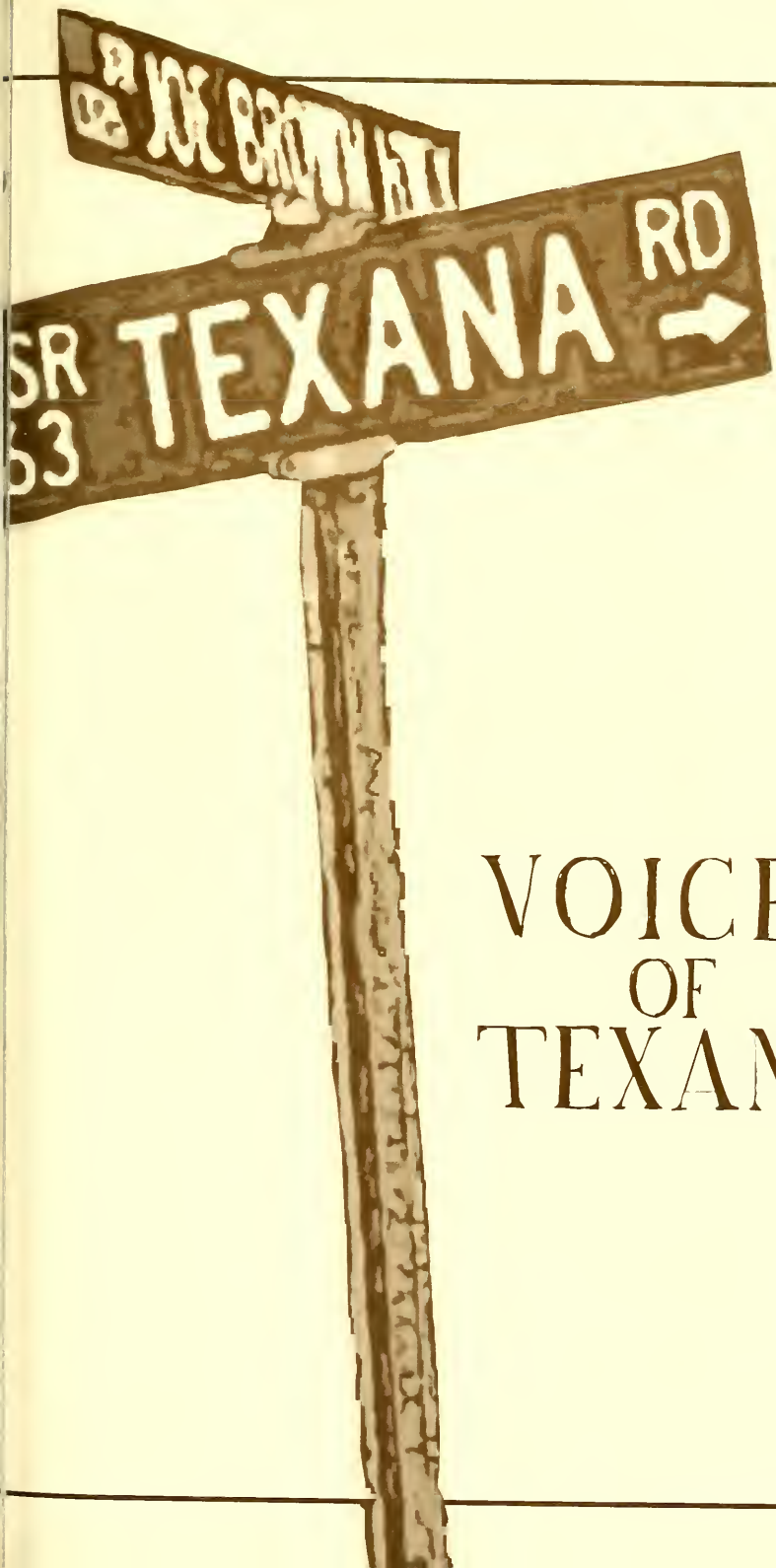
 VOICES
OF TEXANA

Texana Committee on Community
History and Preservation



VOICES
OF
TEXANA



CONTENTS

THE STORY OF TEXANA	1
HISTORY	6
Texana McClelland	7
Texana's Land	7
Other Black Communities	8
Knotley	9
EARLY LIFE	10
We Used to Have to Carry Water	11
Carrying Water and Ice	11
Old Texana Stores	11
They Had Their Own Land	12
Taking in Washing	12
Few People Had Cars	13
EDUCATION	14
One Room School	15
Black School in Asheville	15
Different Schools for Texana Children	16
HARD TIMES	17
Indian Heritage	18
Put Off the Reservation	18
At the Pool during Integration	19
We Had Our Own Little Booth	19
Certified as an EMT	20
Interracial Dating	20
RELIGION	21
Old Churches	22
Going to Association by Wagon	22
Active in Church	22
Called into the Ministry	23
FOOD AND CULTURE	24
We Had Everything	25

Gathering Greens	25
Poke Salad	26
Canning	26
It Was a Sharing Thing	27
Milk and Cornbread	27
Dopes and Belly Washers	27
Cokes for a Nickel	28
Texana Café	28
Quilting	28
Life Was Easy Here	28

STORYTELLING 30

Mountain Lions	31
Blizzard of '83	31
A Great Fisherman	32
UFOs on Texana Road	32
Three-legged Dogs	34
Fast Cars	34
In the House with a Bat	35
Pet Pig	35

FAMILY AND FRIENDS 36

That's the Man I Married	37
The Way We Were Raised Up	37
Peter Jenkins' Visit	38
Going Pro	39
Homecoming and Holidays	40
Newcomers to Texana	40

TEXANA IS HOME 41

Traveling	42
Trucking	42
Back Home to Raise my Family	42
One Big Family	42

FURTHER READING 43

Books	43
Web Sites	43
Films	44



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<http://archive.org/details/voicesoftexana00texa>

THE STORY OF TEXANA

Texana is a historic black community located high on a mountain about a mile from the town of Murphy in the Great Smoky Mountain region of North Carolina. The Texana community was named for a young woman named Texana McClelland, who moved with her family to the area around the 1850s. Her real name was Texas, but her father called her Texana. Texana was the daughter of Isaac and Lucy McClelland. Around the 1850s when Texana was a teenager, she met and married Henry McAdams. They were the first to move into the settlement on the mountain.

One of the first things that community members did when they settled in Texana was build a community church. The First Baptist Church in Texana was built of logs, hewn by the women who had moved into the settlement. In 1881, the community tore down the old church and built Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which still stands today.

