

ETHEL'S PLACE

Material for this book is taken from tapes recorded in conversation with Mrs. Ethel Moore when she was 88 years of age, living in Carrollton, Kentucky.

Writing and sketches
by
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Foreword by Author

If you're traveling on Kentucky Highway No. 42 between Covington and Louisville, halfway you'll cross a bridge spanning the Kentucky River. It joins Carrollton (population 4200) and Prestonville (population 300). As you cross, you'll see the roof of Ethel's Place, formerly the Clover Farm Grocery Store - the largest building erected in the early 1900's when Prestonville was prettier than Carrollton.

Turn left off the bridge and circle to the store that simply states "Ethel's Place". Be careful going up the steps - they've been askew since the flood covered them - and the building - and all of Prestonville in 1937.

If the day is nice, you'll find Ethel in the center of the huge building where a pot-bellied stove is surrounded by a few comfortable chairs and several buckets of coal and wood. She may be jotting down an entry in her account book which she files on top of the pile in a refrigerator. You'll notice a 4-year-old calendar that she says "does pretty good". Usually a friend or two is enjoying the warmth of her stove as well as her friendship. In 37 years, Ethel has probably transacted business with more people than anyone else in the county.

Her mind is keen and her memory sharp as she recalls her earlier days in Prestonville and Carrollton. Born in 1893, Ethel stands 5 feet tall (almost), has twinkling blue eyes, and a steady voice.



E T H E L ' S P L A C E

I. 1906 to 1925

"Everything was clean and nice. There was Mattick's grocery, Wetherills' grocery, the Hatchery, and lots of pretty homes. My sister, Hallie, and I worked at the Darling Distillery. I was 13 years old, and I tell you, it made me sick to smell it the first week I worked there. Mr. Seeholtz was my boss, and Miss Cole my forelady. There was Miss Quinn and Miss Carlisle and several other women. All of us would go up to the store at noon to buy crackers and pickles right out of the barrel."

(The year was 1906 and Mrs. Tomlinson had brought her five children - Harry, Carl, Hallie, Portia, and Ethel - to Carrollton from Indiana.) "We come across from Lamb on the old 'Mary Jo' ferry that Mr. Ashe used to pilot. He was running that boat the day my father was killed down by the wharf. My mother sold the farm and moved us over to Carrollton. We lived on High Street on the Averett property in a frame house."

"My mother taught me how to cook and how to quilt. We quilted nearly every night. I finished the eighth grade. Girls didn't always go on to highschool in them days. I began to do housework for people about then - there was the Harrisons, the Donaldsons, and Mrs. Woods - and of course, I walked to work."

"At sixteen I married, and in the next fifteen years I had seven children. One died a baby, and one got killed when he was only

5 years old. We were living on Seventh Street and the little fellow was sitting on the curb when a car hit him. I didn't weigh much in those days, but I lifted that wheel off my boy's foot and picked him up. His little head rolled back and I could see the hole knocked in his head. His blood run all over my clothes, and I had to throw them away, even my shoes. I didn't know for two days who'd run over him. And you know, that man was killed the same way about twenty years later."

"About 1925 when my youngest child was two months old, my husband came in one night fussin' around. He'd been out to a roadhouse again. He got to hittin' around and when he hit at the kids, I'd take the licks. I asked the good Lord to save us til morning, and He did. So the next day I dressed the kids and we went to Hallie's. Then I filed against him and pretty soon he left town. He had never give me a cent - I'd still had to work and he'd been mean a lot of times. So after he was gone, I was happier and not appeared, and he didn't come back for over seven years."

II. MAKING A LIVING

"I knew it was up to me to feed us. We didn't have anything fine, but I made lots of biscuits and gravy, and we was happy around the table. Sometimes I'd work all night at home, change my clothes, and go to work at 5 o'clock in the morning to do ironing. Then, I'd take that 50¢ and go by the City Meat Market to buy my day's meat. You know, that'd get a roast then. And I'd buy a lot of apples, 'cause they kept so good. I

told my kids, 'there's lots of things we might not have, but you can have manners, and a smile'."

"I never did get disgusted making a living. Mrs. Williams called me 'Sunshine'. I had a good time working. Still do, it's something to get you up in the morning - thinking about things in the store. I get out in the air and see eppole, and then I'm glad to get back to my home in the evening."

"Back in 1925 I'd clean for different ones in the day at 20¢ an hour; and cook and wash and iron for us at night. I didn't sleep very much. It was like bird teeth to get money, and when anyone'd give me their old clothes, I'd always bring 'em home. I'd wear anyone's shoes. I scrubbed the floor at Mrs. Adams' dress shop for 50¢ a week and asked her to put it on a plaid coat for me. It was the only new coat I had in almost 20 years. I had a willow buggy and would take the children for a walk on Saturday evening, three in the buggy and one on each side; and then to church on Sundays."

"I did my washing on a scrub board for seven years and made my own soap. Mr. Anger wanted to sell me a 'lectric washing machine and charge me \$1.50 a month. I didn't think I'd have that much for him each month. But he said, 'Try and see', so I tackled it and paid for it. The first time I used it, I didn't know what to do with myself - with the new machine doing my work."

