

Dr. George B. Lynch, interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri at the home of Dr. Lynch in Brevard, N.C., July 19, 1977.

Dr. Louis D. Silveri: These articles indicate that you are a native of this area.

Dr. George B. Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: Born in Fairview in 1887.

Lynch: January 11, 1887.

Silveri: I like to have the people I interview tell me how far back they can trace their ancestry in the mountains here in North Carolina.

Lynch: My father. . . was born and raised at Fairview. That is just out from Asheville. Of course, he was born in Rutherford County, but he lived in Fairview, and that is where he met his wife. . . and all of his children were born in Fairview. That's 'way back years and years ago.

Silveri: What about his father, your grandfather?

Lynch: He lived in Rutherford County. I think you will find it all in that article there.

Silveri: Your grandfather was the one who owned slaves, was he?

Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: And he was a prosperous plantation owner?

Lynch: Yes; he owned a lot of land up and down Broad River in Rutherford County.

Silveri: What did he raise?

Lynch: He was a farmer.

Silveri: How many slaves did he own? Do you know?

Lynch: I don't know.

Silveri: Do you know if he fought in the Civil War?

Lynch: I'm not sure if there's anything in there about that.

Silveri: You mentioned that. . .

Lynch: I don't believe he did.

Silveri: Prior to the War Between the States, he had owned slaves and extensive plantations, and afterward became a man of affairs at Rutherfordton, where he died. Your father, George W. Lynch, was born on the plantation at Rutherford County. . .

Lynch: That's right.

Silveri: . . . in July of 1848, but then when he grew up he came to Fairview. Was that before or after he was married?

Lynch: That was about the time he was married.

Silveri: Why did he come to Fairview?

Lynch: I don't know. I guess his wife lived in Fairview. . . that's how he came to Fairview. He met her and was married at Fairview.

Silveri: So he took up farming there at Fairview.

Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: And that's where you were born. How many children in your family?

Lynch: Four; three boys and one girl.

Silveri: And you spent your early life in Fairview?

Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: Growing up in Fairview?

Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: You went to school there?

Lynch: Yes; graduated from Fairview High School in 1905.

Silveri: If you were born in 1887, then you must have gone to school there in 1893 or '92, when you were five or six years old. Do you remember the first year you went to school?

Lynch: I remember the first day.

Silveri: What kind of school was it?

Lynch: It was a graded school, I guess you'd call it, and developed into a high school.

Silveri: Was it a small school?

Lynch: No; it was a fairly big school, a big brick building.

Silveri: Was it on the main road? Was it the Charlotte Highway that went through there?

Lynch: Yes; the Charlotte Highway went through Fairview.

Silveri: What kind of work did your father do? Did he have a . . .

Lynch: He was a farmer.

Silveri: A farmer. What did he raise?

Lynch: Corn and wheat and potatoes and just general.

Silveri: What was his cash crop? Did he have a cash crop?

Lynch: I guess, corn; corn and wheat.

Silveri: Is the house that he had still in Fairview?

Lynch: No; our home where I was born was burned. We lost everything we had in that fire, practically. One brother and Mother were there, and they hardly had enough clothing left after the fire.

Silveri: What year was that?

Lynch: That was in. . . she mentioned. . .

Silveri: Do you remember the fire?

Lynch: No; I was in school in Baltimore at the time.

Silveri: So you were away.

Lynch: I was away.

Silveri: I just wanted to know about how old you were when the fire took place.

Lynch: I was in school, medical school, in Baltimore. My mother was Elmira Minerva ^{Thoms}~~Thoms~~. She was born in Fairview and died January 11, 1925. I think you will find all of that in there. I don't think she mentioned about the fire.

Silveri: Is she any relation to the Thoms' of Asheville? The Thoms Orthopedic Hospital?

Lynch: No. . . Well, anyway, I don't think she mentioned about the fire, but the house was burned.

Silveri: Do you remember your first grade teacher?

Lynch: No; I don't.

Silveri: How far away was the school from your house?

Lynch: About three miles.

Silveri: Did you walk that?

Lynch: We walked every day, to school and back. My sister, the first day of school, I went with my sister and she kept me right with her that whole day. Everywhere she went, I had to go.

Silveri: When you were growing up, when you were a youngster, how often did you come into Asheville?

