

**JC & Scott Porter visit with Val & John Green in Fries, Grayson County, VA – June 1979**

(Their brother Dale was not there at the time of our visit).

Edgar Val Green (1907-1995)

John A.H. Green (1903-2000)

Richard Dale Green (1911-1989)

Sons of Stephen Fletcher Green (1857-1923) & Thursa Elizabeth Thomas (1871-1952). Thursa was the daughter of Jacob Crigger Thomas (1845-1925) who was the son of Wesley Thomas (1803-1900)

**In 1866 P.O.J. Thomas & Isaac Thomas (sons of Wesley Thomas) purchased the Andrew Porter home (4040 Carsonville Road, Elk Creek, Grayson County, VA.)**

John Green: Oscar and Isaac (Thomas)

JC: Yeah.

John Green: And Isaac sold his interest in it to his brother and went to \_\_\_\_\_

Scott: Yeah, that is what Ina (Rhudy, daughter of P.O.J. Thomas) said.

John Green: Let's go out on the porch.

JC: Ok. They thought he might remember something that you guys don't. Any little clue will help.

John Green: He's blind, but he remembers things that I don't. C'mon in.

JC: Ok. Was your name John?

John: Huh.

JC: Were you John?

John: Yeah. C'mon in. You can see my name's John.

Scott: Yeah.

John: Have a seat.

JC: Does this plug-in work right here? I'll just plug my tape recorder in if that is OK. The batteries are kind of low.

John: There are some boys out here who want to talk to you.

Val Green: Oh. Hello there, how are you?

JC: Fine. I'm JC Porter and this is my cousin Scott Porter. How are you doing there?

Val: Just fine.

JC: Good. I've got my tape recorder on, is that OK?

Val: I guess so. (1:40) (setting up tape recorder)

JC: Ok

John: (1:40) They wanted to ask if you remembered anything about

**Val: All I know'd about, I've heard em say that Andy Porter lived out there. That was who Oscar Thomas and Isaac Thomas bought that from. As to where he went to, I don't remember ever hearing them say anything about it, where he went to.**

JC: Yeah.

Val: I know of three Andy Porters in this part of the country. Well there is two of them live...one lived over here on \_\_\_\_\_ (2:20) And one lives over here in Wythe county.

JC: Was this years back, or is this now?

Val: Andy Porter over there in Wythe County, he's not been dead too long. But this one over here has been dead for a good long while.

**JC: And then there is the one who lived in the Thomas house also.**

**Val: Yeah.**

**JC: And you don't know what happened to him?**

**Val: No, I don't know what happened to him or where he went to.**

JC: Nobody ever heard of him since.

Val: Not that I've ever heard of. Do you all know where he went to?

JC: Yeah. We are part of him. (laughing) He is our great-great-great grandpa.

Val: Your 4th?

**JC: 3<sup>rd</sup> great. He moved to Carter County, Kentucky. That is in Northeastern Kentucky. He probably has 8-10,000 descendants now.**

Val: Probably has. Back then they raised large families.

JC: They sure did.

Val: There was 13 of us.

JC: Oh is that right?

Val: I know of another man that had 15, and another man up here on Elk Creek had 16.

**John: And Ina Rhudy couldn't tell you nothing, only that her dad (P.O.J. Thomas) bought that place?**

**JC: From a Porter, and I said was it Andy Porter, and she said yeah, that sounds familiar. And then she said there was 262 acres on that farm, does that sound right to you?**

John: I guess so.

Val: I guess that is about what there was there.

**JC: According to the deed book in Grayson County, at Independence, it said 250 acre plot and a 12 acre plot. They sold them both 2 days apart in 1866. They sold one to P.O.J. and Isaac Thomas. They sold the 12 acres to Ephraim Catron, but later the Thomas' bought it from the Catron. Not much later, two years later. The 12 acres, so that would have made 262 acres altogether.**

Val: Do you know where this brick church is at here?

Scott: Summerfield?

Val: Yeah. Well it is just a little ways down the road to where the line of that farm come to. And then up yonder, **an old mill place**. Did you see that? The mill burnt not long ago, did you see that?

JC: We saw it last year, we went by.

Val: And the bridge crossed the creek right this side of it. Well right down this side of it was the line where it went through the road that way.

