

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 25

INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED JACKSON

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT AND MARY B. CAWLEY

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1987

Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 25  
Interview with Alfred Jackson  
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott and Mary B. Cawley  
Date: Tuesday, August 11, 1987  
Location: Mr. Jackson's home, 605 Chastain Road, Kennesaw

TS Mr. Jackson is a long-time resident of the county and knows a great deal about the changes in North Cobb County. Mr. Jackson, I wonder if we could just begin today by asking you whether you were born here or where were you born?

AJ I was born in Jasper County, Georgia.

TS In Jasper County?

AJ Jasper County, February 17, 1926. And I was about three years old--three or four years old when my father, Fred Jackson, moved here to Cobb County.

TS I see. And what year were you born?

AJ 1926.

TS So you've been in Cobb County then ever since 1929?

AJ About 1929 or '30. Probably 1930 is more likely.

TS And your parents originally were from Jasper County?

AJ Jasper County -- the other side of Georgia.

TS Have you lived in this location ever since you came back here?

AJ Just about. We lived over here on what is called the Greers Chapel Road [changed to Barrett Lakes Blvd., Kennesaw], the [W. D.] Chastain place. And we moved from there to the York place, what is referred to as Shiloh Hills now. And back over here on Big Shanty Road and back to the Chastain Place. And then back to here [Chastain Road] in 1958.

TS So you've been a number of locations but what year did you come back here?

AJ [In] 1958.

MC Your family did [what]?

AJ You're talking about the family from--

MC [When] your family came back here.

AJ My grandfather [Alfred Jackson] moved here probably about 1928 or '29.

TS Your grandfather did?

AJ Right.

TS Let's go through some of the places that you mentioned. You said when your family came here in 1929 or '30 they were living on the Chastain place over--

AJ Right, on Greers Chapel.

TS And that's Cassie Chastain?

AJ Right. That was W. D. (Bill) Chastain's wife.

TS And were they still operating a dairy at that time there?

AJ I think so. I was small then. But they had all the equipment and their dairy place there. My grandfather lived in a house across the road from their house. He moved from there shortly after we got here.

TS Across that dirt road?

AJ Right. Across the dirt road in his house there and it finally burned up.

TS I see.

AJ And he moved from there--he was still on the same place up there where about Upton's or Lechmere's at now [Cobb Place Shopping Center, Ernest Barrett Parkway at Barrett Lakes Blvd., Kennesaw].

TS The Chastains owned all of that, that far?

AJ Right.

TS So was your father working as a tenant farmer?

AJ That's right.

TS And so they must have had a bunch of tenant farmers with that much land there, I guess?

AJ Well, I think as best as I can remember he farmed--Mr. Chastain--as long as I remember. And my grandfather. And I believe to the best of my memory they had us all.

MC All your relatives?

AJ Well, not all the relatives but them that would do it.

MC But I mean, he didn't have other families did he?

AJ No.

MC Just the Jacksons?

AJ Just the Jackson family. That's right.

TS About how long did you all stay at the Chastain Place?

AJ We moved to the York's about 1931.

TS So it's just a couple of years?

AJ Right. Because my grandfather was already living there when my father came back again from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

TS Now the York place--it was off of Shallowford Road?

AJ Well, it was partially--the land was partially on the Shallowford and Bell's Ferry and Shiloh Road. Those roads didn't have no name other than the Bell's Ferry then.

TS Oh, they didn't?

AJ That's right. Shallowford probably had a name; but Bell's Ferry was a well-known, you know, road.

TS Well, how would you identify something like Shiloh Road at that time?

AJ Well, they would just tell you, go up so many miles; probably turn at such-and-such a place; it's the second fork, third fork or, you know, something like that. That would be mostly the way they'd give you the description.

TS Now didn't you tell me once that Shallowford Road actually ran straight through at Bell's Ferry? You know, it dead ends there now.

AJ Right. Well, Shallowford Road starts at Bell's Ferry; and it goes east to Canton Highway; and it drops down and it goes through back in there by, I believe, Dawson Cemetery--back in that area in there. And I don't know how far [back], but I was reading somewhere where it was named after--when the people were migrating to Cobb County they crossed the Chattahoochee River at a place

they could ford across at. And they named it Shallowford Road after that. It said Shallowford and Highway 92--the Old Alabama Road--is the two oldest roads in Cobb County, as well as the Old Dixie Highway that runs through Kennesaw.

TS But did Shallowford always have the dog leg in it?

AJ As far as I can remember it did.

TS What about at Bell's Ferry? Did it have the dog leg there?

