

all. When my uncle passed away, she went to her folks and my grandmother and them, they didn't have a thing to do with her, but after my grandma died, she just want us to stay with her. And I thought she was going to treat us good, but it wasn't like that. And then when I went to school she used to do every way just to get me home. Then I worked. I was assistant matron. She couldn't do nothing with me. I didn't want to lose my job.

MYRTLE'S SCHOOL DAYS AT CANTONMENT BOARDING SCHOOL

(How old were you when you started to school?)

I went to school when I was twelve years old. My mother went blind. You know she had a baby--this last little boy. She had a baby and she went blind. And I had to help her. I think she got blood poisoning. I'm not sure. But she died right after--I think the baby was about a week or two years old. And she couldn't see nothing. And I had to help her around. So I didn't go to school. I helped my grandmother take care of that little boy. Finally I went to school. And you know the grades weren't high--we used to go as far as the sixth grade. That's as far as we went. And when I finish the sixth grade, they gave me a job as assistant matron. I was assistant matron. I worked. You know how much I used to get? I used to get sixteen dollars a week. That was pretty good.

(And how old were you by that time--the time you got your job?)

About sixteen. And I worked until I was twenty-one.

(What did you have to do as an assistant matron?)

Well, see, the matron that looks after the girls--she have to look after the girls and see that their clothes are patched or everything like that. And I was assistant. I used to help the girls. Help with their clothes. We used to sort out some clothes that had no buttons, or had holes in them, and we used to have to patch them up and all that. I liked it. And that woman that was a matron at that time, she was going to take me home with her, you know,