

Everything was going well, for my mother and father and no one could understand, why all the homes he had built for his tenants and good homes that were already standing on the land he had purchased, why were they still living in that Ramshackle old house on the Walker place.

Mama and Papa, was giving a lot of thought as to the type of home they wanted to build, and just where the location would be. They were in no hurry to move from the Walker Place until all their planning were completed and in place, they were land holders now and they had plenty of time to decide where and when, they wanted to build their dream home, Several places or locations were discussed and satisfactory to Mama, but my Dad always came back to that, ideal place, as he put it, on top of the hill overlooking Windy Hill Creek. One exception, the ideal place had an overgrown ancient, and deserted cemetery, one would guess around 100 years old, with approximately four or five broken weathered tombs, with a couple still standing and leaning, with descriptions not legible or decipherable. Mama fought hard against that location but to her dismay, and Papa's strong determination bent on that location, she had no alternative but to compromise and admit defeat.

Things were really in the upswing with my father the fall and winter prior to building our brick home. The tenants farming the land were doing a great job, he had bales of cotton in the barn, stacks of hay in the fields, plenty of corn stored away, had a good year with his produce farming and a good market for his homemade spirits. I don't mind admitting, at my young age, the vibration from my father's ingenuity and perseverance, had instilled in me what I wanted to become when I grew up, a man like my Dad, a bootlegger and a self made man and farmer. I guess I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at the time and riding the school bus to Blackville, I don't think it was a single day that I didn't get into a ruckus with some one on the bus or school grounds. Feeling good about my family's richness and progress in the past few years or so, I felt that I was as equal or more so, to those of my fellow acquaintances that assumed a farm kid was a less than average individual. During my frequent altercation or squabbles with a fellow student, as soon as he mention anything about my Dad making liquor, I reciprocated by sending him home with a bloody nose. My father became very impatient and a little irritated with me, sometimes when he came home, he would announce how he was approached by some parent in town, demanding that I stop assaulting their child. My thoughts

were as long as they continue their arrogant ways of speaking ill of my father making moonshine they will continue to get their bloody noses. Amen to that!.

In the beginning of the year in 1932, my father began making plans to build our new house and discussed it with Mama, and since the location was already determined, he had sketch out a rough draft on a brown paper bag with eight rooms, indoor bath, [don't ask me why an indoor bath, with no electricity or running water] four fireplaces , one in the dining room, one in each of the two center bedrooms and one in the living room. A screen and open porch on the sides and a porch on front and back. When finished the home will be in the shape of a "H", for Haskell.

The clearing and leveling of the location began with his field hands, leaving several big oak trees, dogwood and wild cheery , leaving the tombs where be, undisturbed. Soon, thereafter the lumber and materials was delivered and stacked on location. My father had employed two brothers, well known for their expertise in professional carpentry to build our home. The bricks were ordered from Augusta, Ga. And was delivered by rail and the rail cars was on a side tracked just south of Springfield, S.C. H.D. my brother and myself, had the privilege, as my father put it, to hitch the mules to the two horse wagon and haul every single brick from Springfield to the site, and stack them in a neat pile. Papa, was waiting for us at the rail cars when we arrived and with a pencil, indicating with a drawn line inside the wagon as to the height to load the bricks considering the load weight the mules could pull. I haven't seen so many bricks in all my days, and thought we would never haul all these bricks, but thinking where we were living on the Walker place, and these bricks were going to be used in building our new home, my enthusiasm and excitement became more evident. We loaded the wagon according to our Dads wishes and thought we would never finish unloading those rail cars, and decided to add a little more bricks in the wagon, a little more, and a little more. It was late evening, our last load for the day and we had about twice as many bricks in the wagon in direct disrespect for our fathers wishes, and about half way to the building site, a car was coming in our direction, and as we pulled the wagon to the side, the wheels got bogged down in the sand, the mules being exhausted refused to budge any further, as the car pulled along side, Yep, you guessed it, our father! Looking straight at H.D. and myself sitting up in the wagon, the mules inhaling and exhaling as if they had just finished running

the Kentucky derby, and the overload of bricks. He slowly exited the car, whistling while cutting switches from the side of the road, and you can imagine what happened next. After the whipping, came the lecture which was equal to the whipping. We unloaded the excess bricks and stacked them side the road with instructions after unloading this load at the building site to take these mules to the barn and exchange them for two more and return and fetch those bricks we left side of the road. After unhitching and putting the mules in the corral and feeding them we finished about 2;00 o'clock in the morning and still had to walk to the Walker place where we lived. The moral of this story?? You better damn well listen to your parents and do exactly what you are told.

