

Clara Bell Parker Parrish

Interview with Mrs. Clara Bell Parker Parrish of Milledgeville, Georgia, conducted by Dr. Alvin Jackson, originally of Bulloch County, Georgia, now residing in Columbus, Ohio. Parrish is a former educator of Bulloch County, at the Rehovah and Fish Trap one room schoolhouses. Topics addressed include Parrish's life history, her time attending Willow Hill School, her experiences teaching, and stories from the community.

Alvin Jackson: Ok, I'll just go ahead and start so we can get finished. Today is April 14, 1993, and we're in Statesboro, Georgia, at the home of my cousin, Mrs. Clara Bell Parker Parrish. And basically I want to ask her a few questions. I understand she's not feeling too well today, but she tells me she's in her 85th year, and she really does look very well for that. And I just want to ask her a few questions about her life, her mother, father, where she went to school, sisters, brothers, and other information in regards to the Willow Hill School. Now, Cousin Clara Bell, what was your maiden name, now?

Clara Bell Parker Parrish: Parker.

AJ: Parker. And what was your mother's name?

PP: Francis Parker.

AJ: Francis Parker. And she married...

PP: Levi Parker.

AJ: Levi Parker. Now what was she before she married him?

PP: She was an Addlin, and I was born up near Milledgeville.

AJ: Up near Milledgeville.

PP: And then my family, well just like they do now, just a crowd of people leave from one place and go to the other, just a whole lot families. And we left from up around Milledgeville and went to Metter, Georgia. And that's where, I was four months old when they went to Metter. And that's where I got most of my schooling, up until the seventh grade, up around Metter. And after that, I was 16 years old and one school in Bulloch County, the teacher was in a wreck, you might know her, her name was Annie Mae Lanier, and she couldn't start teaching school when it was supposed to open, so they sent, I was a good arithmetic scholar, and at that time they treasured something like that. So they asked my mama to let me go and keep this school open, and that's what started me teaching school. And after that, I only went to school in the summer, cause quite naturally if I could make a little money, and I didn't have no father. My father died when I was about four years old. And so that's when going by different schools. I went to Albany, Georgia. And I went to Savannah State, and of course, Willow Hill. I went up there for several summers. And that's where I got most of my...and Professor Rhimes was the principal at Willow Hill at this time. And we were all grown young people but there was a crowd of us there, in the summer. We didn't have much to do so we'd go up there to school.

AJ: Now what was the name of that school you first taught at, where that lady got in the automobile accident? Do you remember the name of the school?

PP: Groveland School, down below Claxton. School was named Groveland, it was in Bulloch County.

AJ: Ok, alright. Now you were a single girl then?

PP: Yeah, I was about sixteen years old.

AJ: And then you made a little money, and then for summer sessions, you would come up to Willow Hill to get extra?

PP: Yeah, see I would teach during the fall term and then in the summer, Professor Rhimes would have this summer school up there. And I would go up there. I had a sister younger than me, we both would go up there, I think it would be about six or eight weeks. This summer school up there.

AJ: Do you remember any of the other teachers or students that came up there during the summer session at Willow Hill with you?

PP: No, I don't remember any, only those that live up in that section. The Donaldsons, the Laniers, and I can't think, the Polks, well you know, I just can't remember them all right now.

AJ: Well, that's fine, you done real good. And then you said, you boarded with Uncle Ben and Aunt Roseanne?

PP: And Aunt Roseanne.

AJ: While you were there at the summer session? Did your sister stay there too?

PP: My sister stayed there too. And Uncle Ben had a little store out there, he'd sell little staple goods and all of that. And at that time, Bonnie was a grown young lady, I think she had one or two children. Uncle Ben's daughter Bonnie. And then sure we'd be around Bonnie and Cora, do you remember Cora?

AJ: Uh huh. Was Aunt Roxy there then?

PP: Yeah, I think she was. Cause she married one of the Hodges.

AJ: Yeah, she did marry one of them.

PP: I don't remember exactly whether this was before she married or...well I know it was before she married, cause I'm older than her. And this was before she married.

AJ: Now she was born in 1912, I believe.

PP: 12?

AJ: I believe she was. She's about 80 years old.

PP: Well, I was born in 1907.

AJ: Ok. So you were close to Aunt Cora's age.

PP: Yeah. When I mentioned Cora while ago, I meant to tell you, we were real good friends. Darby Donaldson was my boyfriend.

AJ: Oh was he? [laughs]

PP: And they was, at that time, they'd be working the field, most of them. Went to school with girls, young men, and they'd come up there some evenings when they'd call [unclear] work on the farm, they'd come up to the schoolhouse. We'd have little programs sometimes, and I enjoyed it.

AJ: [unclear] Now who did you marry?

PP: J.P. Parrish.

AJ: Now who is his mother and father?

PP: Cilla and Joe Parrish. Cain, Cain, Uncle Cain Parrish was his granddaddy, my husband's granddaddy.

AJ: Ok. Cain Parrish was your husband's granddaddy.

PP: Granddaddy, and that was, oh I thought of his name then, I can't...

AJ: Moes Parrish's brother?

PP: Uncle Moes. They wasn't brothers. Uncle Moes's wife, Aunt Bess, was Uncle Cain's relative.

AJ: Now Uncle Moes's wife, Aunt Bess, that's Uncle Ben's sister.

PP: Aunt Bess. Uh huh.

AJ: That's Uncle Ben Donaldson's sister. So you said that Uncle Cain Parrish was related to Uncle Moes's people though?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: And so, who did Cain Parrish marry? Was he the one that married Georgianna Riggs?

PP: Yeah. Aunt Georgianna. That's my husband's great grandmama, Georgianna Riggs.

AJ: Did you remember her?

PP: Yeah I remember her.

AJ: Now, she had a daughter, Aunt Georgianna had a daughter who was a schoolteacher.

PP: Lola?

AJ: Yes, I was trying to remember her name. Is she still living?

PP: No, she passed, about five or six years ago.

AJ: She lived to be old, didn't she?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Did you know where she used to teach school at?

PP: She taught over there at [unclear], a school between, sectioned between here and Metter. And I think she taught in Pulaski.