For many years after the Texana community was founded, it was self-sufficient. At one time Texana had its own businesses, lawyers, dry cleaners, shoe repair service, and water supplier. People raised their own gardens, chickens and hogs. The community members relied on each other as well, such as during the hunting season, canning time and washing days. Much of this independent spirit arose from the days of Jim Crow, when Texana residents had to be self-sufficient in order to survive. One's sense of community, of citizenship, arose from membership in the Texana community. What had challenged Texana also made it strong.

School was traditionally very important to members of the Texana community, and residents went to great lengths to educate their children during Jim Crow and today. Since black children were not allowed to attend school with white children in the early 1900s, classes were first held for black children in the Texana church until a small one-room schoolhouse was built. In the 1920s, a two-room school building was built. During this time, when children finished the 7th grade they had a choice of whether to continue their education or work. Because education was so important to the community most children chose to continue on to high school. However, Texana children had to leave home to get their high school education. Often this meant living nearly 2 hours away in Asheville, North Carolina. Even as late as 1958, Cherokee County did not have a high school for black residents. But in September 1965, the Texana School and Murphy schools were integrated. The black students who were in the elementary grades went to Murphy Elementary School, and those who were high school age went to Murphy High School. Texana residents still take education very seriously, and many community residents hold college degrees.

Today, Texana has about 150 residents, most of whom live along Texana Road on the same mountain hillside where Texana McClelland first lived. The only difference now is that both black and white people live in the community. In fact, many Texana residents have grappled with issues of their racial and ethnic identity. Texana residents are Appalachian and black; furthermore, many Texana residents are descendants of Cherokee Indians as well as Africans, Scots-Irish Europeans, and people from other cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, tracing the Cherokee heritage of many Texanans is almost impossible because very few historical records of their past have survived. Still, the heritage of Texana people challenges commonly

held notions of 'who' is considered an Appalachian. Many Texanans recognize that ethnic boxes such as those found on U.S. Census records are insufficient to categorize their diverse heritage and identity.

Texana residents are proud to live in or come from Texana. The land holds great meaning in the community, and Texana people are closely connected to it. The land holds for them a sense of place, of comfort, and of home, especially since many Texanans own the land that has been in their families for generations. Many

“Many Texanans recognize that ethnic boxes such as those found on U.S. Census records are insufficient to categorize their diverse heritage and identity.”

folks live in close proximity to family members, and the community is very close knit. Everyone in the community considers each other friends and family, and residents are welcoming to outsiders and visitors as well. The friendliness and hospitality of resi-

dents, their respect for the traditions of the past, and their strong bonds with each other are quickly noticed in Texana.

Residents have always viewed Texana as a strong black community. For example, the diversity that Texana McClelland brought to the mountains of western North Carolina is not forgotten. Each year at homecoming, community members gather at the church to read the biography of Texana and recount stories of early life in the community. A few years ago community members also began an oral history and quilt project in order to preserve stories of kinship, leadership, and history in the community.

Like many small or rural communities, Texana is at a crossroads. As generations who remember Jim Crow

are passing, there is an urgency to hear their stories. As a result of the changes the community is experiencing, in 2003 the idea was formed to put together a proposal to the North Carolina Humanities Council that would engage the residents of Texana in exploring their history and culture. In 2004, the North Carolina Humanities Council approved a grant to conduct an oral history project in Texana, which has emerged as this collection of memories.

We thank first and foremost the North Carolina Humanities Council for supporting this project. We also thank Drs. James Clark, Lucinda MacKethan, Walt Wolfram, and David Brose of the John C. Campbell Folk School, for their scholarly assistance. We are indebted to Charlotte Vaughn for designing this book, to Barefoot Press of Raleigh for publishing it, and to Amanda Driver for her faithful work as fiscal agent.

Most of all, we thank all the Texana residents who participated in this project by contributing your time and stories. The project was open to all members of the community, and as a result, over 50 people chose to participate in interviews related to this project. Because of this community involvement, the process of recording Texana's local history has been both rewarding and successful for all those involved. This book and accompanying CD represent the culmination of the stories they have told and the memories they have shared about life in the Texana community. We hope the material accurately reflects the history of this strong community, although it is certain that many stories about the community remain untold. We know the stories will communicate, in their own voices, the strength of spirit that Texana residents share.



Texana Community Center

**Texana Committee on Community
History and Preservation**

Zula Cox, project sponsor

Becky Childs and Christine Mallinson, project directors



North Carolina Humanities Council

Weaving Cultures and Communities

This project was made possible by a grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council, a state-based program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Statements and opinions represented in this publication do not necessarily represent the view of the North Carolina Humanities Council or of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

*Old photographs courtesy of Grace Mauldin and Peter Jenkins
New photographs taken by Becky Childs and
Christine Mallinson*

© Texana Committee on Community
History and Preservation 2006



HISTORY

When Texana was first settled, it was the largest black community but not the only one in the area. According to residents, one smaller black community was called Knotley, which has since dispersed but is still the site of a black cemetery. Another small community once called On the Branch is now a street in downtown Murphy. Finally, Harshaw Farm was also a site of a former black community and contains a larger slave cemetery. Now, it is a golf course. Many histories about the diversity of the Murphy area do not mention these smaller black communities that once existed. As the other, smaller communities dispersed, Texana remained the largest community because it was where the largest black school was located as well as the Baptist church, which had the largest congregation of all the black churches in the area.

TEXANA MCCLELLAND

FRANK BLOUNT

Right after the Civil War and everything, the slaves were freed. Texana McClelland was the first inhabitant on this mountain. And she bought a lot of land. And the fact that she bought a lot of land, the family ended up buying a lot of land. And my mother lived in the first house in Texana. And that's the first house on the lefthand side as you come up this mountain. It's a, what it is is a log cabin, a huge log cabin. But now it's been overlaid with modern material. And that we would naturally call the family home. And uh, Aunt Texana, understand, when she came here, had to live in a little, a little shack. She built a little tiny shack when she first came up, you know. No water, no lights. Other, other folks came. Aunt Texana came up from my grandmother's side of the family. That's how all, all them got to be. And they're very long livers, I tell you. My grandmother's father was 111, my grandmother just about 100, wasn't she? And I had a brother in his late 90s, and her sister in her late 90s, so they were all long livers. I don't know what they did, but evidently they were doing something right.

TEXANA'S LAND

FRANK BLOUNT AND BRENDA BLOUNT

But she was a slave. Now I believe she came off of Harshaw Farms. They used to have slaves there. *With her being a slave, how was she able to buy land?* By saving her money, by working. *So she just saved it up working for a job and bought it for herself?* Well it took her a while, I'm assuming, buying her first piece. She bought the initial part of the land. Now where the land really came from was my grandfather's father. This guy had a tremendous amount of land all around, I mean, on top of this mountain and below. He had so much across Joe Brown Highway over here, he had a sawmill.

