

Thomas Jefferson

Interview with Thomas Jefferson, 102 years old

Shiloh Church, Highway 29

—*Ellie S. Rice, Anderson, S.C.*

It is not often that a person 102 years old is seen doing manual labor, and especially as hard a job as picking cotton. Yet that is just what Thomas Jefferson was doing, who, as he himself stated, is, "102 years and 18 days old today." Asked why he was doing this, he replied, "Just to take a little exercise."

Thomas lives with his daughter, Florence Humphreys, on a small farm, out near Shiloh Church, on Highway 29. Until recently, he slept in a little shack nearby, taking his meals with his daughter. He is too feeble to live alone now, however.

Thomas Jefferson was born on the farm of Mr. Jenkins Hammond, on the old Hammond place, out on the Williamston road, on November 1, 1834. When Mr. Hammond's daughter, Mary Amanda Pauline, married Elias John Earle, son of Samuel Girard Earle, who was one of the very first citizens of Anderson county, Mr. Hammond gave her, as a wedding gift, Thomas Jefferson's mother and five children, of which Thomas was one. And here he lived with the Earles on "Evergreen" plantation, for many, many years.

During the War Between the States, Mr. Earle operated a corn and flour mill, and Thomas Jefferson was his miller. Asked if he remembered this, he replied, "Well, I do remember it. I remember one time we worked all night Saturday night, all day Sunday and Sunday night, and Monday morning had ten barrels of flour to send the Confederate army."

Shiloh (Baptist) Church, nearby, Thomas said, was being constructed at the time the war started, and was not finished until after the war was over. The first person buried in the Shiloh graveyard was Elijah Herring, who was in the Confederate army and became ill and died, and was brought home to be buried.

When Samuel Girard Earle died in 1848, and his wife in 1865, they were buried under a large apple tree at "Evergreen" plantation. Later, their bodies were removed to the Shiloh graveyard, by their granddaughter, Miss Betty Earle. Thomas says he helped to move and rebury the bodies.

Thomas was at one time a member of Shiloh, but is now a member of the Mt. Sinai colored church.

Thomas is remarkably well for a person one hundred and two years old. His eyes are dim, his steps tottering, but his hearing is good and his mind is as clear as it ever was. Asked about his appetite, he said, "I eat anything I can get, I can eat anything." Many people much younger than he is, and certainly with more money than he has, would envy him for his splendid digestion.

Thomas has been on the relief rolls now for several years. It is a peculiar pleasure for Mrs. A.M. Mitchell, County Director of Temporary State Department of Public Welfare, to look after Thomas personally, because her grandmother was the bride to whom he was given, with his mother and brothers and

sisters. The old man eagerly anticipates Mrs. Mitchell's coming each month, to bring his check and to look after his comfort. He is very humble and exceedingly grateful for everything done for him, and says he is expecting to live many more years, with the good care he is getting