. The first year that I taught I got sixty dollars a month.

Holmes: Was that a lot of money then?

Applewhite: Well, it wasn't very much but we got by on it.

Holmes: You had to!

Applewhite: That was all I had!

Holmes: Would a Negro teacher of the first grade receive the same salary as a white teacher of the first grade? Do you remember?

Applewhite: I don't remember. I don't think so. Fact of the business is that I didn't have any first grade teachers, any Negroes, I just didn't have any.

Holmes: Well, I just wondered if you had third grade white teachers.

Applewhite: No, I didn't have any of those. But that sixty dollars a month was the maximum that you could pay and those other licenses were graduated down.

Holmes: What do you think - I really don't know how to phrase it - but the dichotomy between the black and white educational system that existed there, of course, it's as old as the settlements are in Mississippi, but why does it exist - or why did it exist? It still does, but it was so much more pronounced then.

Applewhite: Well, I can't answer that. I just don't know. I inherited it.

Holmes: Well, I did, too.

Applewhite: It was there, and I just tried to work with it the best I could.

Holmes: I thought that since you did have to work with it you had some ideas about it.

Applewhite: No, I don't. It was there, started there, and who set it up - the principal there - I don't know. County superintendents then just coming into the thing, just had it dumped in their laps. I didn't know a....

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Holmes: Well, it was a part of the system....

Applewhite: Yes, it was.

Holmes: ...That the whole society revolved around. I was just curious if you had any idea as to how that system evolved.

Applewhite: No, I don't. I just don't have any idea.

Holmes: ...Because that's an order of life that I really never experienced. When I was growing up, things were changing.

Applewhite: There's another thing about the educational system I wanted to tell you about that you don't know. There was a school out at Poplar Creek run by a Dr. Armstrong; and some of the boys, and maybe some of the girls, who lived here in Winona went out there to school.

Holmes: It was a good school?

Applewhite: Yes, sir, it was a good school!

Holmes: ...A private school?

Applewhite: Yes, a private school; and it was operated there, and after he died one of the Cartledges took it over and ran it for a number of years. It was a good school! My grandfather's...my half-uncle, Tom Anderson, my mother's father was Anderson...he lived here in Winona, and he had this boy by his second marriage and he went out there to school from here. There were some more folks that were from Vaiden, all down in there, they'd go out there to school.

Holmes: Did they board out there?

Applewhite: Yes, they found a place to board out there in the community.

Holmes: I guess they'd have to.

Applewhite: Yes. I know I had a first cousin that lived down there close to Vaiden; and he came up there and lived with my father out there on the river, and he rode over there on a horse.

Holmes: Well! On the Big Black River?

Applewhite: Yes, he rode across there to school. I remember that very well. A lot of people don't know that. It's just one of those things that happened. This man was a medical doctor; and he come out there to practice medicine and saw that he couldn't make a go of it - someone said he just didn't have the medicine to give folks when they got sick - and he just quit and organized that school!

Holmes: What all did he teach? Was the curriculum better than the public schools?

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Applewhite: Well, yes, it was better. They had the advanced courses. He taught a lot of Latin, and he taught a lot of higher mathematics - geometry and first and second year albegra and stuff like that. We didn't have that in the public schools out there. And he taught advanced courses in history and English; and he had two or three teachers there to help him.

Holmes: Then it was a big concern, wasn't it.

Applewhite: Yes, yes. Henry Frizell was born and reared over there at Poplar Creek. He went to school there and he went to Millsaps and took the examination and got in, first in his class, all except his Greek. He had to go back to prep to get his Greek just like everybody else did.

Holmes: Talking about the school reminded me of something I wanted to ask you. When you were growing up, what did you all do for entertainment...as far as social gatherings and the like?

Applewhite: Oh, well, we had good times. We used to have parties around the community. We'd have a square-dance, and we had another entertainment that they don't have any more. It was what they called a "pound supper"....

Holmes: ...Pound supper?

Applewhite: Pound supper. Everybody would bring a cake or bring something up to the house, you know, and they'd spread it all out there, and we'd have a big time eating that up. And then we'd have a square-dance after it and just have a big time! That was our entertainment. Now folks are going back to square-dancing. They're doing that now.

Holmes: How often did you all do it? Once a week, that often?

Applewhite: No, just occasionally they'd have one. We didn't have them every week, not by any means, just occasionally. Usually we had one, two or three times during the Christmas holidays.

