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[Estelle Berry]

August 31, 1939

Estelle [(?) Berry

Highland, N.C.

Ethel Deal, Writer

Dudley W. Crawford. Reviser Original Names Changed Names

Highland Hedgeland

Hickory Hadden

Burke County Banks County

Phifer Phil

Estelle Berry Esther Perry

Shuford Mill Sholes Mill

Old Man Shuford Old Man Sholes

Bill Hedrick Bob Hamrick

Miss Lentz Miss Lane

Rose Reba

Pearl Opal C9- 1/22/41 - N.C.

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"I live up at Hedgeland, near Haddon. I been married but I don't go by my husband's name. He was so lazy I didn't stay with him but six months. He never worked before we was married, and he wouldn't work after. Well, I just left him and went back home.

"I was born up in Banks County, my folks owns a big farm up there. After Dad died there was nobody to work it, and Mamma wanted to come to the cotton mill.

"I ain't got no education; had to quit when I was in the second grade. Had to look after Phil on account him having epileptic fits. It was dangerous to leave him alone. Guess I should be ashamed not to have more schooling; but I'm just as good off as them that has it. Ma says them that's got a education jist makes a fool of themselves."

Esther Perry frowned and looked thoughtful. She was a dried up dwarf-like creature wearing a blue print dress, with red polka dots, and a green belt. A red clasp was fastened to one side of her stubby black hair.

"We moved to the Sholes mill at Hedgeland. My sister was seventeen then. She got her a job in the mill and Ma did too. Ma learned how to spool, she drawed twelve dollars 2 a week. That give us plenty to live on.

"We lived in a cotton mill house on the factory hill. The rent wasn't much, because the people can't afford to pay much rent out of what they make. This house had a bath and electric lights, and it cost us four dollars a month.

"I guess twenty dollars ain't much to some people, but it looked big to us. Ma, she'd come home after she had drawed her money; put on a clean frock, then we'd all go to the store. The main things like flour, fat back, lard and beans had to come first. Then the house rent had to be paid; sometimes we had a little something extra.

"Phil was about nine and lots of trouble, then there was the baby five years old. I done all the cooking and kept the house clean most of the time. We could go to the movies

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about once or twice a week. Young folks on a cotton mill hill ain't got much chance to enjoy themselves. Them that's got cars can go to ride; we ain't never had a car and can't afford one. People as poor as us does well to make a living.

“For three years now, nobody at our house has had any work. One of my sisters got married and moved away. Ma got laid off in dull times and can't get back on. Phil got gradually worse with them fits and had to be sent up 3 to Dix Hill at Raleigh. He's been there for the last twelve years now.

“I would work myself if I could get a job. That old man Sholes is so hateful, he jist gives work to who he pleases. We manage to live very well though. Ma draws some kind of pension, it comes from Riverton, I don't know what it is; but it's six dollars a month. We keep a cow and chickens, the welfare helps us some and we live.

“I go to sunday school and church. I belong to the Methodist. Sometimes on saturday night a crowd of us gathers at some girl's home and we have a little party. I am twenty seven years old.

“I ain't going to stay with that lazy Bob Hamrick I'm married to. What I want to do is get me a job in the mill. I could make twelve dollars a week. Then I could get some clothes and get Ma some. I could pay board or buy the groceries. Maybe, if I tried hard enough, I could make more than that. After I got everything like clothes paid for; I could save a little money. Ma is getting older every day now, and needs somebody to look after her.”

Esther's eyes filled with tears.

“There's poor old Phil down at Dix Hill. We can't go to see him or send him a thing. I jist come down today to see Miss Lane, the welfare woman, and ask her if she 4 would help us a little more.

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“Can I read the story when it comes out? Oh, I thought you was writing it to put in the paper. I don't like library books; about the only thing I ever read is love stories.

“I got to go, I can't wait no longer. I got to catch a ride home anyway I can. We worked it slick to get a ride down here. I sttod at the road and held my thumb up. I made the other two girls stand back a piece. After so long a time a man come along and stopped. He said, 'hop in'. Then I told him I wanted to take Reba and Opal along. He let us all come, but we might not get back so easy.”