

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Gift and Release Agreement:

We Donette Mitchell and Allen Lesser (Interviewee) (Interviewer)

Do hereby grant permission to Jacksonville State University to copy the tape of the interview conducted at Mitchell home on the date(s) of October 20, 1995 for the oral history collection being compiled at Jacksonville State University.

This collection will be maintained by Jacksonville State University for research into the history of Northeast Alabama and the South. We further grant researchers permission to quote from the interview on this tape.

Donette Mitchell (Interviewee's signature)

Date 10-20-95

156 Chestnut St (Address)

Lincoln AL 35096

(205) 763-7631 (Telephone)

Angry M. Jones (Interviewer's signature)

Date 10-20-95

PO Box 348 (Address)

Lincoln AL 35096

(205) 763-2149 (Telephone)

Interviewee Background Information

Name: Donette Mitchell
 Address: 156 Chesnut St
 Phone Number(s): 763-7631
 Approximate age or date of birth: 81 or 82
 Mother's name: Icie Ariola DIX Oct 12 1879
 Father's name: Chester Dix
 Places lived and when: Lincoln, Thomasville

Education: High School

Religion: Baptist
Business, political and social memberships (past and present):

Present occupation:
Former occupation(s): Teacher Aile

Special skills: Work with children
Major Accomplishments: Worked with young people

Local events in which you have participated: elections, worked polls

State and/or regional events in which you have participated: "

National events in which you have participated: "

International events in which you have participated: "

Natural born U.S. citizen? (Yes)/No
 Naturalized Citizen: Yes/(No) Date: _____
 Country from which you emigrated: _____
 Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession: Photographs, Bibles, etc.

Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview: Helen Parks

Additional information: _____

EVENTS IN ALABAMA HISTORY

- 1920---WOMEN ARE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE
- 1926---UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA WIN ROSE BOWL AND NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
- 1927---AVONDALE MILLS EXPANDS TO MANY SMALL TOWNS
- 1929---GOODYEAR MOVES TO GASDEN
- 1933---TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY IS ESTABLISHED
- 1934---RURAL REHABILITATION IS INIATED IN ALABAMA
- 1935---SOCIAL SECURITY ACT PASSED BY CONGRESS
- 1941---HUNTSVILLE'S REDSTONE ARSENAL IS BUILT
PEARL HARBOR ATTACKED SENDING UNITED STATES INTO WWII
- 1945---WWII ENDS AND BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY THRIVES IN ALABAMA
- 1954---BROWN VS BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA, KS CASE DECIDED
- 1955---ROSA PARKS BUS INCIDENT IN MONTGOMERY
- 1955-56---MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT
- 1958---BEAR BRYANT BECOMES THE HEAD FOOTBALL COACH AT UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
- 1962---GEORGE WALLACE IS ELECTED TO HIS TERM OF GOVERNOR
- 1963---PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ALABAMA BEGIN INTEGRATION
BULL CONNOR LEADS AN ATTACK ON DEMONSTRATORS AT KELLY INGRAM PARK
SIXTEENTH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH IS BOMBED
- 1965---EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE INCIDENT AT SELMA
SECOND SELMA TO MONTGOMERY MARCH
- 1979---RICHARD ARRINGTON IS ELECTED MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM
- 1986---GUY HUNT BECOMES THE FIRST REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR SINCE RECONSTRUCTION
- 1993---GOVERNOR HUNT BECOMES THE FIRST GOVERNOR TO BE REMOVED FROM OFFICE FOR CONVICTION OF A FELONY

EVENTS OF DORETTE MITCHELL

1912----BORN TO CHESTER AND ICIE DIX

1940----MARRIES PAUL MITCHELL

1941----MOVES TO LINCOLN

1942----DAUGHTER, POLLY, IS BORN

1975----DR. GUS COLVIN DIES

1981----FIRST KNEE SURGERY

1990----HUSBAND, PAUL MITCHELL, DIES

1995----SECOND KNEE SURGERY

QUESTIONS FOR DORETTE MITCHELL

1. Tell us about the city of Lincoln, Alabama?
2. How long have you lived here?
3. How the cotton crop of Lincoln?
4. How is your health?
5. What are some things you remember about Dr. Gus Colvin?
6. How did Lincoln handle the intergration of public schools?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THE CITY OF LINCOLN, ALABAMA
2. THE OLD COTTON FARMERS OF LINCOLN
3. GROWING COTTON
4. REPLACING COTTON
5. THE AREA CHURCHES
6. THE HIGH SCHOOL
7. HER HOSPITAL STAY AND KNEE SURGERIES
8. THE FRIENDS OF MRS. MITCHELL
9. THE LIFE OF DR. GUS COLVIN
10. THE INTEGRATION OF LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL
11. EXPERIENCES AS A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

