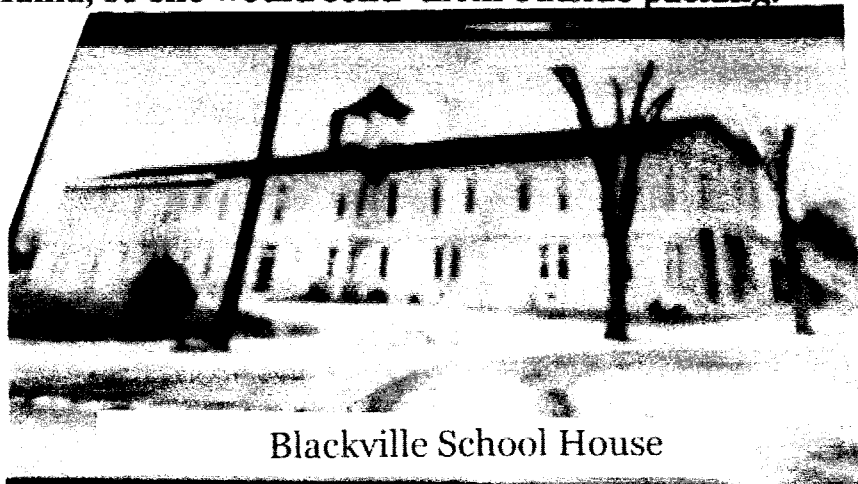


When I got home I had many relatives and friends awaiting my arrival, many bringing a small gift celebrating my homecoming, Aunt Minnie, a black lady, a good friend of Mama's gave me a chicken, Murray and Salmon the two black hired hands, made me a sling shot and a pea shooter It was many weeks before I returned to school. When I returned home ,mama put me in her, and Papa's bed during the day time, beside the window and Papa would carry me to the children's room at night. I would lie there being waited on, hand and foot, by all members of the family. I always look forward to my, Uncle Conner's visit, he was my great uncle, [my grandfathers brother]. He was always bringing us kids, jaw breakers, the hard round marble candy. Mr. Bob Walker and Mrs Annie,[his wife,] would visit and bring me candy from his little country store.

Uncle Conner, lived in Bamberg, S.C. about 12 miles from home. His visit's was as often as his health and stamina would allow. He had no means of transportation and would start out walking, catching rides as he could, He would walk from the bus stop about a mile from the house and when I saw him coming I would yell to Mama, Uncle Conner is Coming!!! looking out the window, I could see, my brother Joe, H.D. and my little sister, Chris, running to meet him, then watching them, slowly approaching the house.

Lying in bed wasn't all peaches and cream as it was the first few days. Things began to get tedium, and as time went by, became more and more tedious, Many times ,I suspect, my mother had wished they had kept me in the hospital much longer. My big moment of the day was when, Murray and Salmon would come in from the field, or from whatever they were doing and stop by the window and talk to me. The weekends were much better, we'd have company and especially on Sunday for dinner. The kids would gather around, play games and jump on my bed. Jumping on my bed didn't go too well with Mama, so she would send them outside packing.



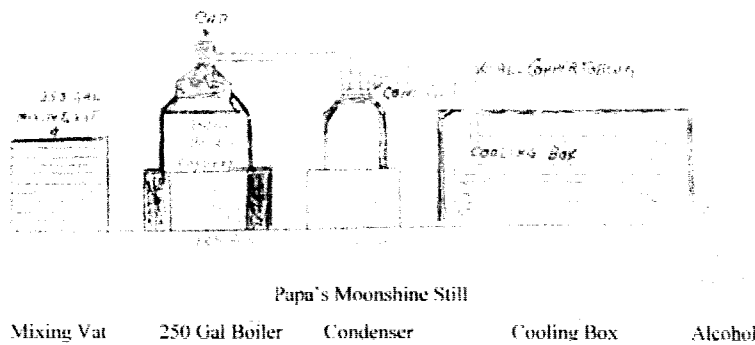
Blackville School House

During my convalescence, I heard Mama and Papa discussing family affairs,

mostly at night when all were asleep and before carrying me to my bed.

Mama sitting in front of the old fire place on an old rickety straight chair, with her elbow's, resting on her knees, smoking her home made Cob pipe, and Papa , beside her, talking about the hard times they were having providing for the family and how difficult it was going to be paying for my medical bills, and keeping up with all the other debts.

