



Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library

P. O. BOX 541

TELEPHONE 833-3369

Brookhaven, Mississippi 39601

I hereby give and grant to the Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the Library shall determine the tape recordings and their contents listed below.

Maud Hill Lambert
Interviewee

Priscilla P. Johansen
Director
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin
Regional Library

Monticello, Miss.
Address

July 27, 1978
Date of Agreement

Life in Lawrence County, MS: collecting antiques: travel by ox wagon.

Subject of Tape(s)

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History
Data Sheet

FULL NAME Mary Maud Hill Lambert

ADDRESS Rt. 2, Box 200, Monticello, MS

PHONE 587-2746

BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, Center, MS.

DATE OF BIRTH September 8, 1896

EDUCATION High school; Whitworth College - 2 summer sessions

OCCUPATION Teacher; storekeeper

TRAVELS

SPOUSE'S FULL NAME John Lucius Lambert

BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS

DATE OF BIRTH 1879

OCCUPATION Farmer; Merchant

NUMBER OF CHILDREN One (1)

NAMES OF CHILDREN

John Swain Lambert

FATHER'S FULL NAME James Madison Hill

BIRTHPLACE Ozark Mountains, Missouri

DATE OF BIRTH 1865

OCCUPATION Farmer

MOTHER'S FULL NAME Alice Viola Brister

BIRTHPLACE Ten(10) miles south of Monticello, MS

DATE OF BIRTH 1876

OCCUPATION Housewife

MAJOR NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE DISCUSSED

INTERVIEWEE'S AREA OF INTEREST AND/OR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

One-room schools; Luch Lambert's Store; Keystone Lumber Company; Antiques;
Poetry; Traveling by ox wagon.

An Interview with
Mary Maud Hill Lambert
March 9, 1977

Interviewed by
Evelyn Benham

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History Project
Monticello and Vicinity

BENHAM: This is an interview with Maud Hill Lambert, Monticello, Mississippi, March 9, 1977. Interviewed by Evelyn Benham. Mrs. Lambert, what is your full name?

LAMBERT: Mary Maud Hill Lambert.

BENHAM: What is your address and telephone number?

LAMBERT: Monticello, Route 2, Box 200.

BENHAM: And your telephone number?

LAMBERT: 587-2746.

BENHAM: When were you born?

LAMBERT: September 8, 1896.

BENHAM: And where were you born?

LAMBERT: In Lawrence County at the old place called "Center."

BENHAM: What was your father's full name?

LAMBERT: James Madison Hill.

BENHAM: When and where was he born?

LAMBERT: In the Ozark Mountains of Missouri.

BENHAM: Do you remember when he was born?

LAMBERT: 1865.

BENHAM: What kind of work did your father do?

LAMBERT: He was a farmer after he moved here.

BENHAM: What was your mother's maiden name?

LAMBERT: Alice Viola Brister.

BENHAM: When and where was she born?

Page Two: Lambert

LAMBERT: About ten (10) miles south of Monticello.

BENHAM: And when was she born? Do you remember when she was born?

LAMBERT: 1876.

BENHAM: Did your mother work outside of the home?

LAMBERT: No.

BENHAM: Tell me about your educational background. How far did you go in school?

LAMBERT: In those days, they only taught us through the eighth grade and then I went to Whitworth College in the summertime for part of two (2) sessions.

BENHAM: How old were you when you started college?

LAMBERT: It was after I started teaching.

BENHAM: You mean you just went to high school and finished high school and then you went to teaching and then that's when you decided to go to college?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: I see. All right. What was your major in college? I mean, what was the thing that you were mainly interested in in taking up at college?

LAMBERT: Historical.

BENHAM: Historical what?

LAMBERT: Events.

BENHAM: What did you do after you got through college?

LAMBERT: I just had part of two (2) summers in college and I was teaching all through those years.

BENHAM: Well, when you got through with your college work, did you go

Page Three: Lambert

back to teaching?