OTHER BLACK COMMUNITIES

GRACE MAULDIN

Anyway, I remember my mom telling me, see, most of the people lived in the Texana community. This was the largest community. But there was always other communities. And there was, they used to live out there, what they called Knotley. But they had to come over here to go to school. 'Cause my girlfriend, she passed away last year, that lived next door to me. She would always say they lived at Knotley. But they'd have to walk over here to school. And there's a black cemetery still at Knotley. It's out 64, right in there I think where, have you seen some of those little buildings painted purple? That's Knotley. And there's a cemetery, a black cemetery, on the hill. So then, I don't know about out at the golf course, if anybody lived out in there or not. I think that's a slave cemetery,

out there at Harshaw Farm. I think that's a slave cemetery, so I don't know. They probably slaves lived on the farm back there then. But they lived at Knotley, then back then they had a, we called it, it's a street now in town, but we called it On the Branch. I think because a branch run through there. That's where my mother's people came from town. And when she married, she



Texana McClelland's daughter Marie and her grandchildren

lived in town. Then they lived across town. But they live anywhere now they want to. Right there where it's got that sign, coming like from Hayesville, says "Welcome to

Murphy.” There was a community, even a black church that sat right in there. And it was a Episcopal church. And then we had a Methodist church over there, and then the Baptist church. But they was few people, and but like I said, there used to be a lot of people, more people than now, but when they took their families and left, the families went away, they married and had families, you know.

KNOTLEY

DIANE SMITH

It was like a community for black people out there on 64. And they wanted that land, so they moved us over here. Now see if my mama and daddy and all them was alive, they could tell you. I don't know what happened, why they moved us over here. It was just a little section over there on 64. And we had a school down here, it was a little red school, three rooms I think. So we had to come home like for lunch, go back.



Texana hillside

 EARLY
LIFE

In the early days, residents of Texana worked hard. Daily chores for adults and children alike were parts of early life that feature strongly in the memories of residents. One of these chores included carrying cold water from a spring in a hollow at the foot of the mountain, since there was no running water in Texana until the 1960s. For many years after the Texana community was founded, it was self-sufficient and had its own businesses. Now, residents go downtown into Murphy for their goods and services.

WE USED TO HAVE TO CARRY WATER

RUBY AND MATTIE ANN ALLEN

Yeah, there were less houses. Because, I mean, families were big. They had, all houses had the big room so they put like three or four beds in that room. That's the way we had to do it. And we had to carry water. Way out here at the forks in the road, there used to be a spring way back out in that hollow. But we used to have to carry water from out there to cook, eat, I mean, to drink, take baths. And back then, we could only get a bath on Sunday night. We had this old tin tub. We'd have to heat the water on the wood stove, til they finally got water coming through here. We hadn't had water too long, back in the '60s I think, the '60s, that's right.

CARRYING WATER AND ICE

FRANK BLOUNT

Water was gotten in the morning, cold water was in the morning, and cold water at night. Have you ever drink water out of a spring? No. It's like drinking out of a refrigerator. It's good and cold. A lot of people, like I said, had cows. And you'd milk the cows and put the milk in jugs and butter. And then you'd put it in the spring and that would keep the milk cold and butter soft. They would cut ice out of the river during the winter. And they would store it on Fain Mountain inside of the cave and to throw sawdust on top of the ice. And it would last until summer.

OLD TEXANA STORES

FRANK BLOUNT

We had a shoe shop, probably the only shoe shop in town, for a while. And that was at the end of this street here. His name was Jay Blackwell. Mr. Arthur Allen had a little store up here. Mr. Fulwood had a store right where you turn off the drive to come down here, there was two stores. You talking about a funeral home. Well he didn't

have a funeral home, he just did bodies. I just remember my grandmother talking about it.

THEY HAD THEIR OWN LAND

GRACE MAULDIN

Texana had their own laundry, they had policemen, black policemen. Texana had the only shoemaker. They had, back then, you know, things were segregated, I don't know how they did it. They had their own land, they did all the embalming of the dead. Texana, and see, I remember this, the only shoe shop was my uncle's. He was in town, then he moved. He made leather sandals. Everybody from downtown, they just started coming over here. They had two grocery stores over here, the community. So really we have gone backwards to a certain extent instead of forward. Well,

"It was not so much even that they went to school for this all the time. It was just, they just learned themselves."

they had back then midwives, 'cause a lot of the women didn't go in to have their babies. They had midwives. Two doors up, the building that's been torn down, which was my uncle's. Oh they had the only floor finisher. He worked all around, you know, different counties, and go in and finish people's floors. They had carpenters, they had bricklayers, I mean, they had—and it was not that so much even that they went to school for this all the time. It was just, they just learned themselves. It was skills. But they had all of this, things like that, but we don't, they don't have it anymore.

TAKING IN WASHING

FRANK BLOUNT

My grandmother tells me that she took in washing. She took in washing when they didn't have washing machines. There's a large spring below her house, going down. She'd

have three wash tubs and a rinse tub down there, and and she'd wash by hand. I don't know if you've ever seen those scrub boards or rub boards or whatever. She'd have that. And the last tub or two she would use to rinse in. The water was cold from the spring. The water was heated up in a hot, in a big old pot and you know, dipped out and put in these tubs. And she did the washing and the ironing and delivered the clothes back to the people.

FEW PEOPLE HAD CARS

GRACE MAULDIN

You didn't get cars, no. There was very few people. Well, even in my early marriage, there was very few people had cars. Now at one time, we did have a bus, you know, that would come through and you'd go downtown, but most people. Which I guess they was much healthier than we are now, but they would walk. And to me, now, I've walked it a many a time, but to now, I'd never get back! So but, and then several of them walks now. You know, they just want to walk.



Texana land



EDUCATION

Originally, classes in Texana were first held for black children in the Texana church until a small one-room schoolhouse was built in the location where the community building now stands. This school had one teacher, and students attended school three months out of the year. Black teachers came from outside Texana, living in the community during the months that school was in session but not moving into the community permanently. In the 1920s, a red two- or three-room school building was built that included a kitchen. At this school, children could only take classes until the 7th grade, at which time they either continued their education outside Texana or found work. Pursuing further education was expensive, because children had to be sent away to school. Still, some families made the sacrifice. Cherokee County did not have a high school for black residents as late as 1958. In September 1965, the Texana school and Murphy schools were integrated: younger black students were sent to Murphy Elementary School, and those who were high school age went to Murphy High School.

