

Virginia Harwell: Businesses in Elkton

VH: Well, Alec Austin had a store over here, and Old Man Ezell had a store. And he had a grocery store in the lower building and then he had dry goods, furniture and a lot of things in this big building up here. And it was about two, two and a half stories, in that Ezell building and the Austin had what they called a balcony where they sold hats, millinery and all that kind of stuff.

ECS: Well now, was there a drug store over there?

VH: UmHm. The Austins had a drug store.

Virginia Harwell: Beer Garden and Ridgeway Tavern

VH: We had what we called a beer garden back in those days.

ECS: Well, now is that over here where used to be the old Boon? What is that building?

VH: Down there.

AS: The Hideaway.

ECS: Did it used to be the Hideaway?

VH: Well they called it that after we were there. We always called it, just called it The Place, but after that it became the Hideaway. [background noise: automobile engine] But that's the same place.

AS: Is that the same place that they called the Ridgeway Tavern.

VH: Yes, it was the Ridgeway Tavern. It was the Ridgeway Tavern long before we got it. And the Ridgeway's lived behind, over there where Mrs. Groth lived. The Turners live over there now, I believe.

AS: Do you know when that building was built?

VH: The Ridgeway Tavern? No, it was there when I, when I got to be here. And Mrs. Usa Groth her husband lived there until, well, I guess, she got feeble and her daughter carried her to Nashville. But she didn't live very long after she lived there. They had a good life over there. And Mr. Groth was postmaster at one time. He, and, I guess he's no, Mr. Fount Dunnivant was I guess the first one I remember being postmaster, and then Mr. Groth, then Ruth Birdsong, and Harold Taylor.

AS: Where all has the post office been located in Elkton?

VH: Up and down the street. [laughter] Whoever got it had to find a place to put it. And you know.

AS: Oh, OK.

VH: Do you remember when Ruth Birdsong was postmaster? Well, Miss Velma Lloyd, you know all that burned out at one time, and Miss Velma Lloyd built a small building there, and that's where Ruth had her post office. And it was a nice new place, and it was a nice place to go.

Virginia Harwell: Elkton Farm and Home Store

ECS: You all acquired this Elkton Farm and Home Store over here. Do you remember what year you all started that?

VH: I think it was in 1956, now that's just a guess, because that's a date that sticks in my mind.

ECS: And you all ran that for a long time. Now you had, did y'all have groceries and could the average person come in there and buy everything, I guess?

VH: Most everything.

ECS: I know y'all had fabric, because I remember buying fabric from you.

VH: Well, we had, we had overalls, we had Key overalls. Did you ever see Key overalls? That guy came in here and they were good looking overalls and a lot of people bought them and liked them.

AS: What was in that building before y'all put a Farm and Home in there?

VH: Well, Gene Austin and his dad had had a drug store in there and there wasn't too much activity for that at that time, and we were kind of skeptical about going in business because we didn't know how people would take to it. But a lot of people came, a lot of people came from far and near to Elkton Farm Store.

AS: Had the building been empty at any time?

VH: Well, you know they had a skating rink in there at one time. You don't remember that.

ECS: Well, was it empty when you all bought it?

VH: Well, Charles bought the building and I don't remember if anybody partnered with him in that. Richard partnered with him, when we had the business in there, but Charles put a hardwood floor in that building, which was right costly at that time, for a skating rink. And that went over well. The kids in the community loved that. They'd come. We'd have certain nights to open and they'd come and skate. And they liked that. And, that's about all I remember about that.

Virginia Harwell: Beer Garden and Segregation

VH: The blacks and the whites got along real well in Elkton, the way I remember. Now somebody else might look at it different, but we got along with the blacks and we had a lot of black trade when we were down here at what I call the beer garden. We had a lot of black trade. And on Sundays when they'd have Association, you sell beer, you just couldn't keep enough beer, they just drank beer all day long.

AS: Did they have a room in the back just for the blacks?

ECS: I was going to ask you did they come in the back?

AS: Just like Rainey's had a big.

VH: UmHm. And they would come in there and drink beer, and they knew they had to be nice and quiet to be able to stay there, because you couldn't let them carry on and carry on. And so, we had everything very well under control. Every once in a while something would break out, you know. And you'd have a little trouble with somebody, but you had to kind of keep everything under control.