

KK-CD-012-026

Rosie Haith

Interviewed in her home by Carrie Kline April 24, 2008

Born 1917, Haith preaches on the virtues of righteousness, getting right with God, loving people and treating everybody right. "I had a praying mama and a praying daddy," she recalls. "I want to be in love with everybody," Haith states. "I want to be in love with the Devil, but I ain't going his way." She sings, "I got my time in. Payday's coming after a while. . . I got my song in. . . . I got my love in. Payday's coming after a while," aided on the refrain by the full, rich singing of her daughter Alma Featherstone, born in 1942. This haunting song, which Haith learned from her mother, seems to come from the days of slavery, sung by people who had never seen a payday but had to rely on the Hereafter for their just reward.

Featherstone speaks for the remainder of the interview, with the exception of Haith testifying after her song. Featherstone paints vivid descriptions of farm and community life as sharecroppers in the Miles community near Dickey Mill Road. She explains corn shuckings and wood choppings. "We were just together. We helped one another," especially in times of sickness, staying with neighbors so they could get some rest. People shared food, walked to church and Revival. Just a few had cars. Grandparents John and Elnora Miles lived nearby. The family would meet there for holidays playing outdoor games and eating a meal together. Featherstone is her mother's live-in caretaker and hosts holiday gatherings at her mother's home, which always wind up with Haith singing.

Featherstone details a traditional family meal, describing the processes for making chicken pie, making sauerkraut, canning sausage, and "homily" or hominy. "There was a lot of ways we did to have food for the winter," says Featherstone, discussing vegetable canning and hog killing. The family planted peanuts and popcorn and dried both for winter food. They collected winter nuts and wrapped fruits, storing them under the bed for cold weather and stored vegetables in the ground. Featherstone discusses milling corn at the Dickey Mill for corn meal. Then it was called the Massey Mill for the family which still owns it. Featherstone then gives a recipe for skillet cornbread fried by the spoonful on the stovetop or oven baked.

Most people were family, says Featherstone. "We just did things together and come as one." Church members from neighboring parishes would join for services including Kimes' Chapel and Jeffries Cross, as churches would alternate meeting weeks. Back then they had passes through the woods where people met, singing and laughing as they walked. On workdays Featherstone recalls people singing hymns in the field. Featherstone gives a poignant rendition of "Amazing Grace" and then sings it in lined-out fashion, describing giving fellowship hands as they sang. The interview concludes with an image passed through the family from the days of slavery, when the ancestors sang into iron pots in the woods to hide their singing while illicitly praising the Lord.