FILE: T-BrownEffie-2006-10-15
INTERVIEWEE: Effie King Brown (EB)
DATE INTERVIEWED: Sunday, October 15, 2006
WHERE INTERVIEWED: Brown home, Check, Floyd County, Virginia
INTERVIEWER: Patricia Jacobs (PJ)
TRANSCRIBER: Patricia Jacobs
DATA CHECKER: Kathleen Ingoldsby
AUDIO TOTAL LENGTH: 108:41 minutes

Tape 1, Side B [selected excerpts from 25 page transcript]

PJ: Do you think Floyd County has changed in your lifetime?
EB: Very much.
PJ: How?
EB: Well, first of all, the transportation system. When I was walking to Check to school, there was nothing in the county except dirt roads. No stone; no gravel. Nothing but pure dirt, pure mud [laughs] in the wintertime. Dust in the summer. In 1924, there was—the spring of 1924, there was some stuff ground, crushed stone, on what is now 221. [Floyd Highway North] The first school bus in the county ran in the fall of 1924. One bus made two trips. Today, there is full consolidation. There are no one-room schools. There is one high school. At that time, there were four, I guess. Alum Ridge had two-year high school, and there were three others that had four year in 1924. So, they've all been consolidated into one high school. We have four elementary schools instead of one hundred one-room schools. There was no telephone system in the school; now every room has a telephone.
PJ: Every room? I haven't been in a public school in forever.
EB: [laughs] There was no such thing as a computer in those days, not even a radio. So, the radio and television and the computer, the different science equipment, and the special teachers for the children with special needs. The "phys ed" program has really changed. [physical education]
PJ: How?

EB: We had a basketball team at Check, but our court was out on the playground. Now there's an indoor court. There's a bus to take you to practice and bring you back. Then the bus took the children in the afternoon to play the ball game, and we had to wait for it to get back to bring us home. And that meant we couldn't go to the game.

PJ: Uh-huh.

EB: And there's no ball, no basketball played outdoors now. So, it's on an indoor court. It was played outside when I was in school because we had no indoor court. There was no lunchroom program. You carried your own lunch or done without.

PJ: You did without?

EB: [points toward sofa] Over there's my lunch basket.

PJ: Where?

EB: [laughs] When we were all going to the one-room school we carried it in that.

PJ: That basket?

EB: My father made it.

PJ: Oh.

EB: For the older ones. Now what else has changed. Oh, the water system. One-room school we drank out of the bucket. Now, they have a spigot for you [laughs] at the school.

PJ: When did you first see some of these changes like a television or a radio or a car? Did someone bring them into Floyd County?

EB: Well, yes, there was a car, two car salesmen in Floyd. One for Ford and one for Chevrolet. My sister bought a Model-A Ford in Floyd in 1930, I guess, '31, for $500. I bought a new Chevrolet from the Chevrolet place in Floyd. I bought a '37 model for $650. Good car. A very good car.

PJ: But before that, when you were a child, where did you see that first car?

EB: This little road right, right out here went all the way through, and my home was off of that road. It went down the road. I could hear it coming from up here, and I go out on the front porch and stand up on the bench so I could see the car. It was a man who had served in World War I and had come home and had bought a car. And at that time, ladies didn't drive a car. It was the man. The first car I ever rode in was my uncle's car who had the store over here. He had more money than the rest of the Kings. He always

operated the store. And we were--we had walked, my mother, dad and I had walked to church, and he picked us up and brought us down to the store by the house.

PJ: Well, I'm going to ask you a few more questions about yourself. This area that you live in, does it have a special name?

EB: It's called Simpsons, and it's called Locust Grove.

PJ: You can use either one; it would mean the same thing?

EB: Simpsons was the post office, and it was named for William, no, not William, Allen Simpsons who came from Connecticut in the very early 1800s and settled at the top of Shawsville Mountain. He was asked why he stopped there and took up land which was very mountainous, but very pretty. He said he had gotten to the end of the road. I guess he had. That was only just a pass-way then. The post office was established in 1823 and was named Simpsons after the Simpson family. Only, I think, it had an "s" on to it, Simpsons.

PJ: And how did Locust Grove get its name? Because there's --

EB: Well, in about the same time, the mail, early or mid-eighties, 1880s, the mail come from Christiansburg across Pilot Mountain, the way you come, and went on out to 221 straight ahead. And turned at the top of Franklin County at Pine Spur [Pine Spur Overlook] and went into Franklin County and then into Botetourt. Fincastle. There was no road up Bent Mountain. So in that area was a relay station where the person who was carrying the mail could change horses and spend the night. And other people did, too. So, sort of a tavern-like. But it was a relay station also for the change of the horses. And the man who owned it set twelve locust trees around his front yard and called his place Locust Grove. The whole community picked up that name, Locust Grove. One of those posts is still standing at that place, and the Union flag and the Confederate flag, both, were flown over that post during the Civil War. There is a Mrs. Vest lived there. Her father was a well-known school teacher, Brownlow Light. But she married, she was a Christine Light who married a Vest. [1940 U.S. Census: Light family, Brownlow, 62; Della, 47; Christine, 16; Binford, 24. Locust Grove, Virginia]

PJ: How did Check get its name? That's an unusual name. Do you know?

EB: Yes. [laughs] I'll tell you that one, too.

PJ: All right. [slight background noise, rocking chair creak]

EB: There was a store in Check owned by Mr. Harvey Poff. The men gathered there and played checkers. And sometimes, they didn't go home for lunch. They just stayed all day. And if any of the women visited each other, and, of course, they had no telephones then, they'd say, "Where's so-and-so?" And they'd say, "Well, I guess he's at Check, playing checkers." "I guess he's playing checkers." Not Check. "I guess he's gone to checkers. He's not home. I guess he's at checkers." Well, it come a time when they were going to apply for a post office, and they suggested the name Checkers, because that's what they called the store. They applied for Checkers, and that was already the name of one post office in Virginia. So they settled on Check instead of Checkers. And it's been Check ever since. Check once had a bank.

PJ: Did it?

EB: It once had a bank. It once had a movie theater—silent, of course. It once had a coach factory.

PJ: A coat factory? [1888-89 coach and wagon builders: J.M. Collins, Check; J. R. Conner, Check; *Chataignes Virginia Gazetteer and Classified Business Directory*]

EB: It once had two stores instead of one. It had two mills, when it didn't have none. Now we have none. And the fourth-grade at Check, a couple of years ago, made a little book on Check. I went over and talked to them. Here's you a picture of the old days at Check. It shows the Check, the State Check of Bank, State Bank of Check. [laughs] That opened in 1918, January 1st. My school teacher was Mr., I was in the first grade; my school teacher was Mr. Daniel S. Lucas. He bid us goodbye at Christmas, and said he wouldn't be back. He was going to the Check Bank to be the cashier of the State Bank of Check.