LAMBERT: I was teaching all the time. We just had a five (5) month school and it didn't go on during the summertime.

BENHAM: And that's when you went to college?

LAMBERT: Yes, just the summer session.

BENHAM: How old were you when you started to teach?

LAMBERT: Sixteen (16) or seventeen (17) years old.

BENHAM: How long did you teach?

LAMBERT: Twenty (20) years.

BENHAM: What was the name of the school where you taught?

LAMBERT: First two (2) years was at Wellman in Lincoln County.

BENHAM: How many grades did you teach?

LAMBERT: Well, in those days we just had two (2) teachers or one (1) teacher in each school. Sometimes you'd have as many as forty (40) or fifty (50) students you had to teach.

BENHAM: And that is how many students they had in the whole school? Can you remember? About forty (40) children?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: Do you remember what subjects you taught?

LAMBERT: Well, we taught all the subjects like we had in those days. Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history.

BENHAM: What grade did you start from?

LAMBERT: The first year I taught, I just had the little beginners. And I was teaching out ten (10) miles from home, so I had to stay out there and pay board. I got twenty (20) dollars a month for teaching and had to pay

Page Four: Lambert

ten (10) dollars a month of that for my board, room and board.

BENHAM: And that was at this school over in Lincoln County?

LAMBERT: Yes. Then the next year I was elected as principal of the school and they raised my pay to forty (40) dollars a month. And I thought I was half rich then.

BENHAM: Yes, I imagine so. Money went a long way and it meant a lot more then, didn't it?

LAMBERT: Yes, it did.

BENHAM: Did you teach more than one grade in the same room?

LAMBERT: Oh, yes. Beginners - you taught the first grade, second grade, and third and fourth grade. Then they hired two (2) teachers. Then the other teacher would teach on through the eighth grade.

BENHAM: Well, you mean all those four (4) grades were all in one room?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: And you taught them. And then in another room, there were four (4) more grades and another teacher taught that, is that how that went?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: I see. How did you discipline the children?

LAMBERT: By loving them.

BENHAM: Well, that is a good way to do it. What sanitary facilities did you have at this school?

LAMBERT: Well, we didn't have any rest rooms, toilets and things like that. When they built, they would always notice to build a school building on a hill with a hollow on each side. One hollow was for the girls to go to and the other hollow was for the boys to go to. And for drinking water,

Page Five: Lambert

they'd pass a big bucket full of water out with a dipper in it and everybody drank out of the same gourd or dipper.

BENHAM: That's interesting. And what about the gourd? What was that?

LAMBERT: We'd have a big gourd for them to drink out of. Sometimes we had a dipper.

BENHAM: Yes, that's what I mean. Can you explain about this gourd? Where did this gourd come from?

LAMBERT: Someone in the community.

BENHAM: Did it grow?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: Can you describe it? Can you explain about that?

LAMBERT: Well, I think everybody know what a gourd is.

BENHAM: Well, I don't know, maybe. You know, I never knew about it until I came to Mississippi.

LAMBERT: Well, they would grow on vines, mostly down a fence row. And in the fall after they would dry, they'd take them off the vines and they would cut a hole in there just like a dipper and when it would dry good, lots of people used them in their kitchens to drink out of. And they used them in the schools.

BENHAM: Did they have one like this in every school, years ago?

LAMBERT: Yes. That was all the way we had of getting water to drink at schools.

BENHAM: And where did you get your water from? Where did it come?

LAMBERT: There was a well where you'd draw it up with an old rope and windlass. You turned that windlass and it would bring up a bucket of water.

Page Six: Lambert

Then you would pour it in this big old cedar water bucket where your gourd was and pass it around to all the children. We'd have a certain period for that.

BENHAM: That's very interesting. What did the children do for lunch?

LAMBERT: They carried most of their lunches in a lard bucket.

BENHAM: Well, did they bring their lunches from home?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: Well, what type of things did they bring to eat?

