

KK-CD-012-094

Jane McCauley Whitlow interviewed by Michael Kline at her home in Pleasant Grove
April 28, 2008

This gracious speaker reflects pride in an old Pleasant Grove family. Whitlow was born in 1936, two years after her parents' marriage. Her father, Claude Roger McCauley, Jr., owned and operated the country store at the corner of Pleasant Grove Union School Road and NC 62 and she lived at the back of the store the first five years until her father, built a new home up on the hill above the store overlooking McCauley Road. Whitlow attended the white elementary school in Pleasant Grove and finished high school there. She attended business school. She spoke of her father's farm and her two siblings, Beverly and Claude Roger McCauley III, both of whom moved away.

Whitlow got married and stayed at home. Her father inherited 130 acres of farm land and a six acre corner where the store was built. His brothers and sisters each inherited a like-sized parcel of land from their father, Claude Roger McCauley, Sr. from his 800 acre farm. He died when Whitlow's father was only fifteen. But the young farmer went to work and at one time raised over 100 acres of tobacco with five tenant families on the farm and a barn full of mules to power the operation. She provides a clear and wonderful memory (from the perspective of one who never worked in it) of how tobacco was raised and how the sale of the cured and wrapped crop was accomplished.

Her father, "Jack" also owned The Farmers' Tobacco and Carolina warehouses in Burlington. Whitlow recalls the five tenant farming families on her dad's farm. One family lived there for forty-five years. At the corner store Jack McCauley sold fertilizer and hail insurance, and as a young girl Whitlow used to ride along on his road trips. "Back at that time everyone knew everyone and at school we all knew each other. I taught at the Pleasant Grove School for twenty-two years as an assistant. All around us here were family, aunts, uncles and cousins, tobacco farmers, all." She recalls more detail about her father's store. People from all around would come because he carried all kinds of feed and farm products. Everyone charged and he kept a file of accounts.

Describes living quarters at back of store. "Daddy was a prosperous man." The customers would socialize and play checkers. He sold gas. He had a pot-bellied stove and a sitting bench along one wall and a candy counter. Crossroads Presbyterian was the family church. Whitlow got married there as did her children. Discusses new classrooms that replaced old hut that used to be the Sunday School. More on church history. Mark Walker and Harry Tate were the great old men; recalls others. Earlier church building used to have a balcony where slaves sat. Alex Haley visited there and filmed it for "Roots." Some of the slaves were buried at Crossroads. Lists family members of her grandparents' generation who were active in the church and talks about how her grandparents met and married.