ONE ROOM SCHOOL

KATHERINE SUDDERTH

Well, there used to be a school, a one room school down in there right where that community building used to be. It was a big building but it was just a one room school. That's the reason that children wanted to finish high school, they had to go off. That's the reason, Frank, my husband, that's the reason he went to King's Mountain and several of them went to King's Mountain and finished. Then there was a private girls' school over in Asheville, they'd go, a lot of them went over there to that private girls' school in Asheville and finished high school. That's about the way it was, yeah, 'cause they couldn't, they couldn't go to school over here, which was a terrible thing.

BLACK SCHOOL IN ASHEVILLE

GRACE MAULDIN

I didn't go to a integrated school, when I left Murphy I went to Asheville and still I went to a black school, there in Asheville; big, big school but you know, it's all black. *Before they could go to school in Murphy, did people go to school here in Texana? Was there a school? Where was it at?* Right in there where the community building is right up through there they had I guess like a little two room school or it might have been three rooms. After I left from down there, I went to school down there too. And they had the dining room and you know. And they got really basically the same thing because it was a teacher that she taught all of the—matter of fact, I think to a certain extent we got more. Because peer pressure wasn't as tight on children as it is now and I think the children—I and I think we were all just about we were all probably



Murphy High School

poor and didn't know it. You know, we all were like God fearing children because our parents taught us this and we respected people not only my mother somebody else's mother they could really get onto me—sit me down, take

“You know, we all were like God fearing children because our parents taught us this and we respected people.”

me home or if they whipped me for something it was perfectly all right. So I think really and truly. And then as far as our teaching and learning I never will forget. I had a teacher. Ms. Dennis was from Texas, she taught, and she would always say, you girls have got to be lady like. She taught us how to cross our legs. We could not chew chewing gum. And she you know just those things that we were taught. *Right*. And she taught like home ec, cooking, and plus your other subjects. So we got a little bit of everything.

DIFFERENT SCHOOLS FOR TEXANA CHILDREN

BESSIE CARTER

You see, we had a school down here, up there, right above where the new community building is. And see that was just the grammar school, and the kids had to go somewheres else to high school before they integrated it. *So did your son go to school up there?* Well, Harry, I think he went a year way out to the high school, they had integrated it then. But Julia, we had to send her to Asheville to get her high school education. She lived at the school, it was a girls', what was it, Allen's, Allen High School. *Now when she went to school there, did the state give you any money?* I think, they gave me a little bit. I don't know how much it was. It was, shoot, I don't know, it was in the teens. *Not much*. Uh-uh, uh-uh. But she didn't work while she was in school. We just, done without, did what we could for her, you know. Got her through high school. It was several of them went to Allen.

HARD TIMES



Details about Texana's history are few and far between. Historical records document the presence of African Americans as slaves in and around western North Carolina and Appalachia, but because slaves tended to take the surnames of their owners, it is difficult for Texana residents to trace their genealogical history to the days of slavery. But despite not being able to accurately detail their genealogy, residents are clear as to the ethnic diversity of their heritage. Many Texana residents are descendants of African, Cherokee, and Irish-European ancestors, which is the case for many black Appalachians, particularly those whose ancestors were slaves. However, Texana's diverse history is not formally recognized. Nowadays, as a result of both their mixed ancestry and of the history that embittered many families, Texana residents have had to grapple with issues of ethnic identity and the fact that their heritage is often more diverse than the single term "African American" denotes. As a result, most Texanans self-identify as "black," a term based on the color of their skin rather than on any single racial or ethnic identity.

INDIAN HERITAGE

FRANK BLOUNT

My grandfather's side are blacks and Indians. Now I'm talking about the people that originally came. *To Texana?* Now, I don't remember any of them on the Indian roll. And I don't believe it was because they were stupid Indians. That the people who were in charge of the rolls kept them off. The Indians, I found out later on, are also prejudiced people. And they referred to blacks as clouds. You'd come down the street, this is what the older ones tell me, they see you coming, they would refer to you as a cloud, like a cloud going by. In the family, this was never really talked about much, their Indian heritage. My mother went to Virginia Union, a college in Virginia. And they would often ask her what she was. But she was never, I guess, sharp enough to say I'm either black or I'm Indian, and she said she was always left puzzled. But her family never discussed it with her, you know, why she looked so different. They have a letter as of right now that was written to the president of the United States, a copy of the letter, asking why were they asked to be removed off of the reservation?

PUT OFF THE RESERVATION

MAY POWELL AND JEAN BENNETT

I guess we got put off the reservation because my fore parents, my great-grandmother was a slave and she was fighting the slaves. Slave blood—that's the reason all of my people got put off the Indian reservation. And our land was taken away from us.

"Slave blood—that's the reason all of my people got put off the Indian reservation. And our land was taken away from us."

...But the Cherokee people learned that my great-great-grandmother had been a slave, so they opposed to my great-great-grandfather

having the land and they all had the land and they all had the services you know all enjoyed the services. And they began fighting. It's very political... Oh yes. To get your name, you have to be on the roll. We have a copy of the roll and mother's family is on the roll, but when this fight went on that grandfather lost the land, they took the name off.

AT THE POOL DURING INTEGRATION

EVON JOHNSON

We could not go swimming over there to the swimming pool. Then after we got to going to school and stuff, they finally let us go into the pool, but for only one reason: we had to shower before we got into the water. Yes, we sure did, I'll never forget. We did, we had to shower before we could jump into the pool. The white kids was already in the



Basketball court

pool. If you come out of the pool, and bought a snack or something like that, you had to shower to go back into the pool. We didn't really care, I guess 'cause we were young, didn't know no better, or you know, kids just wanting to swim. So we didn't really care. That's what it is. We didn't care as long as we got to swim.

WE HAD OUR OWN LITTLE BOOTH

EVON JOHNSON

Well whenever we used to go to the show, we went in and we had to cut back up to the left and go up some stairs. So when we go up to the stairs, we would stand in a booth area, probably about from this wall to the kitchen

wall. Where blacks sit. *Really?* So we didn't sit down in the bottom part with them at all. But we all had to pay the same. But yeah, we had our own little booth. The guy next door here, J.T., he used to run the film thing, so he'd be sitting up in there with us, running the film thing or whatever. But yeah, then eventually we started you know getting to go down in the bottom part and sit anywhere you want to then.

