

JC Porter interview with FLORENCE WILLIAMS, daughter of John C. Porter, son of Andrew J. Porter
May 15, 1980 Wheelersburg, Ohio
Transcribed by JC Porter Feb. 2011
Track 5 Tape 19 side 2

JC: Do you want to sit here?

Florence: No, you go ahead and sit down there.

JC: So how have you been?

Florence: Fine. I worked yesterday, mowed the lawn all day. I'm tired today.

JC: Oh you did?

Florence: Ya, I was just out cutting some weeds, this is a pretty big place to keep up.

Scott Porter: You've got a nice yard. (s/o Ed, s/o Everett, s/o Jasper, s/o Alex, s/o AJP)

JC: This is a nice place.

Florence: My husband's hasn't been around 14 years, so I just hang on.

JC: How old are you now?

Florence: Oh, about 77. What was your grandfather's name?

JC: My grandpa is Everett Porter who lives in Globe, KY. His dad was Jasper Porter. He would be your first cousin. You've heard of Jasper? His dad was Alexander, your dad's brother...

Florence: Brother Alick, they called him Alick when he was younger. His name was Alexander.

JC: And his boy Jasper is my great grandfather. You've heard of him?

F: Ya, I've heard of him. I've got away from all of them.

JC: Ya, it is a big family. Could I ask you some questions about your family?

F: If I know anything to tell you.

JC: Well let's see. Were you born in Carter county?

F: Ya.

JC: And when were you married?

F: Oh, about 1920, I believe.

JC: In Carter county?

F: Yes.

JC: Do you remember the month and day?

Florence: (1:36)

JC: Well, that's OK. Well, why don't you tell me about your family.

Florence: Well, there's not to much. Have you talked to my brother Jim? It's just me and him living now. I'm the smallest {youngest} one, and I don't know too much to tell you. My sister's boy MOODY [NICKLES] from Illinois sent me the pictures. Did you see those little old pictures? Old

fashioned.

JC: Of the family?

Florence: No, It was of a woman and a man. Had on real old time little old hats, you know. I didn't know them.

JC: Who were they?

Florence: I don't know. I don't know where he got them at.

JC: Were they related?

F: He said they was. He said they was Porters, but he didn't know what their names were. Did you get in touch with, now I have some sister's children out in Illinois.

JC: Moody Nickles? Ya, I've been writing to him. He sent me some old pictures that I copied. How long ago was this that he sent you these pictures you are talking about?

Florence: About 2 or 3 months ago. I sent them back, cause I didn't know who they was.

JC: Oh, and he wanted you to identify them?

Florence: Uh huh. I don't know where he got them. He did not tell me in the letter where he got them. My sister (Rebecca Nickles, d/o John C/ Porter, s/o AJP) must have had them. She died a way back, and he must have kept em from that, see.

JC: That might be a picture of Andrew Porter, your grandpa. Have you ever seen a picture of your grandpa Porter?

Florence: No. I don't remember my aunt. I've got an Aunt Mary (Mary Dwelly, d/o AJP) and an Aunt Martha (Martha Day, d/o AJP), but I never did see them. I was the smallest one, the baby of the family. Now my brother (Jim Porter, s/o John C. Porter, s/o AJP) back there can tell you a little more about it than I can. Jim....

JC: What do you remember about your Aunt Martha?

Florence: Just Aunt Martha, and that's all.

JC: Did she have any children?

Florence: I don't know.

JC: Do you know who she married?

Florence: No, I don't.

JC: You don't remember seeing her?

Florence: I've never seen her or Aunt Mary, but my mother always told me that I had an Aunt Martha and an Aunt Mary. But never did see them. Oh, they probably seen me when I was little, but I don't remember seeing them.

JC: I'm going to make a note to write Moody to ask him about those pictures. I might be able to identify them since I have seen some of the other old Porters.