Holmes: I was about to ask you how you celebrated Christmas.

Applewhite: About like they do now except on a smaller scale. All the boys had firecrackers just like they have them now and roman candles! Then we'd have these parties....

(End of Side Two)

Holmes: ...Something else...from your political campaign experience you may have been to some of these...political rallies. I've been told that they used to have political rallies out in the pecan orchard at the old Aldridge farm.

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Applewhite: Yes, they had several out there.

Holmes: I'm sure that was a big social event, too.

Applewhite: Yes! That was in later years, I reckon that was in the '30s.

Holmes: Yes, that orchard's not - it couldn't be over fifty years old.

Applewhite: Well, that's when it was, in the '30s. I remember they had two out there when Tom Bailey was running for governor. He spoke out there in one of these campaigns, I don't know whether it was the last one or not. The American Legion took over the parking situation out there, had them park so that they could get out, you know, and vote.

Holmes: That was the main highway then, that road....

Applewhite: Yes, that was the main route from here to Kilmichael. Everybody went that way...that was it!

Holmes: It was paved?

Applewhite: No, it was gravel.

Holmes: It wasn't paved?

Applewhite: No, I think it was gravel then. It wasn't paved.

Holmes: That's the old Greensboro road, really, isn't it?

Applewhite: Yes. I'm just trying to think about...that was in the '30s when they had those things, or '40s...somewhere along in there.

Holmes: Well, I didn't want to jump that far ahead yet. What about between 1900 and 1920. Where did they rally, or did they have the big ones then?

Applewhite: Yes, they had them in different places. They had one here in Winona and at Duck Hill, and had some over at Kilmichael. I remember going over there to hear people speak on campaigns.

Holmes: Was it mostly county officials or did they have state....

Applewhite: Both...they had both county and state districts. When they'd have one they'd have candidates for governor and candidates for lieutenant governor. Used to have them out at Mars Hill, out there - you know where that is, up there in the north end of the county. I went to one big political rally - two or three of them - up there; and they had them at Alva.

Holmes: It would be an all-day affair?

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Applewhite: Yes. We'd have dinner on the grounds - out there we did.

Holmes: Everybody would bring their own?

Applewhite: Yes, everybody brought something to eat and spread it out there. They had a big time, speaking all day. They'd start speaking about ten o'clock, and they'd speak on until four.

Holmes: ...Give people time to get back home.

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: Could you make it back from Mars Hill?

Applewhite: Oh, yes, you could make it back.

Holmes: Did you go by wagon?

Applewhite: No, there were a few automobiles then. You see, when they had that in the '20s, there were a few, but most everybody rode horseback. If you had a good horse, you could make it to Mars Hill and back.

Holmes: There was a congressman from Winona at one time, wasn't there?

Applewhite: Yes, two of them.

Holmes: Two of them?

Applewhite: Hill, Shed Hill was a congressman, and then Sisson was a congressman.

Holmes: When were they in Washington?

Applewhite: Well, Mr. Sisson was up there while I was teaching school here, in the '20s. He died up there. He was defeated and was going to come back here and go back into his law practice; and he died. We were living up there in his house when he died.

Holmes: Oh, really?

Applewhite: We had just moved out. We'd been up there. He got us to go up there - he had two boys, and he got us to go up there and take care of those boys.

Holmes: Virginia Taylor told me about that.

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: I was talking to her last fall and she told me.

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Applewhite: Yes. Virginia and Helen - Helen was Mr. Sisson's daughter. She lived over there with an aunt, but James C. and Charles were here at home. They were here in school and Upton, at that time, was in the Navy. That was the oldest boy. But those two boys were here, and he just got us to go up there and keep house for them. That's what it was. We were living up there when he married. He married a second time, some lady there in Washington, and then we had to move out. Of course, he was coming back to his house, and we moved into this little house right down here.

Holmes: Yes. Walker Wood was secretary of state for a good while, wasn't he?

Applewhite: Yes, a long time. He was editor of the Times when he got elected and moved to Jackson, and, I guess, did good work there.

Holmes: Did Heber Ladner succeed him?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: He's been down there a long time, too.

Applewhite: Yes. I don't know whether Mr. Wood ran for re-election the last time when he got out or not. It seemed like he did and Ladner beat him, but I don't recall. I don't remember that detail. I just don't!