AJ: Ok. Did she ever teach at Willow Hill?

PP: Not that I know of. I know she went to summer school up there, but I don't know whether she taught up there or not.

AJ: Oh, she went up to summer school, up to Professor Rhimes?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: Now, Professor Rhimes was a big teacher then, huh?

PP: Yeah. He was a well educated black man.

AJ: Where did he go to school, did you know?

PP: No, I don't know where he went to school at.

AJ: Where was he from?

PP: Well, when I knew him, he was from around [unclear], I can't think of the name now.

AJ: But he wasn't from around Bulloch County, though?

PP: No, he wasn't from Bulloch County. You know at that time they used to get these teachers from out of town [unclear] and I don't know just where, can't remember where Professor Rhimes came from.

AJ: Did you ever go to Professor Kemp?

PP: Yeah, I went to school, that was my second teacher...

AJ: Oh was it?

PP: Professor Kemp. Uh huh.

AJ: Now, where did he teach you? At Willow Hill too?

PP: No, he taught me at St. Matthew's. It was a Baptist church between Metter and Pulaski, and Mr. Kemp was teaching there, and Robert Young. I don't know where Mr. Young came from, but they was from out of the county. And I went to school with Robert Young, he taught over there at St. Matthew's.

AJ: Now is he related to Mrs. Veronica Young?

PP: Not that I know of. Cause he had passed away before I learned...see I was all up around Metter and Pulaski until I married, and my husband was from Bulloch County, so that brought me in Bulloch County.

AJ: Oh that's how you came into Bulloch County.

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: But the Parker's are originally from Milledgeville area?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: Ok. Do you have any slave ancestors in your family? On the Parker side? Were there any slaves in the family? As far as you know?

PP: Well, they was, I heard my mother and them talk about it. BUt you know, I'm just now thinking, this would have been a that should have been started years ago. What you trying to do now.

AJ: It would have been very valuable to have that knowledge.

PP: It should would.

AJ: But I've been doing this for the past, in fact, that's part of what I'm doing. I'm compiling the information on blacks in Bulloch County, and we're taking this information, we're putting it in the library, we're taking it from the tapes and typing it up and all the people, we're trying to show that blacks had a very important history, also. Because a lot of people really don't know what blacks did, and I think they've had a very illustrious, I mean just thinking about what you did, kind of lives all of you lead, I think was wonderful. Uncle Ben had a store, people getting cars. I mean, when you really look at it now, some of the people now are not as advanced as they were way back then.

PP: That's right.

AJ: They really are not. And so, now. Mr. Cain Parrish. Did you know who his mother and father was? Did you ever hear your...

PP: See, that's my husband's granddaddy. Uncle Cain. But I can't think right now.

AJ: Did he, was his father named Cain too? Was he a Cain too?

PP: I don't think he was.

AJ: Now, what about Andy Parrish? Do you know how he's related?

PP: Uncle Andy? I don't know how he's related. But I used to tell when I first married, I told them that everybody was kin, cause it was Uncle this and Uncle that. And then the Parrish family over in Bulloch County, I really don't know too much about the family connection. Only a few of my husband's relatives.

AJ: But Joe Parrish was your husband's father.

PP: Father.

AJ: And Cilia.

PP: Silla. S-I-L-L-A. Silla.

AJ: Ok. And what was she before she was married?

PP: She was a Cowart.

AJ: She was a Cowart.

PP: Now, she was from over by Vidalia side. Over in that area.

AJ: And then, are there anybody in the Parrish's is living now? Mr. Joe Parrish's family, that would be old, that would know a lot of that history?

PP: I don't think so. I can't remember nobody.

AJ: Ok. But Cain Parrish and Georgianna Riggs were his grandparents. Now, Georgianna Riggs was the first teacher at Willow Hill.

PP: She probably was.

AJ: I found a record.

PP: I don't remember.

AJ: Yeah, she was.

PP: And, see I knew her. She was a grown, you know. And see, we haven't had nothing like this to come up. You just don't...stumbled up on something like this, I was telling somebody the other day. We need to get together more and make a black history, cause things go over and over and if you don't have somebody to talk with about these things, or read about it, it'll leave you.

AJ: It'll leave you.

PP: Can't remember.

AJ: Did you ever hear of Georgianna being a schoolteacher, Cain's wife, did you ever hear about that? Did you ever hear anybody say that...

PP: If I did, I don't remember.

AJ: But you never heard Aunt Lola say that her mother was a schoolteacher?

PP: No. I don't remember.

AJ: But, you know that she was a schoolteacher, Lola.

PP: Yeah.

AJ: She definitely was a schoolteacher.

PP: Uh huh. I didn't go to school with Lola, but my two sisters did. I had two sisters, younger than me. And Aunt Lola, she was my husband's aunt, they had a store, her husband was blind, and they had a store in Pulaski. And he was blind, but they kept that store going. She taught school and he ran the little store.

AJ: Even though he was blind, he ran the store?

PP: He was blind and he had a little store in Pulaski.

AJ: So he could count the money by feeling?

PP: Yeah. Uh huh.

AJ: Well that was kind of an interesting story. How many children did they have? Aunt Lola and her husband.

PP: No, they didn't have any children.

AJ: They never had any children?

PP: Uh uh. Never had any children.

AJ: Ok. Now who did she marry? Lola. What was his name?

PP: Major Young.

AJ: Major Young. Ok. And they never had any children. Ok. Now, how long, when did you retire from teaching?

PP: Oh, I retired, must have been about, I tell you, after I married, I stopped teaching cause my husband lived on the farm, and let it. I can always teach [unclear], you know? And so we went to New York, that must have been in about...and lived up there for seven years. And then we came back. And that, you asked me how many years, when I retired, I must have retired in, about 1930-something.

AJ: Ok. But most of your teaching was down at this Grove...

PP: [unclear]. Over in Candler County.

AJ: Candler County.

PP: Near Metter.

AJ: Ok. So that's where you did most of your teaching. Now, did you ever go to, you said you and Aunt Cora was close, you never went to school with her did you?

PP: She went to school at Willow Hill same time I was.

AJ: Oh, she was up there in the summer session too?

