ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

NARRATOR: Mr. Charles Chapman
INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Dorothy Smith
PLACE: Store-West Main Street-Luray
DATE:

COMPLETED DATE:
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TRANSCRIBED BY:
Sharon G. Marston
D.S.: This is Dorothy Smith interviewing Charles Chapman who has an international reputation as a carrilloineer, but who also had a father who ran a store in Luray. Is that correct Mr. Chapman?

C.C.: \underline{West Main Street} in about 1890 I think he started in the drug business with Mr. A.W. McKim. Uh, and later around 1900, 2, 3, or 4 he sold out his interest in that store and opened a grocery store in the same block.

D.S.: In other words is it where McKim and Huffman ... C.C.: Same store.

D.S.: Same store. Uh, what type store was it? Uh, just groceries.

C.C.: Groceries and meats... staples... just groceries yea.

D.S.: Uh, did the mountain people come down here?

C.C.: I'm sure they did... I don't remember too much about that time but...

D.S.: Would you know if they were like from Tanners Ridge area or...

C.C.: Probably so... Tanners Ridge, Cubbage Hollow, Dovel Hollow and Basin Hollow... any of them.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Right. Uh, did they bring things to your father?

C.C.: Yea, they traded... let's see... I remember back in the good old chestnut days... I remember when they had chestnuts they'd bring a lot of chestnuts and chinc-a-pins... you don't hear of them anymore. And I imagine produce and of most any kind... I don't remember particularly except those items... Walnuts.

D.S.: Did they bring eggs?

C.C.: Oh, probably so.

D.S.: Chickens?

C.C.: Oh, we didn't handle any chickens.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Now would your father give them cash for this or would they take it...
C.C.: Oh, both ways. Sometimes trade it out, and some cash or both...

D.S.: Uhhuh. Do you recall mainly what the people bought? Was it like coffee...

C.C.: Mainly staple items like coffee and sugar...and course they made their own soap then.

D.S.: Were the people dressed differently?

C.C.: Can't prove it / I don't remember. They didn't look any different to me. The styles I guess...Now I guess they would... I'm sure they must have you know.

D.S.: Do you recall if they walked here or if they came by horse or what?

C.C.: Some walked. Mostly by horse. Horse and wagon or horse and buggy.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Of course there wasn't the traffic then that there is now.

C.C.: No...no..

D.S.: But did your father have like a hitching post out in front...

C.C.: That's right

D.S.: There was?

C.C.: Yea.

D.S.: Uh, did you notice anything about the people like you could say this person came from the mountain and this didn't in their conversation...

C.C.: Oh no, none of that.

D.S.: You were too young. Umm, they wouldn't talk about their home life at all that you didn't hang being around the store sort of and...

C.C.: Yea, but I still I didn't pay any attention to it...if they had...if they did.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Did they stay around the store and talk

C.C.: Oh, they'd tend to their affairs and go on.

D.S.: Oh, they didn't hang around and talk.

C.C.: Not that I recall...

D.S.: Some of them said that that was a good way to exchange news...find out
what was going on? Yea. The chestnuts..did they bring them in baskets or how did they bring them, do you recall?

C.C.: Bags...

D.S.: Did they have paper bags then.

C.C.: They had what do you call them? Gunny sacks.

D.S.: Oh yea.

C.C.: Yea, a lot of them. Burlap brown bags you know.

D.S.: Were they barefoot..do you know.

C.C.: I don't recall seeing them barefoot..no.

D.S.: Were the men clean shaven?

C.C.: I don't recall

D.S.: You don't recall.

C.C.: You will have to get around to my generation.

D.S.: Okey. Uh, did your father have yard goods there?

C.C.: No, strickly groceries.

D.S.: Just groceries. What did he do with the chestnuts, and the chinc-a-pins when he got them?

C.C.: Depended on how many he got in. A certain amount of them were sold retail across the counter. And I think when they got a big quantity of them maybe in Washington he'd ship them to the Metropolitan Area, or Baltimore.