Holmes: Well, I'm getting ahead of myself again! An interesting development of education on up to modern times, really! We've got...when did you come into local education work? We left you in New Albany last.

Applewhite: No, I went to Webb after that. I stayed in New Albany five years and in Webb about five, and came back here. Then I bought my daddy's farm out there. I decided I'd get out of school work, just get out of it. It got to where it was pretty hard to go, and I just decided against it. Then they got after me after I got back out here to go back and get back into the county superintendent's office here. And, just like they did the first time, they kept after me and kept after me, and I decided I'd run - and got elected!

Holmes: What year was that?

Applewhite: That was in '39; and I served from January of '40 to January of '45.

Holmes: Had the situation changed much?

Applewhite: Oh, yes! A lot of changes had taken place, just a lot of them. We still got along pretty well with everything right along. The transportation problem was the biggest problem we had....

Holmes: The schools had been consolidated by then....

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Applewhite: Yes, they'd all been consolidated. And there weren't any one-teacher white schools in the county then.

Holmes: There weren't any what schools?

Applewhite: One-teacher...one-teacher schools. They'd all been consolidated; ant the men who were in that office between the time I left in '22 until I came back in '40 - they'd taken it and worked it all out and it was all consolidated.

Holmes: Where were they located, at Kilmichael and Duck Hill?

Applewhite: Yes, and Alva and....

Holmes: ...Spring Hill?

Applewhite: ...Yes, Spring Hill was established. Yes, that was the Negro consolidated school. And in the Kilmichael system the main high school was at Kilmichael, and they had an elementary school at Kilmichael. They had an elementary school at Stewart, and they had one at Nations, and they had one at Poplar Creek. It was all in that system, you see, and all the high school students were brought in. They did away with the agricultural high school. I don't know just when they did away with that, but....

Holmes: The agricultural high school was a boarding school, too, wasn't it?

Applewhite: Yes. Yes, it was a boarding school. Now this Big Black Consolidated School was not a boarding school.

Holmes: How did the agricultural high school work?

Applewhite: Well, it filled a need there in the educational system, not only in this county but in a lot of other counties. You see, out there in the county they didn't have any high schools. They just didn't have them. They had those one-teacher schools, and the thing had developed to the point that one teacher couldn't do it all. He couldn't teach from the first grade through the twelfth grade. It had developed to such an extent that when they put so many more requirements on there, they couldn't make a go of it. So, the agricultural high school was organized to fill that need; and boys and girls from all over the county would come in here for high school. of course, they had an elementary school there, too, but they didn't come in here for elementary school, they came for high school work. It filled a need; and was a thing that I think was a forward step. Of course, the roads weren't fixed so they could transport like they do - like they should - and they had to wait on that, had to wait till that developed. There were just a lot of things that made it possible, and they had those things all over the state....

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Holmes: The students lived there, and....

Applewhite: Yes. And the people and the children that lived in the town, you mean?

Holmes: Yes.

Applewhite: Yes, they went up there to school just like the others. They didn't board, they just lived at home....

(Tape Interruption)

Holmes: All right. Now, they boarded there and they were taught agricultural methods?

Applewhite: Yes, they had courses in agriculture and home economics.

Holmes: Did they raise their own food?

Applewhite: They raised some of it, yes. They had some cows, had a dairy there and milked the cows; and those boys would work. They'd give them work to do; and they had a little farm out there, and they'd work that, grow vegetables of all kinds. They raised a lot of their food. They had some pigs and they'd butcher that, and they'd butcher a cow once in a while; and kind of looked after it and kept it going, and then they bought a lot of food, too. They had to. They couldn't raise everything up there, but they raised all they could.

Holmes: Sort of like the Piney Woods School....

Applewhite: Something on that order, yes, not on as big a scale as Piney Woods. They've got more land than they had out there and they've got more students, too. It was on that order, though. They had some cooks back there that took care of the meals....

Holmes: They took their meals at the school?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: All three meals?

Applewhite: Yes, yes.

Holmes: But they boarded in private homes - roomed in private homes, though?

Applewhite: Some of them did. They filled the dormitories up and then the run-over they put....There was one family of Olivers there in the northern part of the county, up around Sweatman, three girls and two boys. They came down there and rented a house; and those older girls did the cooking, and they lived there during the school term. You know Ned Oliver, don't you, that lives up there at Sweatman?

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Holmes: No, sir, I don't believe so.

