

3-20-1984

## Interview with Lee (Guffey) Abbott (FA 23)

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INFORMANT/FIELDWORKER DATA FORM

I. INFORMANT.

Lee Abbott

NAME [Include fullest possible name - first, middle and/or maiden, last.

For example: John James Smith; Mary Franklin Smith (Mrs. John Smith)

710 Columbia Avenue

ADDRESS

Monticello, Ky 42633

PERSONAL DATA:

Age: ~~and 60<sup>s</sup>~~ <sup>69</sup> Date of Birth: 1915 Place of Birth: Powersburg, Ky Sex: F

RACE/NATIONALITY/ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Caucasian / American

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: [Include education, occupation, places of residence, religion, etc.]

Mrs Abbott attended Eastern College. She was a school teacher for 41 yrs. in Wayne County.

II. COLLECTOR.

James Edward Spradlin & Ann Coebin

NAME (Include fullest possible name as described above)

2506 Harmony Rd, Jeffersonton, Ky 410299

ADDRESS, ~~THE SPRADLIN~~

630 Tepper Dr, Gallatin, TN 37064

ADDRESS, ~~FEVARIANT COEBIN~~

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE INFORMANT, SUCH AS COUSIN, FRIEND, BOSS, ACQUAINTANCE, ETC.

Acquaintance

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

She took us to the one room school house museum after the interview

Interviewer's tape no.: 1 WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:  
 4810 Old Hickory Blvd.  
 Interviewer: Ann Corbin Address: Hermitage, TN 37076  
 Interviewee: Mrs. Lee Abbott Address: 710 Columbia Ave.  
 Monticello, KY 42633  
 Place of interview: Mrs. Abbott's home Date: March 20, 1984  
 in living room  
 Other people present: Jim Spradlin

Equipment used: Panasonic Cassette RQ-335A

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand: Size reel: Tape Mil: Speed:  
 Cassette: Brand: Scotch AVX-60 3M C-30/C-60/C-90/C-120 (circle size)  
 Amount of tape used: (Side 1) All (Side 2): All

Brief description of interview context and tape contents:

Mrs. Lee Abbott taught school in Wayne County, Kentucky for over forty-one years. She began in one room schools and then later taught in the city school system in Monticello. Her teaching career is the topic of discussion in this interview. It was conducted on March 20, 1984, in Mrs. Abbott's home.

Begin Side 1

CORBIN: Okay, first of all, I'd just like to ask you how long you taught school?

ABBOTT: Firty-one and 4/10 years and I taught the twenty-one years and 4/10 in the, in the rural schools in the one room school with all eight grades. And then the last twenty, I taught in the city schools, because all the one room schools were consolidated. And twenty-one and 4/10 years that I taught in the one room school, of course, we had to be janitor, and mother, and nurse and teacher and everything to the children. And I had from anywhere from fifty to seventy children in one little room with all grades and had all classes, for all the children and every grade and every subject everyday.

CORBIN: What year did you start teaching?

ABBOTT: In, the first year I taught was 1935.

CORBIN: And then what year did you retire?

ABBOTT: 19--what--81. I always have to think--that shows

ABBOTT (continued): I'm retired, doesn't it, that I've forgotten? But, in, in between, I did miss a year, a few years in there...

CORBIN: You did?

ABBOTT: ...That I would have more than forty-one had I taught every year but I was sick some of the time, but...

CORBIN: Did you take out time to raise children or did you still teach?

ABBOTT: No...we, well, we just lost one little boy, and that was the only year I was out, for that. And, then, we were just unfortunate and didn't have a family.

CORBIN: You didn't have any children?

ABBOTT: No. So, I just spent all my time teaching and helping others.

CORBIN: Well, that's good. That way you got to spend some time with children even though you had none of your own... that's good.

ABBOTT: Oh, yes. And I just loved every minute of it.

CORBIN: What type of education did you need to teach school back when you got started? What type of education did you have?

ABBOTT: Oh, we just had after we went to the high school and four years of college, we got a B.S. Degree. and with a B.S. Degree, then you were eligible to teach for; in the elementary schools, first grade through eighth grade, or junior high now. And then, I went to U.K. and did graduate work, but I didn't finish and get my masters. I didn't want to stay away from home. And for that reason, I got all the graduate work I could by extension. Then I just didn't go on. I wanted to stay at home.

CORBIN: Where did you go to high school?

