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My interviewee was my grandmother, Bertha Tims. She was born in Heflin, Alabama on October 31, 1908. She is now 84 years old and still in relatively good health. She has lived all her life in the South, mostly Alabama and Georgia. Her family moved from Alabama to Cedartown, Georgia when she was about two months old. She lived there until after she married. Her father was a farmer and the whole family helped in the work on the farm. They were relatively poor and rented land along with other farmers around them, some of them were black. The year she was born Theodore Roosevelt was President and William H. Taft took office shortly after in 1909. She was about 8 years old when the United States joined in WW1. She stated that she remembered her brothers having to go register, but they did not have to go and serve. She also recalled how everything was rationed. There was hardly enough sugar and coffee to go around, you could only buy a small 'portion' at a time.

Her mother died in 1916, ^{when} she was only 8 years old. She was the youngest and she had ^{six} 6 other brothers and sisters. Her oldest sister took over the care of the family. She never married. My grandmother, her father and brothers and one sister all worked in the fields all day while her oldest sister stayed at the house and cooked and cleaned. Their main crops were corn and cotton and they also planted other vegetables to eat themselves. They worked from daylight to dark. They came to the house to eat lunch. Sometimes after lunch during hot summer days, they would pitch horseshoes until it had cooled off, then they would go back to the fields until dark. On days that it rained

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they could not work in the fields, so the girls would do the washing. They drew water from a well and used a scrub board to wash, it took them all day to get it done. Her mother had been a seamstress and had made a lot of their clothes. She was also a midwife, My grandmother said she remembered her going out to help when babies were born in their community. After her mother died, they bought all of their clothes from the store. My grandmother finished the 8th grade and she went home to help her father on the farm. She said that was common for girls who lived out in the country. However, some girls did go on to the city schools and graduate. She said girls who went through the 12th grade and graduated could teach school. I got the impression that she was content with just finishing the 8th grade and working on the farm. She was only twelve years old in 1920 when women won the right to vote so it did not effect her much. She stated that she did not vote until well after she was twenty one, when she and her husband had moved to Alabama. I do not think they were affected as much by what was going on in national politics because they were poor and were more concerned with matters at hand such as if the crops yielded well or not. She said the work in the fields was hard, but that they were used to it and hardly ever got tired. For recreation and entertainment they went to church socials and sometimes went and watched the boys play ball in the pastures near by. She met my grandfather because his family lived near by and they had worked in the fields together. He was younger than ^{she} her, about nineteen when they were married and she was twenty three.

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They went to the Cedartown court house to be married . He worked odd jobs and they usually lived on the farm where he worked. His brother helped him get a job with the railroad and this began a cycle of moving from one place to another. My grandmother seemed to accept the moving because the job was a well paying and secure job. They moved to Alabama shortly after he got a job with the railroad. The railroad furnished their house which was usually a two room house with a fireplace. The house was always right beside the railroad. One incident my grandmother recalled was when her son David was four years old. He had gotten a red wagon for Christmas and it was wash day. The well that they used was at a neighbors house down the road, so she loaded the wash in his wagon and pulled it to the well to do the wash in the cold weather. The lady who owned the well let David come in and sit by the fire while my grandmother did the washing. She had all of her children at home except for the baby. The doctor come to the house to help in the delivery. Her last child was born at the hospital they were just finishing building. They were constantly moving from one railroad house to another. They moved all over Alabama, from Ragland to Odenville to Wattsville where she lives now. My grandmother said it was hard having to make new friends everywhere she went. Once when they arrived at their new home in Wattsville Al. ^{Alabama} before the train had delivered their belongings, it was very cold, and they did not have any fire wood. They had to wait until the train arrived, and they did not know anyone in the neighborhood to borrow some wood from. Her oldest son David, still very young,

