

Lucille Cook Sweeny
Interview 139a
July 24, 1993
Franklin Weeks, Interviewer
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ABSTRACT: In this interview with local historian Franklin Weeks, Lucille Cook Sweeny recalls her memories of her grandfather, Dr. H.C. Cook. Dr. Cook was a Southern Pine Lumber Company lumber camp doctor who moved with the camps until the 1920's, when he moved into Diboll. Mrs. Sweeny remembers her grandfather's patients paid him in produce and syrup when they couldn't pay for his services with cash.

Franklin Weeks (hereafter FW): This is Saturday, July 24, 1993. I am going to talk about Dr. H. C. Cook with his granddaughter, Lucille Cook Sweeny. My name is Franklin Weeks. Lucille, your grandfather, Dr. H. C. Cook, born in 1851. Do you know what those initials stood for?

Lucille Cook Sweeny (hereafter LS): Harrison Caswell.

FW: And he was born in what state?

LS: In Mississippi.

FW: In Mississippi. And of course, he died in Diboll in 1936. And his marker shows that he was an M. D. and his wife, Martha – what was her name before she married?

LS: Thompson.

FW: Thompson. And she was born in 1848 and died in Diboll in 1929. Where were they married? Do you know?

LS: I imagine in Meridian, Mississippi.

I am going to tell you this. My grandfather's daddy was killed in the Civil War. Six months after his daddy died, his mother died. When he was sixteen years old, he went to work for my grandmother's daddy and I think it was Obe Thompson. He had a big plantation. He had 9 sons and 1 daughter, which was my grandmother. And my grandparents (Cooks) married and then Grandpa Thompson sent him to the University of Mississippi. And he had a diploma. It was left with Aunt Lillie and she died and I don't know what happened to it. I don't know how long he had to go to become a doctor. Then they (Cooks) decided to come to Texas, and the first place that my grandfather practiced medicine was in Corrigan. And my Aunt Lillie taught school in Corrigan several years. Then she married Will Hill who was over the woods. And they needed a doctor at the camps and he went to Lindsey Springs Camp and that is where he lived next door to

Bishop Martin. He worked in all those camps except Fastrill. He retired and they moved to Diboll in the old Chandler house. Do you know where that was?

He had an office in his house and people used to come there. As this check shows here – Jewel Treadwell brought me that. She said it was Mrs. Icy Waltman but she was not sure.

FW: Can you tell what date is on that check?

LS: She said it was the date that one of her sisters was born. I have the permanent check in here. It might be easier to read. This check was in the Cornbread Whistle. Jewel Treadwell brought me this several years ago. It says, “1903.” It is November, 1903.

FW: I expect November, 1903 – we could find out from Jewel which one of the children was born then.

LS: Well she said that one of them was born then and she knew that it was for delivering a child. And she said she kinda thought it was Mrs. Icy Waltman.

FW: I believe Mrs. Waltman is a little older than that. See three from ninety-three would make her ninety and I think Mrs. Waltman is a little older than that. But we can certainly find out.

LS: Maybe when she was going by the year that one of them was born. I don't know, Franklin. I think Jewel told me as much as she knew about it. She said that her daddy had a bunch of old papers and they never had been gone through. She said when she went through them and saw this check. She said she had a sister born on this day, but she might have meant year. 1903.

FW: From her, we can definitely find out which child it was, if we need it.

FW: Lucille, I believe you have told me in the past that this diploma that you say ended up in Mrs. Hills's possession, you have definitely seen that hanging in Dr. Cook's office?

LS: Oh, yes. But see Aunt Lillie is not living, not any of grandpa's own children. But we were with them a lot, and they used to talk about all this. This is one thing, when we would be spending the night, Granny would talk about the panthers in the woods. She would say, “You know I loved papa the first time I laid eyes on him.” And we would clap our hands. I don't know how long he worked for Grandma's daddy. I think Grandpa's family were just farmers and I don't think they had anything. But Grandma's daddy was a pretty wealthy man. He had a big plantation. And Grandma being his only daughter is the reason, I guess, why he wanted Grandpa to do something beside farm. He is the one who sent Grandpa to college.

FW: Why did you say they came to Texas?

LS: I do not know. I know this: they came in a covered wagon.

FW: One of the records that I came across this morning stated that Dr. H. C. Cook registered as a doctor in Angelina County on October 2, 1895 or 1898 at Emporia.

LS: Yes, they lived down there at one time.

FW: As you possibly heard when some of the Temples and even Bascom Weeks told me that when he and his wife came to Diboll from Timpson, they would get off at Emporia. They would have to catch a buggy or walk back up the tracks to where Diboll is.

LS: When they lived at Emporia, Granny Taylor, do you remember her? Mrs. Chandler's mother was their next-door neighbor. And Granny Taylor and my grandmother visited all the time. They were real good friends all the time they lived in Emporia. When they all moved to Diboll, you might know that, but I don't.