ABBOTT: The first three years went to Windy High School. And it was just a three year high school, and then we came to Monticello City School for the fourth year and graduated from Monticello City School.

CORBIN: Where did you go to college?

ABBOTT: At Eastern College, and, of course, it wasn't a University then, a university; it wasn't called Eastern University like it is today. It was just Eastern College.

CORBIN: Where was the first school that you taught at?

ABBOTT: Parmley, and it was in the far eastern part of Wayne County. And I would have to hire someone to drive me sixteen miles to a boarding house. And then, I would stay maybe a month or two before I could ever come back home. And from where I boarded, I walked two miles through the woods to my school. And I had all eight grades in this school, too. And many times, well, weather never mattered. We just went regardless of weather. Snow or rain or what have you. And enjoyed every bit of it.

And it was awfully hard. And boarding was hard because we didn't have, our boarding homes were really bad, a lot of them. And I can remember one especially, or more than one where--I always think of it--for breakfast, we would have maybe sweet potatoes or chocolate gravy. And we always had biscuits and arsh potatoes. And then we'd have to put this in biscuits and take it to school and eat for dinner. We'd come back and have the same thing for supper. And we did this day after day after day, the whole time through. And wash our clothes, we have just, just have a, use a washpan. you know what a wash pan is?

CORBIN: Uh-huh.

ABBOTT: The old time wash pan. And then, I said I slept in cold rooms and have to take a bath in the wintertime in these cold rooms with no warm water or anything. And get up after you'd do all of this and then walk your two miles to school one way.

CORBIN: Did you have to pay to stay at the boarding house?... or was that taken care of as part of the...

ABBOTT: No, I paid five dollars a month. We made sixty dollars teaching, sixty dollars a month and paid five dollars a month for board. And yet, we had enough money when the year was up to pay our way to college. And so, you can imagine what the expenses would have been at that price in that day.

CORBIN: Were you married at the time when you first started teaching?

ABBOTT: No, no. I started teaching in 1935, and then Barnett and I were married in 1941.

CORBIN: Oh, okay.

ABBOTT: So.

CORBIN: Okay, what s--you taught all subjects?

ABBOTT: Yes--first @grade or Primer, we always called it Primer then, instead of saying first grade, through the eighth grade.

CORBIN: When you came to the city schools and taught, did you teach a certain subject or did you teach a grade?

[SIMULTANEOUSLY] ABBOTT: I taught the second grade, second grade.  
CORBIN: So, you taught them all the time.

CORBIN: Do you remember any particular students, in particular? Do you remember...do any of them stand out in your mind when you think back of your teaching years? For some reason do any of them, or I'm sure you remember a lot of them, but any ones in particular that you'd like to talk about?

ABBOTT: Well, I don't know. All of them were interesting and all of them. I said all of them were good, because we thought so much of the children and the work. And I really don't know. I think about it a lot and wonder. Why the teachers today don't appreciate their schools and their children more because I said with all the talk about we need more money for schools. The only thing that I see that's wrong is we just need dedicated teachers. If we had dedicated teachers today, we wouldn't have any school problems, I don't think. And the parents were more dedicated to helping their children and doing for them. And as for what year would stand out the most, I really don't know, because all of them were good. And I can just think about all the little folks I had and their needs--they needed more than just what you could teach them from the books.

CORBIN: Did you have any special favorites that you remember for any reason?

ABBOTT: In the children?

CORBIN: Yeah.

ABBOTT: Oh, well, I think that you. Maybe always have a little boy or little girl that is special someway or other there's that loving little boy or girl, but you never let them know it.

CORBIN: Oh, yeah.

ABBOTT: There's no way you'd let them know that you cared more for one than you did for the other. And I said I tried to never, never let them know that, that if I did have a special feeling toward one.

CORBIN: Can you describe a typical school day when you taught in the one room school house? What time it began and things like that?

ABBOTT: I always went to school about an hour before time to start. And we always started at eight o'clock of the morning and we closed at four in the afternoon. And the length of the day didn't make any difference. We just put in all of our

ABBOTT (continued): time. And we had--we'd always ring the bell at eight o'clock in the morning and line the children up to go in. And I think so much back when we go down to the museum, and I teach down there every summer. The consolidated school, city school, bring children, and I teach them just like I would in the one room school. But we'd always line the boys in one line and the girls in the other line. And the girls always had preference in going in first. And, then, we'd always have our opening exercises, our devotional and prayer and pledge to the flag. And we always sang, and had our roll call and our lesson.