CERTIFIED AS AN EMT

MARY WILSON

At Tri-County, I was certified, now listen here, as an emergency medical technician. Certified to work on any ambulance in the state of North Carolina. *Did you do it?* No. Even after getting certified. But why I didn't do it, is because I couldn't get a job. And I had problems with that. They only had white males, white males. Then, I'm raising Sam, you know, well look man, I've got this degree, I'm just as smart as anyone else. And they just had this little quarter, and they'd do like 24 hours. And you have to sleep there. They don't have nothing to accommodate a woman. So you know, I got all this for nothing. So then years later I would still keep getting recertified, now they've hired a woman. So then I'd go back, hey yo, I still got mine, what up. They don't need anybody. And, you know, so then after a while, it's, forget it.

INTERRACIAL DATING

REGGIE COX AND YOKI COX

It was our age group that had the racist problems. Now at school you see a lot of mixed relationships. Back when we was going to school, they didn't want us at the high school. Well the teachers would talk to you. Yeah, like when I come through, they would say it wasn't appropriate. We could hang out and stuff, but dating, no. We never had a racial problem, you know, everybody got along.

RELIGION



Mt. Zion Baptist Church sign

When Texana was first settled, one of the initial projects undertaken was the building of the community church. The First Baptist Church in Texana was built of logs, hewn by the women who had moved into the settlement. In 1881, the community tore down the old church and built Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which stands today.

OLD CHURCHES

JEAN BENNETT, MAY POWELL, GRACE MAULDIN

In the Afro-American communities of old, the church was the one thing going. So it was very common practice that as people came to a community, they went to church. And at that time, we probably had two churches. Yeah, there was a Methodist church. Methodist church and a Baptist church. It went down. More people went to the Baptist church and fewer went to the Methodist church. And at one time though, it wasn't in the Texana community, then there was the Episcopalian church. That's right. I forgot about that. After integration, you know, they integrated. So, well the Methodist church as it was, the AME Zion Methodist church, died out because nobody went.

GOING TO ASSOCIATION BY WAGON

MAY POWELL

Yeah, we went to association, well what we called association. It would last from Thursday to Monday. The association. *What was it?* Church meeting. And we went from Bryson City to Franklin. Well we didn't call it Franklin, we called it Macon County. And we went there in a wagon, and we'd walk part of the way. *And how long did it take?* All day. When we'd come back, before we left from where we stayed, and they went up on the mountain and got peaches. And those were the best peaches we ever seen. They were what I called Indian peaches, you know. They were so good.

ACTIVE IN CHURCH

KATHERINE SUDDERTH

I do go to church now. I'm the superintendent of the Sunday School and I teach Sunday school, the primary class. I've got five different classes. That's my church right there, you know, then I belong to other churches 'cause

I'm supposed to go to Canton a week from, a week from Saturday, to women's missionary auxiliary and I'm the vice president of it. We meet every quarter, every three months, and it meets at different churches. But we have a glorious time, we always have a guest speaker. *So you've been real active in the church.* Oh yes, my husband and myself was. I said he was deacon up there and he was very, very, very active in church, yeah. I been in to Raleigh, Shaw University, he and I both. Yeah, we studied down there, I went and took training in Vacation Bible School. And I took deaconess training when my husband was taking deacon training, why, we just took different things like that. On his vacation, we'd get in that car and away we'd go.

CALLED INTO THE MINISTRY

GWEN KINCAID

My dad had gone into, well he had been called into the ministry. But he wasn't sure. He asked the Lord if this meant for me to preach, let this be a male child. And so here comes my brother. Three years, he still wasn't sure that this is what the Lord wanted him to do, so when my mom got pregnant with me, three years later, he said okay, if this is it, I will accept it, but let this be a female child. He got his answer.



Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, organized in 1881 and stood until 1941, when the current structure was built and later renovated



FOOD AND CULTURE

Living close to the land allowed Texana residents to grow and preserve food, meaning that early families hardly ever had to go to the store except for staples like flour and sugar. Most families raised their own gardens, kept fruit trees, picked berries, hunted animals, and owned cows, horses, mules, chickens, and hogs. Men and women also fished, often from a nearby lake that contained bass, trout, pike, and other fish. All these foods lasted throughout the year and were preserved by canning. Despite scarce money and resources, hard work and hard times, food was always good and plentiful.

WE HAD EVERYTHING

BESSIE CARTER

See we owned all this around here. We raised our garden, we had our cows, we had our horse, mule, we had a mule. We had chickens, we had everything. Hogs, we raised hogs. And we had our own vegetables, and I canned, food. That's one thing. *You didn't have to hardly go to the store at all then.* No, just for, just the things that you couldn't. *Flour, sugar.* Yeah, stuff such as that. I canned, and I canned my vegetables and all. We had apple trees, and things, you know.

GATHERING GREENS

ADDIE JOHNSON AND ZULA COX

When greens went out of season, she would, honest to God I believe there was sometimes we ate weeds and grass. But it was good. She would go find something. You would see them, her sister and her neighbor would call her. And they'd get their little bags together and their knives, and there wouldn't be any greens anywhere. But they would come back with a mess, they called it a mess, and it was a mess of something. It

was. Blue thistle, dandelion, narrow-leaved dock, Indian turnips, a little bit of this and a little bit of that. I think we're lucky to still be here! *Well, how do you make poke salad?* Oh, delicious. A chicken, wash him good, let him boil, drain that water off of it, rinse him two or three time



*View of Texana land from
Texana Community Center*

in cold water, squeeze all the water out, and fry it. Some people put eggs in it. You can fry it with eggs in it or onions. And some people use the berry, when it blooms out, that yellow bloom. They cook it and it looks like eggs and cheese. *Really?* And take the stalk. You cut them off like you do okra, and fry them. Believe me, nothing was wasted.

POKE SALAD

ZEKE JOHNSON, MITCHELL LLOYD & SCOTT GRANT

Tell them about poke salad. You ever heard, you ever ate collard greens? It's like that but it grows in the wild. *Oh really?* You boil it and fry some eggs and some bacon grease or something like that. You just get lettuce, out of your garden, you just get stuff out of your garden, bacon grease, small onions. Bacon grease. Pour it over, put the onions in it. Chop it all up in there and just eat all you want.

CANNING

MARY LLOYD

My mama canned beans, she canned corn, she didn't can, she'd can corn on the cob. And people would say, we'd go to school sometimes and have corn on the cob. They'd say, oh you got pickled corn. It wouldn't be pickled corn. It would be just regular corn, just like you'd go out in the field and pull the corn. That's the way she'd can it. And it would be just like fresh corn, like people put stuff in the freezers now. You know, like my mom, she would can all this stuff. She'd can squash, she'd can tomatoes. She'd can peaches, apples, pear. Anything come by, she would can it. She'd can ribs, she'd can backbones, she'd can sausage. And all this stuff she would can. She canned fish. She would can fish. My uncle fished all the time. He'd bring that fish and mom would can fish. She'd can chicken. All this stuff. And when we'd get ready, the fish, she'd fry it and have it ready. All you have to do is open up a can and pour it in, you know, warm it up and eat it.