AJ Well, the Bell's Ferry there where you turn off of Bell's Ferry onto Shallowford Road, that was a four-way intersection, like.

TS Four-way? So Shallowford kept going straight through then and came back into Shiloh somewhere?

AJ No, no. See, the Bell's Ferry keep on towards Cherokee County and the Shiloh Road then ran from there. They all connected there.

TS They called it Shiloh to Bell's Ferry, is that what you're saying?

AJ No.

TS No?

AJ See, Bell's Ferry ran all the way through. Shallowford Road ran to the right off of Bell's Ferry.

TS Right.

AJ And then it ran into the Canton Highway. And then it dropped down just somewhat above Noonday [Baptist] Church, and it started again.

TS Right. Okay, now what about the other end at Bell's Ferry?

MC Going west.

TS Going west. If you go out Shallowford to Bell's Ferry and then want to go west?

AJ Well, you'd be on Shiloh Road.

MC Shiloh.

AJ What is now Shiloh Road now.

TS But it was a four-way intersection?

AJ That's right.

MC So Shiloh and Bell's Ferry and Shallowford all met--

AJ Met right there.

MC --at the same intersection.

AJ At the same intersection where that red light is there.

MC Right.

AJ There was one went to Cherokee, one--this was on Bell's Ferry--to Marietta. On Shallowford people go to Woodstock or East Cobb, and west you went to Kennesaw.

MC And that was on Shiloh?

AJ The Shiloh came in to Bell's Ferry as well as Shallowford, right.

TS Tell me something about the Yorks. How many years did you work for the Yorks?

AJ Well, my father stayed there from about 1931 until 1939.

TS So you were growing up there?

AJ That's right. So he moved back over here where [there is] this little shopping center above the Cracker Barrel there [Outlets Ltd. Mall], and he lived there from 1939 to about 1941. He moved out on what is known as the Burt (B-U-R-T) place down just a little bit. He stayed down there, and he moved back over on the Greers Chapel Road, which was the Chastain place. And from there we moved back to here--we bought this place here.

MC He bought this land?

AJ I did. And we had this house put here and I've been here ever since.

TS About when was that, now, that you bought this place?

AJ I bought this land -- an acre of land here in 1954.

TS 1954?

AJ Right.

MC Who did you buy it from?

AJ From Perma Lowe. His father owned, I guess, a hundred acres or a little better of land here. This side of the road as well as going back up in there.

MC How do you spell his last name? L-O-W-E?

AJ L-O-W-E.

TS And his first name was?

AJ Perma -- P. L. Lowe.

TS So your family continued to work as tenant farmers up to 1954 or had they stopped by that time?

AJ Well, they had stopped by then. The last tenant farming they did was probably from Dr. [J. H.] Crawford over on Big Shanty Road. I don't recall what year that was. It was sometime during the fifties. And they left tenant farming then.

TS Tenant farming was kind of playing out for those families just everywhere in the county?

AJ Right. Right in this area it was.

TS What kind of crops did they grow?

AJ Cotton was the main--that was the money crop. Corn and, you know, peas, stuff like that.

TS Did you family own its own mule and so on?

AJ No.

TS So they rented everything?

AJ That's right. In sharecropping the landowner would furnish the house, mule, land, and half the fertilizer. You worked the land together. The tenant farmer furnished the labor. You paid for half the fertilizer. After that it was divided.

TS They used half the crop as the rent?

AJ Yes. If you owned a place, and I rented from you, and I furnished my own stock and everything but the land, I paid a fixed rent at the end of the year. This was called standard renting.

See, if you rent sharecropping you would rent a place from somebody. You'd always have some of them that might vary it, you know. But they would furnish the land, house, and the stock. You would plant it and everything. When time for the fall of the year come you gathered your crops. Half went to the landowner, and half went to the sharecropper.

TS Was that half of everything or just half of the cotton?

AJ Half of everything that was growed. Half of the cotton, half of the corn.

MC Everything that you grew?

AJ Right.

TS Did you have like a vegetable garden as well?

AJ Yes. You didn't go out in the field and eat some of the corn. You had a special patch for the table.

TS And you got to keep all of that?

AJ Yeah, that didn't go into that. So your vegetable garden and, you know, you'd have a little corn patch for table use; and that was yours.

MC What about cane--did they grow any cane?

