

Barbara Johnson Hill Remembers:

As the old song goes, I have "Faded Memories" of the home of Mama and Papa Johnson. I remember the long, long driveway to the house - sometimes lined on either side with tall green corn plants. I also remember sitting on the front porch in the evening looking down that same driveway at the big screen of the drive-in movie. We could not hear the sound track, of course, so it was really like watching the old silent movies.

The holidays celebrated at Carol Villa stand out in my mind more than the day to day events. I think this is because on the holidays there were so many cousins there and it was fun playing together.

Easter was always so exciting because of the huge Easter Egg Hunt that Mama Johnson was famous for and because my mother always designed and made me very special and beautiful Easter dresses. I never found the "Golden Egg" -the older children were much more astute "hunters" than I!

The largest family celebration was the Fourth of July barbeque. Ashley Wilkes had nothing on us! Long tables were set up under the trees. Uncles cooked pork in a pit all night long and aunts cooked all of their best summer dishes. Mountains of delicious food! Adults enjoyed visiting and catching up on family news. The children ran free over the grounds, just enjoying being children.

Thanksgiving was another special day. Again, families would gather - some around the enormous dining table - some spilling over into other rooms of the house to enjoy the feast. All of the traditional foods were expertly prepared by the many great cooks in the family - turkey, dressings (several kinds), ham, sweet potatoes (candied and otherwise) mashed potatoes, a variety of vegetables and of course the desserts - pecan pies, pumpkin pies and cakes.

At Christmas there was always a huge Cedar tree loaded with ornaments, lights and gifts. The gifts that I remember the most were the dolls. Mama Johnson hung a doll on the tree for every girl grandchild. At the time I was small there were about fifteen granddaughters so you can imagine how tall the tree had to be!

I have other vague memories - the "dark hall," the heavy, leaning headboard that I just knew would fall on me in the middle of the night; the entry to the attic in one of the upstairs bedrooms that housed "Mr. Fling Down;" and roaming the back fields with my cousins. Most of all I remember a house that was filled with fun, laughter and love. ☺