

December 10, 1998

Notes of my recollections of our trip in the Fall of 1948 to North Carolina. By Kenneth L. Phillips

When my father Lee Phillips was about 10 years old he said he saw his mother (Lillie Victoria Ray) crying, wishing she could see her mother or family. Dad said he told her some day he would take her to North Carolina to see her family. He filled this childhood promise in the fall of 1948.

Dad took mother, Kenneth, Beth, Dale & Larry, also my grandmother Lillie Ray Phillips, & her older brother John A. Ray. We had a nearly new Jeep Station Wagon. We pulled a Higgins Tent Camp Trailer. Most of the family slept in the tent trailer. I usually slept outside in my sleeping bag. The trailer folded down for traveling. We cooked our meals on a two burner gas camp stove. We were gone five or six weeks. In mother's history she said about five weeks. Dad's history says about six weeks.

Uncle John had been to North Carolina several times over the years. A few days ago, I called the wife of a cousin of Dad's, Mrs. Wade (Johnsie) Ediniston. She lives in Johnson City Tennessee. She said they were married in 1937 and Uncle John visited the North Carolina area that year and nearly every Fall after until the early 1950's. I don't think he went after he froze his feet and had one leg amputated above the ankle. Johnsie said he would come about October or November and stay until about February. She said it was the first time he had been South for many years. All the families in the South loved Uncle John.

We stopped in Terre Haute, Indiana. Grandmother's sister Aunt Etta Evans lived there. Etta's husband Evan Thomas Evans had died. Etta's widowed daughter Ethel Foley also lived there. Ethel has two children, Jimmy & Mary Etta. They came West & visited us a few years later. We visited there a few days. I think Ethel's husband had been an undertaker. They had a small undertaker chapel attached to their big home. That's where I slept on the floor. The carpet was very soft. Aunt Etta went on to North Carolina with us. Uncle John and the three sisters had a touching reunion.

Grandmother said she hadn't seen aunt Etta for 49 years and aunt Nan Edmisten for 56 years. They really enjoyed their time together. Their mother Virginia Coffey died October 30, 1936.

We stayed most of the time at aunt Nan's. Nan's husband Rufus Farthing Edmisten died June 3, 1937. (I got the idea uncle John must not have liked Rufus. John said Nan went barefoot for 40 years then hoed corn for the neighbors for money to buy herself some shoes.) Nan lived in her home with her son Walter Edmisten and Family. Walter's wife was Nellie Mae Holler. They called her Nell. They were all so kind to us. They had some friends (a quartet) come over one night. They sang Southern Gospel songs. They were very good.

They nearly always had fresh cornbread with their meals. I don't remember anyone making regular home made bread. Sometimes they made biscuits. I remember someone there saying it ruins cornbread to cut it. You should just break off what you want.

They took us to visit most of the cousins. I remember Aunt Nan's children & their spouses. Lottie & Bynum Greene, (Hoye's Father) Lena & Robert Shull, (Robert had broke his

leg below the knee a year or two before but the bone still had not healed firm. He wore a brace.) Lida & Marion Coffey, (They had a nice home out in the hills with a spring house by their back door where they kept their milk to cool.) Nell & Lloyd Hays, (Margaret Hays Norris 's parents) Walter & Nell Edmisten, Wade & Johnsie Edmisten, (They lived in Johnson City, Tennessee) . Most of the others lived near Boone. We had a picnic one day at Wade's home in Johnson City, Tennessee. 12-8-98 I called Barbara Manning Wade's daughter. She said she remembered the picnic. She said she was 10 years old. She remembered her dad & her uncles went out behind the barn to do some drinking. I didn't remember this.

Walter Edmisten was a game warden. I remember him saying he had to get up early to go over by the Tennessee border to try to catch squirrel poachers. They had a farm. They raised potatoes and cabbage. I helped them haul potatoes out of the field in sacks on a two wheel cart pulled by a horse. The cabbages weighed about 40 pounds per head. I remember they left the smaller ones in the field. Some they left were nearly as big as any I had seen here in the stores.