IT WAS A SHARING THING

RUBY AND MATTIE ANN ALLEN

Somebody'd kill a hog, everybody in the community got some of it. Somebody killed chickens, everybody got chickens. Gardens, you got, give everybody a mess of you know, corn, green beans, whatever. Green beans, corn, greens, whatever they had in the garden, cucumbers, squash. They had, you know, it was just a sharing thing.

MILK AND CORNBREAD

MARY LLOYD

It was never anyone passing by that needed to sleep overnight. My grandmother, she would always let them sleep. And then we had cattle, and you know, milk cows and stuff. She'd fix her milk and butter, and she'd make big pans of cornbread. Somebody'd come by over in the night and want a glass of milk and a piece of cornbread. She could give it to them. And she kept a big table set all the time, with food all over that table. And at night she would cover it with a big tablecloth, you know. Anytime of night, somebody'd come by hungry, they could eat. Anytime we wanted to get up and eat, we could eat. And I know a lot of kids I have talked to would say, well my mom give us supper, and she doesn't allow us to go back in, you know, the kitchen to get stuff. We could get up any time of night we wanted to and go eat.

DOPES AND BELLY WASHERS

ZULA COX AND RALPH COX

I heard that like a soda used to be called a dope? A dope. That's what my grandfather did, he made dopes! And a cookie used to be called a big wheel, didn't it, a big wheel. What was it, what was that, a big RC? Belly gushers, or belly washers, or something like that. Chitlins and pig feet and pigs' knuckles and what's that one, oxtails? Pigs' knuckles and pig snout. Tongue. Ear. Kidney, yeah. You ate everything. My granddaddy used to say you ate the

pig from the rooter to the tooter! Nothing in the pig was wasted.

COKES FOR A NICKEL

DIANE SMITH

It was cheaper back then than it is now! Like cookies, ten for a nickel. Cokes were a nickel. Back then, it was back then. Now you have to pay a dollar for a Coke.

TEXANA CAFÉ

GRACE MAULDIN

They had what they called, like we had a café. It was like a night spot, but they served food, you know. And my uncle up here, they had his store, you know they served food, hot dogs, and then sometimes on Sunday, they'd serve, you know, you could buy a whole meal. But there was certain things now you did have to go downtown and buy, but it was here.

QUILTING

ADDIE JOHNSON

Now I can set, I can set and make quilt tops. I cut up my own pattern, how I want them, get me some cloth and stuff and set down and cut out a box of material. And just set them and start sewing them together. I go in my bedroom set them on the bed and just start sewing them together. Oh I just draw them, the way I want them to go.

LIFE WAS EASY HERE

FRANK BLOUNT

Living in Murphy has its good points. As a child, I lived here and I really enjoyed it. You had to work, had little yard jobs. Sounds rough, and it was rough during the summer. But I found out that I could make just as much money as any adult could, by contracting yards to cut, houses to clean. I did exceptionally well. So that part was

"I'm talking about before integration. The black and white kids got along great. You wouldn't, you would not have thought there was such a thing as segregation because we played together. We really did. And we got to get to know each other personally, so, it was not a bad time."

good. Then, then my life was easy here. There was a big lake behind the house. And we'd run down to the lake in the afternoons and in the early mornings. A bunch of the guys, and we'd go skinny dipping out in the lake. And it was, I enjoyed that part of my life. And then we had one of the best baseball teams around. I think we might have won city championship one year,

I'm talking about before integration. The black and white kids got along great. You wouldn't, you would not have thought there was such a thing as segregation because we played together. We really did. And we got to get to know each other personally, so, it was not a bad time.



Downtown Murphy



STORYTELLING



Texana Community Center

Although this project primarily focused on recording and documenting Texana's history, this collection of memories also includes residents' tales about mountain culture, entertainment, and ghost stories and legends. These memories also speak to the shared sense of community and culture that is found among residents in Texana.

MOUNTAIN LIONS

MAC PICKENS

Now there's mountain lion, mountain lions. They're one or two here but you hardly ever see them. I've heard one one time and haven't heard another one since. Well, fact of the matter is, there was a guy telling me, I think last year, we was up and he was telling me about the one came through his yard over by the Hayesville High School.

BLIZZARD OF '83

KATHERINE SUDDERTH

Lets see it was in '70, no '83. We had a blizzard and I was without, oh of course whole Texana—I was without power for seven days, and I heat with a heat pump. And that's electricity, you know. But I had a little kerosene heater and if I hadn't had that I'd had to left home, but that's, what little cooking I did, I did it on it, and that's what kept me warm. It was about six families of us was the last ones that got the power back, 'cause the power lines run in different directions. And some peoples was uh in different communities was out of power for two weeks. And oh boy we had a blizzard, oh and snow, and it blew a tree down. I used to have shade trees out back and it blew a tree against my door and that tree stayed there up against that door four or five days. *Yeah. Yeah 'cause I couldn't move it, couldn't get out! So how'd you get out, just somebody...* Well, my telephone never did go out and I called my sister and she brought some of my nephews down here and they brought the axe and saw and they got it, took it, cut it loose and where I could get out. Then took the shovel and shoveled me a road out up to the trail out up to the road there, you know, through the snow, in case I could get a ride to town or somewhere, you know.

A GREAT FISHERMAN

KATHERINE SUDDERTH

And what about Lovers Leap, where's that? It's just right down there, right where the, you remember the bridge you come over, coming, well, you look down that mountain and right there that's Lover's Leap. The waters up now, the lake's coming up. We got a big lake here and it's filling up, yep, that's where Lovers Leap is. And they said there was a girl and a boy that was in love or something and I think they jumped off years and years ago and you know I guess they drowned, killed themselves, and that's how I think it got that name Lovers Leap on account of those two. *So in the lake down there do a lot of people go to the lake and fish and do that kind of stuff?* Oh yeah, I'm a great fisherman myself, I haven't been fishing. Yeah I love to fish. I haven't been fishing since Frank's been gone. 'Cause that's all we did is fish. *What kind of fish are down there?* Oh all kinds, bass, pike, trout. You name it. Yeah, the lake's full of all kinds. My husband would clean it you know, scrape it and scales and he'd cut it open, you know, take the inside out and cut the head off and I'd wash it, salt and pepper it, roll it in, most of the time I'd roll mine in corn meal, and then in hot oil and it'd be delicious. And a lot of times we'd come back with so many, we'd give them away. Yeah, we'd give them away.