climbed up on a shelf in a closet to try and keep warm. When the train arrived with their things, my grandfather built a huge fire in the fireplace. My grandmother said, later when she had made warm friendships with everyone in the neighborhood she realized they would have been glad to lend them some wood for a fire. Although there were disadvantages to working for the railroad, there were also advantages. They could ^{have} free passes to ride the train where^{ever} they needed or wanted to go. When they first moved to Alabama, they did not know any of the doctors or dentist^s in the town near by. So they took the train to Cedartown, Georgia to the dentist they were using before. It was an exciting trip especially for the kids. They would board the train in the morning and ride to Cedartown, spend the day and visit relatives and come home on the train late in the afternoon. They had relatives who lived in Rome, Georgia also, such as my grandmother's sister. My mother would take the train in the summer to Rome and spent the summer there with her aunt. When they lived in Ragland, Alabama in 1962 her youngest son was in the navy and stationed in Washington . They rode the train from Ragland to Washington to spend Thanksgiving with her son. This was very convenient for my grandmother because she never learned to drive. Another advantage to my grand-^{father's} railroad job was the good pay. He was able to buy some land and a farm in Wattsville Al. My grandmother did not like living on the farm because it was too far from any neighbors so she was afraid. My grandfather traded the farm for a store which was right beside the railroad and near more families. They rented a house right behind the store where my grandmother felt more comfortable. My

grandmother ran the store during the week while my grandfather was away on the railroad. He helped on the weekends when he was home. My mother helped with the chores at home and at the store after school. It was at this time that my grandmother began to exercise her right to vote. ¹⁹⁰⁵ Mainly because the county paid her five dollars to allow them to have the voting poll in the store. This was around 1958, she stated she voted against J.F. Kennedy when he was elected in 1960. Running the store was the only job my grandmother ever had outside the home. She remembered during WWII when a lot of women went to work at Bynum, Anniston Army Depot, where they made war materials and army supply. ^{ils} She said most of these women did not have children. She stated that raising her four kids and taking care of the house took all her time. She continued to run the store until her youngest daughter finished high school and could no longer help her in the store. They sold the store and she went back to being a housewife full time. My grandfather built the house she lives in now while they owned the store around 1958. He used some second hand materials and paid for everything as he went so they wouldn't have to go in debt. They were always very careful with their money, having lived through the depression, they didn't put their money in the bank until their children were quite old. Her youngest daughter went to business school in Birmingham, Alabama after high school, a ^{at} 6 month course at Alverson Draughan called Professional IBM to be a key punch operator. Then she got a job in Birmingham. My grandmother and grandfather would go stay with her in Birmingham at her apartment during the week so she wouldn't have to come home by herself. She said she remembered when the church was bombed and three children were killed because of the civil rights disputes in the early 1960's.

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She said she heard the bombs and they sounded like fire crackers. She said they went home for the weekend and when they returned to Birmingham on Sunday afternoon, the streets were clear, no one was outside because they were afraid. She also remembered when President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, she was at the beauty shop in Pell City, Ala. having her hair done. She said she was shocked when she heard it and that was all that was on the news for three or four days later.

My grandmother did not talk much about her later years. My grandfather died in 1980 of emphazema^{of} and she has had a hard time dealing with it. She had been widowed now for almost ^{thirteen} 13 years. Although she did not do any great things in her life , she takes pride in raising four children and seeing them be successful in life. She now lives with her youngest daughter and enjoys the company of friends and family , especially grandchildren and great grandchildren. During her lifetime she saw many avenues open for women but she never cared to venture out of the traditional "women's sphere". She does not criticize other women for doing so however, that was where she found happiness.

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Good information
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Susan Green

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Oral History Tape Recording Release Agreement

I, Bertha Sims, hereby give and grant my tape recordings and their contents to Dr. Suzanne Marshall, Assistant Professor of History Jacksonville State University, and authorize her to make them available for scholarly research purposes.

INTERVIEWEE Mrs. Bertha Sims ADDRESS P.O. Box 63 Wattsville, Al. 35182

INTERVIEWER Susan GREEN

DATE OF INTERVIEW 11/8/92

NUMBER OF TAPES 1

DATE OF AGREEMENT 11/8/92

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWEE/DONOR Bertha Sims

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Bertha Sims M/F female

Address: P.O. Box 63 Wattsville, Al. 35182

Phone number(s): 338 - 2538

Approximate age or date of birth: Oct. 31, 1908 84 yrs. old

Mother's Name: Caroline Louell Bentley

Father's Name: George Martin Bentley

Places lived and when: Codertown, Georgia, Ragland, Wattsville,
Odenville, Piedmont, Alabama.

Education: finished the 8th grade

Religion: Baptist

Business, political and social memberships (past and present) none

Present occupation: housekeeper

Former occupations: grocery store owner, farmer

Special Skills: sewing, needlepoint, knitting

Major Accomplishments: raised 4 children, all 4 finished
high school and some college.

National Events in which interviewee has participated: _____

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: held local election
in their store.

National born U.S. citizen? Yes No

Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: _____

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: _____