Lynch: Oh, every week or so we'd go, my father and mother, and of course that was before automobiles and we'd drive with a team to Asheville and spend the day. It was a day's trip when we'd go.

Silveri: As you were growing up you did chores around on the farm. Right?

Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: You continued schooling at Fairview and you graduated from high school?

Lynch: Yes.

Silveri: What did you do then?

Lynch: After I graduated from high school, I went then to medical school in Baltimore.

Silveri: Why did you do that?

Lynch: Well, I had a brother that had graduated in medicine and was in practice in Baltimore at the time. So he talked me into it, I guess, partly, and I think I had a little hankering for medicine, so I decided to go to Baltimore.

Silveri: In addition to your brother's influence, what other influence was there?

Lynch: None that I know of.

Silveri: None that you know of.

Lynch: Just my own.

Silveri: Now in those years you went right into medical school from high school?

Lynch: Went right from high school to medical school. I remember I went with my brother to the dean and talked to the dean, and told him that I hadn't. . . that I was just out of high school and wanted to enter medical school.

He said, "That's a little unusual without further training." He said, "I'll have to give you an examination first."

So he put me through a rather stiff examination before I could enter medical school. After that was done, he said, "Well, we are going to accept you as a student in medicine."

Silveri: What was the name of the university, of the medical school?

Lynch: University of Maryland.

Silveri: Oh, in Baltimore.

Lynch: In Baltimore.

Silveri: You studied there for how many years?

Lynch: Four years. I could have graduated in three years, but I decided, due to the fact that I didn't have the training before, that I'd just take the four. . . full four years.

Silveri: So when you graduated with a medical degree, you were 22 years old?

Lynch: I imagine, around that, I don't know exactly.

Silveri: And that was in 1909?

Lynch: About 1909.

Silveri: About 1909; and then you took an internship in Baltimore?

Lynch: Two years at St. Joseph's Hospital in Baltimore.

Silveri: And then, what did you do after that?

Lynch: After I finished the internship at St. Joseph's I came home to Fairview and stayed home for a little while, and then went in practice with my brother in Asheville. But I hadn't had the State Board, so one of the members of the State Board of Examiners gave me an examination, Dr. Stevens, in Asheville. He was a member of the State Board. He gave me an examination and he said, "I'll give you a temporary license to practice until you take the State Board."

Well, I practiced about a year with my brother in Asheville, and I decided I wanted to study orthopedics, that I wanted to be my specialty.

So I decided on orthopedics, and wrote to the hospital in Baltimore, Kernan Hospital for Crippled Children, to know if they had an internship. Well, right away I got a letter from Dr. Taylor, who was Chief of Staff there, and he said, "Can you come right at once?" And I told him I could. So I went to Baltimore and took two years as Superintendent of Kernan Hospital for Crippled Children.

Silveri: Two years there; and then what did you do after that?

Lynch: While I was there, of course, that was when the war

Lynch:(Cont'd.) came along, World War I, and I knew that I would be subject to draft, and I did not want to be drafted, so I volunteered, but was turned down on account of an arm. . . that's as far as I can bend my arm. They say it's been broken.

Well, they turned me down when I volunteered, but I knew that the draft would still probably get me, so I talked it over with Dr. Taylor, my chief there at Baltimore at the Kernan Hospital.

He said, "Why don't you get on the train and go to see the Surgeon General in Washington?" Which I did.

He said, "Why were you turned down?"

I told him.

He said, "Take your coat off and let me see what you can do with that arm."

He made me go through all kinds of things. Of course, I have to use my wrist to get to my youth, you see. I remember he was sitting in a swivel chair just like I have there, and he spun around and said to his secretary, "Take this man in the army, we can't keep him out on that."

So then I was inducted into the service. But due to the fact that most of the doctors had gone from Baltimore at that time, I mean, from the hospital, Dr. Taylor asked the Surgeon General: "Now if we take him there will be no doctor left to take care of about 85 or 100 crippled children here at the hospital." He said, "I'd like for you to leave Dr. Lynch as long as possible."

Lynch: (Cont'd.) That was 'way long the first of the year. So they left me until, I think it was along the latter part of 1918, they finally called me into the service. So I went to Camp Greenleaf for about five or six weeks. That was during the epidemic of flu, and so many of the men died. They just piled up one on top of the other.

Silveri: At the camp?

Lynch: At the camp, Camp Greenleaf.