Florence: You know they was real old. You know how people dress back then. Funny looking. He must have got the, my sister died, and they gave the children this and that, and he must have got them then. He didn't say where he got em.

JC: Was it a tin type?

Florence: No, just little bitty about that square. Real old fashion picture, real thick picture. They had their hair all done up funny, I don't know she platted or something, but they had faded a lot. It was real old.

JC: How old would you guess they were? Could you make a guess?

Florence: I don't know where he got them at.

JC: What do you remember about your Uncles?

Florence: I only remember about 2 of them. Uncle Alick and Uncle Levi. Uncle Levi back then, he wore a big mustache that came down to about here, and he was in the civil war, Uncle Levi was.

JC: He was? Where at?

Florence: Back in Rowan county there someplace, because he used to come tell us children about it.

JC: In Rowan County? Is that what he told you, that he fought in Rowan County?

Florence: No, he told me that there, I don't know where he fought at.

JC: That's where you lived?

Florence: Ya, that's where we lived.

JC Over by Elliottsville someplace?

Florence: We had a farm over from HogTown. They call it Elliottsville now. Used to be, me and my dad, and my mother lived there, we had a store, General Store and everything and a Post Office. I come there when I was about 12 years old, and we worked in there. And Uncle Levi, you know when they fought in that old war, that was the civil war, wasn't it? And they rode horses. And he was the youngest one in their family then. He said they was going to take his father away from all the children you know. He told that he would go in his father's place, and he went and fought in his father's place.

JC: Oh he did?

Florence: And they rode horses then. They took all these horses, he told us. We thought it was awful then. He had a big mare, and she had a baby colt, and they took her way down under the cliffs and hid her, and slipped down there so they wouldn't take her. They left their old (6:25) horses in the barn and took their good ones and went on. See, you couldn't do anything about it.

JC: Who took the horses?

Florence: The ones that were fighting in the civil war.

JC: Why didn't his dad want to go to war?

Florence: He did want to go, but he had a whole house of children. And this youngest Uncle Levi didn't want him his dad to leave his mom. They took him in place of him.

JC: How did he talk them in to doing that?

Florence: I wouldn't know. He just told us that is what he did. He was back, and he drew a little bit of a pension. Not very much but it was a lot back during that time. When he come over there, my Dad said, "Well Levi...". Levi said, "Aw, I've lived this long, I'll make it on." Him and Aunt Betty. My Dad turn to him and said, "I'll write.... You are going to get it." I don't know how many years, but he drew some to live on and it just tickled him to death after he found out you know. That's about all I know about that bunch back there.

Florence: If my oldest brother was living, he's been gone a long time, he'd tell you all about it.

JC: That's Will?

Florence: Will.

JC: So Levi was in the civil war?

Florence: He was in the war. They fought with horses. They didn't have like they do now. You've read books about it, you know more than I do.

JC: Is there any other old war stories they told you about Levi?

Florence: I can't think of any more.

JC: Have you ever heard anything about Levi being captured in the civil war?

Florence. No, he got out and he would come and stay with us three and four days at a time. We just loved it. We thought he was so funny. He wore a big white mustache. We'd watch him eat. We thought that was the funniest thing. We just loved him. He wasn't a bit of trouble. He was the nicest old man in the world.

Uncle Alick, I just knew him, and that's all. And Uncle Steve, see, I had an Uncle Steve. He was a Methodist Minister.

JC: He was? What happened to him?

Florence: He died out in Wisconsin.

JC: Why did he move to Wisconsin?

Florence: He had a Dairy Farm there.

JC: Dairy Farm?

Florence. He made a livin there. That's what they always said.

JC: I wonder when he moved up there?

Florence: Well I don't know what time it was. See, I was too small to remember all that stuff. I just don't know. Then Uncle Jim, he lived way down in Stark, Kentucky. You got his name on there?

JC: Ya.

Florence: He got killed they told me.

JC: What did you hear about him getting killed? What was the story behind that?

