

Transcript: Dorothy Watson Hooper

Interviewee: DH Dorothy Watson Hooper

Interviewer: JC Jason Coggins

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Length: 26:58

START OF INTERVIEW

Jason Coggins: Alright so uhh-

Dorothy Hooper: This You got it on. OK This was during the civil war. That Mac Hooper and Monroe Hooper sons of Andrew Hooper. Deserted the uhh confederacy Joined the union. And so the confederacy uhh uhh captains and and uhh sargents came huntin for Monroe and Mac, because they had deserted.

JC: Right.

DH: And they came up across the river here to the old uhh Lambert Hooper place. Andrew's place and their mother Sarah Woodring Hooper was home with Lambert her youngest son who was 8 years old. That was the baby of the two brothers. That were there but they were hid up on the hill behind the house. They were laying up on the ridge watching these soldiers these Confederate soldiers, all these Union soldiers, I'm sorry, (background noise) drive in and ask her where these two sons of hers were and she told them she had no idea, where they were. So they took her youngest 8 year old son in front of them. Made him walk all the way down the river and in behind the Tuckaseegee Baptist Church. The old road back behind the church at that time. And he walked and he told his dad, his son Monroe, which was my grandpa, my father-in-law, Told he said he took my dad 8 year old and they stopped by the river and said he didn't he was scared to death he was barefooted he didn't know what they were talking about, they all they were on the horses they talked a little while and finally they told him he could go back home. He said I ran every step. So Mac and Monroe came to the house and got food and left after they saw their younger brother come back home. What they were trying to do is to get them to come forward

JC: Right

DH: to to look after this little brother of theirs

JC: Right they thought if they they took him it would scare em into coming out

DH: Scare em into coming out, so they didn't they didn't think they would harm him but they were trying to get them out of the woods

JC: He wrote some in there that he seemed to think that had some to do with the the feud was that north and south kind of a politics sort of deal

DH: It was it was it was political. Its in the book about uh uh (long pause) its uh and over land and I think that Mac ended up with the uh some of the, most of the land uh through a grant that he got a lot of this land and his mother was Sarah Woodring so she got uh 40 acres it tells in the book that she got 40 acres and gave back to some of them to try to stop the feud

JC: Right

DH: That was going on. But You know It was Just that the Watsons and the Hoopers feuded over small things like I'm telling you about uh they started with small things like burning haystacks, (JC-yea) killing dogs, until finally they killed John Ansel acrossing the river and uh he drove his team into to his house he was dead. And um But uh They say different ones have said which I am not sure about this that it was a mistake that a Watson didn't kill him that a Hooper killed him. So Franks father said he that people wasn't real sure about that.

JC: You said I, I didn't have the recorder on a minute ago but you said your heard all these stories or what few stories you know from your dad.

DH: My dad told me a few of them Franks dad told me some of them about his dad. And it was My great my great granddaddy was in on this feud and his name was Bud Watson and uh his son lived at Glenville. Uh My dad told me that much. Uh But you know I don't know I can't remember a lot about that's the reason I wanted this book back so bad. But uh Which I am going to try to find it. (laugh)

JC: Um What is uh what kind of general impression of the whole thing do you do you care Just that it was

DH: I don't think I mean I thought that most of it was kind of foolish and it started out with young men out carousing bout trying to do these things to aggravate the other family and it Just got from little things into big things. I think it Just went from uh from like stealing like we said burning haystacks and killing dogs to killing men.

JC: And Just every time somebody did something a little bigger then what the one before had done. (DH- right it Just kept growing and got bigger) It Just growed

DH: Uh Which uh my dad told me that it was something that uh shouldn't have happened uh he said it it was uh first started out like kids playing then it went on into bigger and bigger things and then this dissertation between the confederacy and the union. Uh And a lot of it was over politics uh back then they ..took that (JC-yea) real serious.

JC: Yeah Given the analogy that you had of the kids playing I don't know how many times I have seen kids start out playing end up in a fight.

DH: End up with little fight then sometimes the parents get in on it then it Just goes from small to something that they wish had never happened or started.