During the building process and prior completion and cosmetics being performed, my Dad bought all new furniture including new beds and bedding, storing the bedding on the screen porch where Papa and we boys slept several weeks before the actual move-in, and me, not having one thought, of the century old cemetery, lying quietly underneath. What a wonderful experience for this little sandy haired boy, at that time, with an experience that still mingles .

When the move was finally made from the Walker place to our new home the transition was most extraordinary, exhilarating and exciting.. a new beginning for the Davis family. A family that was look upon by the community as a family on the move and demanded by our father, despite his wealth, and his believing in the old "proverb" that we kids do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

It was a great change for me, having to change schools from Blackville to Healing Springs grammar school, being in their district, first through the seventh grade. Papa had the bus driver to extend his route to our house, whereby he would turn around in our front yard, a big welcome change from the mile walk, to the Blackville bus stop from the Walker place. Healing Springs school was more to my liking than Blackville, due to the fact that all the kids attending healing Springs were kids from the farming community and we had more things in common with each other. Definitely it was less fighting and more socializing and studding. I kinda settled down during my tenure at Healing Springs school before returning to Blackville, high school. I and my sister, Chris was the only siblings attending school during this time and between my studies and helping on the farm I stayed pretty well busy.

Papa in the main time were in the process of obtaining a larger sugarcane mill and syrup kettle to be constructed on the edge of the property between the house and the main road to accommodate the influx of cane growers in the surrounding area that were expected in the fall to have their sugarcane processed into syrup during the sugarcane harvest.

The mill was a four or five stalk feed, meaning, one could grind five stalks of sugarcane at one feeding, whereby his previous one was a two stalk feed.

His expectation and timing of the syrup mill was constructed and completed on time and the first year was in a abundance of wagon loads of sugarcane piled high around the mill waiting to be processed.

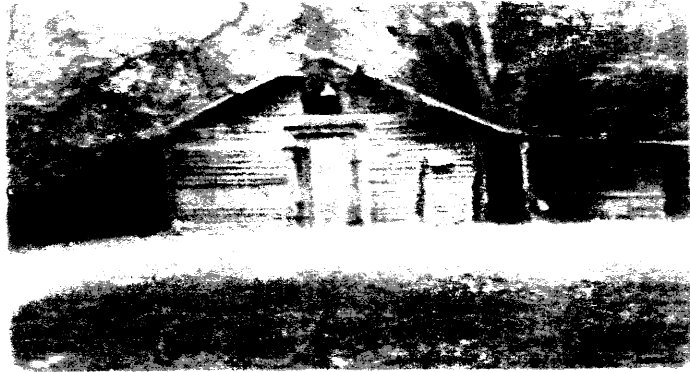
It was a lot of activity going on during the syrup making as I mention in the early stages of my writing. but this operation was much larger and the hours much longer, from before daybreak to long after dark.

In addition to the syrup mill, my father also constructed a varmint proof smokehouse with cement floors and metal wall sheathing . The smokehouse served as a double convenience, one being a part to smoke, cure and store meats, the other part was used as a little country store where the field hands could purchase on credit the necessary goods needed between crops to be settled at harvest time. .at the end of the syrup making season, the little country store was piled high with cans of the best finger licking syrup you have ever tasted and by the beginning of the next syrup making season there was not a can to be had.

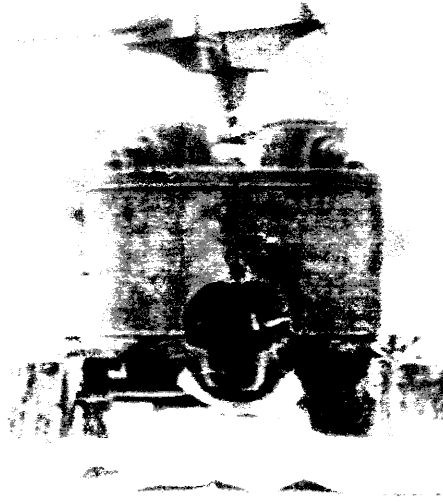
Mama, wanted to increased her flock of chickens and I remember she wanted, especially the Rhode Island Red Chicken that laid the brown eggs, the eggs she liked for cooking, and the White Rock chicken, known for their laying ability. There was one thing standing in her way and that was, she was lacking a place to keep them. Haskell, she would say, I'm ordering the chickens and you had better have me a place to keep them when they get here. She said it, he did it.