And we always had three recesses everyday, morning and afternoon, and, of course, lunch. At lunchtime, we had a long recess. And we did play. And one thing that was good about it, we got out and played with the children and now teachers don't do that.

CORBIN: Well, that's good.

ABBOTT: And we just played like we were actually making money playing games.

CORBIN: Do you remember any of the games that you played?

ABBOTT: Oh one--some of them--one of them we especially liked was Annie Over. Maybe you all have played that one. Annie Over's where you throw the ball over the house. And Stick Base, and Red Rover, those were some of the games that we just really liked. And Tag; Hide-N-Seek. The old time games were what we played.

*Antie*

CORBIN: Did the girls play jump rope, or did any of the boys, did they...?

ABBOTT: Yes, they both did.

CORBIN: Do you remember any of the jump-rope rhymes?

ABBOTT: Oh, now I ought to know. I know we had them. But I--right off. If I had of known now I could have told you that. Oh, no, I can't recall right now.

CORBIN: Were they both, the boys and the girls, too?

ABBOTT: The boys and the girls both jumped.

CORBIN: That's interesting, that is interesting. Okay, you were talking about lunch time, what did the kids do for lunch? Did they carry a lunch to school?

ABBOTT: We all carried our lunch to school and we usually took it in a little four-pound lard bucket or something similiar to that. And the interesting thing was, everybody

ABBOTT (continued): had about the same kind of food. And it was mostly beans and potatoes and a piece of cornbread. And the, the mother would just put it all in the, in the bucket. It wasn't put in containers or anything. We just put it all in the bucket. And then you just sit down. A lot of the children would eat with thier fingers. And maybe they'd be lucky enough to have a spoon or a fork, but not always. And if the weather was pretty, we'd all sit out on the yard on the--well--a lot of times on tree trunks because we had a lot of trees in the yard, and eat. And if it were bad, we'd sit at our desk and eat.

CORBIN: Okay, did you teach the children songs?

ABBOTT: Oh, yes. We sang "My Old Kentucky Home" and "America", and some of the songs that you don't think of so much today. In the Little Golden Book, it's a yellow-back book. And we-- and "Yankee Doodle" was one of their main songs. They just loved that. And there were a lot of songs that we would sing and act out. They liked songs with action in them.

CORBIN: Do you remember any of those?

ABBOTT: Oh, isn't this something? Right off, now what a-- I just don't think about--well, now "Old McDonald Had a Farm"<sup>o</sup> we sang that and acted that. I don't know if you all ever sang that or not. But that was one we acted and "The Mulberry Bush",<sup>a</sup> "London Bridge",<sup>o</sup> they loved that.

CORBIN: Okay, what months were, was school in session? Was it like it is now or...

ABBOTT: We started in July and had all the hot weather. We started in July and usually were out right after Christmas, maybe the first of January or sometime early in January.

CORBIN: And then it was out until July?

ABBOTT: Out until the next July.

CORBIN: Oh, okay. Did the children seem to attend school regularly, or were some of them out a lot?

ABBOTT: No--I--really they went to school much better, I believe, than they do today, because that was the only thing they did was go to school. They didn't have all kinds of entertainment, no radio, no television, or anything at home to--for pastimes, so I think they all looked forward to going to school, and they were there most all the time, seldom ever missed.

CORBIN: Okay, the children that attended the school, at the one room school, were they mostly from farmhouses or...?  
*homes*

ABBOTT: Yes, the rural sections.



CORBIN: Okay, how did you get supplies for the school?

ABBOTT: The interesting thing is that we never needed supplies. We didn't have supplies. All they had to bring to school was our pencils and paper. And, of course, the books were furnished. But they'd bring a pencil and paper and maybe they would bring crayons, if they wanted crayons. But to have just supplies like we do today, we never knew what it was. And the only thing we had was chalk. And if we played games in the house, in the schoolroom, when the weather was bad, they would just go to the board, maybe. And we would have arithmetic races or spelling races. And they would go to the board to do a lot of this kind of things. And we just didn't have the need for the supplies that they do. We had our own type of entertainment, just singing and talking and playing and, you know, we just didn't spend all this time at your desk, with paper and pencils and scissors, as they do today.