FW: No, I don't know, but I do know that in 1914 that he was back in Diboll and pretty active because he was appointed on the building committee of the Methodist church.

LS: After he left that camp practice and that was when Fastrill started, that is when grandpa – he did not work at Fastrill. But I do know that the first camp practice he did was Lindsey Springs. They lived next door to Carl Martin. That is where daddy and Carl Martin (later Methodist Bishop Carl W. Martin) became good friends. I do know this. The first house they lived in Diboll was the old Chandler house. Mrs. Tillman and Homer Rogers were living with her. Mrs. Tillman lived next door to them. I do know that the first house they ever lived in was the old Chandler house.

FW: He then moved from camp to camp and when they cut out the timber, he also moved.

LS: That happened when Aunt Lillie and Uncle Will married. She was their only daughter. I don't know what year they married in either. Anyway, they wanted to be close to Aunt Lillie. I don't know how many different camps, but I do know this, he never went to Fastrill camp. He moved to Diboll. I wish I knew more. But I guess I do know more than some about their grandparents.

FW: Of course he was busy, but is there anything you remember about him to his children or his grandchildren.

LS: We stayed at their house more than we did at our house when we were not in school. They were the best grandparents in the world. Nothing but love for their grandchildren and we all wanted to stay with them as much as we possibly could. They had a pond out in front of their house when they lived in Copestown and we used to crawfish. And Grandma never refused us as much bacon as we needed. Aunt Lillie and the parents used to say, "How do you keep them in bacon." And she would say, "Don't worry about that. When they come and ask me for bacon, they get it."

I will tell you this, what we did. When we spent the night with them and got ready to go to bed, Grandpa read some in the Bible; we had to kneel down just like they did and pray. We went through that every night before we went to bed. We got an awful lot of religious training from Grandpa and Grandma because they read the Bible, they talked and they lived by it. You know their back porch would look like a store most of the time. The people in the country didn't have any money. He took syrup, ribbon cane, and sweet potatoes. A lot of widow women have told me that they would not have made it if it had not been for Grandma and Grandpa. My grandmother was a character. She was a comedian. Mrs. Copes for one said, "Mammy Cook would say, "Lela go out there and get a gallon of that syrup, get potatoes because it is more than we will eat. Just get what you want." She was a widow woman and had Ollie Mae, Ruby, Dana, Ida, and Ruby. I do know I don't think there were two better people that ever lived because Grandpa went whether they could pay him or not Grandma was almost as good as the doctor herself.

FW: I noticed that he died at about age 85. Of course, you remember old Brother Weatherby as well as I do. They were at Diboll about 1932 because that is the years he stayed. Old Dr. Cook was 80 years or a little bit better and I recall the Sunday that Bro. Weatherby would come to Ryan Chapel. That Dr. Cook would come with him for worship service.

LS: If he ever prayed in the church, he kneeled on his knees. He was doing that after others had quit. Aunt Lillie was pretty precise for her day and her being the only girl and she had a pretty good education for people at that time. She would tell Grandpa (he had a certain pew he sat in and it was right on the end up close to the pulpit) "Papa, I am so afraid you are going to fall in the floor. You just need when they call on you to pray, to stand up." He said, "Lillie, in that Bible, it says every knee shall bend, every head shall bow. I have never stood up to talk to my God, and if I fall, you just don't worry, because I am still going to kneel to say my prayers." And he did. There are not any more good people like that. That was a good world, wasn't it?

FW: That is right.

LS: It is a shame too, that people, well, I don't say people our age, because I think we got more spiritual, real spiritual training and we lived in a time when our parents, too, helped. But I would say that in the last 20 or 25 years that we had to start locking doors. We used to go off and be gone a week and never think about locking a door. Sex was not to be talked about. It has made a complete change, hasn't it?

FW: It sure has.

LS: And I don't think for the better.

FW: Well, I will tell you what I will do, I will try to call Martin early Monday and ask him to work out something whereby he can look at these pictures as they are going back to Dixie's house, while you are there. And I am going to tell him that I am responsible, and I am not going to leave those pictures. He will take them, he'll blow them up and he

will make a negative. Then we can see what all he wants to put on the display in the bank for Dr. Cook. Then the other material will wait until next year before the first Sunday in June and I will put it in the Free Press regarding homecoming at the Chapel.

END OF INTERVIEW

(Franklin Weeks and Lucille Cook Sweeney looked over photographs at the conclusion of the interview. This led to a discussion of Dr. Cook's descendants:

Dr. and Mrs. Cook's children:

Lillie married Will Hill

Gilbert Hill

Billy Hill

James Hill (Jumbo)

Hardy married Bobbie Dubose

Sidney Dubose

Kirby Dubose (stepchildren)

Jim Cook married Ruth Victory

Eloise

Wilburn

Robert F. Cook married Mae Morehead

Lucille

Bobbie Mae

Robert F., Jr.)