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Capturing Memories from Edgecombe

Edgecombe County Genealogical Society



LILLIAN BONNER ARCHBELL PHILLIPS

April 15, 1898

Daughter of

Lillian Granger and Edward Lee Archbell

Married October 12, 1918

Ellis Elma Phillips 1892-1983

Son of

John Litchfield Phillips and Stella Frances North

1852-1932

1868-1960

RELEASE

EDGECOMBE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

909 Main Street
Tarboro, N. C. 27886

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(Signature) Bonnie Beck Rest Phillips

(Date) Aug 5, 1997

(Researcher's Signature) Minnie Jo J. Gray

Date: August 5, 1997

Interviewee Information

Name: Lillian Bonner Archbell Phillips "Little Granny"
Address: [REDACTED] Tarboro, NC [REDACTED]
Telephone # [REDACTED]
Birth Date April 15, 1898
Birth Place Craven County, Newbern, NC

Genealogical Information

Father: Edward Lee Archbell Born February 13, 1867, Chocowinity, NC, Beaufort Co.
Died February 13, 1917, Washington, NC, Beaufort Co.
Trinity Cemetery, Chocowinity, NC

Mother: Lillian Granger Born October 12, 1875 Washington, NC, Beaufort Co.
Died December 15, 1919 Washington, NC, Beaufort Co.
Trinity Cemetery, Chocowinity, NC

Husband: Ellis Elma Phillips Born October 5, 1892 Washington, NC, Beaufort Co.
Died February 25, 1983 Tarboro, NC, Edgecombe Co.
Bapt. Church Cem. Pinetops, NC

Father-in-law: John Litchfield Phillips Born 1852
Died 1932 Washington, NC, Beaufort Co.
Oakdale Cemetery, Washington, NC

Mother-in-law: Stella Frances North Born 1868 Zion, NC, Beaufort Co.
Died 1960 Scotland Neck, NC, Halifax Co.
Oakdale Cemetery, Washington, NC

<u>Children</u>	<u>Birth Date</u>	<u>Death Date</u>	<u>Marriage Date</u>	<u>Spouse</u>
Ellis Elma Phillips, Jr.	Sep. 20, 1919		Sept. 1938	Annie Parker
Ruth Granger Phillips	Nov. 24, 1920	Apr. 8, 1978	Mar. 18, 1943	Willis E. Cobb, Jr.
David Archbell Phillips	Aug. 29, 1922			Daphne Freeman
Richard Lee Phillips	Dec. 13, 1925	Feb. 6, 1984		Elizabeth Flowers
Lillian Granger Phillips	Aug. 23, 1932		Jul. 23, 1955	James T. McKeel, Jr.

We are Minnie Jo F. Gay and Louis Norman Gay, of the Edge. Genealogical Society, Oral History Project. Today, August 5, 1997 we are interviewing Mrs. Bonner Archbell Phillips, better known as "Little Granny".

BAP: Who told you that?

MJFG: Ruth Nicholson. Tell me something about your childhood. Where you lived, what your family did for fun.

BAP: Well, you know, people in those days (Washington, NC was hard hit after the Civil War like most eastern North Carolina towns) and they made their own fun, eating mostly. Mother was a good cook and she always had company and my father would come by the Courthouse, Washington was the County Seat of Beaufort County, and he'd come by and some of his folks from down in the country, friends and all and he'd bring them home and mother would say, "You know we don't have a company dinner today, Mr. Archbell." Daddy would say, "Well, what is good enough for me 365 days of the year ought to be good enough for them for one time, put an extra plate on the table!" That was the way I was brought up and I still like to do that, even here, and I have a very nice lady who helps me here four days a week and anybody drops in, why, I'm always glad to have them. My childhood, well she (Mother) was strict with us, that's true. We went to school and when we got through, we went home.

MJFG: What did your father do for a living?

BAP: He was a Grocerman. He had a nice grocery store and he liked the Elk's Club. Very much liked the Elk's Club and a nice group were members and they used to come to our house and play cards at night and that kind of thing. He was an Episcopalian and mother was a Presbyterian, but they went with each other. Things were quiet in those days.

MJFG: What was the first money that you ever made yourself?

BAP: I did not work. Except at home. I did go downtown in Washington for maybe six months and worked in the office some, but that did not last because my mother died and left five children and I was the oldest of the five and Ellis and I were married about a year after mother died and he and I raised her children. (Father died about a year after Mother.) I never did work downtown. I helped him in the mattress factory when he started that. I did help in the office and when somebody did not show up on the sewing machines he'd call me and ask me to come and help him out and I did. But as far as working day by day, I have never done it.