JC: So the um I guess today then probably both sides mostly Just regret that

DH: I think so I think that's what happened. Because later on I was told of course even down to my generation that a lot of em got along and married had children. And um Mr Lloyd Hooper told me that. Uh he was one of the older men that told me a lot of things he said that in later years that some of the Hoopers and the Watson children, grandchildren married and it was all settled. And uh but-

JC: Do you know um not necessarily these two families but do you know any other event s like that in in Jackson county or Tuckaseegee where where two families maybe disagreed and it it got violent at some point or?

DH: Uh no uh he wrote in here something bout the Middletons got in on it. Uh The Middletons and Hoopers some way got a disagreement over some property at about the same time. But I think that uh (sigh)my great grand father in law gave this Middleton man 40 acres of land to settle something. To to keep from being in a feud.

JC: Just a peace token.

DH: Peace yea it was something through the Middletons and the Hoopers to. It told uh they told in some cases that the Hoopers were a lot meaner than the Watson's. (laugh) I am not sure about that. That they were the ones that did a lot of the drinking(JC-Right) and may not have a lot but they did a lot of the drinking and that they were the bad guys that uh got a lot of this started. Now that The book tells that to.

JC: Uh We talked the other day and I think that a lot of people don't appreciate how much so but but back then this whole area was pretty wild this was kind of a frontier sort of.

DH: It was,yea it was I've heard that it was. At the time there wouldn't many families that lived here. The first white man that lived ever uh that was in the valley was a Hooper and he came from Elberton Ga. And he lived in a house behind our church

across the river. The chimney still stands there. And the date is on that chimney they tore the house down and rebuilt but left the chimney with the date.

JC: Is that um is that right over by the Junie Hooper house?

DH: No this is on Fred Smith road (JC- Oh Ok Ok) down the river Mary Joe Cobb lives there I told you about her. (JC-Yea) Ok her house the chimney's still standing with the date of the first white settler in in Tuckaseegee. And he came from Ga.

JC: I think George had told me um that his family came out of Ga. And that some ended up in SC I think and some up here.

DH: Yea. At this place my great grand father owned it. And he was one of the first settlers that came in here. Thomas Powell and he bought this place and raised his family. Which We have all this property the 7th generation. (JC-7 generations) Seven generations on this property. (JC-that's that's impressive) Yea yea and I still have a lot of the furniture some that he made but he come from SC also and this was all barren county there was nothing here.

JC: Right, so now this the house we're in right now this was the uh Watson property right?

DH: No this was Powell (JC- This was Hoopers?) and it was my family it wasn't Hooper it wasn't Hooper and it wasn't Watson but it was the Powells, and uh, but uh, the Hoopers was across the river.

JC: Right.

DH: And uh we lived on that side of the river. But the Hoopers owned that whole side from the all the way from up at Messers uh Canoe Creek down that whole mountain, down like I say to the church. Now Mack Hooper gave the property gave to the Tuckaseegee Baptist Church for the church he's for the board of education for the school and then to use as a Baptist church also and then in latter years the board of education gave the land and the property to the Jackson County Schools er not to the Jackson County Schools gave it to the church to the Baptist association and so now it's it's just a church.

JC: Right.

DH: But it was a school.

JC: I guess um back then there wasn't really anything they was I guess four five six families that had farms in this through here.

DC: that was about it.

JC: and there wasn't no general store or anything here was they?

DH: Not at first I don't think they had to go to East Laporte to Blackwood Lumber Company they came in first and that's where they bought their groceries they walked into East Laporte.

JC: East Laporte I heard before er this is kind of a different subject but I had um been told before that at one time East Laporte was um one of the bigger towns in Jackson County.

DH: It was.

JC: When the lumber company-?

DH: They had a train there they had a store a commissary they called it they had their own money and they gave you their money and you couldn't buy nothing nowhere else you had to uh you had to use that money in that store.

JC: (laughing) So uh for your paycheck they give you money that you couldn't give to nobody else but back to them.

DH: back to them.

JC: (laughs)

DH: That's, that was the policy.

JC: Yeah.

DH: And my grandmother cooked for them up on Caney Fork she cooked for the uh Blackwood Lumber Company at a camp up there, for a bunch of men that worked up there, that uh cut logs I guess.

