

## SPRING ISLAND ORAL HISTORY

Summary of interview with Lee Mitchell and Benny Mitchell 4/12/91

1. Names: See attachment map with names commonly used in 1930's and 40's.
2. Benny Mitchell 1917  
Chapel Miller was Benny's great grandfather who came from Africa by boat. A storm blew the boat off course on it's way to Mt. Pleasant and he landed on Spring Island.  
Benny's grandfather and grandmother lived on Spring Island. Benny was born on Spring Island and raised by his mother on Callawassie. Mattie Mae Mitchell is his younger sister. Benny would come to Spring Island in the 20's and 30's to plant tomatoes and other vegetables.
3. Lee Mitchell 1915  
Lee and Benny Mitchell are cousins. Lee was born on Callawassie and raised on Spring Island. He met his wife, \_\_\_\_\_, on Spring Island and had a child before moving to Callawassie in 1941.

### Colonel Copp:

- Men worked for Copp's overseer or Copp for \$2.00 per week. They could buy supplies at Copp's store in advance of their monthly check. Once a man was 21 he was paid by the month; before 21 one was paid by the week.
- They planted tomatoes for Copp who had them packaged on island and carried by boat to the mainland. The blacks could raise tomatoes and sell them to Copp. They had their own plots of land.?
- A - Lee had his own horse which he rode over the island.  
Copp was a "rough" man who came down with his parents to Spring Island. They bought the island for Copp and he stayed on Spring Island.
- The men worked 5 days per week with Saturday and Sunday off.
- Lee would frequently take the Columbia to Beaufort on Friday.
- The men played baseball and fished.
- If Copp thought someone was stealing even a partridge (quail) he would be angry.

#### Persons named

- Daniel White - white man
- Giddeon Jenkins
- Kit Bryan
- Harry Bryan - lived below duck ponds
- Johnny Austin - mechanic
- William White
- George Camel married Harry Austins' sister
- Henry Austin - good carpenter standing chimney at goose pond
- James Hamilton - alcoholic

The Columbia was Copp's diesel engine boat that went to Beaufort every Friday.

The rusty car along the road to the gazebo belonged to Mr. Copp. It was left because there always seemed to be covey around the car at the bridge.

- There was a small community below the duck ponds.

#### Copp Landing

- Copp lived in a shingled "bungalow" near where the pump shed is presently.
- There was a pump artisan well for water. This was come throughout the island.
- Copp planted the pecan trees. He gave each family a pecan tree so they would have their own pecans and not steal his.
- The store sold everything you needed; flour, sugar, cigarettes, corn meal.
- Lee's wife worked in the "Big House" (as the big house was referred to).
- Mrs. Copp was a large good looking woman.

#### Overseer-

1st was a \_\_\_\_\_ Pinkney who was fair and left because he thought Copp was unfair to the natives. Shakey Pinkney became overseer. He was mean.

The island had its own saw mill and timbered pine.

Crops - sugar cane

- tomatoes

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#### Life Style:

Diet - corn bread and syrup was common for breakfast. Ate a lot of salt water fish fried. You could find a liquor still on "each corner". Wild boar - They would catch a wild boar with long tusks and carry it live to market.

A church existed; the preacher would come from the mainland to preach on Sundays.

### Old House:

Benny's grandfather was a butler in the Edward's Tabby Ruin. He went to Rhode Island and was a butler there and then returned to Spring Island.

The Old Lady Berry planted to the alle'e of oaks at the Ruins.

### Questions

- 1 - Meals - what was diet?  
fish, oysters, beans, rice, cornbread
- 2 - Church - how frequently  
revival
- 3 - Recreation - how often did they fish?
- 4 - Work
  - did each family have their own plot of land?
  - did they work for Copp or overseer?
  - how many hours per day did you work in field?