Applewhite: Well, he's still up there. He wasn't one of them - he was in the family, but he didn't come down, he was younger - Dermott was the older one and he came down here, down there; and then there were three sisters. There were four of them that lived in that house; and the older of those girls prepared the meals and kept house, and they went to school. That really was filling a need there. They couldn't have done that out there where they lived.

Holmes: Did they stay the whole term, or....

Applewhite: Yes....

Holmes: Did they go home on weekends?

Applewhite: Most of the time - sometimes they'd go home on weekends, but not always. Most of the time they stayed over the weekend.

Holmes: And it was a six-month term?

Applewhite: No, that school ran eight months. They had to! Under the law that created those agricultural high schools, it was stipulated that they'd run eight months; so they had to comply.

Holmes: When was that school established?

Applewhite: About 1911.

Holmes: Well, it was eight months in a row, through the winter season?

Applewhite: Yes, from September to May.

Holmes: They couldn't have too much of a garden then, could they? A few turnip greens....

Applewhite: Well, the man there was an agriculturist, and they had some boys that worked there during the summer, and they'd have the garden going from September to frost, you know....

Holmes: ...They'd have an early spring garden... ..

Applewhite: They'd have an early spring garden and then they'd have winter vegetables that they could grow, like turnip greens and collards - there were a few things that they could grow in the wintertime, and they had that, had that growing; and the agriculturist kind of looked after that, with those boys that he kept there during the summer to work.

Holmes: I vaguely remember when I was going to school the first years that - I don't know what the white schools did - but the Negro schools would have staggered terms. They would go to school in the middle of the summer and get out for cotton picking. Is that right?

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Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: When was that policy established?

Applewhite: I don't know, for back when I was a boy, although they had only four or five or sixth months of school, some of the white schools did that....

Holmes: So it's a long tradition?

Applewhite: Yes, they wanted to do that out there in the school where I went, and my daddy just sat down and said no. He was a trustee of the school and he said, "No, sir, we're going to start and we're going to get through! We're not going to break here, there's no use. The boys can't do anything at home during the wintertime, just let them go to school." And he just sat down and we never did have it out there. He said, "After school's out, then you can work."

Holmes: Well, where it was used, did the children work?

Applewhite: How's that?

Holmes: Where the staggered system was, the broken system was employed, did the children work at home when they weren't in school?

Applewhite: I reckon so, I don't know. We never did it. They probably wouldn't be quite through picking cotton when school was opened until along abut the first of November. That's about when they opened. They wanted them to pick cotton, you know; but we never did. When we got home in the afternoon, a lot of times we'd go pick; and we always picked on Saturdays if there was any cotton out in the field to pick; but we never did it. I reckon they did that, maybe, I just don't know.

Holmes: What kind of labor supply did your father have on his farm?

Applewhite: Mostly colored.

Holmes: Families that lived on the place?

Applewhite: Yes, he had about six or seven families.

Holmes: Tenant farmers?

Applewhite: Yes, share-croppers. And once in a while he'd get a renter...a Negro would come in that had his own tools, his own plow tools, and he'd rent to him. He always furnished them, of course, saw to it that they had plenty to eat. He was the type of fellow like your granddaddy. He believed in growing his food at home.

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Holmes: I think it's a wonderful idea.

Applewhite: ...And he made those Negroes do it. They'd dig them a garden, have a truck patch, and if they didn't have a cow, he had a cow there he'd let them milk the cow just as much as if it was his, mostly. He always did that. He just - of course, some things they'd have to buy. He always butchered a lot of hogs, smoked that meat back there in the smokehouse. They'd have a little, and they'd run out and they'd have to come up there to get meat. And he always had molasses syrup, Louisiana cane syrup, sorghum - he grew that and made them grow it....

Holmes: So it was really self-sufficient, as far as food supply....

Applewhite: Yes, yes! Consequently, they never did owe him very much through the year. He saw to it that they had something to eat there at home.

Holmes: I assume my grandfather had families on the place, I don't really remember.

Applewhite: Yes, he had some out there.

Holmes: Of course, he died before I was born.

Applewhite: Yes, he had some families out there, and I bet he made them do that, too! I'm sure he did. You just sort of had to.

Holmes: Of course, the system worked, but did it work effectively?

Applewhite: In some places it did, in some places it didn't. It's just like everything else, there'd be....

Holmes: ...Depending on the year, or the people....

