

Geraldine Russell: Moving to Bryson

GR: Well, we moved from Huntsville [AL] to a farm in Lincoln county, in 1959, and we moved here, in Bryson, in 1964, in October, of 1964. Of course, this was a store before we ever moved up here, and it closed and so my husband wanted to run a store and across the road, used to be a two story store over there. They even had a, so I heard, I didn't see it, it had a stage coach underneath, in the basement of it. But anyway, it had burned on Friday, before we come up through here on Sunday, and it was still smoldering, you know, and so my husband, he checked with whoever owned it. He wanted to buy this place and he wanted to put him a barbecue pit across the road, where the store had burned. So he got busy on that, after we had moved down here, and he opened it in the spring of 1965, and run it until 1988.

Geraldine Russell: We Had a Cistern

GR: But we had a cistern at the back of the house. We didn't never use it, of course it was good for dishwashing, I guess, and the bathroom.

NT: Like, a rainwater collection?

GR: And my husband went to Bee Spring and filled up jugs of water to drink, all the time. And he got, so many people around here had to go to Bee Spring, but behind the Pit, in that yard where that big two story house is, is a well. But when Mr. Davidson lived over there, he was the constable around here, but anyway, when he lived over there, he cut everybody out. He didn't want nobody in his yard, going to that well. So, it was just a problem, everybody had to go to Bee Spring.

Geraldine Russell: Selling Barbecue

GR: And Willard really liked that job. I mean he was crazy about having that business. He met so many people and they would talk about whatever men talk about all the time. They'd just hang over there, laughing and talking and having a big time. Just stay and stay and stay. A lot of them did.

NT: Did he have anyone help him with the barbecue?

GR: Yeah, he had, he had Will Andy McWilliams, a little black man that lived on Mr. John Henry Stevenson's place up there, when he had where you live. He worked for him for years. And he had a Mr. Turkey Warren that helped him some, that lived at Petersburg. They just more or less kept fire under the meat, you know, because everyone wanted Willard to cut the meat off for them. I like that too, because you can make a sandwich better, if it's sliced off, big hunks of meat like some of them make.

NT: He kept it going seven days a week?

GR: Seven days a week. But there was times, in the winter time, we could have stood a welfare check [traffic noise], or something, if we was having a rough time, because selling barbecue, it may be better now than it was when we, you know, when we first started. It's slow months there during the winter time, where you don't. I mean, we had the store to count on, you know, so we didn't close it, well he didn't close that, if anybody wanted any barbecue, they always mostly had some cooked, you know.

Geraldine Russell: Fire at the Barbecue Pit

GR: He come down through here one day, the day the pit burned the first time, you know. It burned when Will Andy was helping Willard, Willard went bird hunting and when he come back, right after he come back, I was right in there at the kitchen sink, and we had a window over the sink then, and I looked over that way and I said, "Looks like the pit's on fire." And Willard looked and he said, "It is!" So him and Barry took off over there, our son, and they started, and he had four or five rain barrels, rain water I mean, up and down the side of the pit, and they had the bucket brigade going, you know, trying to. They had it put out time the fire truck got here. But they filled the barrels back up, but that was about all they done, because they'd already throwed enough water on it to put it out. Burned up 27 shoulders and done a lot of damage to the side of the pit that he cooked on, you know.