

Harlan Porter (son of Alex, son of Andrew J. Porter) June 1978 Track 7

Harlan: Grandma Porter (Lucy Cornett Porter) had brothers that was slave owners.

JC: One of her brothers was named Levi Cornett.

Harlan: Is that right? I think she had two brothers that was slave owners. And grandpa (Andrew J. Porter), he worked through the summer for a man to send him to school. I think he was 18 or 20 years old when he started to school. He had never went to school. He was in the primer class, and they would say, "Look at Andy." Said, "Never mind, Andy will make it." So he made a school teacher. I don't know whether he was a preacher or not. But see I had two Uncles that was preachers.

JC: Did I ask you before if Andrew was a preacher?

Harlan: I believe that Andrew was a preacher. I'm not sure about him being a preacher, but I believe grandpa was a preacher. I believe he was.

JC: We found where he was bonded in 1865, or however they do that.

Harlan: Ya, I'm sure he was a preacher. See Uncle John, and Uncle Steve, they was both preachers.

JC: What was it that happened to Andrew's parents?

Harlan: Andrew's parents, if I'm not mistaken, his father died when he was young. He never had no chance. He was raised up poor. Now grandma (Lucy Cornett Porter) was out of a wealthy family. I know she had two brothers that was slave owners.

JC: We found out that her dad was named William Cornett and they were real rich.

Harlan: Now on my grandpa's side, he didn't have anything. I don't think he ever did accumulate too much. Not in this country (Kentucky?), he never did.

JC: Do you know if his dad was from the same county that Andrew was from in Virginia?

Harlan: I think he was raised in that county.

JC: His dad was?

Harlan: I think so.

JC: And what happened to Andrew's mom?

Harlan: I don't know. I just don't know.

JC: You never heard them say what his dad's name was?

Harlan: No. I might have heard, but I don't remember.

JC: Would it have been John?

Harlan: It might have been.

JC: But you don't know for sure.

Harlan: No, I don't know for sure.

JC: Did he have any brothers or sisters?

Harlan: No, I never heard dad (Alex Porter) say anything about any brothers. I never heard him say anything about grandpa's brothers. I don't know what year they come to this country.

JC: I think it was between 1866 and 1867. He sold his last property in Virginia in 66, and bought one in Carter County (Kentucky) in 67. I thought maybe he came because he was a preacher.

Harlan: What?

JC: I thought maybe he came here because he was a preacher. He got bonded in 1865 as a minister. I thought maybe he felt called to preach in Kentucky. He had a great big farm, so I don't know why he would sell out.

Harlan: My dad (Alex Porter, s/o AJP) always talked about wanting to go back for a visit. He never seemed to have any hankering to want to go back and live.

Harlan's son: He wanted to go back and look around.

Harlan: Ya, he wanted to go back and look around. That was a long ways then, it wouldn't be long...

Harlan's son: About a 3 or 4 hour drive now.

JC: Have you ever heard anything about them living in Robertson County (Kentucky)?

Harlan: My dad (Alex Porter) had a sister that lived in Robertson County; Aunt Mary Dwelly (d/o AJP).

Harlan's wife Gladys: I told you, and I think I'm right. Didn't you all drive the buggy to Robertson County?

Harlan: We sure did.

Gladys: That's what I told him this morning.

JC: That's where he married his first wife wasn't it?

Harlan: What?

JC: Laura Fulton, his first wife came from there? Have you ever heard about that?

Harlan: No.

Gladys: Is that where he got her, Robertson County?

JC: That's what Everett said.

Harlan: Said what?

Gladys: That is where he got Everett's mother.

JC: Robertson County.

Gladys: See Harlan called her Laury. You say Laura, you've got him confused.

Harlan: Ya, that is right. I believe my dad married her in Robertson County. I believe that is right. She was a Fulton.

JC: I found a deed in Elliott County, where he sold that 150 acres that he had bought, it said he lived in Robertson County, and that was 1873. Andrew lived there in 1873.

Harlan: My dad moved over there where Herman lived. He built and cleaned that up. He said you could swap a work horse then for 100 acres. He said a work horse was figured to worth one hundred dollars.

Harlan's son: A dollar an acre. (laughing)

JC: That's how they got some of the land?

Harlan: That's how my dad, I think, he said he swapped a horse for 100 acres. He built and lived right there all of his life. Raised both families right there where Gale.

JC: Who's Bill?

Harlan: Gale's boy lives there now. Herman was my brother you know that got killed. And Gale is his son. Go down the creek, go down here and go up....

Gladys: He's been up to Mae's haven't you?