[No food stamps, medicaid or welfare checks here.] I assume , my Dad had already planted the seed in his mind while making shingles, and just didn't know how to go about telling my



Mom about

start making moonshine whiskey”

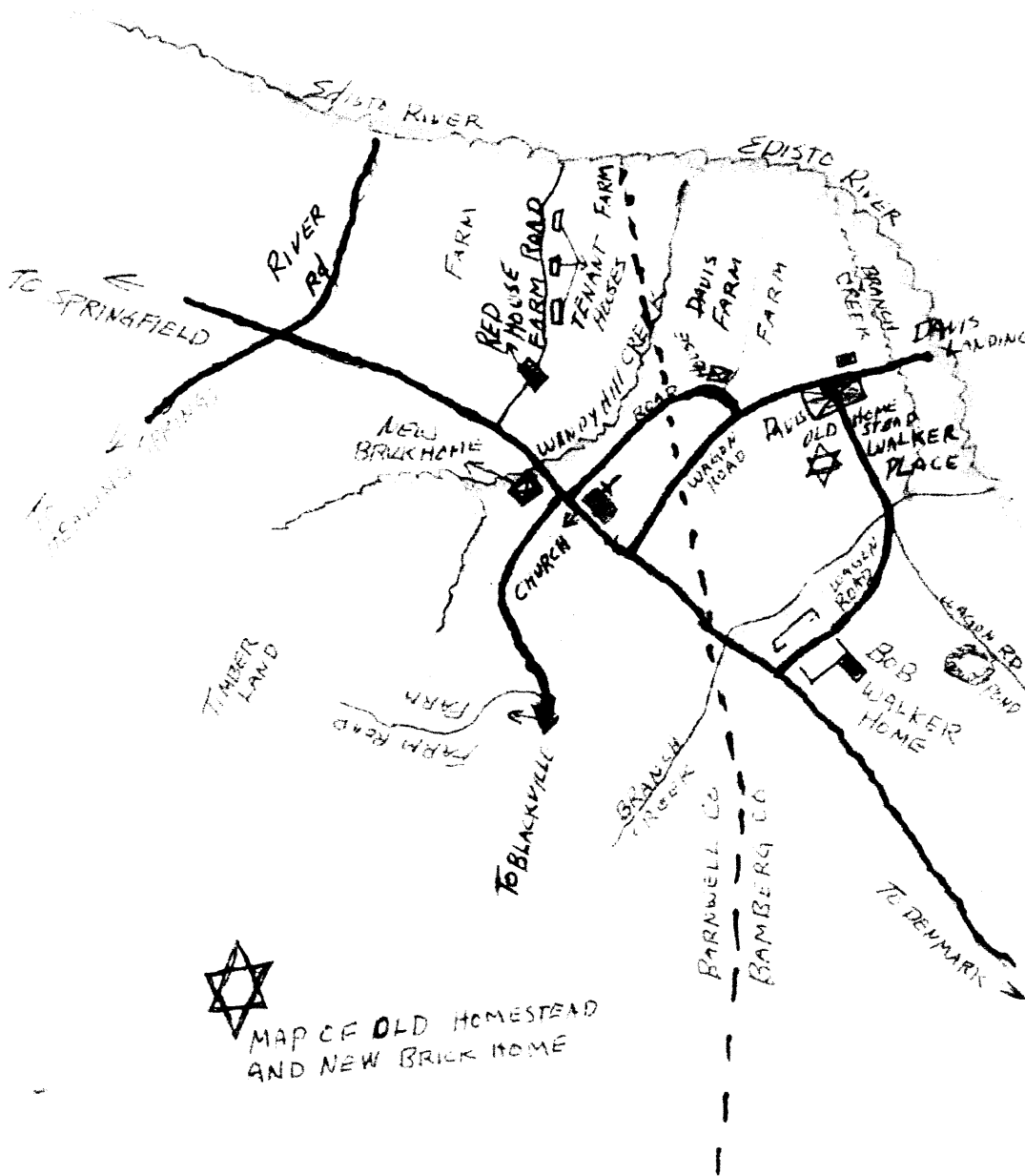
When he told her I thought she was going to have a conniptions fit, I think she almost swallowed her pipe. She told him, that is why she and the children suffered before.[later on as a teenager, I found out about this outrage which I will speak on later]. My Dad, finally convince her after a very lengthily and argumentative controversy. Highlighting, if they continue on the same horizon, it's inevitable they will end up a complete failure. He realized that his new enterprise, making moonshine whiskey, would be walking a thin line, between doing prison time, and providing a better living for his family. He had to have a better strategy. He had to get better acquainted with the people who run Barnwell and Bamberg counties.