Applewhite: Yes, the crop year and the man who owned the farm and his attitude toward those things. Some white people didn't do all that, though. They didn't grow all their food at home that they could grow. A lot of them didn't.

Holmes: It would have made for a better standard of living if you did.

Applewhite: Yes, yes.

Holmes: Was that the rule rather than the exception, or vice versa, in the county?

Applewhite: I imagine it was pretty generally the rule.

Holmes: So the tenant, then, was pretty well-treated.

Applewhite: Yes they were, for the most part. Of course, they had chickens, pigs, things like that to eat.

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Holmes: Was there a market day weekly, to bring the goods to Winona to sell?

Applewhite: No. No, there was no set time to bring it. Whenever you had a surplus you just brought it on in.

Holmes: I know I remember tales about, I think every Saturday, some Negro man would come by my grandfather's and pick up produce and take it to Winona to sell.

Applewhite: Your grandfather kind of catered to that kind of thing. He was right out there, you see, and he could run in here most any time. Now, we were ten miles out of town, and we couldn't run into town every time. So my daddy never did cater to that kind of thing. He always grew it out there, but he never did try to sell it. Lots of people used to haul watermelons in here but he never did. We always had a watermelon patch....

Holmes: ...A little bit too far?

Applewhite: ...Too far, and he just didn't want to fool with it.

Holmes: What was your money crop?

Applewhite: Cotton. And my daddy always grew a lot of corn, sold a lot of corn every year. He grew a lot of peas. He was a great believer in planting peas with his corn, you know, he'd put the peas with his corn.

Holmes: Peas are fine eating!

Applewhite: He picked those peas and would sell those.

Holmes: The corn was sold in the fall, or green?

Applewhite: No, he sold it after he gathered it; along in the early spring folks would run out of corn, and they knew they could get some down there so they'd go down there and get them a wagon load. Sometimes he'd bring it in here.

Holmes: ...The people ate it, or livestock ate it? What was it sold as, fodder or food?

Applewhite: Both.

Holmes: Both?

Applewhite: Both. They'd take that corn, you see, and shell it, and take it to the mill and make meal.

Holmes: Oh, yes.

Applewhite: ...And they'd feed the mules on it. You can't perceive that?

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Holmes: No, I really can't.

Applewhite: We used to run a grist mill out there. Every Saturday we'd grind corn. Everybody in the community would bring a little bag of corn up there and we'd grind it.

Holmes: How was it powered, by the mule?

Applewhite: No, steam engine.

Holmes: Steam engine?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: And you made your own molasses.

Applewhite: Yes, sir! Had your meal, pan, and cooked molasses.

Holmes: Were you self-sufficient in food, practically?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: You bought your clothes in Winona?

Applewhite: Yes, usually. Kilmichael, some of them. Usually one of those two places. My daddy did a lot of trading in Kilmichael in later years because it was nearer. It's just five miles up there, you see, and you can go up there quicker than you can come here; and he did a lot of business up there. Of course, he did some here, too.

Holmes: Let me see, a question crossed my mind a while ago, something you said....What about transportation? When did you get your first car? Or, when did your daddy get his first one?

Applewhite: I'll just have to think a little, now. He bought a Model T. I reckon it was in the late '30s, some time around there. He sold that to one of the Negroes on the place and bought a Model A. It was a little better car than a Model T, went faster. I reckon that was in the '30s, Hank, if I remember correctly. He learned to drive. Mother never did learn to drive, but he did. He could drive anywhere they wanted to go - get in that thing and get gone!

Holmes: Were there any industries here in the early part of the century?

Applewhite: Yes, there was a cotton mill here, right there where J. A. Olsen is. It burned in the '40s.

Holmes: What did it do?

Applewhite: It made cloth.

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Holmes: I don't remember hearing about that.

Applewhite: Yes, it was down there. It came there when I was a boy. They put that thing...Daddy had some stock in that thing. I reckon it was back in the early 1900s when that thing was started.

Holmes: Was that the chenille plant?

Applewhite: No, no. The chenille plant was later. It was down there where J. A. Olsen is.

Holmes: Where the textile plant was?

Applewhite: Yes, that's where it was. And they had the cotton mill village - a lot of houses there and the people came in there and lived and worked.

Holmes: And it was around the factory there?

Applewhite: Yes, it was all over there where J. A. Olsen Company's lumber is stacked up there, over across the road. It started right along in there and came on back this way. There were two rows of cottages there.