JC: Ya, I went up there while ago.

Gladys: Cause I called down there, and Evie said they was up at Mae's.

Harlan: The first house down under the hill as you come back this way, over to the left, now right there is where we was all raised. That's where my dad raised both families. There was 7 boys and 1 girl in the first family. There was four of us in the last family. We had a sister that died when she was maybe two weeks old. Ceola, me and Herman and Irene were in the last family.

JC: What else do you know about your grandpa and grandma?

Harlan: That's about all I know.

JC: Have you ever heard of any Cornetts coming here with them?

Harlan: No. My dad said that he had a brother in law, Andy Cornett (7:50). Said he was arguing to him that a Niger didn't have no soul. He was like a mule. Said he couldn't talk right. He said, "Oh no Aleck. If a Niger do right, he go to Heaven when he die."

Harlan's son: If a Niger do right, he go to Heaven when he die. (laughing)

Harlan: He said he (Alex) asked his daddy (Andrew Porter) one time, "Can I go to Sunday School pap?" He said, "Why ya, go on son. I'll not (8:23)" (laughing)

Harlan's son: Thought he wanted him to do that.

JC: Your dad was arguing with Andy Cornett?

Harlan: Ya, that was his brother in law. That was Everett's Uncle.

Gladys: That was Laura's brother.

Harlan: Ya, Laura's brother.

Gladys: You've got your wires crossed dad. You said, he was arguing that he didn't have no soul, and you said Andy said that if a Niger do right, he would go to Heaven the same as anybody. Who said that, Andy or Aleck?

Harlan: Huh?

Gladys: Tell that all over again. You've got your wires crossed.

JC: Andy Cornett. Was he Lucy's brother?

Harlan: He was dad's first wife's brother.

Gladys: Laura.

Harlan: Ya, my dad told him that a Nigger didn't have no soul.

Gladys: While ago you said it the other way, then you went ahead and told what Andy said.

Harlan: He said, if a Nigger do right, he go to Heaven when he die. Pa said he was just arguing that to hear him talk.

JC: So that was **Andy Fulton**?

Harlan: Andy Fulton.

JC: Ok.

Harlan: (laughing) If he do right, he go to Heaven when he dies.

Harlan's son. Talking about slaves, over there at Jackson, the first house they built in that town, they've got a big block over in the corner of the yard where they used to stand these slaves up and sell them. Slave block they called it. They would put them up and sell them.

JC: How did your dad get to Kentucky?

Harlan: You know, I don't know. (10:28)

JC: Everett was telling us they came on a wagon train or something.

Harlan: Ofcourse that was the only way they had to travel, I guess. They might have told me, but I just don't...

Harlan's son: They was oxen or mules one I'd say.

Harlan: Ya, horses. My dad loved horses better than he did mules.

JC: Your grandmother didn't like this country?

Harlan: She liked Robertson County the best. My Dad said that she said, she would love an old dog if she knew it came from Grayson County, Virginia.

JC: She was really in love with Grayson County?

Harlan: Ya, that's right. Yes sir. She might not have said Grayson County, but she said Old Virginia. She said if she knew he came from up there, she would take him in and take care of him, and love an old dog because he was from Old Virginia.

JC: She really hated this part of Kentucky?

Harlan: Well, maybe she didn't hate it. She didn't like leaving up there I don't reckon.

JC: I wonder how long they lived in Robertson County.

Harlan: You know, I don't know.

JC: Your grandpa's parents died young? Anyway his dad did?

Harlan: Ya.

JC: How old was your grandpa when his dad died?

Harlan: I don't know.

JC: Andrew might have been in his teens when his dad died?

Harlan: It might have been, but I believe he was younger than that. Somebody else raised him.

JC: Somebody that wasn't related to him raised him?

Harlan: I just don't know about that, but if I remember right, somebody else raised him. I know he never had no chance to go to school until I think 18 or 20 years old. Never gone to school a bit until he was that old.

JC: His mother probably died too?

Harlan: Probably did, I just don't know about that.

JC: I wonder where he got all of his money at. He owned quite a bit there. He must have worked pretty hard.

Harlan: I'll say that come from grandma's side, is what I'll say.

JC: The Cornetts?

Harlan: The Cornetts, that is what I would say. Cause the Cornetts was better livers than grandpa was. They counted in that day and time, people that was good livers was slave owners you know. My Dad said that grandma was always used to more at home than my granddad ever had. So I'd say what he had come from grandma's side is what I'd say.

JC: I wonder how he met his wife. They were from two completely different backgrounds it seems like.