PP: Yeah, see, they live right there. We boarded with them. And then, you know, all of us was right there.

AJ: Ok. Was my grandmotehr Bonnie going to school up there too?

PP: Yeah. Bonnie was married at this time.

AJ: Ok. I see what you're saying. Now, did Aunt Cora teach too?

PP: I don't, I don't think Cora taught any. I don't remember her teaching.

AJ: Ok. And you said that Cousin Dob and them, the boys, didn't go to school for too much?

PP: Well, see at that time, they were either pulling fire or working in the water mill and some [unclear]. The men folks had to work on the farm. Well at that time, there wasn't much for women to do on the farm.

AJ: Ok. Do you remember the tornado of '29?

PP: Yeah. I remember.

AJ: Were you around when it came through?

PP: No. I was in Savannah. I was down there in summer school. I used to teach school, and when school was out here, I'd go to Savannah and go to college down there and work, and I was working in Savannah at that time.

AJ: Ok. So you missed it, huh?

PP: Yeah. It was real tore up whole lots up around Stillmore, that where my parents, mother was living. But, I was working in Savannah.

AJ: Do you remember the Depression as being a hard time?

PP: Yeah, I remember that. I remember whenever we didn't have no money, that's we canned. And you'd have to...it's like you wanted a sack of flour, or lard or something, even for the kitchen, you had to sign a paper to somebody to let you have this stuff. And, well it seemed like we, I think about it now, lots of times we made it through. We made it through.

AJ: Being on the land helped a lot because you could plant a little something too, didn't it?

PP: Yeah. Uh huh.

AJ: Did you have any of your brothers or any of your family go to World War I?

PP: I didn't have a brother. My mother's boys died. My daddy left, when he died, there was six of us girls. And the oldest one was 13 years old. And mama raised us without help, and she never did marry no more, she raised all six of us girls without a husband.

AJ: Now what happened to your father?

PP: He had double pneumonia. 36 years old.

AJ: He was 36 years old. Now what year was that, that he died in? That was about in the 20s?

PP: Yeah it was in the 20s.

AJ: And there was six girls, and the oldest was 13.

PP: 13 when my daddy died.

AJ: And she raised all y'all. She did a good job, didn't she?

PP: And I wasn't old enough to go to school when he passed.

AJ: Do you remember your father?

PP: Well...

AJ: Just a little?

PP: Yeah. By hearing them talking, and tell so much about what happened, I can kind of remember. I remember it snowed and we all peeked out the window. I can remember that about it. And he was singing some kind of, some song or another. I thought of the song just while ago. I can't think of it now. But anyway. We all standing looking out the window at the snowfall. First snow we had seen.

AJ: And so you have that remembrance of your dad, like that?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Now where's he buried?

PP: Buried over at St. Matthew's. It's between Metter and Pulaski.

AJ: Ok. Now, did your dad have any brothers?

PP: Yeah, he had, I think it was four. Four of the boys.

AJ: But they was all from up around Milledgeville way?

PP: Yeah. I was four years old when they moved from Milledgeville down, when my parents moved from Milledgeville? I was about four years old. I wasn't old enough to go to school.

AJ: Now, do you know why they would leave Milledgeville and come to Metter?

PP: Well, the farm land was better, they say, down here. And they could make more on the farm. And they come down hunting. That was just, well it might have been the Depression, or just before the Depression.

AJ: Now, did he buy some land or did he live on somebody's place?

PP: Lived on somebody's place.

AJ: Whose place was it?

PP: John Parrish, for one. His cousin.

AJ: Was it a black man?

PP: Black man.

AJ: He was on John Parrish's place?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Ok. And is that how y'all end up marrying, you married into the Parrish family?

PP: No, we didn't know each other until we was grown.

AJ: Ok.

PP: Cause see, we lived down near Pulaski and we lived up around Metter and still no...

AJ: But it was still the same family of Parrish's though, wasn't it?

PP: Yeah. But, we didn't, it was during the Depression I reckon, didn't have no convenient way of traveling, and people didn't get about and see and meet each other like they do now. Like you see somebody now, they been knowing each other for years. But see, when we moved from Milledgeville down here, I was about 21 years old when I went back to Milledgeville. A cousin of my daddy, they was going up there to a revival meeting, and somebody told him I had never been, and I hadn't been since mama and them moved, and he carried me up there to this meeting.

AJ: That was nice.

PP: And we was renting a buggy, double serve buggy, and we was about all night in getting there.

AJ: That was quite a long ride for sure.

PP: It was a long ride. Uh huh.

AJ: A long ride.

PP: And I heard Ma and them say when they moved from Milledgeville down here, they moved a wagon with a mule pulling it.

AJ: A wagon with a mule.

PP: And they spent the night in Dublin.

AJ: Dublin, Georiga.

PP: And then the next day they come on.

AJ: Well, I declare. Well that was quite a ride then.

PP: Oh it was. But now, I see, get in an automobile and that's just a...

AJ: Just a little jump. Now, you don't remember the buggy ride yourself, you was quite young.

PP: Oh, no. I remember mama and daddy had a buggy, and, you know, there was place you can stand behind and go. And I would want to stand back there, but I wasn't old enough. They wouldn't let me stand back there, I had to sit down in the buggy.

AJ: Yeah, that's a long time ago. Who was the first black you knew to get an automobile? That you remember.

PP: I believe it was...I can't remember right now. But I knew we used to, when the mail man would come by the house, he had a horse and buggy. No, he had a car. This was after he got rid of all that and had a car. And when mama would let us, we'd get out there and sit on the fence, all day long, watching for the mail man to come by.

AJ: [laughter] Just to see that car, huh?

PP: Just to see that car. But I don't know about what year that was in.

AJ: Now, did you guys go to Fishtrap Church? As a child?

PP: Sure. Yeah. But I never would be able to see them wash feet. See they washed feet there. And we, children, didn't go in for that. I was living, but my daddy had a brother named George, and he named me Clara Bell after his girlfriend that was up in Milledgeville and when my daddy died, this uncle took me and kept me and send me to school, most of my schooling, he sent me. Cause me and the other children was at the same building but I wasn't with him, I mean I wasn't living with him. And...