Finally, I was well enough to start back to school, rowdy as ever but not enough to try and climb on top of the school bus again, just enough gusto to get back into the swing of things. First day back I was sent to the Principal's office for my usual 10 lashes for shooting the teacher in the behind with a spit ball, he informed me he'll forgo the lashing due to my prior illness, and send a note to my parents instead. Walking home from the bus stop, I mysteriously lost the note by kicking up some dirt and burying the note in the sand. Arriving home, much activity were going on grinding sugarcane and making syrup. I had a premunition that my dad new all about the incident long before I got off the school bus.

Meanwhile, Papa had put all his plans in motion, he had stopped making shingles and devoted all his time to his special project. He turn all the farm work over to my two oldest brothers, Kenney and Carlisle, with Murray and Salmon , the two hired hands.

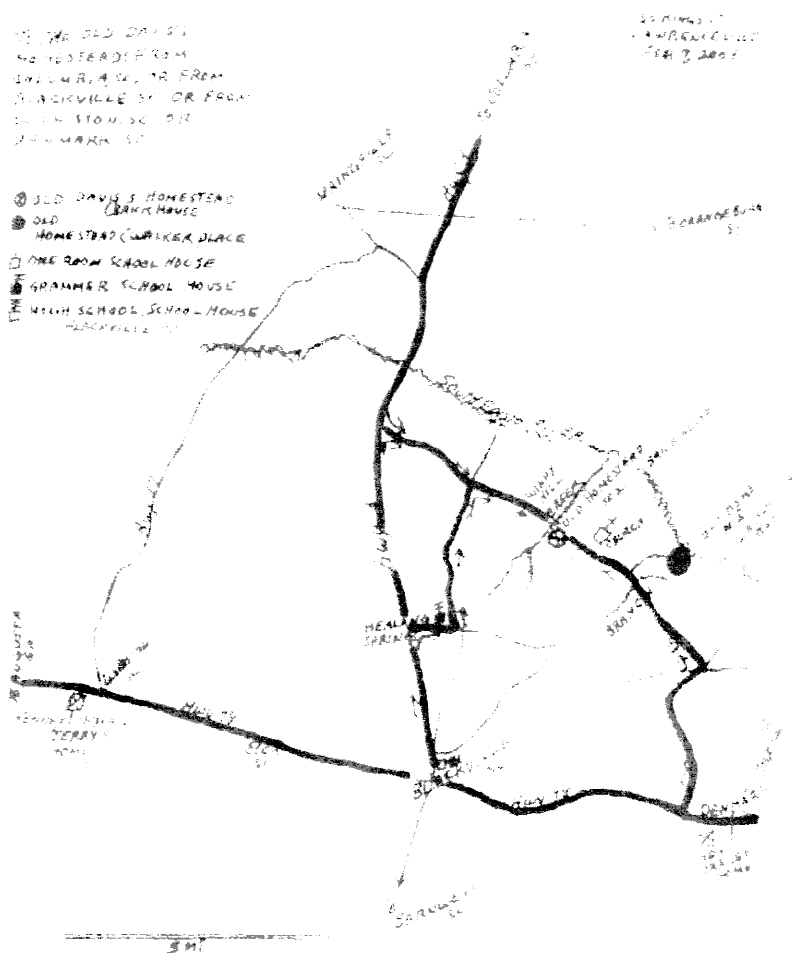
He persuaded his nephew Judson, to stop making caskets and work for him at the whiskey still. Starting out, the necessary materials and ingredients had to be hauled by wagon from Blackville, to the Davis's landing on the Edisto River, and then by boat, deep into the river swamps and finally to the mysterious and secret location , constructing, building and finalizing the finish product , alcohol. This mode of transportation was soon, about to be changed. It was told by my father, the first batch of whiskey, from his liquor still was given to his friends and the sheriff's of Barnwell and Bamberg counties. Things really changed around the Davis's household, on the weekend you could hardly look down the road without seeing a customer coming or going. Currently, without motor transportation he had to do all the bottling and selling the whiskey from the smokehouse at the rear of the house and the surplus hidden throughout the wooded area and broom sage fields.

Map of the old homestead on the Walker Place and the new brick home



location, between hi-way 78, Denmark, S.C. and Hi-way 3, from Blackville, S.C. to Springfield S.C. Notice the branch creek that I spoke of earlier, between the Walker place and the Davis Landing at the Edisto River, and between the house and Bob Walkers's home, also the wagon road leading to the mudding pond. The car shed was across the road from the house.