Holmes: I think it's interesting that....

Applewhite: ...And they had a great big place up there that they called the "hotel" where people could live that didn't have anybody to live with them - maybe an old bachelor or an old maid - and they'd go up there and live and work in the factories. They could walk across the street, you know.

Holmes: What kind of working hours did they have?

Applewhite: I declare, I don't know! I used to hear that whistle blow every morning when they started. I think they worked about eight hours a day, maybe twelve. I don't remember. I've been through that mill several times, back there where they'd take that bale of cotton down, run it through some machinery and get it all fixed up and make the thread first. Then they'd send that over to the looms and make cloth.

Holmes: Well, I surely didn't know that was here!

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: There weren't too many of those in Mississippi, were there?

Applewhite: Yes, there were a good many. There was one down at Kosciusko. I reckon that one is still running. Then there was a great big mill down at Wesson.

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Holmes: Yes.

Applewhite: They had them scattered about.

Holmes: Those were - correct me if I'm wrong, which I probably am - after reconstruction, a "new South" attitude arose with industrialization that would cure the problems of the South. Was this a product of that new attitude?

Applewhite: I imagine it was.

Holmes: I think the Wesson mills were.

Applewhite: Yes, you see, all the textile work before that was done in the north. Some fellows conceived the idea of "why ship all this cotton way up there and make cloth and ship it to England and make cloth and ship it back here and sell it to us? Why can't we make it right here?" That was the idea back of the thing.

Holmes: Was the factory here locally owned?

Applewhite: Yes, my daddy had some stock in that thing.

Holmes: What did they do with the cloth?

Applewhite: They sold it.

Holmes: Locally?

Applewhite: Some of it was sold locally; I imagine they'd sell it anywhere they could sell it. I don't know anything about the management of it, how they operated. I don't know. I just know it was there.

Holmes: Do you remember the name of it?

Applewhite: Winona Cotton Mill, I reckon.

Holmes: Sounds logical!

Applewhite: I think that's right. I think that was the name of it!

Holmes: Were there any other industries?

Applewhite: Yes. Way back yonder, Mr. Dunston came down here from Canada. He had a spoke mill over there.

Holmes: For wagon wheels?

Applewhite: Wagon wheels, yes. He had that mill over there, he ran it for years!

Holmes: What, down by the C&G?

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Applewhite: Down there by the C&G depot, somewhere right in there. I don't remember just exactly where it was, but he had that down there.

Holmes: Do you remember when the C&G depot was built?

Applewhite: No, I don't, I surely don't.

Holmes: I know the IC depot was built in '61 or '71. It surely does look nice since they painted it.

Applewhite: I don't know that, either.

Holmes: It really did improve the appearance. What about the railway traffic in Winona?

Applewhite: Well, they had very good accomodations on the IC. They ran, let's see, there's four - two each way every day of those fast trains. Then they had local trains that ran along with them. The fast trains didn't stop at all the little towns, it stopped here and stopped at Durant and stopped at Canton. The other trains ran along with it and stopped at all of them.

Holmes: You said it went along with it. Would it follow it?

Applewhite: Yes, usually, along about the same time of day - maybe a little difference in the schedule there, but they'd run. Then the Commercial Appeal conceived this idea that they'd put a train on out of Memphis to bring the Commercial Appeal down here, and it came in here about six o'clock in the morning, to Canton.

Holmes: To Canton?

Applewhite: From Memphis to Canton. They called it "Ole Miss."

Holmes: What about passenger service on C&G?

Applewhite: Well, it was pretty good. They had two trains each way a day. It wasn't bad. And then they started another train from here that went to Greenville once a day, and came back. I think primarily that was put in - you see, a lot of these people out here owned farms in the Delta, and they put that in there to take care of that. They'd go over there today and back.

Holmes: To check on their farms?

Applewhite: Yes. That was one of the things that was stipulated. That was started in the '20s. Then they had the other two trains each way in addition to that one. I believe "Ole Miss" went to Jackson. I believe it went as far south as Jackson.

Holmes: You know, I can remember even in my childhood, the huge crowds that would gather around the depot when....

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Applewhite: Yes, when the trains came in.

Holmes: Well, let's see, there were five trains a day that I remember, though. The Panama went both ways, but it didn't stop here then. The City of New Orleans, and then the old Number Four that came came through about four-thirty in the afternoon.

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: ...But I don't remember passenger service on the C&G at all. I think it was discontinued before I came along.