UFOS ON TEXANA ROAD

MARY WILSON

One time, my best girlfriend, something got after us. You know you hear about these UFOs, stuff like that. Now we really did have this experience. She would stay at my house till it got so dark that she was scared to go home. So she would see if I could spend the night with her. And that way, that was our plan. Or I'd do the same, stay at her house real late, 'cause if I could spend the night. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. But if one couldn't they'd let the other one 'cause the other one so scared to go by theyself. So one day, Renee wanted to spend the night

with me. So she called her grandmother, grandmother said no. Then she's scared, she's crying and stuff, and then she wants me to spend the night with her. *Oh*. So then my friend decide to beg my mom, "Oh she's just devastated, please, please." So my



Texana Road and Joe Brown Highway sign

mom would let me spend the night with her. I don't know what was it, we walking up the hill, this way, coming up through here. And I'm like on this side and Renee's right here. And we walking and I look over the back, and I see this big ball. It's glowing and it's orange. And I'm just like, "nah, you know just, nah it ain't nothing," you know. And I'm still walking, you know. Then I look back over my side again, and it has risen up. And, so, but Renee, I still ain't say nothing to her and I'm not sure she see it or not. So I'm still not saying anything. We just walking. Then I look over the back again and I don't see it. Then I'm like "well, you know." But then for some reason I feel some heat or something other and I look back, me and Renee did at the same time. It's right behind us. We like, we were scared and "Ahhh!" you know, at the same time. So we take off running as fast as we can. And we still looking back and every time we look back it's with us. It's just a-bouncing behind us. It's not touching the ground. It's bouncing in the air. Just like this behind us as we run. We run all the way to her grandmother's, and we open the door and we just fall out in the floor, and we're crying and we screaming, and we just can't breathe. We that scared. "What's wrong with you all," you know. And we

tell them, you know, what had happened. And then her grandmother tell us it's some mineral, this or that, they just form, bah bah bah bah. Or the way we run it's the heat.

THREE-LEGGED DOGS

CHANNING WILSON

Three-legged dogs, that's where, my street where I live, coming out and stuff. They say, you know. You know how you're talking about Texana. You know that big old place with the grass and stuff. Look to the right. At nighttime or something, they said, there's a big ball that glow. My mom said that she was chased, her and her friend, she walked her home and was chased by a ball or something that would glow and like. When you get in the sunlight, like the moonway, it disappear. But it's like still beside you in a tree or something. And that like, a place on my street, somebody was telling me like, at 1:00 exactly, look through the window, you'll see a man look through the window. I don't know. They tell some scary stuff. I mean, I try not to listen or hear it.

FAST CARS

W.T. MAULDIN

Back then, you know, 110 was top speed back then, and you had to have a good car. You loaded it down, put you about 20, 25 cases in that thing, and you had to have a awful good motor to pull it fast. I'd take mine to Chattanooga and different places, and a guy came in here from Atlanta that knowed a whole lot about a car. We put three dual carburetors and everything at different time and we done everything to make it run fast. Whenever I had some and they run into me, we had to race. But you couldn't get by with that now. We run around here about all night one night. They couldn't catch me.

IN THE HOUSE WITH A BAT

DIANE SMITH

We had lived in this old, old house. My daddy died before he finished it, so you know, it had holes in it, and bats came in. And one come in one night. He was naked as a jaybird! And we all, the bat came in, and he was laying there, crying and kicking them legs and hands. And we all ran off and left him in the house! With the bat! We left him, so I had to come back in and get him.

PET PIG

DIANE SMITH

Oh, we had a pet pig named Rode, like a horse. It'd come in the house. Yeah, and then we wouldn't eat it, 'cause it was a pet. It used to follow my mama to church. We would have to go get it and bring it back. It was just an old pet. And then, they wouldn't eat it after they killed it. I don't much blame them, 'cause you raised it like a dog.



Mountain vista



FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The earliest Texana residents originally settled high and close to Texana Road. Many of the earliest houses in Texana are still standing—meaning that many houses are often the same ones in which residents’ parents, grandparents, and other ancestors once lived; even houses that have been renovated often remain on the same land owned by a family for generations. For this reason, also, many residents live in close proximity to several generations of their family members, which contributes to the close-knit community.



*Roscoe Hall, Mary Elizabeth Lloyd,
Mae Hyatt, and Zach Oliver*

THAT'S THE MAN I MARRIED

BESSIE CARTER

We would come up every summer to visit my daddy's brother. And this boy, he lived up above my uncle's where he lived. And we called ourselves sweethearts. We were just little kids at that time. And that's the man I married. Went back home, stayed years and years, and finished high school and everything. And then we moved up here, and that's the man I married.

THE WAY WE WERE RAISED UP

MARY LLOYD

I was taught by my grandmother, we never turned no one away. If anyone come by and they were hungry, we fed them. My mother would always cook enough where like if it's six in the family, she'd cook enough for seven or eight, where if anybody came by hungry, feed them. That's just the way we were raised up. If anyone comes by and don't have a place to stay, give them a bed to sleep in.

PETER JENKINS' VISIT

MARY LLOYD

Back when Peter came through, the kids were playing basketball, over to the rock gym, they had our basketball goal outside. And they were playing. And he came by, and what caught their eye, he had a big dog. A husky. And they fell in love with that dog first thing. And so Peter had been taking a bath in the river. He had his soap, and he'd go down to the river and take a bath. And the kids, they came up and wanted to play basketball with him, so he did. They brought him, they didn't bring him home with him that day, they brought him to Texana. And the community building used to be a old schoolhouse. I mean, it was the old schoolhouse where the community building is now. So they went to the old schoolhouse and made a fire and all that stuff and stayed down there. That night. Peter did, they came home, but he stayed. So the next night they moved him a little closer. And the next night they moved him right up from



Peter Jenkins

my house, between my uncle's house, where he lived, and my trailer, you know, they moved him right behind my trailer. They didn't bring him to the house. So the next night, they eased him on down. And he brought his tent down, put it in my yard. And they came in and said, mama, can Peter sleep out

in the yard, in the tent? So I, quite naturally, I said yes. And when I cooked, I cooked enough for him to eat too. So I said, I have to go to work. So I got ready and went to work. I worked at night then. So I went on to work.