MJFG: What year did he start that factory, the mattress Factory?

BAP: I think Young Ellis told me it was 1932. I think it was about that date anyway. 1932 and we moved down. We had a nice home, in Englewood, and I kept that house till since I have been here. That's where I raised my

children, in Rocky Mount. When he opened the factory down here, or started it, we moved down to Pinetops. We stayed there for three years and seemed like it was hard. He needed money for payroll, and all that stuff and we owned a little cottage down on the river, a very small place. I suggested we move, and I take the family and go down there and he could operate and come back Friday nights and go back Monday morning and that's what we did for a while. Then the war came and I knew my boys were the age where they would have to go, which they did, three of them. I had three sons in service and my brother who lived in Elizabeth City, was in service too.

MGFG: What were your sons names?

BAP: Ellis, David and Richard were the three boys and they served in the Airforce in W.W.II. They volunteered. Ellis was a pilot and David was sort of a machinist, or in that branch and Dick was studying to be a navigator. The war ended before he finished. W. E. Cobb married my daughter, Ruth Phillips. He was in service and went over and had the longest turn, in Europe. He was over there about four years and then David went over and was there about two years or more. Ellis and Dickie did not go over seas.

MJFG: Ellis flies the company plane now. You mentioned that you sometimes filled in at the sewing factory. Tell me about working there, what was it like and what you made.

BAP: Well, it was sewing up the covers for mattresses. At first that's all we made was mattresses. Somebody in the sewing room would cut the cloth and then it had, the covers had, to be made. You know a mattress has a bar about like that's down on the sides of them and they had to be put to the top and to the bottom and then filled. I did help him with the sewing when the people did not show up for some reason or other.

MJFG: Did you use scissors to cut the fabric with?

BAP: No, we had electric scissors. I don't suppose they even know what they look like now but that's the first thing we had. I did not work every day but did help when I could.

MJFG: How long did it take to put a mattress together?

BAP: I have no idea. Not the remotest. First of all we didn't make so many in the run of the day but then we finally got on to it, you see and did better. They had what we called a roll-edge machine and I hated it because Ellis put Ellis, Jr. on that roll-edge machine and he won't but sixteen years old. He was trying to get ahead and all of us had to do our part. Ruth, my daughter, was in the office until she and Billy were married and then we got somebody else. She died in 1978 and her daddy died in 1983. I had a working family. All of us worked. It provided us a living. We are not millionaires by any manner or means but we had three squares and a flop.

MJFG: What were some amusing things that happened while you were there?

BAP: I can't tell you that. We were so busy trying to make a living that we didn't have much fun with it. We had a black woman that helped us a lot. She came to work when we first started the business and she was crazy about my children, especially Ellis and Ruth. She would open up in the morning and then took the keys and locked up at night and carried them home with her. Maude and I would get a letter from Ellis when he was in service and we would take it and go sit down on the plank outside the plant. She would cry and I would cry, because he was gone. Her name was Maude Jenkins and she was a faithful worker and helped me raise my children.

MJFG: Did you have an outlet for the mattresses? After you made them how did you dispose of them?

BAP: Ellis would take a load and go off and call on different merchants. He did the selling himself. When he was off on the road he would try to take orders for another load and went home and made them and then had to deliver them. Well, one night he called me, he had been to Richmond and the truck broke down at Enfield. He called me and said, "Bonner, you'll have to come after me, I'm over here at Enfield and they don't have anywhere for me to sleep." No homes had opened up at that time. I said, "Well Ellis I don't see how I can because the children are here and there won't be a soul with'm." He said, "Well lock the back door and you come after me." I got in that car and if anybody had tried to stop me that night I would have run over them as sure as the world because I was just scared to death. He got in and we came on back home and I was so stiff, I thought I would never get out of that car, nerves, you know. Well, I got him home!

MJFG: That's what you call being between the devil and a hard place.

BAP: The devil and the deep blue sea. I have been a very fortunate woman, though. We raised a good family, I had five children, another daughter, Lillian. Two have died and Ruth's husband, too. They are very loyal to me. Somebody comes nearly every day. You don't know David, do you? David is retired and lives in Pinetops. Dick died and Bill Cobb died.

MJFG: Where did you go to school as a child?