We saw lots of tobacco growing in the field and hanging in the tobacco barns to dry in that area. Sorghum also grew around there.

We went to Grandfather Mountain elevation 5954. They were proud of as it was one of the highest in the area. Uncle John said to dad "You have had your grain cleaner on higher hills than that."

One place we stopped, I don't remember if it was a relative or just a friend of uncle John's, but uncle John introduced us. We didn't get out of the car. We must have been just driving by when uncle John saw her in the yard. The lady about dad's age said "I always wanted to see a Mormon." Dad just laughed & they visited a while & we left.

Uncle John took us to a place where they had kept slaves. He seemed ashamed that was part of their heritage. Uncle John chewed Copenhagen. He took us over to a larger city one day to try to buy some Copenhagen as they didn't have any in Boone. The store was called Smitty's Goodwill Store. The man there said they only had a few cans & it had been ordered by a regular customer. He said he couldn't sell it because the man had been known to pull a gun if they didn't have his order. Uncle John said they should change the name of the store to Smitty's Ill Will Store. They sold him a can & we left.

One night David, Paul, & Joe Edmisten took me to a High School football game. David & Paul played. Joe was about my age. I remember staying at least one night at Nell & Lloyd Hays. They had a son Ed about my age. Margaret was a couple of years older. Lida & Marion Coffey had two girls at home. Nancy was about a year younger than I and Geneva a couple of years older.

We visited many cemeteries. One was down in Aunt Nan's field- I think this is where I got the old mill stone I still have. There had been an old flour mill there on a creek in the early days. There were other cemeteries in fields. Dad & mother wrote down lots of birth & death dates from the headstones. They also got as much information on all the ancestors as they could while in the South.

When we returned home they wrote for old census records and got any other information they could to prove the dates needed to do the temple ordinances for all the ancestors on the Ray family they could.

Janet & I were privileged to help with some of the sealing of many of the families after we were married. I still keep in contact with 2 second cousins. I haven't done near as much as my parents in doing the family history of the Ray family but I am the process of repenting & working to trace our family back farther.

Only one of dad's sisters is active in the LDS church now. I only know of one of Dad's Ray cousins that was a member. That is Uncle John Ray's son James. He married Gwen Kennington from Star Valley. She was a member.

This helps me know how important our heritage is & how important it is to keep a journal. In Edward's life history he bore a firm testimony. Others we have life histories have born testimony. I know how important it is to do the temple work for those who didn't have the opportunity while in this life.

William Ray's grandfather Jesse Ray fought in the Revolutionary war for our freedom. I recently found that Jesse's father's name was William born 1734 in England. This is now in the church Family History computer, I have contacted Stanley Wilde in North Carolina & written another person in California to try to get more information to try to search farther back.

It is my prayer we will all realize how thankful we should be to our Father in Heaven for being born of goodly parents in this choice land. I encourage us all to study our heritage & appreciate our heritage enough to get busy & search our family tree and do the temple ordinances for those that didn't have the opportunity in their life. This will be a great blessing in our lives and those we do the work for.

I am really thankful for our family. Thanksgiving day We had 47 of our children, spouses & grandchildren stop for a while. All but 8 of these had dinner with us. The 8 had other dinner commitments. This is all but one daughter-in-law & 5 grandchildren. Three of these grandchildren are serving missions.

This is some our main blessings. We are also privileged to be ordinance workers at the temple each Friday morning 4:30 AM till about noon. The month of November we also served each Saturday 9 AM till 4 PM.

It is my testimony this is the work of our Father in Heaven. I asked the Lord to bless us all with the desire & faith to do these things in the name of Jesus Christ AMEN. written 11-27-98 by Ken Phillips

I hope this is of some interest to you.

Love,



Ken