AJ: So he used to take you to Fishtrap too?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: And when it was time for them to wash feet, they would send the children out?

PP: No, they wouldn't particularly send children out, but my mama, cause they didn't wash feet, the missionaries didn't wash feet, and she didn't let us children stay, and she'd tell us to go on out. Well reckon the service had been long enough anyway. Us would be getting noisy and nervous and we'd go out. And I remember I want to see them wash feet, and when they did get to washing feet, that was after I when I got to where I could see them, that was when I was with Aunt Rose and them. I used to go with them.

AJ: Oh, so you'd go down to church with them? And then you'd see them wash feet?

PP: Yeah, they would always go to Bank's Creek.

AJ: Ok. So then, when you were staying there in the summer, y'all would go up there with them to Bank's Creek?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: How would they travel to church?

PP: Well, they's two or three had automobiles.

AJ: Uncle Ben had one?

PP: Yeah. [unclear] He was named Benny.

AJ: Benny.

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: He would drive?

PP: Yeah. Uncle Ben had a car. And I believe [unclear] Parrish and them had one. And, I can't think of either of the...Powell's. Turman and Charlie Powell. Now, Charlie he married Bonnie, I mean...

AJ: Cora.

PP: Aunt Cora. And that's how we'd be, I was along with them, we'd be going to different...

AJ: Ok. And so they had a car too?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: Aunt Rhena, who then married Georgia Donaldson?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: And that was Ted and Vanny's daddy.

PP: Yeah.

AJ: George Donaldson. Cousin Essa and them. Cousin Essa used to live right down the street, did you know?

PP: Yeah, right down the street.

AJ: Now, she knew a lot, didn't she?

PP: I [unclear]. You know when you first started talking, I said, "This something that should have been done years ago."

AJ: Oh, if I could have just got to her. I would have got a whole library worth of stuff from here.

PP: I know you would.

AJ: I'm just trying to think of who else I could talk to. Now, I've interviewed Mary Lee, Dougie Lee, and then Mrs. Murdie. I done Cousin Aldie before she passed.

PP: You did?

AJ: Uh huh. I'm gonna do Mrs. Cousin Thelma Jones. She'd be a good one.

PP: Yeah.

AJ: I think she's still living, isn't she? She'd be a good one. You know that's Mrs. Eva Moes's sister.

PP: Yeah, I knew both of them.

AJ: She's be probably a real good one wouldn't she?

PP: She sure would.

AJ: Uh huh. Cause she got a lot of that Willow Hill knowledge.

PP: Uh huh. And see, I was in and and out of Willow Hill. I'd be there in the summer, or Savannah, whatever. And then I'd, in the summertime I'd be working somewhere else, and I wouldn't be around but lot's of them, like her and Thelma Jones, she was there the year round, you know.

AJ: Uh huh. So she would know a whole lot. Did you ever see Aunt Cora after she went North? Did you ever see her after any?

PP: Yeah. I went to visit Cora in, where was she, Cincinnati?

AJ: Cincinnati.

PP: I went to visit Cora, and Eula...

AJ: Did you?

PP: After you had gotten sent there. To Cincinnati.

AJ: Is she still living? Cousin Eula?

PP: No, I don't think she is now. I'm not sure about that. Cause you know after my husband died, and I kind of got away from the family. That will happen, you know. And I don't remember now whether she's living or not.

AJ: Yeah, Aunt Cora always said I was one of her big buddies. In fact, I got a picture in my house in Ohio, of Aunt Cora and Cousin Eula, when they were girls.

PP: Oh yeah? You live in?

AJ: Ohio.

PP: Cincinnati?

AJ: I live in Columbus. And then I got a picture of my grandma, Bonnie, when she was a girl. I got one of Uncle Ben and Aunt Roseanne. I got a picture of them and Uncle Benny when he was a little boy. About like that.

PP: Oh yeah?

AJ: Uh huh. I try to save all that kind of information cause it's important.

PP: It sure is.

AJ: It's so important...

PP: But we as black folks, we haven't been treasuring it. We didn't treasure it. We just put it aside and that was it.

AJ: Oh, just like you said, if I could have gathered this just twenty years ago. Or if I could have just gotten to Cousin [unclear] that would have been worth twenty years. [laughter]

PP: It sure would have. She lived right down the street.

AJ: And I bet she knew as much as any black person in Bulloch County.

PP: She called me some morning and I was working at a women's clothing store then, here, and I never did teach after I moved down here. And she called me, "Sister Clara Bell. Come by here when you start to work. You know what I want. Come out here." And that's all she'd say, and she'd want a dollar or two. "Cousin, I get some change, and I'll get it back to you." And I'd go down there and carry her maybe two or three dollars. When she got her check, then that was good.

AJ: She was a good person.

PP: She sure was.

AJ: Good person. I knew she grieved about her nephew Dickey a long time. He was Aunt Cora's son.

PP: Yeah.

AJ: She used to always ask me about him. You knew him?

PP: Yeah, I remember him.

AJ: Now, do you have any children?

PP: I got one daughter. She lives in Atlanta.

AJ: One daughter. How many grands do you have?

PP: Four.

AJ: Four grands.

PP: This is adopted though. All my children passed.

AJ: Were they, how old were they when they passed?

PP: Oh, at birth.

AJ: At birth?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Ok. Alrighty. Oh, that's wonderful. And how long have you been living down here?

PP: Ever since '40...let's see. We counted up the other day, 45 years right here in this house.

AJ: 45 years. That's a long time.

PP: We built this house and we moved down the street and rented a house for a year.

AJ: What street was that on?

PP: On Cotton Avenue.

AJ: Ok, you moved to Cotton Avenue. From the farm, you moved to Cotten Avenue?

PP: Cotton Avenue.

AJ: And then you moved here and built?

PP: Moved here and built.

AJ: Now, when you was living on the farm, whose place was y'all living on before you came here?

PP: Well before we came here, we was, Mr. Joe, my husband's daddy had a little farm out there. And after we came back from Detroit, from New York, we tended that farm, and then times got a little worser, and we moved on to Joe Ballon's farm. That's a white man. And moved on his farm. And from his farm, here.