LAMBERT: They would bring boiled eggs or fried eggs, big pieces of ham, baked sweet potatoes, homemade biscuits made in a big old biscuit or bread tray.

BENHAM: What did the children do at recess?

LAMBERT: Well, when they'd turn out for dinner or lunch, they would get out by the side of an old black jack somewhere and eat what they had in their buckets and then they'd start playing ball. Two-cornered catch or all these little ball games that they learned back then. And they had all kinds of games that they played at school like, "King, king, calico, come to the well to wash my toe." And all like that. And "Hail Over." They'd throw the ball over the school building and chase each other around the schoolhouse.

BENHAM: What was one of the funniest stories that you heard of while you were at school?

LAMBERT: Well, the funniest story that I can recall was not at the first school I taught, but down at Little Ridge, which is near my home. Rev. Hoyt Nelson, he is a noted preacher, Baptist preacher. That was his first year in school and I had a habit of making all the children in my room recite a

Page Seven: Lambert

verse in the Bible when we had chapel early in the morning. So this was Hoyt's first year and he went to crying. He said, "I can't do it, I can't learn a verse in the Bible. I just don't know one." So there was a great big, husky, overgrown boy got him off to one side and said, "I tell you, Hoyt, just say 'Jesus wept,' and then you won't have to stay in after school." Hoyt says, "Is that a verse in the Bible?" He said, "Yes." He says, "Well, I can say that." So he felt pretty good that day, he stopped his crying. Next morning he marched up to say his verse, and he said, "Jesus wept," just as loud as he could. And everybody started laughing. He turned around and looked this old boy, Fred, and he said, "Well, Fred said he did,"

BENHAM: What did you do after you stopped teaching? After you retired?

LAMBERT: I kept a store for forty-two (42) years and during the time I kept the store, I was teaching school. I taught where I could stay at home. And my husband would keep the store in the daytime and then I would come in and take over the store and let him get out to bird hunt or fish after school. And I would do the cooking and washing and teaching school and waiting on the store and all that other.

BENHAM: Where did you meet your future husband?

LAMBERT: We went to school together. It was a long courtship.

BENHAM: Where did you go to school?

LAMBERT: Center.

BENHAM: I see. There was a school there? What was the name of that school, do you know?

LAMBERT: Center.

BENHAM: Just Center School?

Page Eight: Lambert

LAMBERT: Yes. My daddy gave the land to the school so long as they had school there and that school lasted for years and years and years, I don't know, and then the schoolhouse burned.

BENHAM: What was your husband's full name?

LAMBERT: John Lucius Lambert.

BENHAM: When and where was your husband born?

LAMBERT: In Lawrence County.

BENHAM: When was he born? Can you remember what year he was born?

LAMBERT: 1879.

BENHAM: What kind of job did he have?

LAMBERT: He was a farmer.

BENHAM: And what else did he do?

LAMBERT: He farmed until World War I started. Then he went to France and stayed there something over two (2) years after the war ended. And I was teaching all that time.

BENHAM: How many children did you and your husband have?

LAMBERT: One (1) son.

BENHAM: And what is his name?

LAMBERT: John Swain Lambert.

BENHAM: You said your husband kept a country store. Describe your store. Where was it located?

LAMBERT: The first store we had was a little one-room store in the forks of the road.

BENHAM: Of what road?

LAMBERT: On the Brookhaven and Monticello Lower Road which is known as

Page Nine: Lambert

the Brookhaven and Monticello Lower Road. And we kept that store two (2) years and then we had it torn away and built a big house and a store with the house and we stayed there forty-two (42) years.

BENHAM: Is that place still there?

LAMBERT: They still have a store, but it's not the same one, because that one burned.

BENHAM: What did you call your store?

LAMBERT: It goes by the name of Center now, but we called it Luch Lambert Store in those days. Everybody knew it as Luch Lambert Store.

BENHAM: And what was your husband's name?

LAMBERT: Luch Lambert.

BENHAM: What did you sell in your store?