Applewhite: Well, it probably was about dead. I don't know.

Holmes: Well, I have a fond spot in my heart for that railroad since I grew up on it. It ran through the back part of our place.

Applewhite: Yes, that's right.

Holmes: I'm distressed to see the old depot falling down.

Applewhite: Yes, I wish they'd fix it up. It seems - those people that are trying to buy that thing; I don't know why they don't go on and close it out.

Holmes: I want them to. I want to buy some stock in it.

Applewhite: I thought at one time that they had finished the trading deal and they were going to work on it, but they haven't. They haven't done it yet.

Holmes: I think they're having some trouble from the national unions, that they won't be able to pay union wages.

Applewhite: Yes, probably so. That may be the hook-up. I don't know what it is, I just don't know.

Holmes: When did bus service come to Winona?

Applewhite: It was here prior to World War II. I know that Continental kept running through that period. The roads were bad and the Greyhound stopped. Then when Camp McCain came up there, Greyhound tried to come back in and they couldn't make it. They let the Continental have it.

Holmes: ...For staying here....

Applewhite: They stayed here through all that terrible time of roadbuilding. It was prior to then, but I don't know just when it started. I just don't know. I know the bus depot used to be down around where there's a beauty parlor now. There was a filling station there then. Fred Watts owns a little place right down there now...that's where the bus station used to be.

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Holmes: Yes, on Church Street. That used to be the highway, didn't it?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: When were the streets in Winona paved? I think at one time it had the slogan "The All-Paved City" didn't it?

Applewhite: Yes, it was in the '20s. I was reading right down there, it was paved, that was in the '20s, '25, '26....

(End of Side Three)

...Used to come down and sit on our porch while the men worked out there.

Holmes: Sounds like a nice job!

Applewhite: He was from Water Valley...he'd sit there every day.

Holmes: Camp McCain was...provided economic stimulus to the town, I suppose.

Applewhite: Yes, it did. It created a lot of problems!

Holmes: ...Such as?

Applewhite: Housing. People lived in anything, they'd come down here and just live in anything they could get.

Holmes: These were the families of the service men?

Applewhite: Yes.

Holmes: And the service men would come to town on weekends and liven things up, I guess!

Applewhite: Some...they weren't too bad. They would come down here, but they were orderly. I'll have to say that for them. They behaved themselves, in a general way.

Holmes: I think it's amazing that a camp that size could virtually disappear.

Applewhite: Yes, it just...go out overnight. When the war was over, they just abandoned the thing, left.

Holmes: Left some pretty good dirt roads up there.

Applewhite: Yes, they did....

Holmes: I planted some pine trees up there a year or two ago, and we travelled over some of them. Whoever bought the land got a good deal there.

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Applewhite: I was working for the Soil Conservation Service at that time and Mr. Flurry and I talked about it a lot. The short time that they were in there, it was very noticeable the way that timber grew.

Holmes: Well!

Applewhite: They wouldn't let any fires get in there, you know, they kept that out; and they didn't cut anything. It was just remarkable. In just the short time it was there, you could tell a difference.

Holmes: When did cattle become an important agricultural pursuit here?

Applewhite: Well, of course, there have always been some cows here, but long in the '30s, well, before that some of the farmers started letting some of the calves run with the cows. I know my daddy did, way back yonder, because it wasn't an industry then. They sold some cattle, they'd ship them cooperatively, you know, under the direction of a county agent. And they did hogs the same way. They'd have a shipping day and they'd bring the hogs in here and ship them. But that was long, I reckon it was in the '20s, the late '20s, when they started that, and it just grew from there, gradually. Then Mr. Pink Harris bought this place down here, and he's really the one that really went into it on a really commercial basis.

Holmes: He was one of the first.

Applewhite: Yes. He emphasized that in his farming operation, and went into white-faced cattle. That was where it started, right there, one of the places.

Holmes: It's a pretty big industry now, isn't it?

Applewhite: Yes, sir!

Holmes: In fact, I guess it's the number one agricultural crop now.

Applewhite: It probably is. There's a sale barn down here that runs sales every Tuesday. People bring the cattle in here, and hogs, sell them down there.

Holmes: When was that barn established?

Applewhite: In the '30s. It was established over at the C&G, over in that area, first established.

Holmes: So they could transport them by the railroad?

Applewhite: Yes, they transported them by rail then.