D.S.: Did any of them bring any whiskey along to sell to your father?

C.C.: No. Not that I recall. Might have been, but I don't remember...

D.S.: No, uhhuh. Did any of them talk at all about George Polluck? Did you ever hear them mention George Polluck's name or did your father talk about him.

C.C.: No..oh my father knew him, and they'd talk..Polluck used to do his dealings at that store almost exclusively in those days. He knew Polluck
right well..I know him. Polluck was quite a colorful character as you
have heard I'm sure. A great entertainer, but a poor business man.

D.S.: Yea, uhhuh.

C.C.: ... Polluck and his main

D.S.: So Polluck used your father's store,

mainly.

C.C.: Yea.

D.S.: Then wasn't it one of the the Sours that used to...

C.C.: Yea, Ben Sours. Carried the mail. He came every day. And uh, Polluck
would come about once a week in his wagon drawn by his colored man,
Spensor. A horse..maybe a mule I don't know. Load that wagon full of
supplies for Skyland of course... Ben Sours came every day with his
satchel and mail bag and buy small items for different guests at Skyland.

D.S.: Oh, they would leave orders with him

C.C.: He would bring the orders yea. Had a memorandum of different things.

D.S.: Umm...they didn't cook in their own cabins did they?

C.C.: On the mountain...

D.S.: I mean up at Skyland?

C.C.: Oh, they had a central dining room...

D.S.: Yea, then I was wondering what they would buy from your father.

C.C.: Oh the individuals... I don't know. Oh, maybe tobacco, cigarrtes...different things...maybe candy...I don't know, crackers or I
don't know.

D.S.: Yea, did your father have homemade cake?


D.S.: Uhhuh. Um, did you ever walk to Skyland?

C.C.: Oh, sure. Up the old road people don't use now.

D.S.: You mean up Little Canyon?

C.C.: Probably in Little Canyon, yea. The road went back and forth over
the ridge didn't it? Uh it was just north at that time. The canyon was too steep to go right straight out.

D.S.: Did you walk up there or...

C.C.: Yes, I walked up there, a number of times.

D.S.: You did?

C.C.: Yea, that was a great pleasure...great fun.

D.S.: You'd walk from here.

C.C.: Oh, sometimes we'd ride to the foot of the mountain and walk up...In those days we only had a horse and wagon to take up there. And uh, Ned Burkman and I and other Luray people had the first car I guess in Luray and his was the first car to go up that old road to Elkhorn.

D.S.: And Mrs. Black said that her father had the second one to go up.

C.C.: In a car?

D.S.: Uhhuh. Did you go to any of his parties?

C.C.: No, I was too young for his parties.

D.S.: Oh, that's a shame. Did you ever go up there on a Sunday?

C.C.: I don't...why a Sunday?

D.S.: Uh, people from Bark Hollow said that he had a baseball diamond and they used to go on a Sunday and play. And I was wondering...did you ever see a baseball diamond there?

C.C.: I remember vaguely something like that yea. He would have...I remember he would have a big dance and a bonfire...what is that an Indian affair you know...

D.S.: Around the Fourth of July wasn't it?

C.C.: Could have been yea. I went to one of those.

D.S.: Yea, said you could see the flames here in Luray.

C.C.: Yea, I spect that is right.

D.S.: Isn't it too bad he isn't around now.
By the way, speaking of that, did you ever see any of the mountain fires?

C.C.: Oh, yea, I sure did. Every summer they would have them...summer they were going almost all the time. I can remember it very well. Long streams of flames you know..looked like long lines of fire. Uh, they said the moun-
tain people started them to make...the huckleberries grow.

D.S.: Yea, yea.

C.C.: But of course they had no way of finding them in those days. So they just burned them. I recall seeing them at night and in the day time.

D.S.: Umm, awful. When you went up there did you see Any/wildlife? Like the deer or the bear?

C.C.: Not in those days, no. I'm sure there must have been some deer and bear there but I don't recall seeing any.