LAMBERT: We sold everything in the world that you could think of from a hairpin to mule bits. Do you know what mule bits are?

BENHAM: Yes, was that the thing that goes through their mouth?

LAMBERT: You holler "Haw gee."

BENHAM: Oh it goes through their mouths.

LAMBERT: To hurt them enough. They knew when to turn left or right.

BENHAM: Well, what was the haw gee about?

LAMBERT: Well, if you wanted to go to the right, you'd holler "haw" - I think I'm right - and if you wanted them to go to the left, you'd holler "gee."

BENHAM: Well, I wouldn't know.

LAMBERT: It might be opposite.

BENHAM: Well, that's all right. Well, did you have farm implements?

Page Ten: Lambert

LAMBERT: Yes, a few.

BENHAM: Groceries?

LAMBERT: All kinds.

BENHAM: What about sewing cloth?

LAMBERT: Plenty of cloth.

BENHAM: Did you sell any furnishings for the house?

LAMBERT: No, not furniture or anything like that.

BENHAM: What about drugstore items?

LAMBERT: We had all such as that in there, different shelves for different things.

BENHAM: And did you sell any fertilizer?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: What about seed for planting and flower growing and that sort of thing?

LAMBERT: We sold seed, all kinds.

BENHAM: How did your customers buy things? Was it by credit or cash?

LAMBERT: Mostly credit. We would furnish farmers what they needed in the summer to make their crops and then in the fall, they would pay their bills.

BENHAM: What were some of the things that you bought from them?

LAMBERT: From the farmers?

BENHAM: Right. Did you buy things like butter from them?

LAMBERT: No. We had our own.

BENHAM: You never bought any homemade butter that people would bring in? Their eggs? Did you buy eggs from them?

Page Eleven: Lambert

LAMBERT: We bought eggs and chickens.

BENHAM: And anything else?

LAMBERT: We bought dried beans and peas.

BENHAM: What about sweet potatoes?

LAMBERT: Everybody had their sweet potatoes.

BENHAM: Did you worry about a stamp from a food inspector on things like butter or sausage which you sold?

LAMBERT: No.

BENHAM: Did your store furnish people while they made a crop?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: Did you set a limit on what you would let them have?

LAMBERT: No. Everybody thought everybody else was honest.

BENHAM: Did you ever lose much money or did you think people tried harder to pay their just debts long ago than they do now?

LAMBERT: In the early days we didn't lose anything, but after we stayed there for years and years we finally had customers that didn't pay off very well, but most of them were honest.

BENHAM: Do you think that people are like that today? About the same?

LAMBERT: Well, I imagine they are.

BENHAM: Was there a place in your store where people gathered to swap yarns or catch up on the news? Or what was going around in the community?

LAMBERT: We had a huge fireplace in the store and every night when people got their cows milked and got through with supper and their horses fed, they'd gather in this old store and chew their tobacco and spit in the fireplace and dip their snuff and tell yarns. And we'd sell goods until

Page Twelve: Lambert

about ten o'clock. Stay open until ten. Then get up at four o'clock in the morning and start to school.

BENHAM: Let's see, while you were storekeeping at this time, you wrote for the Lawrence County Press about news from your area of the county, didn't you?

LAMBERT: Oh, yes. I wrote what was called the "Center News." And I wrote several items for the Brookhaven Leader Times.

BENHAM: Well, the ones that you wrote for the Brookhaven Leader Times, what were those articles about?

LAMBERT: Mostly humor and fun.

BENHAM: Can you tell me how you got started doing this?

LAMBERT: I can't remember that far back.

BENHAM: That's all right.

LAMBERT: I just love to write.

BENHAM: How did you get all the information together? What did the people do?

LAMBERT: Well, I could sit around that fireplace at night and get all the news and I'd jot it down.

BENHAM: What are some of your hobbies, Mrs. Lambert?

LAMBERT: Writing poems has always been my hobby.

BENHAM: How did you get interested in writing poetry?