The city of Lincoln, Alabama is located in Talladega County. It is eleven miles north of the city of Talladega. In Lincoln, there is easy access to major roads. Interstate 20 and U.S. Highway 78 both run through Lincoln. The Coosa River forms the border between Talladega County and St. Clair County in Lincoln. There is easy access to Lake Martin from Lincoln. The Post Office in Lincoln serves a large area of people. The dentist office, the doctors office, and the drugstore all serve a large portion of Lincoln's population of 4000. There are also many old homes in Lincoln that are visited by people from out of town as well as the homefolks. Some of these houses were built as far back as the 1850's.

The city of Lincoln, like most other cities in Alabama, grew a large amount of cotton.¹ There was a cotton gin¹ located in the city near Blue Eye Creek and the railroad track in what used to be downtown. Cotton farmers would line up and wait all day to have their cotton baled at the gin.¹ The cotton gin made growing cotton less laborious, and too many people began to grow cotton in Lincoln.¹ The market for cotton fell and the hard working farmers were forced to find another way of life.¹

Lincoln was just a part of Alabama. The entire state was agricultural, with cotton being king. In time cotton growers began to grow corn, tobacco, peanuts, soybeans, and sweet potatoes. Livestock also turned into a big part of the land use in Alabama.² As late as 1959, there was still millions of dollars of cotton grown in the state of Alabama, but with industry rising the diehard cotton farmers of the state were having to look for a line of work.²

Mills and factories were being built all over the state. With all the waterways in Alabama, it was easy to operate these new buildings by electric power. By 1959, the waterways were being taken advantage of by building electric dams. Alabama's waterways are so vast that only California has more navigable streams in the United States.² Industry was ready to explode in the U.S., and Alabama with its water resources was willing to help.

The city of Lincoln changed from a cotton with the rest of the state. The farmers began to raise cattle, corn, and other crops.¹ Corn grew well in Lincoln. Farmers would load their trucks full of corn and take the corn to Anniston to sell.¹ The corn sold in Anniston. Other types of crops, such as peas, did not do well in Lincoln. Fruit trees and pecan trees do well in Lincoln. Most homes were able to get good crops of pecans off the trees in their yards and surrounding areas for extra money.¹ This is still true today. Farming of some form is the way most people in Lincoln used to earn a living, but today the people have jobs in area factories or at the Anniston Army Depot. The Anniston Army Depot employees a majority of the residents of Lincoln.

The people of Lincoln are generally close to each other. The churches are an important part in the life of most of the residents of Lincoln. These churches draw members from other areas as well, such as Talladega and Pell City.¹ Football is also an important part of the city of Lincoln.¹ This is evidenced by a large turn out at most of the high school football games played in Lincoln. The youth of Lincoln start playing football at young age. They play other cities and towns in the area.¹ The people of Lincoln do not

change much, therefore the city of Lincoln does not change much. Mrs. Mitchell has observed that "The people of Lincoln are the same everyday, new people come in but they are pretty much the same as the old."¹

Friendship and not being lonely are two things important to the people of Lincoln. Mrs. Mitchell expresses this as she talks about her health. She has had two knee operations, the first in 1981 and second in the summer of 1995.¹ When she was in the hospital she felt lonely because she couldn't see her friends. Her personal health, like many elderly people, is on Mrs. Mitchell's mind regularly.¹ "I thank the Lord that I'm not in a wheelchair,"¹ is the first thing said when she talks about her knee surgeries. The importance of the elderly being able to get out and do activities is stressed when Mrs. Mitchell talks about being able to drive still. Visiting her friends is something she and many others love to do.¹ "Your glad to see anybody when you can't get out."¹ With this statement, Mrs. Mitchell starts to talk about the city of Lincoln and one of its most important members, Dr. Gus Colvin.

Dr. Gus Colvin was the doctor in Lincoln for many years. His father was the doctor before him. The two Dr. Colvins took care of Lincoln residents for many years and gained a near worship from them.¹ Dr. Gus Colvin was so loved by the people that when he died in 1975, "some people thought the city would collapse."¹

Dr. Gus Colvin's father lived in a two story house near what was then downtown Lincoln. Dr. Gus Colvin owned a beautiful two story house near

his father's. Dr. Gus Colvin's home is still commented on today. His widow still lives there and is very active to be 87 years old with failing health.

