

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Louise Bohannan CRAIG M/F: F

Address: 406 West WALNUT, Sylacauga, AL 35150

Phone number(s): 245-7148

Approximate age or date of birth: 10-28-24

Mothersname: Minnie Bell Bohannan

Father's name: Loucius Ora Bohannan

Places lived and when: Goodwater, AL - Bored their + lived there until 18 yrs old

Education: 12 grade - some college courses

Religion: Methodist

Business, political and social memberships (past and present): Business + Professional Women Club - Cherokee Garden Club -

Present occupation: Retired

Former occupations: Worked First Federal Savings & Loan Assn.

Special Skills: Cashier

Major Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_

National Events in which interviewee has participated: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: \_\_\_\_\_

National born U.S. citizen? Yes/No Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No

Country from which he/she emigrated: \_\_\_\_\_

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

Gift and Release Agreement

We Louise Bohannan Craig and Lynn M. Phurrough  
Interviewee (print) Interviewer (print)

do hereby give and grant Jacksonville State University, Oral History Archive, all literary and property rights, title, and interest which we may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) conducted at

Louise Bohannan Craig's Home

on the date(s) of 02/20/96

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.

X Louise Bohannan Craig  
Interviewee's Signature

Date: 02/20/96

Address 406 W. Walnut St

Sylacauga, AL 35150

Phone 205-245-7148

Lynn M Phurrough  
Interviewer's Signature

Date: 02/20/96

Address 570 Oldfield Road

Sylacauga, AL 35150

Phone (205) 245-2823

## **AUDIO TAPE TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**General description of tape content: Interview of Louise Bohannon Craig , by Lynn Phurrough**

**Subject of Interview: Growing Up In Rural Alabama In the 1920s and 1930s.**

1. General introduction with interviewee's date of birth, where she grew up number in household.
2. Chores on the farm as a child.
3. Family water source.
4. Household heating and cooking sources.
5. Kinds of animals on the farm and their care.
6. Family food sources.
7. Description of food preparation - making of butter and butter milk.
8. Schools attended - description of the schools; how she got there; approximate number of students.
9. Further description of family - talked about two of her siblings who died in childhood
10. Her jobs in high school and what the money she earned was spent for.
11. Jobs her brothers and father had to earn extra money when needed.
12. Crops grown.
13. Getting the crops in - harvesting.-sometimes the children had to miss school to help
14. What they did for entertainment
15. Transportation.
16. Clothing.
17. A description of the sewing machines.
18. Where they got the cloth for their clothing.
19. What they ate.
20. Sorghum syrup - a brief description of how it is made.
21. Food storage.
22. Home furnishings.
23. Kitchen furnishings.
24. Furniture crafting.

Lynn Phurrough

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

American History 202

Instructor: Dr. Suzanne Marshall

Louise Bohannan Craig was born at her home near Goodwater, Alabama on October 28, 1924. Back in those days doctors still made home visits and usually came to the home to help when a baby was born. She was born Sarah Louise Bohannan, to parents Minnie Bell Sprayberry Bohannan and Loucious Ora Bohannan. She lived on a farm her parents rented and worked near Goodwater, Alabama until she was eighteen years old. She was the middle child with a sister, Ora Bernice, and two brothers, James Louis and Charles Walker, who were older, and a sister, Rachel, and two brothers, John and David Herman, who were younger. Her sister Rachel who was four years younger died of diphtheria at five years of age. She recalled being sent to live with her grandmother while Rachel was sick because the family was afraid she might also get diphtheria. They did not have diphtheria shot until later. Her younger brother John died at less than a year of age from meningitis. Penicillin and other antibiotics that may have helped the two children survive were not purified into usable form until the 1940s.

The farm house that the family lived in was about two and one-half miles outside of Goodwater toward Sylacauga on the old Goodwater Highway. The house had five large rooms with a bedroom that the boys shared, one the girls shared and one that was her parent's room. The house was heated by a fire place and a wood burning cook stove. Water was carried daily from an open spring on the farm.

The children started very young helping out with the many chores on the farm. "Like all farm children you had to bring in wood. You had an open fire place and you had to bring in wood and

kindling. You had to bring in water for the night.” By six or seven years of age she helped by feeding pigs and chickens each day. As she got older she started to raise baby chicks.

At six years of age she started to school. The children walked about two miles to the six room school in Goodwater. The school had about twenty-five students per grade and housed grades one through six. A pot belly stove that burned wood provided heat for the school. The school had indoor cold running water but the bathroom facilities were outside (out house). The children carried their lunch to school each day because, “... there was no such thing as a lunch room.”

The family wore clothing sewn at home on a treadle sewing machine. The girls clothing and the boys shirts were made out of the cloth from sacks that fertilizer and other dried goods came in. “Material was ten or fifteen cents a yard back then but you didn’t have ten or fifteen cents to buy it.” By the time she was twelve Louise learned how to sew, knit, crochet, and embroidery and could make her own clothes. The boys pants or overall were one of the few things the family bought in the store. Other things that were store bought included flour, cornmeal, sugar, and fertilizer. Most of what the family needed was grown or made on the farm. Much of the furnishings were even hand made. Her father could weave the seats for the chairs at the kitchen table from strips of white oak.

