

Georgette Groves
Carl Livingston – Oral History

Mrs. G.: on one trip, with a cargo of three cows and mules, all kinds of ducks and chickens and you could hardly see the deck. This was in the 40's – right after the war; sailors were still in Lauderdale, so when we started out the captain decided the cows were not secure so we stopped in front of an apartment house – there was a canal there. Then we had a sail-maker to make bands to support the cows so the next morning early we heard sirens, motorcycles, looked around to see where they were going – and it was our boat, telling us we were a public nuisance and had to move, because the people in the apartment had complained of all the noise – the cows mooing, the chickens crowing, and what-have-you. The next day, in the headlines, the newspapers said “Noah's Ark is in town” but the policemen helped us to get the sailmaker to make those bands immediately because the captain said if the cargo is in distress, they cannot force you to move, so we got the bands and were on our way.

Carl: Where these milk cows that you were taking to L.W.C. [Little Whale Cay]?

Mrs. G.: That's right – those were milk cows because we had several children on the island, and we thought it was terrible for them not to have fresh milk, so on the high seas there was only one person who knew how to milk a cow – that was Wallace Groves, so it was quite something to see a man on the high seas milking a cow. Then the captain and his wife and two children were on board so I was telling her in front of the children of the beauties and all the good of fresh milk. She didn't like that at all – they liked only Carnation, so that was the end – the children never had fresh milk, they had only Carnation. These cows were marvelous, and eventually we butchered them and had our own meat.

Carl: You weren't exactly around the corner from the grocery store – so how did you get your supplies – out of Nassau? Or did you have a plane come out or did you have a boat go into Nassau?

Mrs. G.: Yes, we had supplies from Nassau and Miami – a chartered boat to bring in supplies, because for building you needed bricks, cement and concrete blocks – everything for building, so some we brought from Nassau, and some from Miami – and supplies for food we would order two months ahead of time.

Carl: You built a little church on L.W.C. Will you tell us something about that?

Mrs. G.: Yes, we had marvelous masons, and incidentally, both Bahamians – a fellow named Minnis (?) and the other named Pratt – and we took the rocks right from the island, and they were marvelous stone-cutters, and the church was also the school, only the part of the church was dedicated by Bishop Burton.

Carl: The Right Reverend Spencer Burton? Was he an Anglican priest?

Mrs. G.: Is Burton an Anglican. Yes, that's right – it was Anglican, although it could be any denomination, the way he dedicated it, so he told us, and he christened all of our children. He came to the island and christened each one of them at the right time.

Carl: When was the first time that you heard of Mr. G. discussing the Abaco Lumber Company and the possible involvement in the island of Grand Bahama?

Mrs. G.: I believe it was in 1945 – we were in Nassau, walking down Bay Street, and Mr. G. said to me “Well, you’ve just bought a lumber company, and I said “I don’t believe it – not back to lumber!”, so he said he had just heard from Harold Christie about this company which was bankrupt on Grand Bahama island – a place called Pine Ridge, so shortly after that he came over, and that’s when he started spending weekends on Grand Bahama.

Carl: Tell me where you lived at that time, as there were no facilities at all on Grand Bahama.

Mrs. G.: You’re right – there were no facilities, no more of luxuries of L.W.C. I’d find myself at a boarding house, which was the manager’s house, and everybody would stay there – you know, all salesmen, for bricks or whatever was needed for the operation of the lumber camp, so there was no other place for these salesmen to stay, so one day I decided it was too much, and asked Mr. G. to build a house by the harbour where it was planned to have a harbour. That’s when we built a pink house and then the green house, and I well remember one night after dinner, sitting out on the veranda of that house, and Mr.G. said to me “One day you will see the biggest ships in the world out here” and I thought to myself “Oh, oh, there he goes, dreaming again” for it seemed so impossible to have big ships out there because all you could see were these little native boats in which was then a creek – no harbour.

Carl: The first time you came to Grand Bahama, you came by amphibious aircraft or by boat.

Mrs. G.: We came by amphibian aircraft, and we landed northshore and that’s where the railroad was, then we would get on the flat car to bring us Pine Ridge.

Carl: And gradually, the railroad was extended to the harbour, when the harbour was done, and then didn’t you land by amphibious aircraft on the harbour?

Mrs. G.: It was the creek – not the harbour – it was more of the Hawksbill Creek, near Queens Cove. Other times we would fly over Pine Ridge, and then somebody would go block the road so that we would land on the road nearest to Pine Ridge.

Carl: Before you came to Pine Ridge, you and Mr. G. adopted five children. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Mrs. G.: Well, we wanted children, so we decided to adopt and it was a long search. In the United States it was not possible because they would not tell us anything of the background of the children and we had promised ourselves that we would take only those with good background and good health. That’s what we required of the babies, so finally it took us to Europe. England was the same, would tell us nothing, France was the same so we did manage to get our first one from the states, from a doctor, who was a friend, from the United States. Then Germany was the place where we found they would tell us the whole background and we got three – not all the same year – it was over a period of years – maybe it took about ten years to find the five of them.

[omit next two segments to honor the editorial excision of miscarriages]

Carl: You named all of the children - there were 4 boys and 1 girl –

Mrs. G.: Three boys and two girls.

Carl: All of their names start with a “G”? Correct?