Papa constructed a huge two story fowl house, the bottom used for her chickens to roost and the top story, with a little balcony extended out over the entrance to the fowl house was used for storage, or whatever, Mama was a very pleased and happy woman. It didn't take much to please my Mama.

The smoke house was used for many things other than smoking meat. It was also used for the women folks to take baths in washing tubs for privacy, for canning, especially in the summertime, when wild berries, plumbs, pears, etc were plentiful, and a little country store.



The smokehouse



Five stalk sugarcane mill



Top  
Mr Huffman Mercantile Store  
Blackville, S.C.

Bottom  
Healing Springs  
Blackville, S.C.

Despite my fathers mogul disposition and reputation in the community, he was also a man of concern and very compassionate for others , he was highly respected by the people from the community especially the black population. My father always gave unconditionally and without any obligation to his fellow man in need. He was an expert in his favorite sports, fishing and hunting. He would bring tubs of fish from the river and game from the swamps, and with grain and produce from the farm, he would travel through the tri county community sharing with the most needy. At the beginning of the depression this was a welcome gift for the poor and well appreciated. Mr A.V. Cullum , the Auto dealer, and Mr Grey, Blackville's police chief and close friends of my Dad would occasionally accompany him on these trips. I think only for the celebration they would have after all the deliveries, sampling my father's moonshine. My father and Mr Cullum would always get into their usual friendly argument . I don't think anything serious could ever come in between those two people. They were just about inseparable. Papa would always tease Mr. Cullum about his face after being shot by Jessie Morris and everyone knew, for all intent and purposes ,the shot was ment for my Dad. Let me go back and elaborate a little on this occasion.

It was in June, of 1930, Papa and George Morris, father of Jessie and Monnie, was always feuding . They lived up on the main road from the Walker place where I caught the school bus. His younger children and I played together often, especially shooting marbles. The elder Morris and my father had, had several altercation concerning allegations the elder Morris interfering with my fathers lifestyle and profession, one being reporting my father to the authorities about making illegal whisker. The day before the shooting, my father and Mr Cullum went to the Morris's home to address the situation with the elder Morris and not being at home, Jessie and Monnie, the sons of George Morris accosted my father and Mr. Cullum on behalf of their father and my father gave Jessie a whipping of his lifetime, while Mr. Cullum keeping Monnie at bay. The next day my Dad and Mr. Cullum were coming out from home on the Walker Place in clear view of the Morris's home. In front of the Morris's home was a big tall oak tree where Jessie and Monnie were hidden, Jessie with a 44 caliber rifle. Jessie as he claimed, fearing further trouble were waiting and as they neared the house opened fire with a

single shot, missed my Dad and took effect in the lower part of Mr. Cullum's face, knocking out his teeth and cutting off part of his tongue. Papa drove him to Blackville where first aid was given and from there to Columbia, S.C. for hospitalization. Jessie took full responsibility for his actions, and was tried for aggravated battery, etc and found not guilty. Yes, it was an uproar as they said, but nothing could be done under the circumstances, according to Edgar Brown, a lawyer from Barnwell County [not the trial lawyer] and a good friend of my Dad and Mr. Cullum, and later a senator from Barnwell County and president of the South Carolina Senate. I think he, as it was told, gave them a friendly dressing down, and recommend they hold their temper and be less responsive to violent situations. Maybe OK for A.V., but my father?