JC: What, that mill was part of the property?

Val: No, I don't think so.

John: That mill wasn't part of it.

Val: Back down this side where the line went to. You remember the house on the turn of the road? Where there is a sharp turn in the road and a little garage below there.

JC: Yeah.

Val: Well that is a part of that place.

JC: Is that bridge still there by where that mill was?

Val: Yeah.

JC: What kind of mill was that?

Val: Well they made flour and corn meal there and buck wheat flour.

JC: I wonder how old it was?

Val: I don't know how old this building was. My dad helped get the big timbers out that was in the thing.

JC: Oh he did?

Val: Yeah and took them in the woods and hewed them. Then they brought em up here and two or three men took broad axes and hewed em again. They looked like they had been \_\_\_\_\_. Did you ever see a broad axe? (6:16)

JC: I don't know.

Scott: I've heard of them. I don't know if I ever saw one or not.

Val: They had a crooked handle in them so you could hew down by the side of a piece of timber. The handle crooked over this way, then come back in.

Scott: Oh yeah, I've seen one.

John: The blade is I guess that long. And it is beveled on one side. Well a left handed man, he had to have a crooked handle so he could hew with it, and a right handed man, you took that handle out and turned the axe right around, so a right handed man could use it. I've used one of em a little.

Val: Right there lays a mill stone at the bottom of them steps there that come out of a mill that washed away up there before that one was put back there. I believe they said it washed away about 1877 or 78, somewhere along there.

John: And out there sits another mill stone was at another milling wheel on down the creek.

JC: Those grooves just left the grain come out to the side and fall off huh?

Val: They ground it in then, see them grooves is what ground it.

John: Them stones laid down flat, and that one setting up out there, that is the one that turned.

Val: One of them was bedrock, and one was the one that rubbed.

John: I'll tell you one thing, the man who trimmed them out, he know'd his business.

JC: You're not kidding. I wonder who trimmed those out? Someone around here, or did they buy those special?

Val: I don't know where they come from. They had some kind of a good granite.

**JC: You don't know anything else about the Porters that lived up there? (8:22)**

**Val: No, and I never heard anybody say how many children that he had.**

**John: I never did either, or I'd remember it, cause I've heard my mother talk about em living out there. And that is all I remember, and another old lady that was older than my mother. I've heard her talk about it, she stayed there some, but as for knowing anything about em, I do not. (8:56)**

**Val: There was an old cemetery out there up in the field, out beyond the house. Did you notice a house up in the holler there above this brick house?**

JC: What brick house? The rock house?

Val: You know where the rock house is?

JC: Yeah.

Val: Right on up the road there is a brick house on the right going from here up there.

JC: A newer brick house?

Val: Up in that field, right this side of it, **there is an old cemetery up there**, they tell me, at one time. I don't reckon there is any sign of it there now.

JC: Huh. I wonder who all is buried up there?

Val: I don't know. I don't guess there is anybody in this country that would know.

JC: Is there any tombstones up there?

Val: No.

JC: No tombstones?

Val: No. On back out this side there was an old cemetery, the **Old Bethel Cemetery**. There is no tombstones up in it, all there is it is rocks for the head and foot of the graves.

JC: No names on any of them?

Val: No. But I know of two people they said was buried there.

JC: Who's that?

Val: (10:13) **Daniels**.

JC: Daniels?

Val: Yeah. This woman down here at the foot of the hill lives in that house across from that store building there. It was **two of her dad's brothers** that was buried there in that old cemetery. There was somebody was here a year or two ago, Byrd, that was hunting for some of his people that was buried, supposed to have been buried out there.

John: My brother sent you all out there in West Virginia and Kentucky hunting our granddad, our great granddaddy's picture. (10:57). Well they found where he was buried at, but they done away with that part of the cemetery. No sign. Somewhere in Kentucky they found this. They went to the courthouse and found it. That is where they went to all the time when they was a hunting out there.

JC: Sounds like what we are doing.

Val: Did you all find them things at the courthouse that's got Porter in it?