Florence: It was election coming up and he was a democrat. My dad was a democrat. And every one of them... I said I never want to hear nothin about politics...my dad...I think you can be anything you want to be, it's up to you. Like religion, if you want to be a Baptist or a Methodist, that's your problem, not mine. I never argue over that. But my dad said, he was arguing. He had a big General Store in Stark, Kentucky. They got into it and some man stabbed him with a knife.

JC: Who did that?

Florence: I don't know who it was. They wouldn't talk about it to us.

JC: Jim's boy was killed right after that wasn't he?

Florence: He got killed right there someplace too, Ed. I never seen him. There never would let us go. Well I was too small to go.

JC: Somebody said that your dad went out to New Mexico chasing the guy that killed Ed Porter.

Florence: No, that's not right. My dad would always, when he would see an ad in the paper, he took papers on the farm. When he left the farm. Later he gave it to my sister Rebecca. That is her children that is out in Illinois. She didn't ever want to leave there, and he said well I'll give, I don't know, 300 or 400 acres back there. He gave it to her. He decided, he got all these books and read em, you know, big stores in em. He went to Mexico and bought a place. It was so dry up there. My mother was scared to death, afraid that she was going to have to leave Kentucky. She didn't want to leave, and left us children there...my older ones was big enough to look after cows and everything. Went out and we got a letter, and it said for us to come. I went to the (Post) Office down at Jacobs, Kentucky and I got another letter. It said, "Stay at home, I'm comin home. I sold everything and I'm comin home"

JC: Why did he do that?

Florence: Ah, he got dissatisfied. He took my sister out there, and she didn't like it. There wasn't much work or nothin. It was New Mexico, but I don't know. He bought a farm out there. The way he brought his money back, they didn't have all this stuff like they do now. He put it in an old suit case. He told us kids about it. He tied old strings around it, raggedy you know. Then he put on an old pair of raggedy pants and suspenders, and brought his money back in a suit case.

He made quite a bit of money. I don't know why it is, but my dad, he could make a living on a rock. He did that. But he never throwed nothing away. He kept every...he just knowed how to make a living.

JC: Who all went out to New Mexico with him?

Florence: My sister Becky (Rebecca Nickles), that is the one who's children live in Illinois now. She didn't have no children when they went then. Her husband went with her, Bob. Oh, she just cried to come home, sand blowed. She kept house for them. They hadn't been married long. She said she couldn't keep nothing on, just sandy, sandy. They come back and she was tickled to death. I remember em comin in, and then my dad came back.

He stayed there until he come over to HogTown, Elliottsville. Way back there, it's Elliottsville now. There was a big old fancy store there and the Post Office. We kept the Post Office.

JC: He ran the store and everything.

Florence: And when he would go away, me and my brother Jim would take care of the Post Office. I got \$15.00 every month for being assistant Post Master. Oh that was money. (laughing)

JC: Who was the regular Post Master?

Florence: My dad, JC Porter. His name was John Calvin. And Jim was James Russell.

JC: I got by JC Porter too.

Florence: Do you? (Laughing) That's a good name, ain't it?

JC: I reckon. Where was your dad born at?

Florence: You've got me there. I don't know.

JC: Was he born in Virginia?

Florence: He could have been.

JC: You've never heard about that?

Florence: My mother was born in Virginia. (Nancy Catron) I have relation...I've always wanted to go to Virginia and see my relation. (13:55) My cousin said they live in an old house, I'd just love to see that. That's been several years, probably all dead now.

JC: Your mom was a Catron?

Florence: Ya, Nancy.

JC: Who was your grandpa, William Catron? Or do you know? Bill Catron?

Florence: No, I don't know who he is. My grandmother Catron was buried in Stark, Kentucky my mother told us. But I don't know where grandma and grandpa Porter was buried. They never did tell us. (14:25)

JC: Have you ever heard anything about your grandpa Porter?

Florence: No.

JC: Not a thing?

Florence: No.