MAP OF OLD HOMESTEAD AND NEW BRICK HOME



The money started pouring in and my father was experiencing a change in his life that he had never expected, and I don't think he ever understood or to comprehend just how to handle the unexpected change. He had worked so hard all his life, and barely could feed his family, and now he had a goal, to become a man like Bob Walker, become independent, build him a home, and become a land owner. Mama was still solemn and uncomfortable with the new endeavor and didn't hesitate to let it be known, however she did demand two things from Papa, one being a corset, and the other to fix the privy [out house] so as, the ducks and chicken's would not interfere with nature's call. The back bottom half of the out house was open, whereby the ducks, chickens or whatever, had free access, for the sole purpose of disposing the waste. Meanwhile, when sitting, your bottom is exposed to the elements and it was fare picking's for those barnyard residents to disturb your moments of relief. Mama wanted that opening closed. The first request was honored but the second went unheeded because the male members of the family, when nature called, mostly went to the wooded area or behind the barn or any surrounding area for privacy, [A better privy was in Mama's future, from which I will speak of later.]

Supply and demand for the moonshine was getting into the critical stage, and Papa and Judson decided to go into full swing day and night. Papa, persuaded and hired another, close friend of the family, John Henry Williams and two other individuals, Lee, the black man I introduced to you earlier, and Otis Williams, another nephew, the son of his sister, aunt Victorie [Vick].

My father was a very proud and excited man the day he purchased his first automobile from A.V. Cullom, a close friend of his too whom own the dealership in Blackville. It was a big box type body chevrolet, four door's with a trunk attached to the rear, large enough to place one ten gallon keg of moonshine for transporting and delivering with no problem.

Just down the road from the house there was once a sawmill, deserted, leaving a pile of old discarded slabs that was removed to square logs in preparation for sawing lumber. With the mule and wagon, we kids hauled those slabs to the house for papa to build a car shed for our new automobile.

The transition and acceleration that was taking place in the sharecroppers home was unbelievable and exciting. In the past couple of years or so, my father had purchased the two mules from Mr. Walker to increase his share of

the crops yield. My siblings were running the farm to my father's satisfaction, he owned his cane mill , his new enterprise was doing exceptionally well and was the proud owner of a brand new chevrolet and a shed to keep it in. I remember those days well, as if it were only yesterday, My Dad was a very happy and exhilarating man, cheerful of his determination and calculated accomplishments, and very happy to provide a better standard of living for his family. Mama? Well she was still a little reserved about the fast pace she was experiencing, the outcome, and what it might do to my father and how it may effect the whole family.

Well, as time moved on, around 1929/1930, working day and night, Papa came to the conclusion that the one still ,just was not producing enough liquor to support the demand and decided to construct and build another side by side conformable to the existing still to conserve labor and material.

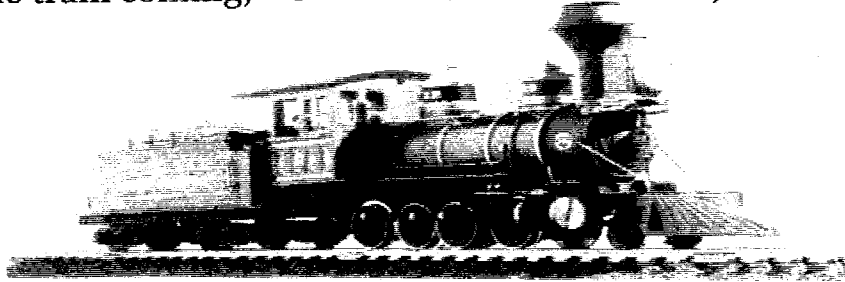
Judson, Papa's nephew had left and John Henry was in charge of producing the alcohol, Papa handling the business end and was mostly on the road selling and delivering. In afterthought, I think what prompted Papa into increasing his production, was due the fact a Mr Battum, a timber giant, the president of the Battum Lumber Company, a huge operation, was being located just south of Springfield, S.C. near the South Edisto River. This operation as I remember was a little town within itself. It required huge amounts of manpower and people with a wide variety of skills. There was a steam locomotive [train] and a railroad that eventually reached from Springfield to Parkers ferry S.C. An operation of this magnitude, had lumberman and saw filers, clerks and engineers, cooks, cable riggers, lumber stackers, fireman and dozens of other specialist. Fabricated shacks or cabins was available for the loggers and their families and a commissary, "company store" to provide clothing, staple foods, hardware and other essentials needed by the lumbermen and their families. The employees used company scrip nicknamed 'babbitt.' when a purchase was made the babbitt, the aluminum metal coinage was exchanged for merchandise. When the lumber company was in full operation, my Dad's thriving business increased substantially. My father accepted the scrip, "babbitt", in exchange for his merchandise and exchange it for dollars at the company administrative office.

It was a momentous occasion for the Davis family when the railroad was under construction and the railroad ties and tracks were being laid between the house and the Branch Creek.