BAP: I went to school in Washington, NC. I did not have the opportunity of going away to school. There was too much for me to do at home, I could not leave. Ellis and I raised their children. I had three brothers and all of them are gone now but me. Strange as that may seem and I was the oldest. When I was about twenty-five we moved to Rocky Mount. We stayed over there a long time.

LNG: Did Mr. Phillips run a store in Rocky Mount, NC?

BAP: He did start a furniture store.

LNG: If I am not mistaken, I believe it was the same store there on Main Street in Rocky Mount that is now Low's Appliance Store, where I worked. I think your son, Ellis, told me that he was standing there in the front window when something special/startling happened on the news. He said, "I was standing right there in that front window when I heard it."

BAP: Right next door there was a family, what was those peoples names, they were bakers, they had a bakery in there next door to us. Right along there. Epsteins was on the corner and we were about in the middle of the block.

LNG: That is the same store that I worked in for thirty eight years.

MJFG: I worked there 1948- 1954 when it was Standard Electric and Redmond Purvis owned it.

BAP: I knew all those people. In fact, we built a home in Englewood and Standard Electric wired it. My daughter, Lillian was born in Englewood but Dickie was about two years old. He was the youngest when we moved there. Do you know where the Episcopal Church is over there? Well, our lot went right up to the lot where the Episcopal Church was. We were on Charlotte Street and it's on that little circle drive down in there. Next to Zeb Bullucks house, just a lane between us. We bought the lot from Z.B. Bulluck. That's where I raised my children.

LNG: They have put a bank right in the front yard of that Bulluck house.

BAP: I was living in Pinetops and every time we had a tenant go into the house, we would have to paint and fix up. We never did find a real good tenant. It was standing up there just as straight as it ever did. A nice brick, two story house. Finally, David and I talked about it. David looks after my finances for the most part. I said, "David I think we will just have to put it on the market and sell it." We let Wimberly & Gregory know we wanted to sell it and in two weeks time it was gone. A man by the name of King, I believe bought it and they moved in and seemed to be delighted. About six months ago, I believe, I heard he was going to sell it. There was too much business coming in there. He did not like that. I have not seen the bank and do not know who owns that property now. Zeb had two daughters, Charlotte and _____ I don't know whether they sold it or not.

MJFG: What is the most frightened you have ever been in your life?

BAP: I never have been frightened. I am not scared. The most uneasy I have ever been I was down on the river where we still own a little house down there on Pamlico River, Shady Banks. I was down there one Summer and a soldier knocked on the door and I went to the door to see what in the world he wanted. It's down there in the country, you know. He said I want to know how many boats you have. I said, we don't have any boats except that little row boat out there in the front. That's all the boat we have. Why do you want to know? He said, "I need to know so if we have to move you from one side of the river to the other." That was the first inkling that I had. He said, You know you are not so far from Norfolk, Bellhaven is on the water and it might be, you can't tell.

I had never given it a thought. I thought that when I got in that country down there it was in about as safe a place as I could be. And I reckon I was, sure enough, cause we stayed down there a long time but this was because of World War II. New River and all those places down there where the soldiers were based and they would come right over our heads but it never occurred to me that I was in any danger. I thought I was hidden away.

MJFG: Do you remember the day your mother died?

BAP: I certainly do. Back in those days people did not go to the hospital, you know. There was a hospital but it was a very small one and she died at home. My father only lived a year and a half after she died. He had pneumonia.

MJFG: Where were you the day Hurricane Hazel struck?

BAP: I was in Rocky Mount, in Englewood. It did not make much impression on me to tell the truth. I reckon I haven't got enough sense to get scared. I never was one to go to pieces over everything. I had to raise children and I did not want them to be scared of their shadow. That was a bad storm though. We did not have any lights for about three days but that was the only thing that bothered us.

MJFG: Do you ever wish for the "good old days"?

BAP: NO! I do not. They were good old days but these are good days today! We have many more conveniences today than we ever had then, you know. I very well remember the first washing machine that Ellis bought for me. It had a wringer on top and you had to turn that thing (with a handle) to wring out the clothes. No, I don't wish for the good old days, except for my folks being with me. Of course, I had to give a lot of my people up.

MJFG: Do you ever remember a night that your parents did not find out about?

BAP: I wasn't much on that kind of thing. Mother kept close look on us.

MJFG: Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

BAP: I certainly do. I was down on the river and I could show you, if I was down there, exactly where I was sitting. We had a little radio about so long and so wide and it came on and Mr. Roosevelt had declared war on the seventh of December. Yes, I remember.

