

Visit at home. Interv. Vera Francis.  
8.7.48. (On many previous occasions int. Merton)  
T.O.

*Jawes  
p. 2*

Mrs. Vera Francis was sitting on the ground between her house and a big pit dug to make a tank and was washing bottles. We sat there talking while she was washing the bottles. Later on we went to the kitchen to light cigarettes.

The two-room house is very neat. The thatch is beautifully made and nicely cut at the edges. Through the open door I could see the "hall". There is a china-cabinet, a table with some books on, a few chairs.

Attached to the kitchen of an usual type is a little structure made of boards where a big pile of lime is kept. This is to cement the new big tank close to the house.

Present household:

Francis Merton	head.	M.	27.	Bull. Sav. Jehov. Witn.	Ass. secr.
"	Vera	wife	M.	28 (4)	Rose Hall Jeh. W. Homemaker Cultiv. Baking & selling ginger beer.
"	Merton	son	S.	1	(the youngest of 4 children)

I know Merton Francis very well as he visited us several times. He is a quiet and very intelligent young man (looks much younger than his age).

Merton is the son of Lucinda and Adolphous Francis Merton's mother belongs to the Elliott "clan". She was the daughter of Charlie and Judith Elliott. (For her numerous family see F.R. 21)

Merton was brought up in his maternal grandfather home where he stayed till four years ago when he built his house and married Vera with whom she had already 2 children at the time. "A loving grandfather he was, he gave Merton this land to build the house and land. A dear old man" said Vera.

Merton calls his "step grandmother" (the second wife of Charles Elliott) "mamma". Merton has only one full brother Neville, who lives with the parents. Merton has a half-brother by the same mother.: Percival Dyer. His father Allan Dyer is the nephew of Rhoda Elliot. Merton's half sister by the same mother is Edith Powell. Her father was Joseph Powell the uncle of Vincent Powell the present "boss" of Merton in the Growers Ass.

Merton's education. He was sent by his grandparents to Bull-Savannah school and he finished the 6th stand. After the school he was learning carpentry for two years with his uncle Calbert Elliott. After this he learned for two years masonry with a mason working at the factory.

Merton's occupations He was offered once to work with the Jamaica Welfare, but somehow this didn't materialize. He is at present the assistant secretary of the Growers Association. In this capacity he is employed 9 - 10 months a year. During his holidays he cultivates and also does some building. At present he works ~~luxury~~ ~~success~~ in collaboration with his uncle Calbert Elliott. Merton was working for the last few weeks at Mr. Robinson's house. He also cultivates.

His land.

Merton was the favourite granny of Charles, who regarded him as the youngest son. The old man gave Merton 2 acres of land. (Though how it is possible I don't know, as according to Moses and Cornelious Elliott this was family land which Dorothy Sinclair gave to her grandchildren. The old home (in which Charles lived) with the 2½ acres to it is to be the lot of the youngest: Calbert Elliott in addition to his share of 2½.)

Anyhow Merton has 2 acres of home land and 6 acres in Duff House which he bought from the Government Settlement at £5 per acre.

Cultivations: Vera is an exceptional wife who is very well informed about the cultivations. Tomatoes brought this year £50. They have 2 acres of guinea grass which she regards as important as "food". They have about 50 hills of yams, ½ acre of cassava and small quantities of corn and sweet potatoes. The garden round the house she cultivates herself. There is corn, escalation, some mellons. She looks also after the pig and the hens. They started the "Poultry scheme". (The only other person in Bull-Savannah doing it is Vincent Powell) They have 20 white Leghorns, the eggs are sold to the co-op "pool". They keep also two sheep. Vera prefers her husband to cultivate than to do the building. "Ready money is not everything to me. It's hard when you work the land, but you reap when it grow. You don't have to spend on shop."

His wife Vera. She is an exceptional young woman. I haven't met in Bull-Savannah a woman of her age who would take such an intelligent and active part in the productive activities of the household. ~~She makes~~ Although their economic position and especially the earnings of Francis are well above the average, she earns also by making ginger beer and selling it on the mornings on the road. She buys ginger in the market in Alligator Pond or Mandeville. "You can grate it but we beat it. You can set it in a vessel like that (she

showed me a small tin bucket) and leave overnight. In the morning you dilute with water and add sugar. All you have to do now is to pour it into bottles - it is ready." She sells to the people who come in the morning to work in the factory. Though the tomato season is over there are many people employed in building of the sheds etc. right now. "You can earn the day's expense 4, 5, 6/- shillings in one morning."

She just finished cleaning the house "We both go out in the morning and you never know what might happen." She doesn't work in the factory during the season. "With the garden and house, and lunch to be ready." She also has the youngest baby at the house to look after, and the hens.

Vera is a striking beauty and what is more she doesn't seem to take much notice of it. She has delicate regular features of an Italian Madonna. She is svelt and graceful and - what is extremely rare - has beautiful white teeth - all her own. But she seems to be much more interested in her work and economies than personal appearance. The kerchief was unpretentiously tied over her black wavy hair and her ready smile had nothing of coquetry in it. This combination of physical loveliness with a naive shrewdness and businesslike behaviour is rather touching. What is also exceptional about Vera is her lack of inhibitions. Most of the old women I meet for the first time seem to be "weel in their place". But the young ones are always at the first contact at least fidgety, either too shy or too boisterous as if uncertain what attitude they have to adopt towards me, or concerned how I am going to place them. I had no pains with Vera to established at once a friendly natural contact as between neighbours and I felt she didn't have a moment hesitation how to treat me or to address me. She is proud of everything she has and does. She must feel happy of her accomplishments in life.