AJ Yes, they raised cane. I forgot about that. About this time of year and a little later on we'd be getting ready to make sorghum syrup. While we lived over here where Mr. [Tom] Allred lives [Big Shanty Road], Mr. Garrison lived there. Of course, he was dead then. Byron Brooke bought the place. Then Dr. Crawford bought it, and Dr. Crawford sold it to Mr. Allred. They had a syrup mill. There was a man lived down the road here, Mr. Walter Jackson, Sr.--he cooked syrup. Then when he stopped cooking syrup over there, he went down and he cooked it on the Jackson place down there. Then we lived at the York place over here where Booth Road runs into Bell's Ferry--Mr. [Dillard] Poteet, he had a syrup mill there. Mrs. Medford [McAfee-Medford house on Bell's Ferry Road] is Mr. Poteet's daughter. Over on the Hawkins Store Road Mr. Prince--he cooked syrup over there.

MC Did you barter that? Did you give them a part of your syrup to do it or did you pay them?

AJ Well, the places where we lived, you know, they never did that. We paid a toll to have the syrup made. In some

cases they might take a gallon or something like that, but they just never did bother about the syrup. Not the people that we lived with.

TS When you took it to the mill, though, how did you pay the person who actually--

MC Who ran the mill.

AJ Like carrying cornmeal to the mill?

TS Yes, cornmeal or the cane?

AJ Syrup -- they would take toll.

MC A toll?

AJ It cost you so much, you know, you're going to make this so many gallons out of [it], and then you would pay them.

TS When you were on the York place, isn't there--how did Mr. York get the land?

AJ I don't know. Because --

TS Had they been there a long time?

AJ Right. I imagine somewhere during his life he bought that place. I did remember him referring to that as the old Benson Place.

TS Benson?

AJ Benson. Where Hawkins Store Road--now there would tell you a lot--ran into the Bell's Ferry, there just to the right above that was the old Benson Schoolhouse.

TS When Hawkins Store runs into Bell's Ferry is it on the east side or the west side of the street where the Benson Schoolhouse was?

AJ It would be on the west side.

TS Did Hawkins Store always run into Bell's Ferry at the same place?

AJ Pretty much -- that's right.

TS And so the school would be just a little bit to the right --wouldn't it be heading north then towards Cherokee County?

- AJ Right. North like on Cherokee County, that's right.
- TS Benson School is a one-room school there?
- AJ The big room is the main part of it; [it] was built similar to our church there [Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church] only the back wasn't like that, you know. And it resembled-- of course, you probably never did see the old Chalker Schoolhouse which was above our church up there where Wildwood [Baptist] Church is now.
- TS Where did you go to school?
- AJ I went to school at Mount Zion. I first started at Noonday over here; and my parents, they moved. My grandfather was at the York place, and they had a one-room school house at Mount Zion.
- TS Did the church operate the school?
- AJ The county.
- TS The county?
- AJ The county would furnish the teachers, but the church owned the building and the land.
- TS Where was the Noonday School?
- AJ The Noonday School--it was off the main thoroughfare over--I don't know what they call those little mountains over there. It was over there. Well, Noonday the church is still over there [White Circle, Marietta]. Over the little mountains up there. And each church, just about it, especially in the rural area, would have a school, you know.
- TS So this was on the property of Noonday Baptist?
- AJ Noonday Church--that Noonday Baptist Church. Now when I was going to school at Noonday, my mother just sent me over there, you know, I was too young to study. I guess she just sent me to get out of her hair. But I entered school really at Mount Zion. And they would go from first to the seventh grade. When you finished the seventh grade back then, most of the rural children would go to the fields. You know, they couldn't get to high school.
- MC Was there a high school that you could go to?

AJ Down in Marietta on Lemon--

MC Lemon Street.

AJ Lemon Street. They called it Perkinson High.

TS From where you were living on the York place, [Mt. Zion School] would've been, oh, two, three, four miles distance.

AJ Well, from the York place to Mount Zion was about a couple of miles.

MC How'd you get there?

AJ Walked.

MC Did you walk? Every day?

AJ Every day. See, we didn't have nine months of school like they have now. We would go six weeks in the summer time, and we would start school approximately somewhere in November after the crops were gathered.

MC Crops were in.

AJ Yes, and we would go through to about the 20th of March. Then they would let you out, and you would plant the crops and get ready to plant it. You would stay out until what they called "laid by." Then they would have six weeks summer school. We'd be going to school now. But the white ones, you know, they would have nine months. Their schools were consolidated.

MC Did they? Even then?

AJ Right. Even then. And they had bus transportation. In the summertime we would be going to school.

TS You say you called the crop "laid by?"

AJ "Laid by"--when they finished working it.