**JC: Yeah, Andrew Porter owned 140 acres. His first 140 acres he bought from a Wesley Thomas. In less than 10 years he sold it back to Wesley Thomas. That was your great grandpa wasn't it?**

**Val: Yeah.**

**JC: And then there was some other land he bought from some other people, but then about 1866 he sold 250 acres to POJ Thomas and Isaac Thomas and he sold 12 acres to that Ephraim Catron but Ephraim Catron turned around and a few years later sold it back to the Thomas'. So that made 262 acres that went to the Thomas' that the Porters once owned. So that is definitely it, it sounds like. About 1866 is when they would have bought it from him.**

John: Yeah, that was just after the Civil War. They was all, that Thomas family was in the Civil War, the men but one. I tell em I had three granddaddies' in the Civil War. My granddaddy Green, granddaddy (Jacob Cigger) Thomas and my granddaddy Green died up here at Stanton of typhoid fever. He was in

the war, and after he died my grandmother Green married a Hawks, so I had three granddaddies' in the war. (12:58) What you'd call a step granddaddy I reckon.

**JC: Have you ever heard of a Levi Porter in the Civil War, from around here? Andrew oldest son was named Levi and he would have probably been about the same age as POJ Thomas. Levi Porter.**

John: If I am not mistaken in this book of Grayson County, I've seen that name.

JC: What as a soldier for the Confederacy?

John: Yeah, there is a whole bunch of them, listed in that book.

JC: Is that the new Grayson county book they just published a couple of years ago?

John: Yeah.

Val: Granddaddy did \_\_\_\_\_. We could find out. (13:40)

**JC: He was Andrew's (Porter) oldest son, and he was in the Civil War, and he was captured.**

John: Now he was probably about the age of some of the Thomas'.

**JC: He was born in 1845 so he would have been about the same age as POJ Thomas.**

John: My granddaddy was born in October of 1845 but he didn't help, he run away. The other three, Mitch Thomas and Isaac and Oscar all had to go. **Did you see a picture of that house out there before that stone casing was put around?**

JC: Yeah, I saw that.

**John: Well there is a picture of it in there.**

**JC: Yeah.**

**Val: And all that framing is mortised together.**

**John: Right there is a picture of that house.**

**JC: Yeah, there it is.**

**Scott: We saw that picture.**

John: Telling you about our granddaddy, right there is a picture of his house.

JC: And how far is that from here?

John: Just a short ways over the hill here. There was a part of this Wesley Thomas farm, he had a patent on it. road all the way in \_\_\_\_\_ (15:15) It was made at the US patent office.

JC: What was the patent for?

John: For part of this land that my great granddaddy Thomas owned.

JC: Why would he patent land?

John: The government owned it. Nobody had took it up. He took it up and the government made this patent on it. Gave him a patent on it. They rode all the way on \_\_\_\_\_ (15:45)

JC: I'll be darn. Is there any old land around here that nobody owns? We found our Andrew Porter and we can't find 12 acres that he had. He bought 429 acres all together but he only sold 417 acres so that leaves 12 acres unaccounted for.

John: When they surveyed it, it might not have run out what it...

JC: Might have surveyed it wrong the first time.

John: A lot of the needs in this part of the country, there is so many acres "more or less." That is the way they make most of the deeds. See if you buy land for a certain number of acres and you run that and it don't run out, they've got to put you your money back. Most people have just wrote "more or less," so many acres "more or less," that way that takes care of that part of it.

**JC: He would have been a private.**

Val: I'd guess he was probably in the **Daredevils** then. From Elk Creek.

JC: The Daredevils you say?

Val: Ya.

JC: Was that the name of a regiment or something?

Val: **Napper Peyton Hale** trained them up here at Elk Creek they tell us.

JC: Alfred Hale?

Val: Napper Peyt.

JC: Napper Peyt?

Val: Yeah. They say he was killed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas battle. They said he had his men in to load guns. They had these breast works sand in bags filled up this high. He had men to load guns and he stood up on top of that and done the fighting.

John: That right there is our granddaddy. Right there is Isaac Thomas.

JC: Yeah

JC: (17:53) How old are you now?

Val: Me? 72.

JC: Have you ever herd what it was like around here after the Civil War, all the Carpet baggers and stuff like that?

Val: I've heard em talk of em.

JC: What's some stories about that?

Val: Well I don't remember too much about it.

JC: I heard that some of the Catrons moved to Kentucky, and all the soldiers came up and stole their horses one day, when they lived here.

