

## Double Birthday Celebration



Mrs. Oyn Hammonds of the Saddlecreek Community celebrated her 87th birthday on Feb. 15 at the Lennie Hammonds Apartments' Club House. Mrs. Hammonds is the wife of the late James Lattie Hammonds and the daughter of the late Rev. and Mrs. Huey Smith.

She is one of the oldest members of Bethel Hill Church. She is the mother of eleven children. Four of them are deceased. The surviving seven are: Mrs. Archie Bell of Shannon and Mrs. Moses Chavis of Lumberton, Mrs. Lennie Hammonds of Lumberton, Mrs. Eusebia Scroggle of Chicago, Ill., Mr. James T. Hammonds of Mary land, Mr. Earl Hammonds of Norfolk, Va., MR. Erytie Hammonds of Rex.

Mrs. Hammonds has lived to see her fifth generation. She has 52 grandchildren and 81 great grandchildren and

four great-great grand children.

Her surviving sisters are Mrs. Maggie Lowery of Fayetteville, Mrs. Cassie Chavis of Pembroke, Mrs. Lillie Hammonds of Lumberton, Mrs. Martha Chavis of Pembroke, Mrs. Ethel Jacobs of St. Pauls.

Also celebrating her birthday was Mrs. Hammonds' daughter, Mrs. Moses Chavis of Lumberton. She has seven children. They are Mrs. Virginia L. Simpson of Summerfield, NC, Mrs. Linda Lois Brayboy, Miss Rita Chavis, all of Lumberton, Mrs. Barbara Mendoza of California, Mr. Abner Jr. Chavis of Alabama, Mr. Michael Chavis of Boston City, LA, Mr. Ronnie L. Chavis of Lumberton.

There were approximately 125 persons attending the party for Mrs. Hammonds and Mrs. Chavis who are shown above.

## GROWING UP IN ROBESON COUNTY

by Ronald H. Lowry

### GROWING UP IN ROBESON COUNTY

Growing up in Robeson County before the advent of modern conveniences gave one a good insight of life as it was lived by the people in the rural regions of the county during its early history. Today's technology has both simplified and complicated the way modern families go about living their daily activities. Easy push button gadgetry has taken most of the physical work out of the daily routine chores required to operate a modern household. Disposable products are convenient, save time, available in all shapes and sizes, and quantities ready for use when wanted. The primary motives for the output of products from today's technology seem to be the enhancement of comfort for the consumer, requiring less energy to utilize, and the American custom of gaining a monetary return. The monetary motive for technological advancements has put a great strain on today's average families as they undertake the task of earning the money to pay for the products which sustain their comfort. The stress generated by the fact that both spouses of more families are having to work outside the home, is creating more problems inside the home. The proliferation of disposable products has created a garbage disposal problem throughout the country. By eliminating much of the physical effort formerly required to operate and use products for our welfare, plus over indulgence in what we consume have created many health problems.

**FIREPLACE**  
Even though the masonry open type fireplace is a very inefficient home heating system, it was the primary heating source for homes in Colonial America and rural Robeson County when I was growing up there. Wood was plentiful, but it took lots of man powered energy to convert it into a form suitable for producing heat for your comfort in cold weather, or for cooking food the year round.

The fireplace was a good aid for bringing the family close together during the winter time, because of a natural tendency to seek its heating effects. The drafty and non-insulated houses made it necessary for families to cluster in close proximity around the hearth in order to receive benefits from its heat producing capacity. Usually one would get pretty well cooked on the fireside while still being chilled on the backside. To county this dilemma, one would stand up in front of the fire and perform a 180 degree rotation periodically.

Before the television era, and I go back before the first battery powered radios came into the average farm home in Robeson County, the family devised ways to entertain themselves without having to spend much money. The fireplace served as the setting for wintertime entertainment for my family. Since small family farming provided very little cash on hand, we had to be quite conservative in how money was spent. We would make one item serve our needs, such as having only one kerosene lamp, one shot gun, one ax, one cross cut saw, one iron kettle and even only one checker board. Since the checker board only took two people to play the game, we played a game called "Fox And The Geese" on a home made game board drawn out on cardboard. A large white button served as the fox and several grains of corn were the geese. In the game the fox attempted to single out the geese and jump them one at the time while the geese tried to work as a unit in attempting to pen the fox in a corner. We even had a little game of chance going on around the fireplace, after having parched some home grown peanuts called "Jack-In-The-Bush." In the game, requiring two players, the first one would conceal a certain number of peanuts in his hand, or he could have no peanuts in his hand. The second player would make a guess at the correct number of peanuts in the hand, and if he guessed correctly, the handful of peanuts was his to keep. On the

other hand, if he under guessed or over guessed the number of peanuts in the hand, he would have to make up the difference between the actual count and his estimation. The player concealing the peanuts usually had the advantage, therefore each player had an equal opportunity at concealing peanuts in his hand. This was a game you literally played for peanuts, but it served as a means for making many long winter nights enjoyable around the fireplace.