D.S.: No, well, I don't think there were.

C.C.: They were not protected then like they are now and the population

D.S.: That Fletcher that Polluck mentioned in his book "Skyland"..did you ever run into Fletcher? Fletcher is the one that he and his wife were always carrying guns around.

C.C.: Well I never knew Fletcher.

D.S.: Whee, lucky you..

C.C.: Lucky me.

D.S.: He was an outlaw of some kind.

C.C.: Was he the one they called king of some section up there?

D.S.: No that was Aaron Nicholson.

C.C.: Nicholson...yea. I never knew either one of them.

D.S.: This Fletcher and Polluck made quite a flamboyant figure and I haven't found anybody that knew him.

C.C.: Maybe it was a figment of Polluck's imagination.
D.S.: There were pictures though...with his wife. And she did have a gun.
C.C.: Oh.
D.S.: Uhhuh. And the son had a gun on him too. So it wasn't just an imagination. I would like to have known what they really were like. If they were as dangerous as everybody said. Um, did your father ever...did you recall him mentioning anything about...I'm going to buy these particular items because I know the people in the mountain need them.
C.C.: Oh, probably so. Again you are talking to me of things when I was a small child.
D.S.: Yea, so you don't recall him saying that.
C.C.: ...none of those things.
D.S.: You didn't hang around the store much.
C.C.: Hang around the store...oh, somewhat.
D.S.: When the children came in of these mountain people were they noisy or were they quiet.
C.C.: I don't recall them bringing the children with them. Maybe they did. I don't know. Now that you mention that. Did they have a practice of leaving the children at home when they came to town.
D.S.: Well I guess if the man came and the woman stayed home...
C.C.: 
D.S.: Yea. Was it mainly the men that came.
C.C.: I don't know. Talk about a period...I was young in my infancy...
D.S.: Um, your father kept the store for how many years?
C.C.: Well he kept it til he died and then we had it in the family for ten or fifteen, twenty years after that. That brings us up to what...1935 or 40.
D.S.: Alright now, during 35 and 40 you weren't such an infant then.
C.C.: No.
D.S.: And the Depression was going on, did you notice any difference in the
mountain people, in the way they were able to buy things?

C.C.: Now that you asked the question about that period I don't recall much traffic with the mountain people in those days...30's and 40's. Did they still come to town like they did before? When were they put out of the mountain.

D.S.: 1934.

C.C.: Yea, well I don't recall anything about the mountain people.

D.S.: Yea, well maybe they stopped coming down here. I wish you knew where they did come from. When you went up there to Pollucks...did you see any of them there?

C.C.: Yea, I may have.

D.S.: Again did they look any different than...? C.C.: Oh, I'm sure. They were dressed you know and the hats they wore, and so on.

D.S.: Did you ever walk around any of that area and see any of the mountain homes.

C.C.: No, I just stayed in the immediate area of Skyland.

D.S.: Oh, dear...can you think of anything at all

C.C.: Nothing. a blank to me on this subject...

D.S.: Well believe it or not you have helped. You truly have.

C.C.: M.M. Black.

D.S.: M.M. on South Court Street... a man woman

D.S.: Is that now or then.

C.C.: Now. He was in the mercantile business in Luray and his father before him and then when he still had a good clear mind. I think around 90...he ought to remember quite a bit about the people coming into his store then. That might be a good lead for you.

D.S.: Yea..that would be an excellent one. Okey..Say by the way..one question.
did your father carry any medicines like bufferin or anything of that sort?

C.C.: No. That was out of his line.

D.S.: His line was groceries.

C.C.: Anything pertaining to groceries.


C.C.: 

D.S.: You certainly have and uh you have helped out whether or not...

To protect the people that I interview I asked the Park to make up this agreement so that nobody can use any information without contacting me personally. Read this agreement and if it is alright with you, sign there... I don't think there is anything.

most horrible stories that I have ever ever read in my life. And that's why I asked