Val: Well now up here on the creek during the Civil War they stole horses \_\_\_\_\_ (18:31)

JC: Who did that, the Carpet baggers?

Val: No. The Yankee soldiers done that.

JC: Oh yeah?

Val: So they said.

JC: Just came through here and stole whatever they wanted huh?

Val: Yeah. Well according to the history, a lot of these old southern homes was burnt by the North.

JC: Did the Thomas' ever have any trouble right after the Civil War, since they had been Confederates, and the North won.

Val: Not that I know of. If they did, I never heard tell of it.

JC: Never heard of any trouble that they had?

Val: No. I'd guess a lot of what was told wasn't so.

**JC: Do you know of any people around here who practiced hypnotism and table walking?**

**Val: No.**

**JC: Cause that Levi Porter I spoke of, he got into that somehow. He had an old book, and he started making tables walk in Kentucky there. I don't know if he got started in it here or not.**

John: Now here is a picture of a Reunion in 1914. And right there is our granddaddy (Jacob Crigger) Thomas.

JC: Oh is that right?

Val: Did you find any Porters?

John: No, I never found any Porters.

JC: We bought that book, so we can look through it real close. We've got it out in the car.

John: You've got one of em?

JC: Yeah, we bought it at the library yesterday.

John: According to that book, some news man out west somewhere wrote this story. And a fellow Phipps back up yonder at Bridle Creek above Independence said that the people believe that this Phipps is the daddy of old man John D. Rockefeller. (laughing)

JC: Where did they get that? (several talking at the same time)



John: This news reporter wrote the story. I don't believe I'd press it unless I know'd he was his son. (21:03)

JC: Did your family own any slaves before the Civil War that you know of?

John: My granddaddy Thomas, great granddaddy Thomas up here, Wesley Thomas had a slave.

JC: Just one?

John: Yeah. He bought him, and \_\_\_\_\_ so he run away, got away. (21:30)

JC: The slave got away?

John: Yeah.

Val: I'll tell you \_\_\_\_\_ about our grandmother Thomas. We furnished the picture \_\_\_\_\_ (21:44)

Scott: Is that the one you said she weaved herself?

JC: They put the picture on that cloth?

Val: Yeah. I boarded with an old man and his son in \_\_\_\_\_ county. (21:55) This old man was 94 years old when we was there and he was in the Jackson Brigade during the Civil War. He said that Jackson never went into battle, but what he got down and prayed before he went into battle.

JC: Is that right?

Val: He said he would send his scouts out and find where the Yankees was at. They would march day and night and run up on em about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning when they was bedded down \_\_\_\_\_ (22:43)

**John: Said you boys was in this part of the country last year?**

**JC: Yeah, we were just here for two days and one night last year.**

**John: And you didn't find the home out here, the Porter place last year did you?**

**JC: No, we just now found it yesterday I guess. We came out to see what it was like, came out and talked to you and your brother down there. It is definitely it.**

Val: Of all the military men I've ever read after, Robert E. Lee was one of the greatest men that ever commanded the army. He could have sold, some insurance company after the Civil War offered him a big amount of money, just to use his name, and he refused. And he was offered Grant's job, by Abraham Lincoln, and he refused to take it, said he would not lead the army against his own people. He was born and raised in Virginia. He said if he led the army, he would go back home. He was in the US armed forces at the time the war broke out. He said if he led an army, he would go back home and lead one. He would not lead an army against his own people. There ain't many men who would turn down a thing like that is there?

JC: No, not many.

Val: \_\_\_\_\_ using his name to get a big amount of money. He wasn't selling his to nobody. (24:25)  
Presidents now days, as soon as they leave office, their papers, they offer large amounts of money for

them. I heard tell of Johnson's papers that he collected while he was president was worth 5, 6 million dollars. Those papers don't actually belong to them.

John: You can see, if you look close that is \_\_\_\_\_. (25:01)

JC: It sure is.

Val: For the simple reason that when your president of the United States, you are president 24 hours a day.

JC: Yeah, that is right, it would be a big job. Who made the picture on here?

John: It was sent off somewhere and made.

JC: That is something else.

Val: Are you from anywhere near Paradise, Kentucky, or have you ever heard of that?