TS I was just wondering --

AJ When they finished working, then they'd say "laid by." But everybody that farmed--along about--they would try and they would say, "I'm going to try to lay by before the 4th of July"--something like that. You know, when it be getting hot, they'd be getting out of the fields. Get it cleaned out--all the grass out and the terraces cleaned off. That's what you called "laid by."

TS Was the land very fertile around here?

AJ Some parts of it were. Some of it was kind of red, you know, dirt. It didn't do as well as some of it. Most of it was.

TS About how many pounds of cotton did you grow on an acre?

AJ It really depended on the land, and I imagine some of this land probably produced about a bale to the acre.

TS Really?

AJ And you might have some that did a little better.

TS Where exactly were you all living off of Shallowford when you were working for York?

AJ Well, when we first moved to the York place, my grandparents and my mother and father lived in the same house. See, where Shiloh Road ran into Bell's Ferry then, it was just a little to the right of Shiloh, sitting up there on that bank. And finally my daddy and mother moved over there just around the corner on the Shallowford Road. But it was on the same place.

TS So he was on Bell's Ferry and then he moves over to --

AJ Over on Shallowford Road. There was a stretch of woods there, and just as you pass the woods the house was sitting there on the right--a three-room house. I believe they had what they call a English Poplar tree in the yard. It may still be there. It's a huge something.

TS When you say right off of Shiloh, you're talking again about going south?

AJ I'm talking about right onto Shallowford.

TS I'm talking about the first house.

AJ The first house. From Shiloh you would go right onto Bell's Ferry, and it would be the first house on the left as you went south on Bell's Ferry.

TS Okay, so just a little bit north of where Shiloh comes in now in 1987? [Editor's note: In recent decades Shiloh had come into Bell's Ferry a block south of Shallowford. In 1994, however, D.O.T. engineers changed the road back to the original configuration with Shiloh and Shallowford linking together at Bell's Ferry, making a four-way intersection].

AJ Right. It was just above that on the right. There's a house sitting there now. And across the street there where those houses are we were farming then. On the Shallowford Road on each side of the road you had cotton that was growing there.

TS Now down the road a piece on Shallowford there was at one time a man that was a member of your church that owned a good deal of land, wasn't there?

AJ Are you talking about Isom Gresham [pronounced Grissom]?

TS Yes.

AJ Well, see, when we moved here he was dead. Gresham died about 1919, at a hundred and ten years old. And see, he owned quite a bit of real estate here in Cobb County, and he had real estate in Atlanta. And Mr. Will [William G.] York at one time had been the administrator of his estate. And see, Mr. York, he was one of the old settlers here in this area, and he could tell you quite a bit. And Isom Gresham's old home was down below Gresham Cemetery on Shallowford Road there where Mr. George Ray York used to live. Right. And Mr. George Ray York was Mr. Will York's son.

TS How did Isom Gresham come across his property?

AJ Well, I really couldn't tell you that, because, see, when my family moved here Isom Gresham had been dead probably about ten years. According to headstones in the cemetery, Isom Gresham's dates were 1809-1919. Millie Gresham's dates were 1832-1920. Also buried there are Isom Gresham, Jr. (died 1900), Savannah Gresham (1895-98) and Mamie Gresham (1881-1920).

MC Did he have children that still lived there though?

AJ Mostly all the children are dead [now]. This lady out here is one of his descendants--Ms. Hudson. Her grandmother, Priscilla Slocum (1849-1940), that was his daughter. They lived down off of Bell's Ferry there. I think the man owns that place there is Mr. [E.P.] Blocker now. The Blockers bought the Slocum homeplace.

TS Blocker?

AJ Yes. And that was just the back of Mr. Poteet's syrup mill. And they were Slocums. Priscilla Gresham married John Slocum (1839-1921), the son of Thomas and Leah Slocum. He had a daughter lived down the road here-- Jackson, Walter Jackson, Jr.--his mother was [Isom

Gresham's] daughter.<sup>1</sup> Then he had a daughter--when I knew anything about her she lived in Atlanta and was called Ms. Callie Dobbs. They were several of them, you know, were dead.

MC Do you know what happened to his land after he died?