An open fireplace served other purposes beside producing heat for comfort in Robeson County before the advent of electrification. Before synthetic fabrics, most all cloth materials were made from either cotton or wool, and it had to be ironed. A household usually had two flat irons, which were heated in front of the fireplace. By using an exchange procedure, one could iron without interruption, because there was always a hot iron ready in front of the fireplace. Some people used their fireplaces for cooking, but we always had a good wood burning cook stove to serve us. I have roasted a few birds over a fire in the fireplace on a skewer stick for in between meal snacks when a good snowfall was on the ground. These were usually victims lured into a trap or under a deadfall with corn meal after a snow storm.

### IRON KETTLE

We were required to take Saturday night baths, while growing up in Robeson County, but bathing during the rest of the week was optional. This custom took a little more effort and was not as enjoyable a task to perform as is the case under modern conditions in cold weather. An eight quart cast iron kettle was the primary hot water heating system, and the fireplace provided the heat. Some times we used warm water from the water tank attached to the cook stove as one side of the fireplace in a galvanized wash tub, while the family shared the heat. The tub of water we only emptied once, and that was after everyone had taken his turn in the weekly ritual. Your place in line for taking a bath was determined by one's initiative in getting the necessary equipment set up. The first in line had to get a good fire going in addition to the other chores required to get a Saturday night bathing party underway. The iron kettle full of hot

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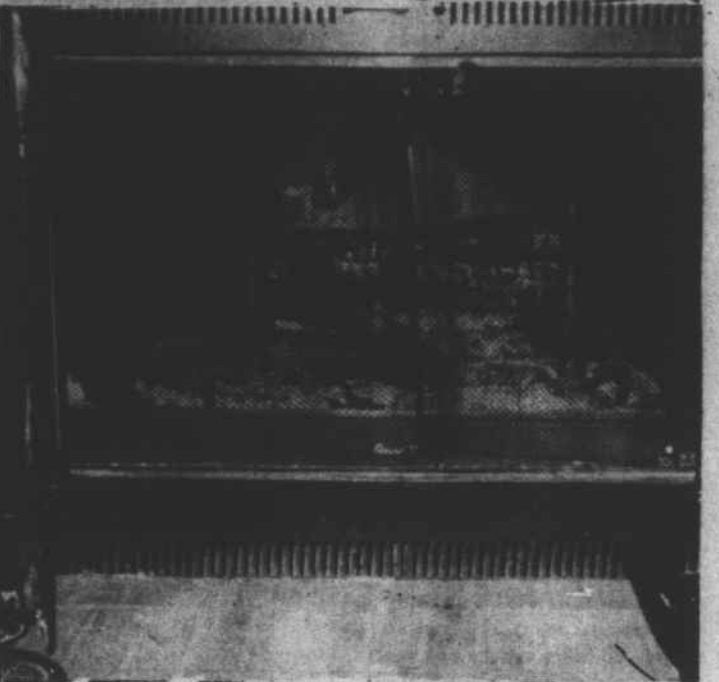
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water was maintained in order to keep the temperature of the water for Saturday night baths, when I was growing up in Robeson County, has been given a special place on the fireplace hearth in my home here in Virginia. This hot water heating system of the past is still useful today as a "Nut caddy", and serves to remind me of earlier times when the fireplace was at the center of the family circle on long winter nights.

### Cross Cut Saw

Today the chain saw has reduced most of the work formerly required to get wood from standing trees into a usable form for burning. One of the negative sides to the influx of chain saws is the fact that they are traumatizing human bodies as the result of accidents. We used the two man cross cut saw to convert trees into usable wood for heat production. You still got your share of cuts and bruises, but all you needed - repairs were bandaids and mercurochrome without missing your turn at the end of the cross cut saw. A mishap with a chain saw usually sends the participant to a hospital for repairs.

Back when I was growing up in Robeson County, the two man cross cut saw along with an ax comprised the equipment we used to convert trees into firewood. The southern shortleaf pinetree was the source of wood for the cook stove, while oak served as the primary source for fireplace wood. The wood sawing activities would start in the fall of the year. The sawing team consisted of four able bodied men, and I never did have any



A Supplementary Heating System In Many Modern Homes Today, was the Pri-

mary Source of Heat in Rural Robeson County in Earlier Times.

problems making the team. Our Dad was the self appointed team leader who had certain duties to perform to justify his position. The team leader would pick out the tree to saw, decide which way to fall it, the height of the stump, measure the block lengths, split wood, and see that a decent level of productivity was maintained.

The actual sawing team, consisting of three members in most cases, was expected to keep the saw moving. Each member of the team would saw two blocks and rest one. A soda pop bottle containing a kerosene-oil mixture would be prepared to put on the saw to prevent sticking when sawing pine trees due to the turpentine buildup. Anything was welcomed to ease the strain

on ones back. Today when many people are concerned about the shape they're in, and are looking here and there for ways to reduce, I think back to the days down on the farm in Robeson County when wood energy was plentiful, and one could maintain a trim figure by pulling on one end of a two man cross cut saw over a course layed out on a fallen tree.



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In parts of England it was once believed that seeing a hen and rooster through a keyhole on St. Valentine's day foretold one's marriage within the year.

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