

Eison Lyles

Interview with Eison Lyles (73)

Santuc, S.C.

—*Caldwell Sims, Union, S.C.*

REMINISCENCES

"Dey comes slow—dem things you calls recollects, or whatever it is; but I knows what I is talking about, dat I does. My daddy named Aaron Lyles. Him and Betsy Lyles was my parents. She come from Virginia. Deir white folks, de Lyles, brought dem from Virginia to Maybinton, S.C.

"I was too little to know much of de old war, but jes' can remember living wid Mr. Alf Wright when de horn blow, saying dat de war was done over. I thought Jedg'ment Day done come!

"I soon learn't to put up 'hopper'. Dat was hanging up strong ash wood and hickory ashes in a bag dat was wet, so dat de lye would drip out in a box whar soap was made. When de moon got right, de grease was biled off de bones and put in de lye; den it was cooked up into soap. It was done on de increase of de moon and only a sassafra stick was used for stirring. De soap maker stirred from her all de time. When a real hopper was made, it was in a V shape, wid a trough underneath for de drippings. Dat is all of de kind of soap folks had in dem hard times. If it was too strong when you took a bath, de skin would come off. Hard soap was used for washing, and soft soap for clothes. Another thing we did wid lye, was to shell corn and put de grains in lye and clean it. When it come white, we called it 'hominy'.

"Things slip me sometimes, dat is, dey slips my memb'ance. I reckons dat old Gordam Mill was run by water, down yonder on Tyger River. Tyger separates Maybinton from Goshen Hill. Mr. Bill Oxner had de post office, and he lived up in a big grove whar de squirrels was real tame and loved to play.

"When we lived on de old Lyons place I got acquainted wid Mr. Bob Lyons. His family refuged from Charleston to Maybinton during de war, and dey stayed dar until he died; den his folks went back to Charleston. I know'd Mr. Jim Thomas, den.

"My father went from dat to Herbert's. We had it hard dar. Had so many ups and downs, and de overseer was hard on us, too. As to age, I ain't so sho about my right age, but I been old enough to sleep by myself for a long time. Folks knows me well and I stands well wid dem, and I tries to stand well wid God. My name was down in de old Lyles Bible, but it done burn't now. Miss Ellen done dead and ain't none of my set of Lyles living dat I knows de wharabouts of. I was born over on de Newberry side, so dey says; but dat don't matter, I knows de Union side jes' as well.

"I lived wid Mr. Byars at Herbert's on a big plantation. Oh, Lawdy, I couldn't remember how many plows dey run down dar. I was gitting big enough to go to see de gals, and I sho had to walk a fur ways to see 'em. De first buggy in dat country belonged to Mr. Epps Tucker. He had a net to go on de horse to keep de flies off'n him. Dat's de first horse wid a net on him to come to Gilliam's Chapel.

"I run around four or five years for nature and for fun. Had in mind picking a wife, and I got one dat I like de looks of in about four years. Us up and married. I know'd Dr. Cofield, Dr. Geo. Douglas, Dr. Peak Gilliam and men like dat. Things run along all right till de night of August 31, 1886. Dat night dis old man prayed, 'O Lawd, come down, we need You. We need You and we need You bad. Ain't no time for chillun's foolishness, so don't send your Son, Jesus Christ, kaise it's You we needs. Dat earth sho was shaking everywhars, and things was falling. De Lawd or something had things by de hand dat night. Next day de Lawd heard folks prayers and stopped dat earth's gwines on. Of all de ups and downs, I spec dat was de worst scared I ever was.

"Atter dat us built St. Luke, and we had logs for seats. We marched together and sung: 'Let's go down to de water and be baptized. I promised de Lawd dat I'd be baptized when St. Luke was finished. 'Ligion is so sweet, 'ligion is so sweet.'

"Little boys watched us while us was building St. Luke's. Dey would play in de branch and sing: 'Little boy wouldn't swim, kaise leather tacked to his shoe'. Den dey would catch hands and jump up and down on de bank and sing: 'Loop de la—loop de loop de la; Deacon coming out, deacon coming out.'

"Den all would run to de shade trees and put on deir clothes. And when us finished St. Lukes, such a baptizing as us had! All of us marched down to de pool while we sung:

Let's go down to de water and be baptized.

'Ligion is so sweet, I's promised de Lawd I'd be baptized;

'Ligion is so sweet, and I's promised de Lawd I'd be baptized