LAMBERT: My daddy liked to write poetry, and we would see which one could write the best poem at night and have the family be the judges.

BENHAM: How old were you when you wrote your first poem?

LAMBERT: I guess I was seven (7) years old.

Page Thirteen: Lambert

BENHAM: Can you remember the name of the poem?

LAMBERT: I can't remember the poem, but I can remember what it was about.

BENHAM: All right, tell us about it.

LAMBERT: My daddy had an old man, his name was Frank Boyd, making syrup. We called it making molasses in those days. The old cane mills. And he stayed at our house for a week making syrup for people. They'd haul their cane into this mill. And the first poem I ever remember, he told me one night, he'd already gone to bed, he said, "I bet you I can tell you a subject you can't make a poem about." I said, "What is it, Daddy?" He said, "Mr. Frank Boyd." I can't remember the poem, but I can remember writing about him and my daddy got up and went and took it to this old man's bed and made him read it. They had a big laugh about it. It rhymed pretty good.

BENHAM: What else have you written?

LAMBERT: I am writing a book; I haven't finished it.

BENHAM: Tell me about it.

LAMBERT: It's the life sketches of my daddy, as it was told to me.

BENHAM: Would you please read one of your poems?

LAMBERT: Well, living on the Pearl River now, I'll read this one about Pearl River.

Who knows how many thousand years Pearl River has hurried on its
way.

Tumbling waters splashing, rolling, trying hard to reach the bay.
Unnoticed are the waves a-splashing, unseen the midnight waters foam.
Flowing through the banks, just drifting, still trying to reach its
home.

Like the waves of man, still plowing through life's dreary, restless
stream.

Page Fourteen: Lambert

With no sight of the tomorrow, life goes on just like a dream.
Who knows but our great, great grandfathers
Climbed these same old trees
That sheltered us in childhood
Only God can answer these.

BENHAM: That's beautiful. I noticed as I came up the driveway that you have a room apart from the main house. What is this little house, this room?

LAMBERT: This is what I call my museum. All through the years I liked antiques so much that when I would get one I would hug it to me, I thought so much of it. And I started collecting when I was a girl. And after we moved to Monticello, that was in 1962, I had taken my old home out in the country, my mamma's old home, and had it full of antiques. And people started breaking in the house and hauling it away, until I had to move it. So I took my carport and had it made into an antique museum. I took all that I had left and all I've gathered since and put in there and people come from far and near to see these old things.

BENHAM: Well, can you tell me what are some of the most interesting things that you have in there?

LAMBERT: Well, the most interesting things now are the things our forefathers used during their lifetimes. Like plows and homemade fertilizer distributors or planters. Made all their hoe handles and shovel handles. And the old shuck scrub where they used to scrub the floors. The floors were not painted. There were no such things as rugs on them. And they would take a block of dogwood wood and drill holes in it and put the shucks from the corn in there and put a handle in it and then they'd scrub these floors

Page Fifteen: Lambert

until you could almost see yourself in them. They had all kinds of drawer knives, single trees in there, and coffee mills. And I have the key to the first jail that was ever in Brookhaven, Mississippi, but I can't tell you what year that was. I have a pistol in there that belonged to Jesse James.

BENHAM: Oh, that is interesting.

LAMBERT: When the Union soldiers' camps were burned it was got out, but they never had it restored because it couldn't be restored.

BENHAM: How did you get this?

LAMBERT: Well, my son got the pistol for me and people have given me things. Someone gave it to him on a music trip through the Ozark Mountains - an antique dealer. I just have everything you can imagine in this museum.

BENHAM: Well, that's really wonderful. I think you are the only one in this county that probably has things like that of the past.

LAMBERT: The old sidesaddles that the old ladies used to ride.

BENHAM: I imagine you could really write a story about every one of those things, couldn't you?

LAMBERT: Yes.

BENHAM: Well, where did you get the idea to start an antique museum?