The next morning I came home, and Cooper, the big dog, was out there and I was scared to come home. I would not pass him, I started screaming, and finally Peter woke up and he came out and got Cooper to where I could go into the house. And I cooked breakfast, and they all had breakfast, and Peter, the kids wanted to know if he could come in and have breakfast, and I said well sure. So he came in and had breakfast. Then at night, I fixed lunch, I mean my dinner, he ate dinner, and then Peter just got to come in and eat all the time. And then we had a tornado hit here. And on the night of the tornado, his tent was out there in the yard. The clouds, those were the funniest looking clouds I've ever seen in my life. And up above the clouds, it just looked like fire wrapped over the clouds. And Frank Jr., he says, "it's fixing to come a tornado." So he says, "Peter out there in that yard, he'll get blowed away." So, he said tell him to come in, let him come in the house. So he came in the house, in my trailer, this great big dog in my little bitty trailer! The dog and all of us in there. But he stayed in there until the tornado was over. And from that night on, he came in the house to live. And he lived there five months and a half. He got to be a part of the family.

GOING PRO MAME BROWN

I told J.C. he get pro, don't go that crazy with all them cars. What he gonna do with all them cars. Just need one, that's all you need! If that one tear up, have it fixed or either go get you another one, you know? I told him I wanted a house and a Jeep. That's all I want. He told me one time, he was talking about, I guess he was bout maybe 15, 16, he told me one time if he move away, you know play ball, professional ball. He told me I was moving with him, I told him no I'm not! I told him just build me a house right up here and you can go on and do your business. I stay here you can live by yourself. *There you go.* I said don't you get tired of seeing mama. Yeah, so

he wanted me to move with him one time, but I believe I done got on his nerves so he ain't gonna want me to move with him now.



Murphy High School football stadium

HOMEcomings AND HOLIDAYS

MITCHELL JOHNSON

We got homecoming coming up. That's where they have homecoming at the church. *Yeah*. And everybody will come in. Then like for Labor Day, we'll have a lot of people come in. Christmas, families come in. Fourth of July. See like Memorial Day, we barbecued, we had a good time.

NEWCOMERS TO TEXANA

ZULA COX

And we know we've been noticing, there's a lot of black families living in Murphy now. We don't know who they are or where they come from. Y'know, you go downtown to Wal-Mart. And that's what I say about the city life is so different. When I see somebody in the store, black, I automatically greet 'em. And they don't.

TEXANA IS HOME

Texana residents of all generations share an attachment to place. They express deep ties to western North Carolina as a region, as well as to Texana and Murphy specifically. As can be seen in this collection of memories, the attachment to place that Texanans feel is simultaneously an attachment to community, family ties, and mountain culture.

TRAVELING TURBO PICKENS

I was born here, but I left and went to uh, Indiana, in uh, '69, yeah. Stayed up there eighteen years and I moved back here in uh '87, yeah. 'Cause you know when I first left there wasn't no jobs, but you know, like a hard labor like baling hay and cutting wood, and stuff like that.

TRUCKING WT. MAULDIN

Yeah, when I was with Champion, I had another boy riding with me. And we'd go out, some weeks we'd stay two to three weeks. Nothing but riding. I reckon you just, you just get used to it. We'd run, sometime we'd run 12 hour shift. One guy got 12 hours and then the other one would drive 12. But we hardly had a layover. They had paper, so many paper places that we was able to go into one of their places and just drop a trailer and get in there and just keep going.

BACK HOME TO RAISE MY FAMILY ROSCOE HALL

Yeah, that was my brother and some of my cousins. And our band had two or three names, we were the Chain of Fools. Miss Mauldin's son, which done made it big now 'cause he stuck with it, and then his son Jermaine. But I came back home in—after it was all over, it was, looks like I was just running around in circles, and nothing positive wasn't gonna happen. So I just came back home to raise my family.

ONE BIG FAMILY YOKI COX

This is just one big family. You know other than the ones that were like brought in. But you know Texana is just—everybody's kin.

FURTHER READING



For those who are interested in further understanding and investigating the diversity and unique heritage of Appalachia and western North Carolina, the following resources have been recommended by Texana residents and by this project's humanities scholars.

BOOKS

A Walk Across America. By Peter Jenkins. St. Helens, OR: Perennial Press. 2001.

Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation. Edited by John C. Insoe. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 2001

Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region. Edited by Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1999.

Cultural Diversity in the U.S. South. Edited by Carole E. Hill and Patricia D. Beaver. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 1998.

Slavery in the American Mountain South. By Wilma A. Dunaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003.

WEB SITES

Appalachian Regional Ministry.
http://www.arministry.org/appalachian_culture.asp

Celebrating Diversity in Appalachia.
<http://www.ferrum.edu/applit/studyg/Diversity.htm>

Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia.
<http://www.marshall.edu/csega/index.asp>

"The 1990s: An Era of Increasing Diversity within Appalachia."
The Appalachian Region.
<http://www.arc.gov/>

FILMS

Coal Black Voices. Produced and directed by Jean Donohue and Fred Johnson. Available from Media Working Group, <http://www.mwg.org/production/documentary/voices/index.shtml>. 2002. "Coal Black Voices is an intimate mosaic of images, poetry, and storytelling by the Affrilachian Poets as they give glimpses of life in the American Black South and Appalachian region. The ensemble of African-American writers challenge simple notions of an all white Appalachian region and culture while drawing on traditions such as the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement, and experiences of the African Diaspora. The poetry of the Affrilachian Poets celebrates their African heritage and rural roots while encompassing themes of racism and Black identity. In this documentary they give voice to the pleasures of family, land, good food, artistic community, music and transformation."

Evelyn Williams. Directed by Anne Lewis. Available from Appalshop, www.appalshop.org. 1995. "Evelyn Williams is a portrait of a woman who is many things: a coal miner's daughter and wife; a domestic worker and mother of nine; a college student in her 50s and community organizer; an Appalachian African American. Above all, she is a woman whose awareness of class and race oppression has led her to a lifetime of activism. Now in her 80s, she is battling to save her land in eastern Kentucky from destruction by a large oil and gas firm."

Long Journey Home. Directed by Elizabeth Barret. Available from Appalshop, www.appalshop.org. 1987. "This documentary explores the ethnic diversity of the Appalachian region, the economic forces causing people to migrate into and out of the area, and the personal choices individuals make to stay, to leave, and to come back. European immigrants recall the ethnic variety that existed in Appalachia during the first coal boom of the 1910s and '20s. African-Americans whose families left sharecropping in the deep South to build the railroads and work in the mines talk about the transition to life in the coal camps, and their later dispersal across the country as automation in the mines during the 1950s took their jobs."



VOICES OF TEXANA

audio cd

oral histories
from residents of
texana, north carolina

©Texana Committee on Community
History and Preservation 2006