Silveri: Where is that located?

Lynch: Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Silveri: Yes.

Lynch: Well, anyway, I finished my training there, and then I was assigned to duty at Fort McPherson, Georgia; still assigned to the orthopedic division, and I stayed in the army then until I was discharged. I think it gives you the date that I was discharged.

Silveri: Yes.

Lynch: I then came home, back to Fairview, to my mother's home. In the meantime we had re-built the home that was burned. We had built another home there, so I stayed there until, I guess, December 7, 1919 . . . I was married to Ada May Willison of Cumberland, Maryland.

I stayed at home there with my mother for a little while. One Sunday afternoon my brother came and said, "The Red Cross has found that you are just out of the army and not in practice yet. The flu situation is so bad in Rosman and Brevard, would you go to Rosman and Brevard and help the doctors out with the flu situation for a little while?"

Lynch: (Cont'd.) So I did. I left one Sunday afternoon. It was pouring down rain, and cold. I drove to Pisgah Forest and spent the night there at Pisgah Forest with Mr. Ed Patton.

While we were eating supper someone knocked at the door and said, "We understand that we have a doctor up here from Asheville, or from Fairview, and my wife's in labor and I can't get a doctor. Would he go and deliver my wife?"

So, of course, I didn't know anything about the country, and there was a man there, Ed McCoy, said, "I'll drive you to this man's house." So he took me over to this man's house and I delivered the baby and came back.

Then I stayed about two or three weeks in Brevard and then went on to Rosman and stayed two or three weeks up there, which the Red Cross paid me for. So after that was over I came back to my mother's home.

But while in Rosman, Mr. Silverstein, who had Silverstein's Industries, Lumber Company and Tanning Extract, and so forth, he got after me to come to Rosman to practice.

I said, "Mr. Silverstein, I don't want to come to Rosman, a small town."

He said, "Well, come for a few months, anyway, and help us out."

I said, "Well, I'll consider it." I went back to my home and finally decided to go help them out for a little while. Instead of

Lynch: (Cont'd.) that, I stayed about four years in Rosman practice, country practice.

Silveri: Oh, Rosman is a little town. . .

Lynch: . . . is a little town about ten miles above here, between here and Lake Toxaway.

Silveri: And they were doing a lot of lumbering up in that region.

Lynch: Yes; Mr. Silverstein was in the lumber business and the tanning extract business, for tanning.

Silveri: You worked for him and also. . .

Lynch: I didn't work for him, I worked on my own, but I was taking care of his employees, so to speak.

Silveri: I see. I see.

Lynch: He employed a lot of help, you know, men that worked in this tannery and sawmill.

Silveri: So, in those four years you must have gone out and around the country side.

Lynch: Oh, I went every where, all over the country. At that time there were no roads hardly except just dirt roads, so to speak, very few paved roads.

Silveri: How did you get around? On horseback?

Lynch: Every way: horseback, and walked, and used a car when I could. Sometimes I'd have to hire a man with a Ford, a little Ford car, to take me to these places. I couldn't get there on account of the road.

Silveri: What were the major health problems that you encountered in those four years?

Lynch: That was during the flu situation. That was the reason I went, because the doctors there. . . there was only one doctor and he was just worked down. He couldn't take care of all the calls he'd get. So that's the reason I decided to go and help out for a while. Instead of that, after I got into practice I stayed about four years. At the end of that time I decided that I'd come to Brevard, so I came then to Brevard and entered practice here in Brevard.

Silveri: What year was that?

Lynch: That was in. . . four years. . . that was about 1924 or '25.

Silveri: What were some of your major medical duties in those four years at Rosman? After the flu epidemic was over, what were some of the health problems of the mountain people you attended?

Lynch: Well, of course, they didn't have medical help, only one doctor. Sometimes they'd have to send all the way to Brevard to get a doctor, or maybe adjoining counties, because the doctor couldn't take care of all the calls that he'd get. And that is, as I say, the reason that I went to help out.

Silveri: Where was the closest hospital to Rosman?

Lynch: I believe that a Dr. Stokes here in Brevard had a little hospital. That was the nearest one. And, of course, Sylva, in Jackson County, was across the mountain. They had a hospital.

Silveri: Was there very much typhoid, or anything like that?

Lynch: Very little typhoid at that time. Of course, it was just general practice: deliveries and flu situation, and just general practice.

