

[Mrs. Eloise Seay Mathis - Part 2](#)

This is the second part of a series of interviews with Mrs. Eloise Seay Mathis. Mrs. Mathis is 95 years old and grew up in [Pacolet Mills](#). She has been kind enough to agree to share her memories about her early life in Pacolet with this website. Her granddaughter, Drenda-Michell Brennan, has been essential in allowing us to do this. We have supplied the questions to Drenda via email. She has talked to her grandmother about the questions and recorded her answers.

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1. Did your family have a car when you were young? If so please tell us about it.

“Daddy and Momma never had a car until after I was married. We walked everywhere we went. We didn’t think anything about it, that’s all anybody knew.

Daddy had to keep all four mill well pumps going no matter what ... even the one all the way over at White Rose Cemetery. He had to walk that far at all hours, day or night, and during any storm or weather when the pumps went out. Occasionally he did get a ride home by wagon & mule if the opportunity arose. Momma used to say she wouldn’t be surprised to see him coming home in a wheel barrel if someone offered to push it.

There were only three people with cars that I remember when I was growing up: the preacher, Dr. Hill, and Mr. Henderson.

Dr. Hill had a car, but his nurse (Ms. Fuller) always came by horseback. There was also an ambulance, it was a big car like a hearse, and they would come get people if there was a real emergency. The ambulance came the day of the storm when the grandstand blew over and so many people were electrocuted and burned.

Mr. Henderson had a good heart and money...and his own car. He lived on Brewster St. and he used his car to help people who ‘had bad luck’. If people had sickness, problems, or a death, Mr. Henderson was always willing to take people wherever they needed to go.

Daddy and Momma bought their first car when my younger siblings, Nelleen and Moon, were graduating high school. They had more money by the time they came along because all the older children were married and things were easier by then.”

2. Did you ever ride the taxi to Spartanburg ? If you did, please discuss it.

“Oh yes! The taxi was .25 to Spartanburg roundtrip if you took the same one back. You could flag a taxi down or go to The Hall where the taxis waited on people to come. When you went to The Hall to get a taxi you usually had to wait until you had a full load to leave so sometimes you had to sit a while. We didn’t use seat belts back then and the drivers would pile as many people as they could get into the taxi. Most of the time you had people sitting on top of each other. It was not a comfortable ride, but that is how we went to Spartanburg.

Momma and Daddy went to Spartanburg in a taxi every Saturday when we finished the chores at home. They would do shopping for things we couldn’t get in Pacolet, go window shopping, and to department stores, and they brought back cookies for us children.

When my sisters and I were older, we would sometimes go to Spartanburg to see a movie. We had to meet back up at the gas station at the intersection to get our taxi back home.”

Grandma remembers being at her Granny Pugh’s house sitting on the porch steps (on Stone St. across from Pacolet Mills Baptist Church) when she was a young girl with her grandmother and aunt. They watched anxiously as Mr. White (1), one of the town’s most

beloved [taxi](#) drivers, drove around shouting out the window that all of [Pacolet Station](#) was burning (2) . She feels like it was a banner day for him as he was collecting passengers as he shouted. Everyone who could afford the fare was hopping in the taxi to go watch the fire. The entire town did not burn, but most of [Pacolet Station](#) and several houses did.

3. *Did you often go to the movies at [the theater in The Hall](#)? What do you remember about it?*

“Yes, we would go to a movie in [The Hall](#) when Daddy finished work sometimes. I remember going with my sisters to the [mill](#) to get a dime from him to go to the [picture show](#) while he was fishing out the [mill](#) window (3) . Popcorn was extra and there were too many of us to get popcorn, we just watched the show. It was usually a Western...we saw John Wayne, Gene Autry, and Roy Rogers...the [mill](#) had ‘all the movies’ there for us.”

4. *Did you have any part-time jobs when you were in high school? Please describe them.*

“I never worked a job until I was married. There was too much to do at home, so we children had to help out there. We grew our own food, made most of our things ourselves, and we all had our own chores we were responsible for. Thankfully Daddy let us rotate chores so that no one had to do the hardest ones all the time.”

5. *Do you think there was much difference in the food and meals that you had when you were young and the meals we have today? If so, please explain.*

“When I was growing up we had the best food you ever tasted. We had animals and grew most things ourselves.

We had three different gardens separated by crop and we all had to help in the gardens. When there wasn't rain, we carried the water to the gardens ourselves. Momma canned vegetables and fruits and had enough put up to feed all ten of us all winter. We never went hungry. We had tomatoes, corn, okra, every kind of bean, sweet potatoes, pickles, black berries, watermelon, everything you can think of. Occasionally at night we would be asleep in our beds and we would wake up to an ‘explosion’ from the shelves in the hall where Momma stored the canned goods...we knew when we heard the glass burst that we had lost another jar of tomatoes.

We had chickens for Sundays and eggs, a cow for milk, pigs, and ducks. Daddy butchered the hogs and hung the meat (sausage, ham, and bacon) under the house. We used the eggs to barter with [Thomas' Store](#) for grocery items we didn't have at home like coffee and sugar. We carried a whole tray of chicken and duck eggs to trade every day. Anybody that didn't have laying chickens needed eggs. Most of the women thought duck eggs were better for cakes so they were popular too.

Momma milked the cow when we had one. Eventually we sold the cow and started getting our milk delivered because it was less work. Sherbert's Dairy would bring the milk in glass bottles. We kept the milk down at the branch in the spring house with the butter and cream to keep it cool. We drank water or milk with every meal except Sunday lunch.

Momma had to cook for ten of us, so she didn't go to church until the night service. We loved Sundays! Every Sunday morning, Momma would get up before anyone else and make biscuits, steak and gravy for us. While we were at church with Daddy, she would fry the two chickens she had killed the day before for our lunch. We always had a big Sunday lunch and sometimes other family members, friends, or the preacher would come to eat with us. We would have corn, green beans, potatoes, macaroni with tomato sauce, and biscuits...a whole table of wonderful food! And we always had a bowl of tea on Sunday ...a big bowl we served with a ladle because we didn't have a pitcher back then...and a blackberry or sweet potato pie.

Sunday meals were the same every week... we had the best food I ever ate!"

End Notes

(1) Mr. White was Mr. Harvey White. He was indeed a beloved and well-known taxi driver. I first met him when I was about 9 years old when my brother and I "hired" him to take us home from the movies on a very hot August day. The unusual story is told at the end of the [Article on Taxis](#).

(2) The big fire in Pacolet Station happened in 1934. You can read more about it in the [Article on the Pacolet Post Office](#).

(3) Fishing out the window of the [mill](#) is not as strange as it may seem at first. The home shop for the "outside maintenance men", like Mr. Seay and my Uncle Toby Campbell, was on the ground floor of the mill on the side next to the [river](#). The water level of the [river](#) was close enough to allow fishing from the window of the shop.