III. DURING THE DEPRESSION

"Then in 1929 when my oldest girl, Emily, was graduating, she wanted a new dress. That night I ironed til midnight, and the kids were in bed; so I went out to an old trunk in the shed where I kept the clothes that people give me and looked to see if there was anything I could make a dress out of."

"Mrs. Winslow had give me a big ole winter coat with green satin lining. So I took the lining out, washed it, ironed it, and cut out a circular skirt. I didn't have no pattern, but it fit alright. And I sewed some little pieces of fur around it that another lady'd give me. Emily wore the dress to school and with her yellow curls she looked real cute. Mrs. Sherman's daughter said it was the prettiest dress she'd ever seen. I thanked her, but I didn't tell her it was made out of her aunt's coat lining."

"One of the homes I worked in was Mrs. Lee's while she was running our city paper. I'd clean and then cook their supper. When her mother got sick I'd look after her. I loved her mother, but Nell and I would sometimes cross words. Her husband would take up for me, and finally, we all got to getting along okay. She tole me she'd leave me a nestegg in her will. But she went into a nursing home about ten years ago and I thought it'd take all her money for that. She lived to be up in her 90's. Last week, I got this letter from a law office here in town, and I puzzled, 'Oh, my, what's this about?' and I was scared to open it. Sure enough, she left me a nestegg - a thousand dollars - just like she had promised."

"When the depression got real bad, in 1935, we had the C.C.C. camp here, and there was some real nice boys in it. They built our Butler Park, you know. I did some laundry now and then for them, and that's where I met Doc Moore. We got married, and he stayed here in Carrollton."



IV. 1937 FLOOD & WW II

"We were living on Sixth Street in 1937 when the two rivers flooded everything. The water was up to the highways, and all of us in this end of town were taken to a school house in Easterday, bout 200 of us. It wasn't too bad - until it got to stinking. Prestonville was about ruined in that flood, and it never did get back again. That's why this building was empty when I needed a place for my business."

"And then came the war in 1941. Doc and my three boys all went into the Navy. My two

son-in-laws were in the Army. Both my daughters went to New York to work, and I raised my grandson, Larry. I bought my son's old car and finally learned how to drive. I was 49 years old, and didn't have to walk to work anymore."

"I helped Mrs. Jesse and Mr. Lyter Donaldson whenever they needed me for over 40 years. They were like a brother and sister to me. When Mr. Lyter ran for governor in 1943, we cleaned for 4 weeks on their big house. We scrubbed that long porch, and I climbed those ladders, cleaning outside, inside, and doing windows."

"Every light in their house was on that election night, and microphones were hooked up. But, you know, he lost; and the next day when I got there, he was stoking the furnace. I said, 'We've all got to work now, don't



we?" but he didn't get mad when I'd tease him. I helped him in the years to come after Mrs. Jesse died, and in 1960 when they were settling his estate, I'd saved enough money to buy their home."

"But I didn't buy it. The roof was bad and the third floor was near ruined. I just loved them both, and I sure would liked to have had an antique shop there. High Street just don't seem the same since they torⁿ down their house."

"I've climbed many a ladder. 'Specially cleaning wallpaper. I've helped clean in nearly every church in town, and you know how high those ceilings are."

"Soon after this, in 1944, my mother got poorly; so I quit working out, just took in washing and ironing, and stayed home with her and Larry. I've been lucky all my life that I've been healthy. Never took no medicine, no vitamins. After my mother died, and with all my family off in the war, I decided to go into the used clothes business."

"I started in the courthouse yard one Saturday with 12 dresses, 2 boxes of clothes, and 35¢. I got enough saved to rent a building, and finally bought this old grocery in Prestonville where I used to eat at noon, 36 years before."

V. SINCE 1945

"All my boys returned from the war, and my girls came home, but I kept the store. Once in a while I'd help out at special parties. One of the biggest I remember was at Mr. & Mrs. Quinn's. He used to run the Cincinnati Enquirer paper. They'd bought Rebel Landing just outside of our town and had

done it all over from top to bottom. About then was when 'Happy' Chandler had been governor and senator. They really had a big crowd for him - hundreds of people. Why, I helped



bake a hundred pies, and fry eight-five chickens. They had fifteen hams and barbecued a beef. All the salads and everything was served in great big wooden bowls. There was a fountain with colored lights, and a band playing music. It was the biggest and the prettiest meal I ever saw."

"Whenever any of my family got sick, I'd help out. I thank God I could do that for them. When Portia was in the hospital all those months, I'd go either in the morning before I opened the store or at night after I'd closed. All my brothers and sisters are gone now."

"The Lord's been good to me. I'm 88 and except for a little arthritis, I feel fine. I still did quilting up til two years ago. I have a nice home now, with the pieces of furniture I like. Every spring I plant a big garden."

"My oldest girl and Doc both passed away in the 1960's. My boys have their families and live in other towns. We keep in touch, but Elsie is the closest of my children."

"Two years ago a man stopped by the store in a great big truck, and asked me what I'd take for all of it. I added for a minute or two, and told him a figure. He said, 'Okay' and carted off a truck-loads. He didn't buy the building though, and in just a few weeks I'd started filling it up again. I open the door every day. I don't make much, but I love it. Everyone is welcome."