Dr. Gus Colvin learned the practice and became interested in medicine from his father. He would ride with his father on visits to patients.¹ The Colvins would visit their patients because the patients couldn't come to him. Many of the patients could not afford to pay the doctor with money, but they felt it right to pay him, so they would give him something. Dr. Colvin would accept whatever they offered, he did not believe it would be right to refuse anyone. When Gus Colvin became a doctor, he continued the precedent of visiting the patients. He also would refuse anyone. Neither of Dr. Colvins would take money away from the patients who could not afford to pay, although they could legally. They would not be a reason that their patients were having financial troubles.¹

Dr. Gus Colvin was one of the best doctors in the world according to Mrs. Mitchell.¹ His medical skills were very good and no one would criticize his performance, but his character and personality made him great.¹ Dr. Colvin, like his father, loved his work, he was not in the profession to make a lot of money, although he did well financially.¹ Gus Colvin could have charged people whatever amount he wanted to and they would have gladly paid. Dr. Colvin had grown up in Lincoln had lived here his entire life; He could tell you how much money you had, so he knew if you could pay him or not and yet it did not make a difference in the way he treated you.¹

Gus Colvin had earned the respect of everyone in Lincoln. "The people of Lincoln nearly worshipped Dr. Colvin.¹" Dr. Colvin was also fair

in his offices, where he would take the patients in order of the seriousness of their illness.¹

Doctor Colvin could have left Lincoln and lived anywhere he wanted.¹ He wanted to live in Lincoln and that is where he lived, died, and is buried. The reason he stayed in Lincoln he said was the weather. Lincoln usually has better weather than places just a few miles away. The weather in Lincoln is a factor in why people stay today also.¹

Dr. Colvin saved many lives in Lincoln.¹ His attitude on billing was one that you are forced to like "He never sent a bill to anyone."¹ He often would take a rooster, a watermelon, potatoes, just any good that patients offered him for payment, he would take things he didn't need just to make the patients feel at ease about paying him.¹

Another reason that Dr. Colvin was loved is his personal life. He owned several acres of land by the river and many hunting dogs. He loved to hear his dogs bark.¹ He recorded his dogs barking and could recognize the dog by its bark when playing the tapes back.¹ Dr. Colvin would use his dogs when he took part in one of his favorite activities, fox hunting.¹ He was also known for giving away bottles of sorghum syrup, which he would take from his trees and have bottled in Sand Mountain.¹

Doctor Gus Colvin is known for his dedication and work with Lincoln Baptist Church.¹ He loved the church. His whole family had been involved with Lincoln Baptist Church.¹ The church had been founded in 1887, his father was probably a key figure in the founding of Lincoln Baptist Church. Dr. Gus Colvin helped buy an organ for the church. To show appreciation for

Gus Colvin's work, Lincoln Baptist Church recently put in some beautiful stain glass windows in the sanctuary; One of which is dedicated to him and another is dedicated to his wife, who played the organ for many years.

Dr. Gus Colvin, who was a second generation doctor, had a son, little Gus. Dr. Colvin once said he would love for his son to be a doctor, but he was not made for it.¹ One the thought of his son being a third generation of Dr. Colvins, he said "If he can't be a damn good one, then I don't want him to do it."¹ It was this kind of care and concern for people that won him the respect and adoration of the entire city of Lincoln and most of the surrounding area. The doctor showed no sign of the racism that surrounded him throughout the state, and continued to treat all races and genders equally even when it was not the status quo of Alabama.³

Dr. Coffin showed the racial attitude that has been typical of Lincoln's history, although not the state's history. The city does not and really has never had any major racial problems.¹ In 1963, Alabama began to integrate public schools as a result of the 1954 Brown VCR Board of Education of Topeka, KS. case.³ When Lincoln High School integrated the whites gathered under a tree across the road from the school, but they eventually came inside. Tensions were high for the first part of integration, but quickly settled down and there were no problems. Lincoln High School had integrated peacefully.¹

One of the reasons why there no problems with integration is that the blacks and whites live so close together. The blacks and whites have always gotten along well in Lincoln.¹

The city of Lincoln is just a small town. We have been lucky not to have any race problems, like the rest of the state has had to suffer. The people of Lincoln are generally hard working and honest. Local events like high school football still attract the interest of almost everyone in town. Lincoln has had its time when was like Maybes in "The Andy Griffith Show", and its had a time, under Dr. Coffin, when it was like Walnut Grove in "Little House on the Prairie." We are easily accessible to cities such as Annuitant, Birmingham, and Atlanta. Lincoln has a history of being a good place to live and it continues to be.

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3. William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins, and Wayne Flynt, Alabama the History of a Deep South State (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), pp 409-630.