JC: It's the um there was a flood in 19-

DH: 40.

JC: Was it 40?

DH: Uh huh.

JC: And that's what took everything out wasn't it? Just washed it all-

DH: Just washed it all away - - yeah

JC: You're not you're not nearly old enough to remember any of that at all?

DH: Oh yes.

JC: Do you?

DH: Oh yeah.

JC: I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have figured you were old enough to remember any of -

DH: Yeah I can remember it very well. I remember the flood uh covering the river it was almost up to her to our house. Course the house wasn't built.

JC: Right.

DH: Uh it covered Frank, the bottom where Frank's Dad had over there, and it washed the bridge one end of the bridge out. It and the bridge in Bryson City was the only two bridges left in the 40 flood. Every other bridge in the whole county, Cullowhee, everywhere was gone.

JC: Really.

DH: Yeah.

JC: What did it just rain for a week?

DH: It rained for uh about six or seven days and nights solid and what they said was it the mountain, the mountain behind us, it did the same thing and came right down through here, uh some of them call it spill out some of them call it spew up we don't know we think the dirt, the earth got so full of water that it just bubbled out.

JC: Right.

DH: And washed out big slides out of the mountain, and uh at that time I lived with my dad in Canada section but as soon as we got able to walk we walked the mountains and came down here. My aunt, they was a man that lived just above us that drowned, him and his two sons, and his wife, and she was expecting a baby and she washed about 200 yards downstream. Um she said a big light, bright shining light, and she didn't know where it came from was a tree limb, and she grabbed it and hung on to that until she got her legs wrapped around, and said she stayed there the rest of the night and her husband went over these little falls right up here and they found him in Bryson City and they never found the little two boys.

JC: That's -

DH: And uh but my aunt, my mother's sister, walked down here when it got daylight, she lived just above here, they stood here on the hill and they saw this man

floating, in the water, his feet would come up and then his head and he was floating with the logs.

JC: Right.

DH: And all the other ... trash. But she said that they saw him. And there was a man that came in here to help build the Glenville dam, they were working on it, and up here at Thorpe power house he had parked his car and he was from Tennessee and he slept in it that night to see the foreman the next morning for a job. And that night the flood came and washed his car washed him away and they found him about three miles and his car all torn all to pieces he was dead. And his family got over here and they was the ones that hunted it him and uh he was buried under rock and debris.

JC: So they um so they were actually building the, the dam at Glenville?

DH: Glenville Lake.

JC: When the flood happened?

DH: Right when it happened.

JC: But now they hadn't built none of -

DH: No.

JC: -none of these up here, Bear or Cedar Cliff or any of those dams yet?

DH: No, no they hadn't built those. Those started in the 50's and it was 40 the flood was in the 40's.

JC: When they built them dams did they did they, did they bother to tell people any kind of reasons for, I mean we're going to build them for electricity or so we can control floods like this flood in 1940.

DH: Uh electricity.

JC: Electricity is what they-

DH: Yeah my husband worked on all four of them he started on the first one making 90 cents an hour and ended on the third one making two dollars and twenty five cents an hour.

JC: What? That was a pretty good bit of pay raises right along.

DH: Yeah and uh he operated a big machine.

JC: How many years was that over?

DH: Uh ... goodness that was maybe fifteen year.

JC: A fifteen year period?

DH: Yes and we bought our place back with the money here that we, we, that he worked the dams. Yeah I was born in 29.

JC: Well I wouldn't have guessed that. I would not have guessed that at all.

DH: Yeah.

JC: Um well I don't know what else really to ask about this. You, you had obviously contributed to the uh Mr. Middleton's book, *The Forks of the River* there, can, can you think of anything else I ought to ask maybe or? That you can just think of off the top of your head?

DH: No uh, it says here (reading from *Trouble at the Forks* by Walter Middleton) a Watson family went to help a Hooper family work until noon, all who helped were invited to eat except the Watsons

JC: That's just orneriness there.

DH: The Hooper women refused to feed them. That was a direct insult to the whole Watson clan. That was part of the feud. You know that they went to help them work until noon.

JC: Right.

