

**Transcript of an Oral History Interview in the collection of the
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922**

Roz Foster: Good afternoon.

Lena Stokes: Good afternoon.

Roz Foster: Would you please tell me your name?

Lena Stokes: Lena Stokes, Lena Curry-Stokes.

Roz Foster: Tell me something about your family, when were you born, and your mother and father?

Lena Stokes: Okay. I was born February 13, 44. I was born in Mims on 46th, and my mother and fathers name was, Viola Curry, and Joe Curry.

Roz Foster: Okay, [00:00:30] and where were you born out on 46th?

Lena Stokes: The Turpentine quarter.

Roz Foster: Okay, and tell me something about growing up as a child at the Turpentine quarters.

Lena Stokes: Well-

Roz Foster: What can you remember?

What was your house like?

Lena Stokes: It was wooden house, it didn't have lights, it had lanterns, it had--and lamps, and we [00:01:00] had a wooden stove, wooden heater, a refrigerator that you had to put the ice—the block of ice in, and it had wooden floors, and we didn't have a TV, we had radio that we had to listen to, and that's about it.

Roz Foster: Did you have a car for transportation?

Lena Stokes: Yes. No [00:01:30] we didn't. We had this older guy that used to come and take us to shop brothers to buy groceries, or to the post office.

Roz Foster: Do you remember who that gentleman was?

Lena Stokes: Mr. Rushing.

Roz Foster: Mr. Rushing. Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay, and he lived on 46th up here in Mims right?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative), he lived on 46th, and we used to walk from Mims to the grocery store sometimes, which was a good ways to walk-

Roz Foster: [00:02:00] A long way.

Lena Stokes: -and we used to walk to fishing, go fishing, we used to go out to fish.

Roz Foster: Who were some of the children ... What did you do as a child growing up, what were some of the games that you played?

Lena Stokes: We played hide and seek, hopscotch, jumping rope, we used to do the spring board, and we used to—the kite--fly [00:02:30] the kite, and the boys used to play marbles, shoot the marbles, and a long time ago you didn't have that much, so like when my bed-

Speaker 3: You played baseball.

Lena Stokes: -baseball, and when we didn't have anything to do we used to, the old mattresses that wasn't any good, we used to jump up on them.

Roz Foster: Who were some of your playmates? What were their names?

Do you remember?

Lena Stokes: [00:03:00] It was just like families out there. The Owens's, the McCullough's, the [inaudible 00:03:08], and my friend was a white girl.

Roz Foster: What was her name?

Lena Stokes: Reva. I'll never forget it.

Roz Foster: Reva?

Lena Stokes: Uh-huh.

Roz Foster: And what was her last name? Do you remember her last name?

Lena Stokes: I can't remember her last name-

Roz Foster: Did they live at the camp?

Lena Stokes: -she was the first one that pierced my ears.

Roz Foster: Did they live at the camp?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Roz Foster: Oh they did?

Lena Stokes: Yes.

Roz Foster: Oh. So it was an integrated camp?

Lena Stokes: [00:03:30] Yep.

Roz Foster: Oh. I didn't know that.

Lena Stokes: It sure was.

Roz Foster: Very good. Do you remember any of the other white families that lived there? Their last names?

Lena Stokes: I can't remember. I can remember their face, but I can't remember their names.

Roz Foster: Okay, where did you all go to school?

Lena Stokes: In Mims.

Roz Foster: Okay, what school did you go to?

Lena Stokes: Mims Elementary.

Roz Foster: Okay, and where was that located?

Lena Stokes: On Cuyler ... We call it Cuyler, but now it's Harry T. Moore.

Roz Foster: Okay, that's good. Who was [00:04:00] your teacher? Do you remember who your teacher was back then?

Lena Stokes: Well, I had a lot of teachers-

Roz Foster: What were their names?

Lena Stokes: Ms. Jameson, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Bouie, Ms. Basset was the principal, I can't remember anymore.

Roz Foster: Okay. How [00:04:30] long did you live at the camp?

Lena Stokes: On 46?

Roz Foster: Yeah, how long, how old were you, you were born there, so how long, when did you move to Mims, or how long did your family live at the camp? Do you remember?

Lena Stokes: No.

Roz Foster: Do you remember about how old you were? Were you a teenager?

Lena Stokes: No, probably about 6, or 7.