JC: I guess they died before you were born.

Florence: Yes, way before. My mother was so easy going. She just never had anything to say. She just easy going. And those children that is out in Illinois, she took after my mother. She would sit for an hour, I'd say, "If you don't talk to me, I'm going home." In their home, she was just easy going. Some of my older brothers, Will has been gone quite a while, he could tell you all about that.

JC: What did your sister Rebecca die from? She wasn't very old.

Florence: Well, she lived way back there on the farm, away from HogTown and the closest doctor then was in Ashland, Kentucky.

JC: Was that the old log house they lived in?

Florence: Uh huh.

JC: We were just there yesterday. We went back to see it.

Florence: Have you been there?

JC: Ya, we were just over there yesterday.

Florence: Well. We went back about two years ago, I took some of the grandchildren. They just kept at me and kept at me, and I said, "You had to walk up that holler didn't you?" Park down there.

JC: Ya.

Florence: They just kept on. I got to take all of them but one. John McHenry? He is the one that made that. (16:00) When he was in college, and he would come in here? Start when he was about that big ?

JC: Oh really?

Florence: He's in college. ? (16:05) Everything is gone up there now. One of the Porters owns that. Harlan Porter (s/o Alex, s/o AJP) owns that.

JC: He's your first cousin isn't he?

Florence: Ya.

JC: You said the nearest hospital was Ashland.

Florence: They doctored with Dr. Robbins up there, but I don't know what killed my sister. He ain't never seen the patients in, I don't guess he knew what she had. My brother in law would go over there and get her medicine. I would ride a horse and go over and take her everything from the store. My mother would fix up a little stuff to take to her. I don't know what killed her.

JC: What about your brother Will. He died of old age didn't he?

Florence: No, he had a stroke.

JC: Oh he did?

JC: How old, he was way up in years wasn't he?

Florence: He lived about 5 months. He had a little wreck and hit his arm, and it caused a blood clot .

JC: Car wreck?

Florence: Ya, he drove truck. He had a little wreck, he drove a truck and hit a tree or something. He had a blood clot, and that blood clot moved and set on his brain. He never could speak no more after that. He was the only one...school teacher...he got a college education...Us kids didn't.

JC: Oh he did? Where did he go to college at?

Florence: I've often wondered. I don't know where he went to college at. It wasn't Morehead. I guess he went up to Huntington, WV.

JC: Oh he did?

Florence: I guess.

JC: He didn't have to go four years back then did he?

Florence: I don't know. Way back then, you could teach. I had a cousin teach when he got out of High School. Three years of High School. That doesn't work anymore.

JC: No, it doesn't. Your sister Lucy, what happened to her?

Florence: She died with TB.

JC: Oh she did?

Florence: Lucy DeBord.

JC: You had a sister Fannie who died when she was a baby?

Florence: She was older and I never seen her. (18:30)

JC: Where did Lucy get married at, do you have any idea?

Florence: No.

JC: You say your mom is from Wythe County, Virginia?

Florence: She always told us she was from Virginia. And they come through on the oxens and drove the wagon, come through in a wagon ? (18:57) My dad must have lived back there. That is where she met my dad and they got married.

JC: What in Virginia?

Florence: No, in Kentucky. But they come, the Catrons come from Virginia. Not West Virginia, Old Virginia. We were trying to get her to tell us all about it, but that's all she would ever tell us. I guess he was from back in Kentucky somewhere. (19:27)

JC: How did they (Catrons) come through from Virginia to Kentucky. Do you know how they came?

Florence: I don't know how they came. I'd give anything in the world to know that. They come in a wagon. Her dad and mom and she had several brothers. She didn't have no sister.

JC: She didn't?

Florence: They come in a wagon, with Oxen ? (19:51) That's the way they come through.

JC: That's what pulled the wagons, Oxen?

JC: Do you know, did they cross the river at Prestonsburg, or did they come up through Ohio?