DH: But uh it's a great book and I borrowed this book so I could review some of the things that I had, I had forgotten. But I had told Walter some of this stuff but uh and he worked with Frank on the dam they were, they were buddies, worked together.

JC: I think he said in there that his uh, ah maybe his grandfather or something was friends with the Hooper family.

DH: Oh yeah Dave, Dave Middleton.

JC: So they've been friends for just-

DH: Yeah.

JC: - generations on back.

DH: And him and Andrew were the ones that something happened and he gave Andrew's wife back 40 acres of land for to settle a feud, it was a feud they was having.

JC: How many, that's a, lots of acres have been mentioned, how big a, I mean you told me like the area, do you know what kind of acreage that would be.

DH: I have no, I have no idea maybe five or six hundred acres.

JC: Five or six hundred acres that's a-

DH: yeah

JC: big farm.

DH: Yeah he owned all where the Wesleyan church is and Saunderses and down all the Moses land he owned it but he owned nothing on this side of the river. The Hoopers didn't own anything on this side of the river. They owned it all on the, on the other side.

JC: On the South side I guess.

DH: Yes.

JC: Well that's a pretty good stretch of land.

DH: Yeah.

JC: Well I certainly appreciate you helping me.

DH: You know I was trying to look over this a little bit and kindly (word lost to turning pages) some things that I've forgotten.

JC: Right.

DH: Like this right here is one of the things I remember the most was when uh John Ansel was shot.

JC: Right the story back that you said that he-

DH: Right.

JC: -was headed home in his wagon and uh-

DH: He was lying in a pool of blood (pause while turning pages) but most the Watsons uh they started at uh in Hamburg (reading from the book again) they were working up a murder spree to be carried out at Robert Watsons home in Hamburger, or Hamburg. (stops reading) so they were uh trying to figure out who to kill and what and when.

JC: Right.

DH: But uh but they lived in Hamburg but it was with the Watsons or with the Hoopers (pause while reading) now that Dave Middleton he was the one that he was born 1848 now he was the one that gave uh Walter a lot of information and he knew this.

JC: Is, is Mr. Middleton still alive by any chance or he's-

DH: He died not, not too awful long ago.

(Long Pause while Ms. Hooper looks at the Book)

JC: Does anybody um, let me think, did anybody ever talk just about what life was like back then in general just living in this area.

DH: Uh I know what my grandma said how hard life was and she told me one time if, if the men uh all they had was a farm like to live on uh their gardens and their crops she said if what men uh where most men got their money was they made whiskey there was a lot of after booze, stills. And she said those people had a little extra money to buy little extra things but she said that was the only extra money there was and she said the guys from down Sylva way would get this, they'd have to ride a horse and buggy.

JC: Right.

DH: Or a horse to come back into the mountains to pick up a load of booze. And I can remember very well when our Sherriff was killed uh Griffen Middleton was my dad's first cousin he went up in Canada to arrest this man uh he was uh Jackson County Sherriff and uh he went to arrest him and the man was drunk and shot and killed him and that was in 19 and 51. Uh because he was my dad's first cousin the sheriff was. Do you remember hearing of Griffen Middleton?

JC: I don't know if I've ever heard that tale about the sheriff getting killed.

DH: Demos Woods? Demos Woods killed him.

JC: I don't think I've ever heard that one.

DH: That was out at Rock Bridge near Wolf Mountain.

JC: Ok.

DH: Uh he shot Griff and killed him and I know uh I went to the trial some my dad wanted to go so I went with him.

JC: What'd they throw him in prison forever or?

DH: Yeah he died in prison.

JC: Did he?

DH: Yeah, and then Jess Brown did you ever know him? That had the store?

JC: I did. I remember Jess, he might have sold a little booze too.

DH: Yeah, you know his wife was killed. I went up there that day, and Jess and my dad was first cousins, and uh Rob(?) Brown and this Mathis boy, Tony Mathis , killed her they cut her throat. I remember that, that day. They just, and of course this is latter years this is not way back.

JC: I can, not well, but I can remember Jess having his store up there and stopping in with Dad and just

DH: He sold, he sold Booze

(At this point Frank Hooper, Dorothy's Husband enters the room.)2654

END OF INTERVIEW