Holmes: How would they bring them to the market?

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Applewhite: They'd bring them in trucks, wagons, some of them would drive them.... Jim Knight started that first one over there, the first sale barn; and then they moved out here. When the Graves got over there, they decided they'd move it in here and they did.

Holmes: That was before 51 was built around Winona, wasn't it?

Applewhite: Yes, it was.

Holmes: Well, I could ask you questions all day, but I've got to stop sometime!

Applewhite: Well, there's one thing we haven't touched on that I wanted to touch on. I want to get something done about it.

Holmes: Okay!

Applewhite: Out here on 407 there was a post office - had the mail brought out there three times a week - and the name of the post office was Gandolfo.

Holmes: Gandolfo?

Applewhite: G-A-N-D-O-L-F-O.

Holmes: From whence did it come?

Applewhite: Well, there was a travelling salesman that used to make all these little country stores, and when they decided to put that little post office there - Mr. King ran the thing - he just had a little old country store, and the federal government decided to put a post office there; and this man was there and they were talking about it and he said, "Well, I'll just give you ten dollars if you'll name it after me!" Well, he said, "You've made a deal!"

Holmes: My word! It's a very strange name for Montgomery County!

Applewhite: It is! Now, the thing I want to do is to get the federal government to put a plaque up there, the date that post office was put there and how long it stayed. It was a big community there, you see.

Holmes: Yes.

Applewhite: The boy that owns that place is Garrett. There are a lot of houses out there on 407, right on the road that goes to Vaiden.

Holmes: Yes.

Applewhite: Well, that's where it was. That's where we got our mail before the R. F. D. came in. There was another post office up there at Milligan Springs Church.

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Holmes: What was the name of that?

Applewhite: The name of that was Hoskins.

Holmes: H-O-S-K-I-N-S?

Applewhite: Yes, it was named for an old Negro blacksmith that ran a blacksmith shop there. It came in the same time Gandolfo did, and it left at the same time. They were both on that rural route that went out there.

Holmes: Well, you know, the Department of Archives and History sponsors these historical markers over the state. I'm sure you've seen them. Originally the state bought them, back in the '50s; but the way the program works now, the Board of Supervisors has to buy them, so you'd have to go through them to purchase them. That's the only way we could get them done in the state. I don't know whether the federal government would...I'll check into it and see what the procedure is.

Applewhite: Well, you check into it, and see wherever it is that we'd have to go to get the dates.

Holmes: Okay. We could easily establish those through the Archives, I think, and I think that the Department could certify that the supervisors can legally purchase the plaque.

Applewhite: There's another post office that nobody knows anything about, right down in the southeast corner of Montgomery County called Threlkild. I remember that.

Holmes: My goodness! Where did it get its name?

Applewhite: It was named for a man over there. That was his name. He had a little old country store, and they put a post office in there and named it Threlkild.

Holmes: It's a strange name.

Applewhite: Yes. There's not any of them down there now. They're all gone, moved off.

Holmes: That's the sad tale of many a place.

Applewhite: And Poplar Creek ought to be cited. There was a post office there for a long, long time. It was just done away with a few years ago.

Holmes: I'd like to get a marker out here for Old Middleton.

Applewhite: Yes, there ought to be one there. That's where Winona came from.

Holmes: I was out to the cemetery last fall, what's left of it.

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Applewhite: It's a shame that nobody keeps it up.

Holmes: Well, I've been working to have it declared an abandoned cemetery at the Archives; and once that's done, the Supervisors can legally take it over, and spend some money to get it cleaned up. I don't know whether all the supervisors would be interested or not.

Applewhite: I have a cemetery that I keep, the Applewhite cemetery down in Carroll County. You see, my great-grandfather moved up here from Columbia. There weren't any churches here then....

Holmes: ...Hardly any people!

Applewhite: No, and when people died he had to pick a place to bury them, so he just buried them on his place. He's buried there, he and his wife, my grandfather and grandmother, my father and mother are buried there, and I have a brother and a sister buried there, and I keep it up. Joe Kimball and I, we keep it mowed, keep it fenced....

Holmes: Yes, there are several small family cemeteries in that part of the county that some of my ancestors are buried in, too, the Tylers, and I've forgotten who all. Raiford knows all about them, where they are, and keeps up with them. Well, I appreciate this!

Applewhite: Well, you're welcome!

(End of Side Four)

(Transcribed by Mary H. Mingee)

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