Florence: I just don't know. I've studied and I'd just give anything if I could find out, I don't know. Now my oldest brother and my oldest sister, they was all ahead of me. They might have could have told you. We had a lot of that down in a great big Bible. When they was born and married and all that stuff. My sister Mary had it, see Mary married, (20:32) Mary Parker. Her house got burned and it got burned up. I'd just give anything to have that.

JC: Did it have your grandparents in it too?

Florence: It had all that stuff down. They had gave it to us after my dad and mom...she got it someway . See, I was out here when he died. I've lived here a long time. If I had had that, I could have told you a lot of things. That's where the old people kept everything. They wrote it down in the big Bible.

JC: Did your dad have his grandpa written down in it?

Florence: I don't know. I believe I hear somebody knocking. (pause) (21:32)

JC: You've never heard anything about your grandpa Porter?

Florence; No. It was in that Bible. I'm sure all that stuff was written down and kept. But it's gone now. It's such a shame that you can't keep stuff like that.

JC: That's the only Bible you've ever seen where records were written down?

Florence: Ya. It was one of those big Bibles. You might have seen one. All their names. My grandpa had all of this down in that Bible and it burned up.

JC: Your grandpa is buried in the same cemetery where your dad is buried, at Old Fairview.

Florence. Ya, I know they are. Have you been back to the cemetery?

JC: Ya. We just stopped up there yesterday too.

Florence: have they got it cleaned off?

JC: Ya. It was mowed and everything.

Florence: I've got to send, I send money every year to keep it cleaned off. My brother and dad is there. ?(22;30) Now Will's daughter Mae Porter, she has got a little treasury and she keeps it. We all throw in? (22:50) I've been wanting to go see Jim (her brother), but I have never made it.

JC: Do you remember any of your cousins? Anything unusual, or any stories about any of them?

Florence: No, I don't know. I haven't seen them for so long, and when I go back, Jim tells me this one died. They never let me know when they die and I never know unless I go back. And Jim, he's just at home, and you've got to go knock on the door if you see. He come up night before last and had dinner with me.

JC: He did?

Florence: He called and said he was coming, and he said don't you go to any trouble. We will eat before we come. I said, OK, we won't have a thing. I had it all on the table when they come. (laughing) He go to sitting down and said I don't eat this, and I don't eat that. He said my wife likes chicken. I said you are going to eat mashed potatoes, and I filled his plate up and he ate every bite. When you get hungry, food is good.

JC: Me, and Papaw & Mamaw went over there last year and saw him and talked with him.

Florence: Who do you call Papaw now?

JC: Everett Porter who lives in Globe (KY). My grandpa.

Florence: Is that Uncle Alick's boy?

JC: That is Alick's grandson. Alick's boy Jasper is his dad.

Florence: Oh ya. And they live in Globe, KY?

JC: Ya, Globe, KY. That is just out of Olive Hill there.

Florence: Ya.

JC: Your brother had a picture of your dad when he was a little boy. Have you ever seen that one?

Florence: No.

JC: Ya, he had a little tin type picture of your dad.

Florence: They used to take them.

JC: He was just about 10 years old in the picture.

Florence: Is that old log house still standing where we used to live?

JC: Ya, it's got a lot of trash in it, but it is standing pretty good. Do you remember any of Alick's children?

Florence: Not too many of them. I don't know what their names was. (25:02)

JC: How about Levi's kids, did they ever come over and visit?

Florence: No, I don't know a thing about them. (25:10)

JC: Do you remember when Levi died?

Florence: No I don't.

JC: Did him and his wife die about the same time?

Florence: It kind of seems like him and Aunt Betty died about the same time. They kind of lived to be real old though. I know when he would come to see us, he was real old. I wasn't very big, but I can remember. They lived on a farm back there. I never knew where they lived.

JC: What kind of a woman was his (Levi's) wife?

Florence: She was a little bitty thing. Just as sweet as she could be. (25:44) How come you came up into Ohio?