Roz Foster: About 6, or 7. Okay, because I was going to ask you how were the teenagers that lived out there.

Okay, [00:05:00] what are some of the other things that you remember about the camp, did you, as a little child, do you remember going in to the commissary, into the store there, the company store to buy anything with your parents?

Lena Stokes: No. I can remember them talking about it.

Roz Foster: Okay, do you remember anything, what did it look like out in that area at the time? What was around the camps?

Lena Stokes: [00:05:30] Just wooden houses.

Roz Foster: Wooden houses, well-

Lena Stokes: And toilets.

Roz Foster: -was the road paved at the time?

Lena Stokes: No.

Roz Foster: 46th wasn't paved at the time.

Okay, how about Turpentine Road? Did you remember going out to Salt Lake? Fishing?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Roz Foster: Okay, and that was, and what did the roads look like back then?

Lena Stokes: They was dirt-

Roz Foster: Dirt roads. Okay.

What did, was there anything out at Salt Lake, any buildings or anything out on the lake?

Lena Stokes: No.

Roz Foster: [00:06:00] What was the bridges, do you remember what the bridges looked like across the St. Johns, or anything, were they wooden bridges?

Lena Stokes: I think they was wooden.

Roz Foster: Wooden bridges ... how about the mosquitoes? What were the mosquitoes like living, do you remember when you were a little, little, girl?

Lena Stokes: In Mims, I do. They was terrible. Terrible. Yes.

Roz Foster: How about out in Turpentine, do you remember being a little girl, do you remember anything, [00:06:30] what you did in the heat for instance? You did have any electricity, so what did you do for the heat in the summer time out there? Do you remember how hot it was? Did it seem like it was hot?

Lena Stokes: We just stayed in the shade, under the trees, played under the house sometimes. The house was built off the ground so you could go under the house and play.

Roz Foster: Okay. Do you remember ever seeing any alligators, out in the creeks and stuff out there where you lived?

Lena Stokes: [00:07:00] Not alligators, you see bobcats, wildcats and stuff like that.

Roz Foster: Oh.

Lena Stokes: And we used to see like the---the, what they call the coral snake now, the different color, and we used to see them and we used to play with them.

Roz Foster: Oh my goodness.

Lena Stokes: We used to see them passing, didn't know they was poison.

Roz Foster: Oh dear.

Lena Stokes: We did.

Roz Foster: How about, what happened when you were sick? What did Mama do when you were sick?

Lena Stokes: We didn't go to the doctor [00:07:30] that often. If we cut ourself, or either got cut, they would put spider webs on the cut and it would stop the bleeding.

Roz Foster: Interesting.

Lena Stokes: And if we sprained our ankle, she would take dirt dobber nest, mix it with vinegar and make a paste and put it on my ankle.

Roz Foster: Interesting, [00:08:00] interesting.

Lena Stokes: And for fever, temperature they used to take Palma Christi, I think, leaves, put it on your forehead, tie a rag around it and it would draw all that fever out, and if you had fever you would be in bed and would like, I think it was Turpentine, underneath the bed, and it would draw the fever out. I think I'm right on these things.

Roz Foster: Hm. That's very interesting.

Lena Stokes: [00:08:30] Yeah, if you stick a nail, step on a nail, they would put a piece of fatback bacon on there and it would draw all of that poison, I guess, and infection out.

Roz Foster: My goodness, and it worked?

Lena Stokes: Yes. We're still living.

Roz Foster: That's right. That's marvelous, that's marvelous.

Do you remember going to St. Mary's Church out [00:09:00] there, when you were little?

Lena Stokes: I can't remember that.

Roz Foster: Can't remember that, okay. Do you remember the, coming into Titusville, do you remember Kelly's being here when you came into Titusville? The still that was on US 1 at all? Do you remember the still?

Lena Stokes: I remember Kelly, but it used to make cement, my dad used to work there.

Roz Foster: Oh. So they made cement too?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative), cement plant.

Roz Foster: [00:09:30] Oh, and what type, did they make block or-

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Roz Foster: Oh.

Lena Stokes: They sell blocks.

Roz Foster: And where was that located?

Lena Stokes: On US 1.

Roz Foster: On US 1, in relationship to what today, where was it on US 1?

Lena Stokes: It's still there.

Roz Foster: Oh, it's still there? Oh, okay. What, do you know what happened to the still, or to the camp, what happened-

Lena Stokes: On 46th?