AJ: Now, how many brothers did your husband have? And sisters?

PP: He had three sisters. And I believe four brothers.

AJ: Ok. And any of them living?

PP: Well the two girls live here in Statesboro. Two of the sisters.

AJ: And what are their names?

PP: Virginia Hardy [possibly Harden] and Bonnie West.

AJ: Ok. Is Cousing Tet got any...you remember Cousin Tet, Cousin [unclear], do she got any sisters or brothers living?

PP: Not that I know of. Now she had one...

AJ: She had a sister named Mamie.

PP: And one named...yes, well Mamie is dead.

AJ: And one named Bessie.

PP: One named Bessie.

AJ: And one named Lola or something like that. I think.

PP: Yeah, cause she used to live in, on down the back street.

AJ: So, all of them are dead?

PP: I think they are. Now, I'm not sure.

AJ: Ok. Did you know Cousin Tet's father, Aleck Hall?

PP: Yeah. I knew Aleck. Now, he married, Uncle Aleck's last wife, was my husband's grandmama. Aunt Eliza Cowart.

AJ: Hold on. Ok. Aleck Hall's last wife. Oh, I didn't know he married again. Ok. And that was your husband's grandmother?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: Ok. Now. Mrs. Cowart's husband died?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: What was his name again? [long pause] That's Mrs. Silla's, Mrs. Silla was a Cowart?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: And Mrs. Silla's mother married Mr. Aleck Hall.

PP: Aleck Hall. Uh huh.

AJ: Ok. Alright. I got that down. Now, do you know who Mrs. Cowart, who she, what Mrs. Cowart was before she married?

PP: No, I don't know.

AJ: You don't know that. Ok. Uncle Aleck Hall was a big man in the church, wasn't he?

PP: He was.

AJ: And a lot of the Hall's, Mr. Garfield Hall, and all of them, they were. In the Primitive Baptist Church.

PP: Yeah, that's right.

AJ: Ok. Did you know Elder Wash Hodge?

PP: Yeah. I knew Uncle Wash. He's at Banks Head Creek.

AJ: Yes. That's my grandfather's grandfather. Saul Lee was my grandfather. That was...

PP: Bonnie's husband.

AJ: Yeah. That was his grandfather. Elder Wash Hodge. Did you ever hear him preach?

PP: Yeah. I've heard him preach. Several times.

AJ: Well. Is there any other stories or anything of interest, you can think of?

PP: No, I don't think so.

AJ: That you think might be interesting? You told me a little bit about Willow Hill. Describe what Uncle Ben looked like. Was he a slim man or a fat man?

PP: He was kind of on the heavy side. And...

AJ: What complexion was he?

PP: Kind of light. Lighter than you.

AJ: He's lighter than me?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Was he as light as you?

PP: Yeah. Maybe a little lighter.

AJ: A little lighter than you.

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Do you know Mr. Johnny Green?

PP: I used to, yeah.

AJ: Was he about his complexion?

PP: No, he wasn't as light as Johnny Green.

AJ: Ok. I'm trying to think who...but he was somewhere between Johnny Green and...I'm trying to see. Was he, he wasn't as light as Cousin Aldi, Cousin Aldi. About her color though?

PP: About her color maybe.

AJ: Ok. I was just trying to get a...and Aunt Roseanne was on the dark side?

PP: She was on the dark side.

AJ: Was she as dark as me?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: Even...was she darker than me, or about the same?

PP: About the same I imagine.

AJ: Ok. Did you know any of Aunt Roseanne's sisters? Aunt Georgeanne, Aunt Penny, or Aunt Sis, Susie?

PP: I used to know Aunt Susan, Susan Donaldson.

AJ: Yes. Ok. Aunt Winnie Lanier?

PP: Yeah, I used to know Aunt Winnie. Just like I said a while ago, when you don't have nobody to talk about these things and don't seem them, you forget it. Cause I used to go to different churches, and I'd meet all these people there, but now since I've been up in age, I don't have the convenience to go, and I don't have no children here with me to take me out to these different places. And you will just forget these things.

AJ: Did you ever go to New Bridge? Did you ever visit that church?

PP: New Bridge? Yeah, Uncle Cain, that was, we said that was his church.

AJ: That was his church? Ok.

PP: Yeah, you know they, the church had a split for some reason. This happened just before I married, cause when I married, Uncle Cain was going out there to New Bridge to his church and Mrs. Silla was going to Fish Trap, that was his wife see.

AJ: Oh, so they were going to different churches?

PP: Uh huh. But they got together.

AJ: Now, what year did you get married?

PP: 1928 or 9.

AJ: And before you married, the Primitive Baptist Church split?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: And you don't know what they split over?

PP: Uh uh.

AJ: And when they split, one group went to New Bridge?

PP: Yeah, and built down there.

AJ: Ok. So, originally, they were all at Fish Trap?

PP: Fish Trap and Bank's Creek, yeah.

AJ: That's where they originally were?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: And then one group got mad, and went down to New Bridge and built?

PP: New Bridge.

AJ: Now, Aunt Roseanne ended up going to New Bridge too, didn't she?

PP: Yeah, and [unclear].

AJ: They went there too? Now, whatever happened to New Bridge?

PP: It just, everybody left, died out.

AJ: It didn't grow. And so it just kind of went out, the normal people eventually headed back to Fish Trap?

PP: Yeah. And some of them passed away, and that ended that part of it, and some of them went back to Fish Trap.

AJ: But did you ever hear why the split up though?

PP: I don't remember why they split up.

AJ: Ok. I see, cause this is the first time, you the first person...

PP: Mary might.

AJ: She might know that?

PP: She might know.

AJ: Ok. Cause the Kirklands were her people. And they were down there. The Kirklands were there.

PP: Well Arthur, he was, when I first married, Arthur was a church worker. He was a member there.

AJ: At New Bridge.

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: You said Arthur?

PP: Arthur Kirkland.

AJ: Ok. He was there. Ok. And so this was in the '20s?

PP: Uh huh. About '28 or '29, something like that.

AJ: Ok. So now New Bridge was just built during the '20s then?

