

THE SAM ANDERSONS-COTTON MILL WORKERS

By Gertha Couric

The Andersons live in a five-room, screened house, painted white with green trimmings. White furniture, a swing, and pots of geraniums and ferns mark the front porch, which gives entrance into the living room.

This social center of the Anderson house has clean white curtains at the windows and is furnished with a sofa, chairs, a table with reading lamps on top, and a radio.

Several vases filled with artificial flowers, crocheted mats on the table, "tidies" on the backs of chairs, family pictures on the wall and a flowered rug on the floor, complete the cheerful living room.

Three bedrooms each have plain oak furniture and clean white curtains at the windows. The dining room and kitchen are combined. An electric stove and refrigerator contribute to the ease of housekeeping.

Mrs. Anderson answered my knock, and seemed quite willing to tell of the life in Cowikee Mill Village.

"I worked in the mill thirty-five years," she said. "But I ain't worked for ten years now. My old man Sam, has been workin' here forty-five years, but he's pretty old now, just sorta' piddles around at the mill, odd jobs and 'sweeping.' He gets nine dollars a week.

"I was Clifford McLeod, of Comer, and was visitin' here when me and Sam met. He started courtin' me and---well we got married.

I was from good folks; was born near the old Comer plantation, so naturally, I wanted us to get ahead.

"But it was sho' hard in them days, workin' from six in the mornin' 'till six in the evenin.' We didn't have no electricity nor nothin' either.

"We had to draw the warps in by hand, and threadin' them looms by mouth was some'pin terrible. I'm 'shamed to tell it, but that's why I started dippin' snuff; to keep the lint out of my mouth. But, I dunno, the doctor says there's one good thing about snuff. It'll keep you from havin' hook-worms.

"We got four children, all of them grown now. My oldest boy, Frank, has been livin' in Jacksonville, Florida, but he's here without a job now. We got twin boys. Riley is a 'weaver' at the mill; gets sixteen dollars a week. Wallace is a-working at the printing office. I don't know what he makes. Sam, you know, is pensioned by Mr. Donald Comer.

"The boys didn't finish high school, but my girl, Lelia May, got through and has a good business education.

"I sho' am worried about Lelia May. She's taken up with them 'holly rollers' and its about to kill me and her pa, us bein' Baptists and not believin' in nothin' like that. But we can't do nothin' with her; she's a grown woman, you know.

"Aw, you've seen 'holy rollers!' Lelia May's a preacher; she's preaching someplace up in Georgia now. All them 'holy rollers' is preachers.

"They all take turns preachin', standin' up there shoutin' 'till they lose their voice. When they sing, they jump up and down to the music, and the more excited they get, the faster they sing and jump. To see them, you'd think it was a barn dance.

"After they jump awhile, 'till they can't stand up, they fall down and roll around, and talk the 'unknown tongue.'

"How do I know what the 'unknown tongue' is? All I know<sup>ed</sup> is that it sounds like a lot of gibberin' and gurglin', like when somebody has a mouth full of mush; or like somebody that can't speak for stutterin'.

"The choir members are all preachers and the preachers are all choir members.

"After anybody stands up in the congregation and testifies to all their sins, and comes up to the altar to be prayed for, then he's a preacher and a choir member too.

"Once, at a protracted meetin', a woman kept standin' up and testifyin,' and goin' up to the altar to be prayed for, and then goin' back to her seat. We all commenced to think she just wasn't goin' to get saved.

"Then, right on the last night, after she'd been prayed over, and talked to, and prayed some more, all to once she jumped straight up and began to shout: 'I got it! I got it!' All the preachers slapped her on the back and she began to jump up and down, and the singin' started, and all of them shouted 'amen.'

"On the way home, a friend asked the woman how come it took her so long to get saved and she answered:

'I forgot to spit out my snuff.'

"Now that's supposed to be the truth," said Mrs. Anderson.

"That's why I'm so worried about Lelia May."

She resumed the affairs of her home life.

"I have so much to do at home, it keeps me pretty busy. Cookin', washin', milkin' - we got a fine cow - all takes a lot of time. I don't go nowhere, because Sam works from two in the after-



noon 'till ten at night. I crochet a lot when I have any spare time, and usually sell my extra pieces. Every little bit helps with expenses. House rent is twelve-fifty a month. Sam works in garden mornin's. A garden cuts down grocery expenses a lot. Out<sup>n</sup> chickens and cow help too.

"For instance, at a meal, we can have fried chicken, collard or turnip greens, rutabagas, beans, peas, and butter milk; that we don't have to bring home in a sack.

"The boys enjoy the Men's Club and the Community House. One of the boys, Riley, is a member of the band.

"We all have a pretty good time, even if me and Sam are gettin' pretty old."

Mrs. Anderson, a regular anarchist and "Dame Van Winkle," knows all the gossip and scandal of the town. She views the young people in this light:

*More!* "They're s<sup>o</sup>me 'pin' scandalous and terrible, the gals smokin' and drinkin' liquor; just like the men. They're all goin' to Hell!"

Sam Anderson, quiet and mousey in a hen-pecked way, has always been hard working, thrifty and uncomplaining. He is now quite feeble. In his reserved and unassuming manner, ~~has~~ has this to say of the younger generation:

"Young folks will be young folks. They ain't so bad; could be worser."

Their politics are strictly favorable to the Democratic party and it is a good bet that Mrs. Anderson guides the Anderson vote.

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