Roz Foster: Yeah, what happened to the camp?

Lena Stokes: I think they tore the houses down, but now it's a big trailer [00:10:00] park.

Roz Foster: Okay, and it was, where was it if you're heading from Mims, you're heading to Orange County, was it on the left hand side or the right hand side-

Lena Stokes: Going to Orange County?

Roz Foster: Or going to-

Lena Stokes: 46th?

Roz Foster: Yeah. Going to, on 46th, you're heading west, which side of the road was the camp on, was it on the right hand side, or the left hand side? North [00:10:30] side, South side?

Lena Stokes: It was on the right, no, on the left hand side.

Roz Foster: On the left hand side, okay, and it was right on the corner there were Turpentine Road is.

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative), all the way down it was houses. All the way down.

Roz Foster: Okay, did they have, there were about 22 families that lived there, about 22 houses or so, were they on like a little road, a street, or a path went in between them?

Lena Stokes: Path, [00:11:00] I think.

Roz Foster: A path-

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Roz Foster: -and then-

Lena Stokes: They're just scattered all around.

Roz Foster: They were scattered all around? Okay. Do you remember, did you have a, do you remember if your father ever said there was a foreman boss, or anything like

that? That lived out there, that sort of oversaw them, do you remember him talking about it in later years?

Lena Stokes: Yeah, it seems like I do. I think.

Roz Foster: Did he ever say where they went and gathered the Turpentine, or do you remember him talking about it at all?

Lena Stokes: I don't remember that.

Roz Foster: Okay. What's [00:11:30] the biggest change that you've seen in Mims, since you remember when you were a little girl?

Lena Stokes: We have lights, electricity, and we have paved roads, and Space Center.

Roz Foster: Do you remember old St. James Church? The old wooden structure?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Roz Foster: Okay. How big was that, it was just a [00:12:00] little small church?

Lena Stokes: I think it was ...

Roz Foster: Yeah. Do you remember what happened to it, at all?

Lena Stokes: St. James?

Roz Foster: Yeah, the little church.

Lena Stokes: I think they tore it down, and they built the ...

Roz Foster: The Annex, yeah, I think that's what happened, they tore it down and built the Annex, when they built the Annex. Yeah. What about, do you remember the baptisms that they used to have here in the early days, [00:12:30] where they had the baptisms?

Lena Stokes: I think I'm right, I could be wrong, it's over Marigold? It's Marigold now right? Wasn't it the rock pit thing? The only thing I can remember is the rock pit. Its over there where the dump used to be at right? And the river.

Roz Foster: And the Indian River?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Roz Foster: Okay. [00:13:00] Do you remember what, did you attend any of the baptisms in the river when you were little?

Lena Stokes: I can't remember.

Roz Foster: You can't remember. Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to let us know about life in Mims?

Lena Stokes: No.

Roz Foster: Or the Turpentine? You said your teachers Mrs. Jameson and Mrs. [Billy(?) 00:13:22], were they good teachers?

Lena Stokes: Yes.

Roz Foster: Okay, what was your favorite subjects they taught you?

Lena Stokes: Myself I liked the [00:13:30] reading, and writing.

Roz Foster: Reading, and writing, okay, and so you lived in Mims ever since you came here when you were a little girl, and you've always lived here?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yep.

Roz Foster: Do you have family here?

Lena Stokes: Yes.

Roz Foster: And what are their names?

Lena Stokes: I have a sister, her name Ellen, and Pearl(?) [inaudible 00:13:52], and I have a lot of cousins, and aunts-

Roz Foster: They all live here-

Lena Stokes: -nieces and nephews. Mm-hmm (affirmative), yes.

Roz Foster: [00:14:00] And how about the Easter Parade that's held, do you, does your family participate in that every year?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative), my children too.

Roz Foster: Okay, can you tell us about that a little bit? How that's changed over the years?

For instance, how do you participate in it?

Lena Stokes: My church, we made a float to go in it-

Roz Foster: A float to go in it.

Lena Stokes: -and we won first prize.

Roz Foster: Wonderful! That's wonderful.

Lena Stokes: And Corine Saunders [00:14:30] was the person that really started the Easter Parade in Mims.

Roz Foster: It's been a long tradition hasn't it?

Lena Stokes: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Roz Foster: Well thank you very much for coming today and participating in our project.

Lena Stokes: Okay, you're welcome.