PP: Oh yeah. Uh huh. I don't think it was never, never completed, you know, like ceiling and all like that, I don't think it was never completed, they just put up a church there, and worked on it as they lived. But they finally, those that didn't die, they went back. To their home churches.

AJ: Had you ever heard of the church splitting other than that time?

PP: Oh yeah. Several churches split.

AJ: I mean of that particular Primitive Baptist...

PP: Oh, no, not that particular one. I didn't know about it. But when I knew them they was up at Banks' Creek, Fish Trap, [unclear].

AJ: And Old Bethel?

PP: Old Bethel. And, there's one, up above, out from Swainsboro.

AJ: St. Paul, you mean?

PP: St. Paul. And then there was Cyprus Grove.

AJ: Cyprus Grove. [overlapping PP] Yeah, that was, forgot about them. And there was one, used to be called Eden I think.

PP: Yeah, that's down around Claxton's side.

AJ: Ok. I never knew where that was. Is that still going on? Eden?

PP: Yeah, Eden Church is still going on.

AJ: Ok.

PP: But I haven't been there in years. My husband never was a member of a church. But he'd always make a way for me to go, and he'd go sometimes.

AJ: I heard that Uncle Ben and them [unclear] he joined on his death bed. That's what I heard. You ever hear that?

PP: Yeah. I heard that too.

AJ: That when he was on his deathbed he joined a church. Up at Banks's Creek. So, this is, this has been really interesting. Now, let me make sure I got this right. Uncle Joe Parrish and his wife Silla were members of different churches?

PP: At one time.

AJ: She went to New Bridge and he went to Fish Trap.

PP: No, she was at Fish...she was at Eden.

AJ: She was at Eden.

PP: Yeah, when she first married, according to the way I learned it, she didn't move her membership. It was sometime after these churches split up, she joined Fish Trap. And Mr. Joe, he was with Uncle Cain and them, and they built at New Bridge.

AJ: Ok. Did you know Steve Riggs? Did you know him well? Steve Riggs?

PP: Riggs?

AJ: Steve Riggs. That's Mr. Herbert Riggs's granddaddy I think.

PP: Yeah, I know Uncle Steve. Now they're, they had quite a bit of land, going out, straight on out this way.

AJ: To Cypress Lake?

PP: Going out that way.

AJ: How do you get out there? He got a relative out there called Pauline, that's somebody I'm trying to find. Pauline...

PP: Well, you'd go to Johnson Street, I don't know how, I can't...

AJ: Somebody over there could help me. They could just ask where Cypress Lake area is, huh?

PP: Ask them about the old Riggs farm. The old Riggs place.

AJ: Ok. Ok. I'm going to, cause I know...

PP: About two or three of them Riggs has had land out there.

AJ: Ok. And she's a good person to talk to. Now, did you know Moes Parrish real well? We were talking about it just a minute ago. Did you ever go to Uncle Moes' house?

PP: Yeah. See, Eulah was a young girl and I was, my sister and Cora, we four used to be together a lot.

AJ: Ok. So y'all would go to each other's house?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Uncle Moes kept Cousin Eulah?

PP: Yeah. But there was a boy. Eulah had a brother.

AJ: Was it William?

PP: Uh uh. It wasn't William.

AJ: Ok. But he used to be there. Ok, now. Now Aunt Bess. Was she a big, fat woman?

PP: Yeah. She was on the fat side. And Aunt Roseanne was little.

AJ: Ok. Now, was Aunt Bess a light or dark woman?

PP: She was, she and Uncle Ben...

AJ: About the same color?

PP: About the same color. And she was stout. She was on the stout side.

AJ: Ok. What about Aunt Rhya?

PP: She was, she was kinda slender. Aunt Rhya. She was kind of slender. She wasn't fat like Aunt Bess was.

AJ: Aunt Bess was. Was she about the color of Aunt Bess, though?

PP: She might have been a little bit darker.

AJ: Ok. And, so you went to down to Aunt Rhya's and Uncle Andy Parrish's house too?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: All their houses. Well, I don't want to get you too tired, but I'm just glad that you could tell me this.

PP: Well, I tell you, I didn't feel like it. But lots of times, if you try to do something good, you'll feel better. I feel better now, than I did when you first came here.

AJ: Well, I'm glad to hear that.

PP: And I hope I was a little help to you.

AJ: Well you was some help, because the one thing that I never knew that you really told me, was about this New Bridge. And nobody could seem to tell me about New Bridge. I had heard that name but I was trying...Everybody, most of the people, they just don't know anything about it. They'd never heard of it.

PP: Yeah, there was a church called New Bridge. It was down...see, Fish Trap is sitting right side a stream of water, and on, down on this same stream, that's where New Bridge was.

AJ: So, was it in Candler County?

PP: Yeah. New Bridge is in Candler.

AJ: Oh, I see. So you just go straight across that bridge, like you going...

PP: No, you go, see, the road it goes down, you don't have to go to Fish Trap to go to New Bridge.

AJ: Oh, I see. But it's...

PP: If you go out there to the Riggs, find the Riggs's settlement, they can more likely point you out how to get to New Bridge. I think, some colored fella got a big farm out there, James Washington. Out near the...

AJ: Near New Bridge?

PP: From what I can understand.

AJ: Ok. Alrighty, well that has been very, very helpful. And you said...how many sisters you have living now?

PP: I got two sisters living.

AJ: In Savannah?

PP: One in Savannah, and one in Detroit.

AJ: Oh, that's nice. Now, are you older...you're younger than them or older?

PP: The one in Savannah is older than me. And the one in...well, they're both older than me. The one in Savannah and the one in Detroit.

AJ: So, y'all in y'all 80's then?

PP: Yeah. My oldest sister, I think she's about 92.

AJ: That's wonderful. How's her mind?

PP: Better than mine.

AJ: Is it really?

PP: Uh huh. And she's planning to come down here. We went, she and the one from Savannah and me, we went to Detroit last summer. So the one in Detroit, she's coming down here this summer. We got a thing worked out. We've been doing that every other year for about five or six years now. I've been to Detroit several times.

AJ: Isn't that wonderful?