Scott: I don't believe I've ever heard of it.

Val: Have you ever heard that song that they sing about that? Oh daddy take me back to Lunenburg? county. (25:55) On the Green River where Paradise lay. I just heard them sing that yesterday or the day before, on the radio.

JC: I've never heard that.

Scott: I don't think I've ever heard it.

John: Boys \_\_\_\_ this them.

JC: Here's your brother who is not here today, isn't it?

John: That is the one who lives down the road. This is the one that was here yesterday evening. And it starts here, the oldest. It goes out this a way, and then goes back.

JC: Is this you here?

John: Yeah. There was 10 of us boys.

JC: Is this Val here?

John: Yeah. \_\_\_\_ lived to be grown. (26:54) That was made in 1952. And this is a brother of ours that lived in Maryland. (laughing)

JC: What's that sign on there for?

John: And he has never been married. Out of the 9 that lived to be grown, 3 married. (laughing)

JC: Is that right?

John: And this one, he will soon be 78 years old.

Scott: Which one was this? That one?

JC: Who put that sign on there? (laughing)

John: I think he looks good with that beard. And it is as white as snow.

Val: You reckon that horse will win the Belmont race tomorrow? (27:54)

JC: I haven't been following it any.

Scott: I don't know. \_\_\_\_\_ is that what you are talking about?

Val: That fellow that trained that horse, his granddaddy was raised up here at Elk Creek. Bud Dandifer? His actual name is Grover, but they call him Bud. His daddy was drowned out here at \_\_\_\_\_ stage park out there. (28:24)

JC: How long have you been blind now?

Val: It will soon be 46 years.

JC: Is that right?

Val: 1934

JC: Was it an accident?

Val: Yeah, I was blown up on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1934 about 4 o'clock in the evening, I was on a grading job 22 mile west of Harrisonburg, in the George Washington National Park.

JC: What was it, fireworks you say?

Val: No blasting rock.

JC: Oh, I see.

Val: Was grading this road. I got blown over a hundred feet.

JC: 100 feet?

Val: Yeah, I walked up to this hole, stooped down like that, picked this wire up, and then she went off. They didn't know for a while what \_\_\_\_\_ (29:42) There was a whole bunch of cars in the road waiting to get by. It threw rocks all over the cars. Them people was mad cause we didn't let them know we was going to blast. The boss man said he told em that nobody know'd the thing was going off.

JC: Is that right?

Val: There was actually two holes loaded and both of em went.

John: How old are you boys?

JC: I'm just 19.

Scott: I'm 20.

John: You is young yet.

JC: Yeah.

John: The right age for the next war.

JC: Yeah, I guess so.

Val: Which one of you, are you the Porter?

JC: We're both Porters.

Scott: Both Porters.

**JC: We're cousin, 1<sup>st</sup> cousins. Yeah our great-great grandpa was born here in 1855, he was the son of Andrew Porter, that lived here.**

John: I had two brothers, my two oldest brothers in the first World War. I had three brothers in the second World War. The two youngest ones is twins, and they didn't go to camp together, in the second World War. But they was put together later, went through it together. They were in \_\_\_\_ foreign countries. (31:17)

JC: They were in a lot of fighting then.

John: Oh yeah. They were in a tank destroyer outfit. And our oldest brother who was in the first World War, he was gassed in France and reported missing. After he come home, I seen him and he looked like he couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ but he was 85 when he died.

JC: Where did this church pew come from? Is that from Summerfield Church?

John: They had it out there in the old school building, but it come originally from Wytheville out of a church over there.

JC: Is that Summerfield church the way it was originally?

Val: Yeah, that building is the way it was built when they built there?

JC: Did they put brick on it later?

Val: No, it is built out of brick. There ain't no framing inside, the walls they plastered right to the brick.

JC: So it is the same original brick structure?

Val: It was built the year I was born. That cornerstone is laid in it. By the front door in the wall there, there is a flat marble block in there with the date on it.

John: And the brick that it was built out of was made just west of us.

JC: It was?

John: Yeah.

Val: Some of these old brick houses, the walls of them is about 18" thick.

JC: Yeah. Well what about that sign that says 1838? Was there another building before that then?