LNG: I remember, too. A friend of mine and I had been to the movie in Rocky Mount and were on our way home and turned the radio on in the car just before we got into Battleboro on 301. We heard the news about Pearl Harbor about four o'clock in the afternoon.

BAP: It was right after church. We had been to church and we were sitting there listening to the radio and after a while I got so restless, I told my husband I believed I would go for a walk. I went out and started walking down the street and as I got half way the block a lady came out and joined me and introduced herself. Her name was Miss Knox and she said, "Mrs. Phillips, did you hear that broadcast?" I said, "Yes, I did." She said, "You know I have been all out there and those Japanese are crazy as bats, they will never win this war, they'll never do it!" Why they chose to attack the United States, I'll never know. I've thought about what Miss Knox said many times. Yes, I remember!

MJFG: Did your parents pass on any stories to you about their life? Civil War Stories?

BAP: No, do you know Washington, NC? Well, my grandmother lived in a house right on Water Street, which faced the water. I used to hear her talk about how hard it was to get anything, everything was so scarce. The Yankees came through and took all the tools and everything that they could carry away. Of course, that was before my day.

MJFG: I really appreciate your taking the time and talking with me. I have enjoyed it.

BAP: Well, I like to have somebody come now and then, it breaks the monotony. I like people and there are not many days that someone does not come and it gives me something to think about.

MJFG: How **did** you get the name, "Little Granny"?

BAP: I had a grandmother that lived with us and we all called her "Granny". When Ellis, III was born (his mother was a Parker, the one who lived with us) Mrs. Parker said, Mrs. Phillips, what are you going to teach this baby to call you when he gets up some size? I thought a little bit and I said, "Well, Mrs. Parker, you know I had a grandmother that we were all crazy about and we called her Granny and I reckon I had better teach this baby to call me 'Little Granny'." That's where it all started. Everybody in Pinetops, the bank, post office, or wherever call me "Little Granny". When I came here (The Albemarle) they asked our first name and everybody is called by their first name. It is a very friendly place. They do not know about "Little Granny". Every body calls me Bonner.

INTERVIEWEE**Bonner Archbell Phillips**
"Little Granny"*Interview Date:*
August 5, 1997

<i>Birth Date</i>	April 15, 1898	New Bern, NC	Craven County
<i>Death Date</i>			
<i>Married Date</i>	Ellis Elma Phillips		
	October 12, 1918	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>	Presbyterian		
<i>Current Address</i>	The Albemarle Apartment C-300 Tarboro, NC 27886		
<i>Telephone</i>	919-641-1927		

Genealogical Information

Father	Edward Lee Archbell		
<i>Birth Date</i>	February 13, 1867	Chocowinity, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Death Date</i>	February 13, 1917	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Interred</i>	Trinity Cemetery	Chocowinity, NC	Beaufort County
Mother	Lillian Stuart Granger		
<i>Birth Date</i>	October 12, 1875	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Death Date</i>	December 15, 1915	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Interred</i>	Trinity Cemetery	Chocowinity, NC	Beaufort County

SPOUSE**Ellis Elma Phillips**

<i>Birth Date</i>	October 5, 1892	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Death Date</i>	February 25, 1983	Tarboro, NC	Edgecombe County
<i>Interred</i>	Baptist Church Cemetery	Pinetops, NC	Edgecombe County

Genealogical Information

Father	John Litchfield Phillips		
<i>Birth Date</i>	1852		
<i>Death Date</i>	1932	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Interred</i>	Oakdale Cemetery	Washington, NC	Beaufort County
Mother	Stella Frances North		
<i>Birth Date</i>	February. 1868	Zion, NC	Beaufort County
<i>Death Date</i>	November 1960	Scotland Neck, NC	
<i>Interred</i>	Oakdale Cemetery	Washington, NC	Beaufort County

CHILDREN

	<i>Birth Date</i>	<i>Death Date</i>	<i>Marriage Date</i>	<i>Spouse</i>
Ellis Elma, Jr.	September 20, 1919		September, 1938	Annie Parker
Ruth Granger	November 24, 1920	April 8, 1978	March 18, 1943	Willis E. Cobb, Jr
David Archbell	August 29, 1922			Daphne Freeman
Richard Lee	December 13, 1925	February 6, 1984		Elizabeth Flowers
Lillian Granger	August 23, 1932		July 23, 1955	James T. McKeel, Jr