PP: But, [unclear] my health is going bad, and I told them I don't want to try that trip anymore.

AJ: Y'all usually drive or fly?

PP: My sister in Savannah, she won't fly. And we go by bus. And I think that trip is too much on me. A bus trip. We leave here about 12 o'clock in the day and we get there tomorrow morning about 7 or 8. And that's too long sitting, you know, you get off, you do get off and recreation outside but it's just too long to sit. And this sister in Savannah, she won't fly. And I said I was going to make her fly, so I got everything ready, and she got everything ready, and we was going to leave Thursday, and she called me, must have been Wednesday night cause we was leaving in the morning, and I said...she's tall like I am, that's about the first person I saw when I come over to claim, was my sister from Savannah. She got on that bus, and she went by herself. I said, I said, well now she was afraid to ride the plane. I said, I'm not going to do that no more, I'm going to ride with her on the bus. But, it wears me out, that long ride.

AJ: Now what about the train?

PP: We went by train one time. But it's such a round about way by train. You had to go to Atlanta, and then from Atlanta, this train we was going on, it took us into Alabama and then come back and...it was a long ride.

AJ: My goodness. It ended up being much longer than the bus. Is it more comfortable than the bus?

PP: No, that train, we could have got a sleeper in that train but we didn't.

AJ: Well, that's nice of y'all to get together.

PP: Yeah. I had went up there by myself, but since I got vertigo, I don't, doctors tell me not to get out by myself.

AJ: Now, who is those Parkers over by Fish Trap? There's some Parkers over there.

PP: That's my daddy's, that's my first cousin. His daddy and my daddy were two brothers.

AJ: Ok. Cause I know there was some Parker kids I went to school with. They were fair skinned people. I went to school with some of them young kids. I was trying to remember their name and I was just wondering. So that's your...

PP: The girl is named Connie, and the boy is named [unclear].

AJ: I think I know that boy. And I know the girl too. The girl is a little younger than me. The boy is a little younger too, but I remember them from school. They went up to Willow Hill at one time.

PP: What is [unclear]?

AJ: And those are your brothers?

PP: First cousins.

AJ: Your daddy's...

PP: Brother's children.

AJ: Brother's children. Ok. So when your daddy came down from Milledgeville, his brother came too?

PP: Well, about four or five families came. Or more than that. If they didn't come at one time...

AJ: They came later.

PP: They come after.

AJ: Now, were they all Parkers or were they some others?

PP: Parkers, Alvins, Holsters.

AJ: Shinholsters came? And who else? Alverson?

PP: A-L-V-I-N. Alvin.

AJ: Is that the last name?

PP: Yeah. That was my mother's last name. Francis Alvin.

AJ: Alvin. A-L-V-I-N.

PP: [unclear]

AJ: So some of them came, the Shinholsters came?

PP: Yeah, she had four brothers. My mama had four brothers came down. From time to time, they were down here. And one of them lived down here for a while, and he moved back up there.

AJ: Oh, ok then. I didn't realize that there was four families came down to get some of that rich land down here. That was pretty nice land.

PP: They was more than that come. I mean, those are my immediate family.

AJ: Now, the Shinholsters, are they any Shinholsters still around?

PP: Yeah, there's of them around. And one of the Shinholsters belonged to the NAACP. He's a head man in there.

AJ: Ok. And that's that same group of people that came down?

PP: That came down from up there.

AJ: Ok. Cause I had heard of that name, Shinholster.

PP: That, my mama's sister, my grandmama's sister married a Shinholster. They were kind of related, the families would come down from time to time. And all of them didn't come at once. Maybe three, four years difference, before somebody else would move down. They'd see how well they were getting along. And they would move down.

AJ: Ok. Your grandmother's sister married a Shinholster. I heard my grandmother talk about a Shinholster, he was a tall dark man.

PP: That's him.

AJ: Huh?

PP: Yeah. That's him, [unclear].

AJ: Is that the one?

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Ok. Now, I've seen him when I was a little kid.

PP: I know you have cause...

AJ: Cause he could sing.

PP: Yeah.

AJ: He was a singing man, I think, if I make no mistake.

PP: Zeke Shinholster.

AJ: That's him.

PP: And his boys, one of them named Ben.

AJ: Zeke, Mr. Zeke is the one I know. I remember my grandmother talking about him. And I didn't realize that that was that same group that came through.

PP: Yeah. Some of that crowd that came from...up there, down here.

AJ: Well, a few other. Did you live around Uncle Nels Littles when you was growing up?

PP: Yeah. Not too far, far at the time. After, well I must have been about 15 or 16 years old when we lived near him.

AJ: Uncle Nels. Now, what kind of looking man was he?

PP: He's a tall, dark skinned fella.

AJ: He was tall and dark? Now his first wife was Janey Donaldson. Did you know her?

PP: No, I didn't know her. She was, when I knew him...

AJ: He was with his second wife? He met Hattie.

PP: Hattie?

AJ: Williams. She was Cousin Ada Williams, Cousin Ada Hendricks's daddy's sister I think.

PP: I think so.

AJ: Yeah.

PP: What did Henry's [unclear] do?

AJ: Hendricks? His son Jack?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: His son Jack.

PP: Now, some of his children went to school with me.

AJ: Oh yeah?

PP: Grandchildren.

AJ: You taught them?

PP: Uh huh. I had children went to school to me, that was older than me. You know Jack McCray?

AJ: Yes.

PP: Well Jack McCray, and Creacher, they went to school with me. But the way they daddy had it figured out, when he plowed with a two horse plow, one of them could go to school. And they weren't interested in nothing but arithmetic and spelling. So I figured that's what they needed most. And I learned how to figure land so I could teach them, and you know, I've done forgot now. [laughter]

AJ: Oh, so you learned that to teach them to keep their interest.

PP: And I tell you who taught me that. Professor Rhimes. Up there at Willow Hill.

AJ: Is that where you learned that? At Willow Hill?

PP: He's a good mathematician. And he worked arithmetic, and spelled real good. Professor Rhimes was good on anything. According to me. I was, I really was crazy about him.

AJ: Now, describe Professor Rhimes. Was he a slim man or...