Val: Yeah, there was a weather boarded church there in that old cemetery, west of the church, there was a log church stood there. Then before the church \_\_\_\_\_, (33:21) that old cemetery I was telling you about out there where the rocks are up to the graves, there is an old church there, Bethel Church.

JC: Yeah, but the first Summerfield church was there just on the other side of the cemetery was a log church?

Val: It was where the old cemetery is at. I've seen some of the logs out of it.

JC: That is the one that was built in 1838?

Val: Sammy Brewer deeded that church property in 1834 wasn't it?

John: I believe it was either 1833 or 34.

Val: And it must have been in war time that he deeded it for a church.

JC: I guess this whole area would have been woods at one time?

Val: There is a Dickerson, Old man Johnny Dickerson owned a lot of this land in this part of the country. At one time he owned, didn't that book say 50,000 acres?

JC: That must have been part of the next county too?

Val: I reckon that is what he lived off of. Sold the land along, lived off of that. Now you would have a fortune.

JC: One of the richest men in the world, if you had 50,000 acres.

Val: Is woods high in Kentucky and Indiana? (34:59)

Scott: Oh yeah.

Val: These mountain tops here, people is buying and building cabins. One time after the Civil War people went into these mountains and lived in em. But most of them has left out of these mountains now. (35:21) Got down on the road.

John: \_\_\_\_ land in Grayson county is bringing better than \$1000 an acre now.

JC: How much would land cost up on a hill? About \$1000 per acre, up there in the woods?

John: Somewhere around \$1000.00.

Val: I bought, wasn't it 30 some acres out here, or 40 some acres and give \$20,000 for it. They moved a trailer in there. Saturday they had it hung out there in the curve in the road, the road blocked. They finally got it loose some way or another and got it on up there. 12' wide and 60' long, well they won't go around these short turns.

John: A year ago there was a loader .... (talking at the same time) (36:25) ...place they called Mouth of Wilson, \_\_\_\_\_ brought some cattle in here. I was telling him, he was telling you about selling a place up there somewhere, 30 some acres and a two bedroom house, brought 87,040.

JC: You know up where we are from, that is a good price though. I know of a 20 acre woods that went for 60,000 up there. Just 20 acres with some big trees on it. \$3000 an acre, that was a pretty good price.

John: I have a niece that lives up in Maryland, she bought her a lot to build a house on, over in Pennsylvania. Wasn't it 11,000 it cost her?

Val: 11,500

John: Just a lot to build a house.

JC: That must have been in a nice subdivision.

John: I don't see how people builds \_\_\_\_\_ (37:50) (John & Val talking at the same time)

John: When I was working, plywood sub floor cost three and a half dollars a sheet. Now it is ten something.

JC: 2x4's are more than \$2.00 a piece now.

John: 8' - 2x4's we used to get em for 50 cents apiece, delivered on the job. Last time I was over at Galax, they was about \$2.00. 8' - 2x4.

Val: My dad worked up here. Do you remember a big house up here on the right beyond the mill, a white house?

JC: I'm not sure.

Val: Well anyhow, he worked there on that place for four years at \$8.00 a month, \$96.00 a year. Well up yonder on 21 where Dr. Moxford? lived in an old brick house. It would be on your right after you turn to go toward Independence. First big house on your right. Only house on the right, between the creek after you turn off. And he worked there four years, \$8.00 a month.

John: I wouldn't be afraid to say it, that I handled more money in a year than my dad handled in a lifetime. Our dad died in 1923. (Stephen Fletcher Green 1857-1923)

Val: At the time I got hurt, \$5.00 for 10 hours is the most money I ever made in a day. We worked 10 hour days.

JC: 50 cents and hour

Val: Yep.

John: We've got a nephew that is working in carpentry trade, masonry work. (40:24)

JC: 10 or 12 and hour.

John: He ain't drawing \_\_\_\_\_. He is making \$5.00 an hour carpenter work and \$5.50 masonry work.

JC: He is just a young guy?

John: Yeah, and he studied this in school, masonry work. \_\_\_\_\_ was talking about an old store that used to be at Elk Creek.

JC: Old Store?

John: And I told this woman, I oughtn't to tell this, but I'm going to. It was an old Irishman, my dad said, run this store. Back then people sold Bee's Wax. (END OF TAPE) (41:21)