Vera was born in Rose Hall. "But my family from Bull-Savannah. My mother was born right at the old Powell house where Nancy Powell lives now." The father of her mother was Daniel Broomfield. He went to Colon "At that time many people went there, but things weren't so bright they expect. He fret, and the first letter we got from him was death letter." The mother of her mother was Fanny Powell. Vera's mother Latty Broomfield was taken as a baby child by an aunt in Rose Hall. "There my mother met and married my father. Broomfield married to Broomfield." Her parents are alive and live in Rose Hall with Vera's two sisters and two brothers.

After Vera finished the school in Rose Hall she came to stay with her aunt Martha Broomfield in Bull-Savannah. Here she met Francis Merton about 10 years ago and started to have children with him. "We have two before we marry."

Vera's children. The three eldest ones stay with family. The eldest boy Naldy 8 yrs old stays with the parents of Merton. (Naldy was present at our conversation). The daughter Morine stays with Vera's aunt Martha Broomfield "over the road". The second daughter Sybil is with Vera's mother in Rose Hall. The youngest baby son Merton 1 yr old sleeps at present at home, but stays for the day with Merton's mother. "But we have to plan for the future. The old-people may die so we must prepare for the children." Vera is very busy "preparing for the future." When I offered her a cigarette she proposed we smoke after she finishes the washing of the bottles. She did it methodically, and after the task was finished we went to the kitchen to ~~get~~ lit the cigarettes from the fire. In the kitchen a pot was boiling on the fire for dinner.

Vera said she will visit us one day with Merton. (No woman ever proposed it. Visiting is done exclusively by man - the more official visiting on special occasions among neighbours. Women visit each other informally.) "I leave it to Merton." she said about the time of the visit.

The building of the tank. Vera was very eager to get her own tank. She explained to me that they have a "family tank" from which the household of Calbert Elliott and Rhoda Elliott were also taking water. But she considered it not sufficient. "Too many of us for this water." She wanted one near her house "In the future still more of us here." Merton was building it for the last week. To do this work he didn't earn much building. But Vera thinks a tank is a better investment than a few shillings. "A tank is for life."

Life in Rose Hall. Vera says she prefers to live in Bull-Savannah. "Can make more money and the land quicker." In Rose Hall it is too cold for tomatoes. The main cash crop is still tobacco which by far doesn't pay as well as tomatoes. Besides the soil is "slow." "You plant and have to wait 5 - 6 months, here you have the same in 3 - 4 months."

Also the place here is more densely populated. In Rose Hall houses are far apart, there is no traffic, no people coming and going like here, which suits Vera's business.

She goes to see her family in Rose Hall when she has time. It is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Bull-Savannah.

Information from Leo Powell.  
 Interv. Merton Francis and Vera Francis.  
 14.6.48.  
 J.O. 27.8.48.

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Present household.

Francis Merton, 27.  
 Francis Vera, wife, 28.  
 Francis Melton, son, 1.  
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Merton Francis is son of Adolphous Francis and Lucinda Francis. Has on full brothers, Neville Francis, living with parents; one half brpther Percival Dyer /with mother and stepfather/ and one halfsister, Edith Powell /through mother in Kingston.

Vera Francis, nee Bromfield. Daughter of Latty and Charles Bromfield.

Merton and Francis met 8 years ago, married ~~onlyxxxxxx~~ in 1947. ~~xxxxxx~~ Started to share house only 4 months ago, when he built his house.

They have 4 children: 8 years old Naldy is with Adolphous Francis, his grandfather; 6 years old Morene Francis is with ~~her~~ her mother's aunt Martha Bromfield /in B.S./.  
 4 years old Sybil Francis is with Vera's mother, & Latty Bromfield, in Rose Hall.

Vera has 2 brothers and 2 sisters, living in Rose Hall, and one half sister, Pearl Chin, living with grandmother Jane Bromfield /in Rose Hall//.

House: 2 rooms. Furn.: 2 beds, 1 table, 1 cabinet, 4 chair  
 Land: 8 acres in 2 lots. 2 ac. homeland, 6 ac. in Duff House  
 Homeland inherited, the rest bought from L. Settl. for £30.  
 4 ac. cultivated, 2 g. grass, & woodland.

Tress: 2 c. mangoes, 1 coconut.

Tomatoes: 7000, £50. 44 yam hills. 1/2 ac. cassava, 2 sq. ch.  
 corn, 2 sq. ch. red peas. 1 sq. ch. sw. potatoes.

2 sheep, 1 pig, 21 hens, Leghorn.

Merton is ass. secr. of Tom. Grow. Ass. in B.S. ~~xxxxxx~~ Does bookkeeping. Earns £50 yearly. ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ /half year work/. Is also a carpenter.

Weekly spendings: 20/-. On clothes last year: £30. On doctor - £10. £3 spent on entertainments.

£4 insurance last year. £12 investm. in poultry.

Vear is Anglican. Merton - Jeh. Witn.