PP: Slim, dark skinned fella.

AJ: Slim with dark skin. With white hair?

PP: Not at this time. Well, he did get white hair before he passed.

AJ: Now, where did he, where was, was he in Bulloch County before he passed?

PP: No. I don't know where. I don't know whether he was in Savannah or...I believe he was in Savannah when he passed.

AJ: Do you know any people that I could talk to to learn anything about him? Any of his people, or anybody who would know anything about it?

PP: I sure don't.

AJ: You know anybody who would know anything about Professor Kemp? That I could find out about him?

PP: Mary ought to could tell you something about Professor Kemp.

AJ: She might be able to tell me something?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: Ok. I'll ask her then. Now, is she older or younger than you?

PP: Mary? I think I'm older than her.

AJ: But y'all are close in age?

PP: But see, she was in the community, where I was up around Metter, she was over there around Lee Holder and Fish Trap. She was out in the country, I ought to say, moreso than where I was at.

AJ: So she might know where Professor Kemp and them...

PP: Uh huh.

AJ: Ok. And you don't know who would know anything about Professor Rhimes?

PP: No, I sure don't. Unless Mary knows something.

AJ: She might know something?

PP: But tehboth taught at that same school, not at the same time, but they taught in the same area.

AJ: Did you know any of the other teachers that went to Willow Hill, other than them two? Was Professor H.W.B. Smith, was he ever there when you was there?

PP: No, I don't think, not when I was there, I don't think.

AJ: You don't remember any other teachers other than them two?

PP: Uh uh.

AJ: Ok. Alrighty, well, I really appreciate this and I'll you a rest and this has just been so helpful.

PP: Well, I'm glad I could attempt to help you some. That's something that we need.

AJ: Well, you have helped me. There's nothing about attempt. You've definitely helped me. You definitely helped me. And see when I have it on my tape, that way when I go back and listen, see if you trust your mind, you'll forget. I'll remember next year, but five years I might not.

PP: Might not remember.

AJ: But if I have this, it'll always be here.

PP: You can go back and refresh your memory.

AJ: And then when I'm gone, somebody else can hear your voice. Now this is what's interesting. We have your voice that will always be here. I'm putting these in the library downtown.

PP: Oh yeah?

AJ: Yes ma'am. I got a whole collection of tapes that I have been recording, memories of black people in Bulloch County.

PP: Oh, that's good.

AJ: And so, these voices will always be a part of the record of Bulloch County. So your voice will always be in the Bulloch County records.

PP: I appreciate that.

AJ: And, oh and it's wonderful hearing it because here you are, you were a teacher, you started off, and you taught many many boys and girls. We needed to hear this. I didn't even realize myself, that you had started off before you even finished school.

PP: I'll tell you this. At one time, I had 85 children on roll at Fish Trap. 85. And, they said they didn't see how, they passed, people had passed and everything so quiet and all, they didn't see how I was controlling those children. That many. But, I would have somebody outdoors, sleeping in the yard, and have somebody over in that corner studying arithmetic and somebody over there doing something else. I would just divide them up. And, you know, you don't see it. Where I could keep them quiet. I enjoyed it.

AJ: And this is at Fish Trap?

PP: Yeah.

AJ: So you taught at Fish Trap, also. And you taught down at...

PP: I taught at Rehovah.

AJ: Rehovah. Now, did you ever have any assistants when you were there?

PP: Well, when I first went to Fish Trap, Mary taught with me.

AJ: Mary Lee? She taught there, too?

PP: [unclear] Mary.

AJ: Yeah, she told me she taught somewhere, but I don't remember where she said she taught. I'll ask her.

PP: Well, you ask her. I think we, Mary...

AJ: Was she a good teacher?

PP: Yeah, she was very good.

AJ: Well, yes, she'd be a very good person. I'm going to go back and talk to her again.

PP: And remind her of some of the names that I been calling out. She might know more about them.

AJ: I will. Cause, you know, I'm going to ask her about Kemp and Rhimes and all of that.

PP: Robert Young. He was one of the teachers.

AJ: Robert Young. So you taught at Rehovah, Fish Trap, you attended summer sessions at Willow Hill, and you went to, you taught at this school when you was 16 down...

PP: Groveland, Georgia.

AJ: Groveland, Georgia. Which is in Bulloch County. Ok. Were there any other schools that you remember teaching at?

PP: I was at Fish Trap for seven years.

AJ: Oh you were there that long? My goodness. Now, what year did they stop having school at Fish Trap, do you remember?

PP: No, I don't remember but it was after they integrated the school. See, they would have a little black school over here. Now that school didn't get much attention. And after they had to integrate, black and white in the same school, they cut out some of these little one teacher schools. I used to teach in Rehovah Church. We used to have to have school in church. We didn't have no building. But after they integrated, they had to break that down and all go to school in one, because black and white go to school together.

AJ: Well, that's wonderful. A lot of people would never believe all of these stories and...

PP: A lot of times, if you go through something, you'll remember some of it

AJ: You'll remember it. But 85 kids. That's a lot of kids.

PP: Yeah, and I started to say about Jack McCray and all them, when they were, when it would rain and it'd be too wet to plow, too wet to do something on the farm, they'd come to school. But they were just as [unclear] as a six year old child. I didn't have no trouble with them. They'd get they books, and get on in the corner or wherever I told them what section to take, and they'd be quiet. And I enjoyed them, cause they, me and Jack, I reckon are about the same age. Jack McCray. He went to school for me, Jack and Creacher. And Copper Lee Mincey, and Edward Mincey. That's somebody you ought to ask somebody about. Tom Lindmere.

AJ: Tom Lindmere.

PP: I don't remember who you could ask about him.

AJ: What do you know about him?

PP: He was jut in the community when I taught school there.

AJ: Tom Lindmere.

PP: Uh huh. He was a little preacher. [unclear]

AJ: Ok. Do you know who he married?

PP: He got somebody from over around Groveland side, but I think her name...

AJ: Is this Harsh Lindmere's brother? Or is it a different set?

PP: I don't know Harsh Lindmere.

AJ: You don't know Harsh Lindmere. Ok.

[tape ends]