Harlan: He had to steal her. Said grandpa said I never did steal but one thing. Said he stole a petticoat with a woman in it. (laughing)

JC: He (Andrew) stole Lucy his wife?

Harlan: Yes sir.

JC: How did he do that?

Harlan: Well see, she was out of a rich family, and he was a poor man, so he had to steal her.

JC: so that is what he meant?

Harlan: Ya. We was talking, I was down there at Marion Stamper's the other day, and what's that boys name?

Harlan's son: Mitchell.

Harlan: Mitchell. His little woman was there, and she don't look like she is more than 12 or 13 years old.

Gladys: She's 19.

Harlan: Ya, she told me how old she was. She went and got me a drink. Miss Stamper said, "That's Mitchell's wife." I said it looks like he done a pretty good job this time. She said that's what I thought. (laughing) I asked her how old she was, she looks younger than that. She said she was 19. Clifford said there was a fellow told me they stole you. She said no, I just slipped off with him. (laughing)

Wanda, Clifford told her, it was her brother in law that told, one of them Sparks' up there told Clifford that Mitchell stole her. Said there was a fellow told me that Mitchell stole you. No he didn't, I just slipped off with him. (laughing)

Lady: Well she told some of them that she hated to get married that way, but after they done the way they did, that was the only chance she had. They wouldn't let him come down to see her or nothing else.....

JC: What can you tell me about Levi and that hypnotism stuff that he did?

Harlan: Well, I can tell you one thing. There was a Pentecost preacher come out there at Clark Hill. Uncle Levi (s/o AJP) said, "I believe I will go out there and try my power on him." He'd study these hypnotism books all the time. They said he could put fellers to

sleep. He went out, that long beard you know, and that would pretty near get anybody's attention. Said the old preacher got up and read his text, and Jess Collins of Olive Hill, and this is a fact. The preacher, he read his text, and his tongue got to getting thick. He said, "Evil Spirits here." He dismissed. Next time he come back he said, "That old long whiskered feller ain't here is he?" (laughing)

He (Levi) had a boy Byrd Porter who put his wife to sleep. He learned how to do that. But he didn't know how to wake her up. He had to go get Pa to wake her up. (laughing)

Uncle Levi had my brother Charlie Porter (s/o Alex, s/o AJP) fishing in the fireplace. Charlie always said he know'd what he was doing, but the rest of them said he never. Said he had a poker just a fishing in the fireplace. Said he told him that they were going on a fishing trip, that they was going to catch a lot of fish. Said Charlie got the poker and got to fishing in the fire. Charlie never would own it. But the rest of them argued that he had him hypnotized.

There was a lot of people he couldn't do nothing with. I guess he could actually hypnotize a lot of fellers, and there was fellers that he couldn't phase. (18:02)

JC: What was that about Winton & Jasper? What did they do?

Harlan: (laughing) I don't know, so many things. One time Jas (Jasper Porter, s/o Alex, s/o AJP) was boarding with Wint (s/o Alex, s/o AJP) in Olive Hill. Jas got to laying out at night, and Wint got a sheet to scare Jas. Jas had got him an old pistol, Wint didn't know it. He know'd it was Wint and he come a shootin. Wint said, "Don't shoot you fool you." He said, "This is your brother Wint." (laughing)

JC: What was that about them making the table raise or something?

Harlan: Oh they raised the table. Wint did. Well Jas was in on that just as bad as Wint. They could make a table count; tell how old you was, how many years, how many months and how many days. My daddy said he'd seem them do it many a time, just somebody come in. Not even nobody would know his age, just ask if they would tell that man's age, and if it would, to knock. Said it would knock for every year, knock for every month, and knock for every day. Not only has my daddy told me that, but my mother has told me that, and dozens of people that was witness to that.

Charlie told em that he could hold that table down. They was just getting that table to raise up by them a pressing it to make it raise up. He said he got under a little table and got a hold of it. He said he thought that table would kill him. It scared him to death. He know'd there was something happening to that table. He said it like to have tore that table all to pieces. It handled him rough.

My dad told them there wasn't nothing in that one time. He said he knew there was. I don't know which one of the boys it was. Everett (s/o Alex, s/o AJP) was in on that. Everett can tell you all about the knockin spirits. He's helped raise it.

Gladys: Ya, but Everett won't tell.

JC: He was telling us some about it last night, about it doing that.

Harlan: Everett's been in on it. I'll tell you one thing that I heard Everett tell himself. After my dad married the last time, I had half brothers and sisters on the other side. Well my dad stopped em from raising it. He said it got so you could hear that just peck all the time at night and everything.