It was no doubt that my father was a survivor and an icon of the community no one was ever surprised at his antics or his mischievous acts or capers. Aunt Laura had since returned home to Augusta, Ga. And Papa went to Blackville to fetch an elderly lady to come stay with us for awhile and help Mama in her household chores. He was gone a few days and Mama didn't seem to worry, knowing he would be back with some excuse that really didn't matter to her one way or another. When he returned home, she learned he had gone to Augusta to return with another housekeeper, instead he had returned with two teenage black boys, Neal, and Bubber. He had gone to a barber shop for a haircut and Neal and Bubber was the shoeshine boys and he brought them home. He told Mama no one was staying in the storage space above the fowl house and this was a good way to get it occupied and will be good playmates for us kids. He would pile all us kids including Neal and Bubber, in the trailer and take us for a ride on Sundays. He would always stop at this one particular gas station in Bamberg for cokes for all and this trip we had Neal and Bubber and someone asked Papa pointing to the trailer, is all those your kids? Papa said, yes, the guy said how about those two, pointing at Neal and Bubber, Papa said yes, they were born at night. We thought the world of Neal and Bubber, they became part of the family and stayed with us for several years. With Mama's blessing, my Dad returned to Augusta for another housekeeper. Her epileptic seizures was getting no better and it was required that she have someone with her or close around, when she had one of her spells to administer as much aid and comfort as possible. It was no medication at this time, as it is now, for her condition.

Her name was Nell, blonde, 160 pounds [approx] 5'7" [approx] at the beginning a good worker, dedicated and performed her duties well, until she became more like Miss Cora and she too was shown the door with instruction

from Mama not to reenter , she walked to Clarence Williams house, about three miles, for whom were sharecropping for Jeff Hair, Clarence had a son named Fletch, lost one eye and several fingers from dynamiting fish in the Edisto River, Nell and Fletch became common law husband and wife.

To get the housekeepers out the way, the next was Bonnie, from Kingstree, S.C. and the last was Willow Mina, from Norway, S.C. She had a child by my father, she was christen Matha Ann, last known residents, Charleston, S.C.

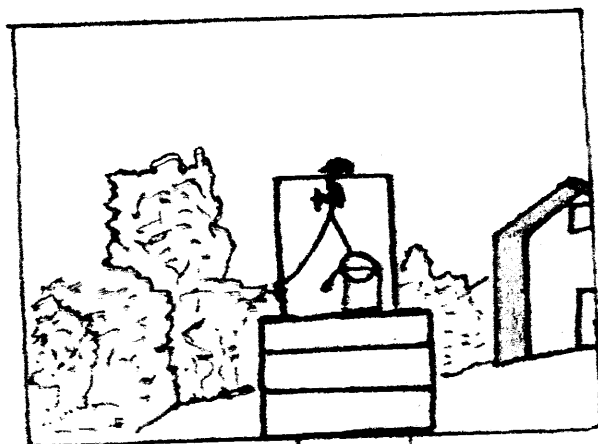
Early on after moving into the new brick home we had addition cosmetics for final completion, landscaping, lightning rods to be installed on top of the house, paint trimming, etc and above all a deep well had to be excavated for water. Mama wanted the water supply completed before they started building the house, but Papa couldn't decide if he wanted another pitcher pump well or to excavate a well with a rope pulley and bucket. and since the location of the house was going to be situated well above Windy hill creek and on top of a red clay hill, he knew he had to go very deep to reach the water line.

Tootsie, a black man and very good friend, profession, was digging wells, mostly for the pitcher type pump wells. Even though Tootsie was a well digger he had no well for himself, and his wife Mary had to tote water from their neighbors house. While Papa and Tootsie were bickering back and forth as to the most efficient well, the house had already been built.

Papa decided on the open well with the pulley, and Tootsie would delay starting the excavating, and Papa had Mr. Boylston from Healing Springs to dig him a shallow flowing well on the edge of Windy Hill Creek with a Ram, a pump that raises water by the force of the water itself falling through a pipe. Pushing the water up the hill was a grave task for the Ram pump and the water was limited too about one gallon for every three or four minutes.

Tootsie finally started the well, and had excavated about ten or twelve feet and couldn't or wouldn't go any further. He was absent a few days and when Papa faced him about his problem, Tootsie stated the walls was caving in around him and it was decided that Tootsie, was suffering from an illness, better know claustrophobia.

My Dad searched the countryside looking for someone that could dig him that well, he did not want another pitcher pump, due to freezing in the winter time. Carlisle, my brother, new how important it was for our Dad to have that well excavated and have plenty of water, and volunteered to dig the well. Our father was astatic. What do you know about digging a well 50 feet in the ground?.



40 foot well excavated by  
By my brother Carlisle at  
Our new home.