JC: Well we came over to Ashland...

Florence: You live up there though?

JC: No, I live up in Indiana.

Florence: Oh, you live up in Indiana?

JC: I was down visiting Scott, he lives over in Globe. Visiting with Mamaw & Papaw. Today we came over to Ashland and Ironton to look up some stuff, and bring some tires over, so we thought we would just come on up and talk to you while we were here.

Florence: Do your parents live up there also?

JC: Ya, I still live with my parents.

Florence: I wish I knew way back. If I had that Bible... (26:30)

JC: Ya, I'd like to see something like that.

Florence: Well that is the truth. They are all gone. Did my brother Jim know anything?

JC: He didn't know anything about his grandpa Porter. He didn't even know his name or anything.

Florence: See, he is next to me.

JC: Well he knew about the Catrons. He told me where they came from, Wythe County, VA. He had heard about them, but he did not know about the Porters. Treda Mundy, you know that is Will's daughter. (s/o John C. Porter, s/o AJP).

Florence: She lives in Olive Hill. I don't know her. I have never seen her.

JC: Well I visited her, and she had some old papers of your dad's that were in a safe they said. And there was son old tax receipts of your grandpa from way back in Virginia, and some old papers of your dad's. I looked through some of them.

Florence: Well see, my oldest brother Will, he got everything my dad had. We had a great big iron safe when we had the Post Office and we kept the money in it. He kept that safe, and all my dad's paperwork, old fashioned things (27:49) was in that. That is where he got that. He kept everything my dad had. He was appointed administrator, so he was ? (27:57). I'd never sue my brother for a little money. He died and his kids are all living good. I've often wondered where that old safe was and who got that. Some of his children got it. It weighs about 2000 lbs. See when we had that Post Office, we had to lock that up every night. It had a combination. That's where we kep our money. I said the other day, if I had been real smart, we had so much gold in there. We had little sacks of gold we kept in that safe. I thought if I had kept one of those sacks full, I wouldn't have to mow the lawn would I? (laughing)

Scott: You'd be living in a mansion. Where did you get that gold? Was it your dads?

Florence: People coming in a payin. We had a General Store. And there was plenty of gold then. People would bring a \$10 gold piece, they was just like you paying with dollars. (28:58)

JC: They paid with gold a lot?

Florence: We had a lot of silver too ? (29:08) See now it's just a fake. We had big sacks, and every night, we had to take that out of the money drawer and put it in the sacks and lock it up. If the house burned, or the store or Post Office burned, we still had our money. I was asking around the other day, who got my dad's safe? I'll bet Will gave it to some of his children.

JC: When did your dad start that store in Elliotsville?

Florence: We sold that old place, left that place (29:30) We was on the hillside hoeing corn, Me and Mary and Jim, and he said, "We are going to move off the farm." We jumped up and down and hollered, had a hoe down? We had worked so hard you know.

JC: Didn't like the farm?

Florence: We started in the General Store and the Post Office. We made an awful lot of money. We had one side dry goods and grocery, then a warehouse over to the side.

JC: How old would you have been when you moved over there?

Florence: About 12.

JC: So that was about 1914?

Florence: We done real good there, but we worked hard. Everybody liked us. (30:15) Then there wasn't no store there then, but us. After we was there a long long time, someone put up another little store. Atkins? (30:25) And we took eggs. People brought their eggs and their chickens, and that's what they traded.

JC: Did just you and Mary and Jim work in the store?

Florence: Me and Jim mostly. Mary, she got married. She wasn't there very long. Then Jim stayed longer ? (30:47) My mom...

JC: What did she die from?

Florence: Do you remember talking about the flu?

JC: That was in 1918.

Florence: 1918

JC; What flu was that?

Florence: Just the flu. That was the first time it had ever come around. Old fashioned doctors, they rode horses. They didn't have doctors. They did their best. It was just real bad, now they (end of tape)