The whole family, including the children, worked in the vegetable garden and in the fields if needed. If changing weather made it necessary the children might sometimes have to stay out of school to help get the crops in. Louise talked about picking cotton, and dry peas as a child. She said she hated to pick dry peas worse than anything else because they scratched her legs and hurt her fingers. Because they had no refrigeration vegetables and fruits had to be canned in large amounts and frequently to provide food for the family throughout the year. Her father grew sorghum cane that was taken to the sorghum syrup mill where it was made into syrup. Two milk cows provided milk and butter for the family. Her father milked the cows every morning and every evening. Sometimes there was even some butter and

butter milk left over that could be sold. A gallon jug of milk could be put in the cold water were the spring came out of the earth. This would keep it cold enough to last for short periods of time. The chickens provided eggs and meat the pigs provided pork and her brothers hunted and brought home rabbits and squirrels for the family to eat. Fish caught in the nearby creek also provided meat. They did not have meat to eat ever day though as may people do now days. Meat had to be eaten fresh, or be salted, smoked, or in the winter it could sometimes be stored longer in the cold temperatures to keep it from spoiling. A usual breakfast might consist of hot biscuits, butter, jelly, eggs, and fresh fruit. "Lunch was usually vegetables with hot cornbread and we had milk most of the time." Supper was usually leftovers from lunch. What was not eaten by the family at a meal was usually feed to the dogs or pigs because there was no way to keep it from spoiling.

When Louise was about twelve years old her older sister moved way from home. Her mother got very ill that same year and she had to leave school in the spring to take care of her mother, and younger brother. Her mother was sick enough that she seldom got out of the bed for a period of time. Louise was responsible for all the household chores during that time: cooking, washing dishes, laundry, cleaning, caring for the vegetable garden, caring for her mother and little brother. This would be a big responsibility for a twelve year old even with today's modern conveniences. In the mid 1930s with no running water, no electricity, no dish washer or washing machine, this was a tremendous responsibility for a twelve year old to have to take on. When she started back to school in the fall she did not know if she had been promoted to the next grade or not. She was promoted to the next grade and did not have to repeat a grade in school due to her absence.

Her father and older brothers did most of the heavy farm work and other work that supported the family. After the crops were put in the spring and during the winter her father worked at a saw mill and her brothers worked with an uncle who was a carpenter for extra money. The crops grown on the farm

were cotton, corn, beans, and peas. The fields were plowed using a plow pulled by a horse or mull. The horse or mull were also used to pull a wagon to ride in and haul supplies in and the children often rode them for fun as well as transportation. Other forms of entertainment included fishing with her grandfather Bohannon, and playing checkers and dominos.

The children went to another school on the other side of Goodwater for the seventh through twelfth grades. This was a two story school building with about ten or twelve class rooms. The school had agricultural classes that boys could take in tenth grade or after. Home economics classes were available for the girls. This is consistent with the general view of most people at this time that the woman's place was in the home. In high school Louise worked at the drug store in the summer between her junior and senior year to pay for a class she took in summer school so she could graduate a year early. In her senior year in high school she worked in the principles office so she could pay for a typing class she wanted to take.

The inside of the house that she lived in was different from today's homes in several ways. The rooms were much larger than most rooms are in modern homes. There were no closets, all the clothing was folded and put in dresser drawers or hung in a chifforobe. The beds were made of iron, the dressers were made of oak. The living room was furnished with wooden chairs with homemade fabric cushions. The house had no built in kitchen cabinets, sink, or counter tops. All work was done at the kitchen table. Free standing kitchen cabinets and pie cabinets or racks held the pans, dry goods and other food. The dishes were washed in a big dish pan with water heated on the wood stove. The laundry was usually washed outside in large wash tubs, rinsed, rung out by hand and then hung on the line to dry.

Many of the modern conveniences that make life easier for us were not yet invented in the 1920s or 1930s or were still too expensive for most people buy. Economic times were very hard especially for farmers in the in the rural South. There frequently was not money to buy anything but the absolute

necessities. Louise said that there was no indoor plumbing in either of the two farm houses she lived in while she was growing up. She said they never had a car while she was growing up, but that some people in town did own cars. All the plowing and farm work was done by hand or with farm equipment pulled by a horse or mull. Though they did not have a lot of luxuries Louise said they always had plenty to eat. She remembers, with a smile, going fishing with her grandfather. I got the impression that in general her memories of childhood are pleasant, with the exception of the death of her two siblings and the year her sister moved away from home and her mother was so sick. I think that must have been a very hard year for her. They got electricity in their home in about 1939 or 1940 according to Louise. Louise graduated from high school in 1943 and got a job in Alexander City and moved away from home. She was married to Robert Andrew Craig on June 02, 1943.

Ms Craig is an amazing woman she can do almost any type of sewing, craft, minor household repair, cooking, interior design (drapes, quilts, painting, wallpaper, flooring, furniture refinishing), gardening, and flower arranging. She is very active in her church. She gets along well with and keeps involved with her children and grandchildren. I believe in her case the hard times she lived through as a child helped her learn a wide variety of still that now enrich her life and the lives of those she comes in contact with. Maybe the most important of which is, how to see the best in everyone and every situation.

Excellent  
A+

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