LAMBERT: When I was a kid I just loved things and I'd keep everything I got. I don't know how come me to start such as that. I can remember one thing, about the first thing I ever saved. My daddy sent me down to the Keystone Railroad where the bushels of old nails had been scattered and told me to go down there with my brother and pick up a bucketful of them, which is a quarter of a mile from the house. At that time, the old Keystone Lumber Company had a track through there where they hauled logs. And I

Page Sixteen: Lambert

still have that little bundle of nails, squarehead nails that I picked up at the old Keystone Lumber Company track.

BENHAM: And how old were you when you did that?

LAMBERT: I was just a little child, I don't know, just a little child.

BENHAM: So it started way back in your childhood, didn't it?

LAMBERT: And I have thousands of things that are old now.

BENHAM: That's remarkable. Have you displayed your antiques in any shows?

LAMBERT: No.

BENHAM: Are you interested in selling any of your antiques?

LAMBERT: I never was interested in selling them, but since I've got so old, until I don't know what will happen to them after I am gone, I might decide to sell some of them later.

BENHAM: Have you done much traveling through the years?

LAMBERT: No, the ways of travel were so poor when I was growing up, until about all the way we had to go was in a buggy or a surrey with a double team hitched to it and tassels all around the top of it. And we'd go to church in that. I never had the chance to go to cities. I can remember the first time I ever went to Brookhaven, Mississippi, which was sixteen (16) miles from home and I was about eight (8) years old then. My daddy carried us in an ox wagon. We spent the night and camped out, made a big pine knot fire, and Mother cooked for two (2) to three (3) days to carry food for us to eat. And we lay down on a pallet by the side of the road with the blue sky for a shelter. And it took us a day-and-a-half to get there in this ox wagon. We drove in to the back lot of McGrath's- that was a noted store -

Page Seventeen: Lambert

where the oxen could drink water. And then, I had never seen a train. My daddy would tell me how it would go choo, choo, choo, choo, choo, choo, and we just thought that was the most wonderful thing in the world, to go to Brookhaven and see that train go through.

BENHAM: Do you remember the name of this train?

LAMBERT: No. But my daddy would holler, "Stand back, children, stand back. Hold them, Mother, don't let them get on the tracks." And then, after that, she took us to a studio to have our pictures made and that was fun. One of my little brothers got out in the back lot there where the old man had thrown away his hundreds of little buttons like the candidates or people used to put their pictures on and when he came in for his picture he had about two (2) dozen of those pinned on his jacket and my mother said, "Get those things off of there." And she got them off before he had his picture made.

BENHAM: That would have been interesting though, to have kind of left them on there.

LAMBERT: You remember those old buttons that used to put the pictures on.

BENHAM: Yes, I do remember, yes, I do.

LAMBERT: Then we went to some stores and did some shopping, came back home that night. We got in sometime in the night. But that was the most wonderful trip I ever had in my life in that ox wagon.

BENHAM: Well, did it have a top over the wagon?

LAMBERT: Yes, a homemade top.

BENHAM: And did you sleep in the wagon as you went?

Page Eighteen: Lambert

LAMBERT: Some of us slept in the wagon, but most of us made a pallet under the wagon or on the ground.

BENHAM: That would be nice if we could do that now, wouldn't it?

LAMBERT: It sure would.

BENHAM: You wanted to read another one of your poems. Would you do that now?

LAMBERT: Yes. Well, I think the white flag should wave over Mrs. Evelyn's head for being a part of this wonderful program of Lawrence County, and I would like to dedicate this poem to her. The name of it is "My Last Ride."

When I take off from this old world
To ride the speeding train,
I'd like to sit beside you, Evelyn,
And look through the windowpane.

I'd like to hold your hand in mine
And walk where dreams come true.
If I go first, I'll wait outside
And open the gate for you,

BENHAM: Thank you, that is really beautiful. Thank you, Mrs. Lambert, for talking with me.

LAMBERT: I enjoyed it very, very much.

BENHAM: This is the end of the interview.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Evelyn Benham)