As the harvesting of the timber preceded into the swamps, and parallel to the Edisto River, the cross ties and tracks were laid and built by the lumbermen simultaneously as the cutting of timber progressed.

The skidder were steamed operated and used to performed the vital link of dragging logs from the woods to the railroad for loading. They were equipped with long steel cables and pulled by horses for the long distance into the woods and attached to the logs with grapple hooks, The skidder was always move ahead on rails by the train and placed at the end of the rail line, when all the timber was cut in the surrounding area and haul to the lumber mill, an already rail line was built by the lumbermen to the next cutting area, all men and equipment was moved, and the same process became evident, starting all over again in a different location.

The Battum lumber company, no doubt changed the entire landscape in the our two counties, Barnwell and Bamberg and gave the older children a bigger and better play ground to expense with their time. Early in the morning we could hear the train coming, we would rush out the door, down the sandy

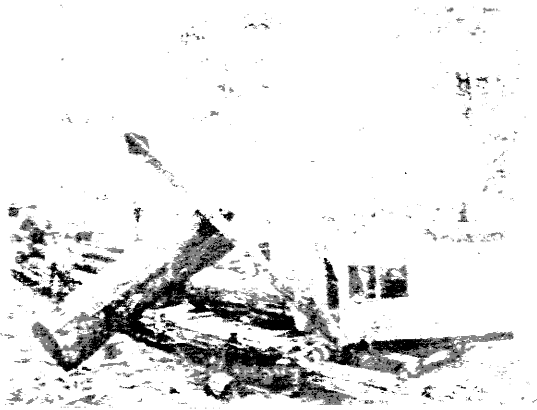


A Replica of the Battum wood burner logging train

road and wait for the train to pass, waving at the many lumbermen sitting on the flat cars with their feet and legs hanging off the side, heading for the days work. It was times when me and my brother H.D. would hop the train cars and ride to the working site. You can't imagine the astonishment and the excitement that was instill in two adolescence, the activity and sound that was vibrating throughout the swamp, the loud hissing and smoking, bellowing from the skidder, pulling and dragging the logs from the swamp, the lumber-jacks screaming to the top on their voice to override the loud noise. The sound of the axes and saws, as the force behind them penetrate the wood to trim and fell trees, the sound of huge trees falling and the sound of TIMBER being yelled, and echoed throughout the swamp. The first aid station busy treating the injured from small cuts and bruises to snake bites. Ever man carrying out his duties as a lumber-jack and doing it well.



Train trestle made by lumber-jacks



Steam powered loader [skidder]

The railroad had a slightly upward slope emerging from the swamp to the higher elevation in the open field between the house and Branch Creek and due to the heavy load could hardly make the grade and would almost come to a complete halt. A contraption was located in front of the wheels with sand to be released on the tracks for a firmer grip to prevent the wheels from spinning. Every Friday at the end of the work day and the beginning of the weekend, the engineer would stop the train with it's heavy load and the woodsman that wanted to make a purchase from my Dad would make a mad dash for the smokehouse, others remaining with the train putting sand on the tracks, shoving more wood into the furnace to build more steam for a smoother start. When the engineer tooted the whistle and pulled the forward lever, the little steam locomotive with it's heavy load ,and with all its power would huff and puff , smoke rushing from it's smoke stack, wheels spinning despite the sand, slowly moving forward until the wheels had a firm grip, picking up speed and finally on its way, whistle blowing, celebrating a job well done.

My two brothers Blend Joe, H.D. and myself, with our evil little minds to fulfill part of our daily routine of mischievous behavior, when we would hear the train coming with its load of logs at a far distance picking up speed for the upper slope climb, we would fetch a can of axle grease from the wagon shed and grease the railroad tracks, hide and watch the train as it came in contact with the axle grease. I don't have to explain to you what happened, you can imagine yourself, and whatever comes to mind it did. We didn't try that again and knew our Dad was aware of what happened and who caused that catastrophe. We waited for a few days and knew that our rear ends would accept full payment for what we had done. Papa had a thing about letting things of this nature hang for awhile, letting you sweat a day or two and then at any moment start whistling,[we knew what that whistle was all about] disappearing and returning with a branch, cut from a small tree or a large unbreakable switch, and then the dancing began. At times when we boys needed discipline, inlieu of disciplining each one individually and to save his strength he would place us inside of a circle drawn on the ground, giving each a switch or small brush with several limbs and taking one himself , he would give us instruction to place ourselves inside the circle and start flailing the hell out of each other and whom ever stepped outside the circle, he would take his switch or brush and whip him back inside the circle..Did those whipping do us any good? I guess they did, at least until the next time.