AJ Well, the children inherited it. This down here [pointing eastward along Chastain Road], his daughter, Ms. Jackson inherited. That back up there, up in these woods back there there's a road went up through there--the Benjamins have that. Mr. Benajamin's wife [Lizzie], you know, and his daughters. They inherited that.<sup>2</sup> He divided it up between the children. And down below Gresham Cemetery see, he willed Mr. Will York a child's share; and that's how that came into the York family there below Gresham Cemetery down there.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to the will of Millie Gresham, wife of Isom Gresham, "After my death and the death of my said husband, I give, bequeath and devise to my daughter, Mary Jackson, for and during her natural life, and at her death to her children then in life, One Hundred acres of land in Cobb County, Georgia, off of what is known as the Fox place on the Bells Ferry Road, the said One Hundred acres to be laid off and designated by my executor or executors hereinafter named." Last Will and Testament of Millie Gresham, 15 March 1916, Fulton County Probate Court, I, Item 3.

<sup>2</sup>Item 9 of Millie Gresham's will reads: "After my death and the death of my said husband, I give, bequeath and devise to Lizzie Benjamin, my daughter, for and during her natural life and at her death to her children, what is known as the Chastain lot on the Bells Ferry Road in Cobb County, Georgia, and a sufficient number of acres off of the Battle lot adjoining, so as to make One Hundred acres, said land to be laid off and designated by my executors hereinafter named."

<sup>3</sup>In Isom Gresham's will (I, Item 3) is the following: "After my death and the death of my said wife, Millie Gresham, I will, bequeath and devise to William G. York, of Cobb County, Georgia, the following described property, to wit: lots of land Nos. 7, and 67, containing Forty acres each, more or less, and Twenty-Four acres of lot of land No. 66, all lying and being in the 16th District and the 2nd Section of Cobb County, Georgia, and containing in the aggregate, One Hundred and four (104) acres, more or less, this being the same property heretofore conveyed to me by J.D. Benson, the deed being recorded in Deed Book "I", page 356 of the records

TS And then the Yorks had other property, too?

AJ Yes, he had that that was up there around the Bell's Ferry and Shallowford and Hawkins Store and Shiloh Roads.

TS And so they just started accumulating a lot of property?

AJ I don't know.

TS You don't really know for sure?

AJ I really don't know. But I know that I used to hear them say so many times about that land there that Mr. York was willed the child's share as administrator of it. He would look after his property and stuff and took care of his rent and all that. Eventually he lived in Atlanta--Isom Gresham. He might have died there, I don't know.

TS What's the story on the Gresham Cemetery? How did that--

AJ The Gresham Cemetery--Isom Gresham gave that land--I heard this from Mr. York.

TS Mr. York told you this?

AJ Right. He would tell my father about it; and I'd be around, you know, hearing it. He gave that land for the blacks would have a place to be buried. Isom Gresham swapped with the white Gresham. He swapped the land at the front of the cemetery, as it exists today, for the land at the back. Don't very many black people use that now. Maybe occasionally some of the family descendants are buried out there. But very, very few black people are buried out there.

MC Mostly white?

AJ Mostly white.

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of deeds of Cobb County, Georgia. This property is willed and bequeathed to the said William G. York on the condition that after my death and the death of my wife, he pay to the children of my deceased son, share and share alike, the sum Six Hundred Dollars in cash. When he shall have complied with this provision after my death and the death of my wife, the title to said land shall vest in him absolutely." Last Will and Testament of Isham Gresham, 15 March 1916, Fulton County Probate Court.

MC And white Greshams?

AJ Right. But there's quite a bit of space out there [that] is still used for the blacks to bury in. But don't very many bury out there. But every now and then some of them had family probably, you know, are buried out there that are connected to it someway or another. And that's how that happened.

Now I couldn't tell you an exact date but as near as I could get to it--it had to be during or before 1855. Because the nearest, the oldest stone that I could locate out there was from 1855. I think it was probably September of 1855 that [a] person was buried there. And the cemetery had to be donated maybe in 1855 or sometime before that. Because I wasn't able to find no record down there or even no days for it. And he gave that.

Now Chalker over there in front of Pinetree Country Club is a cemetery. The people from Mount Zion buried there. And Mr. Chalker, George Chalker's father, was afraid to go by a cemetery at night. He had to travel that road. See, that was a public road then down through there. You know, for years there wasn't no traffic going through there until they opened it up, prior to the country club in there or maybe a little before. And he didn't like going by a cemetery at night, if they buried somebody there like today; and he had to go down through there. He just didn't like that. He told them, if they would quit burying over there, he would give them two acres of land up there at the church. And naturally, they accepted.

TS Up at Mount Zion?

AJ Up at Mount Zion. See, they just had the one acre then. Isom Gresham gave it to them. And I would assume that he gave that first acre of land for Mount Zion church about the time he donated the land out there for Gresham Cemetery. And that would have to be sometime in the 1850s. And they started burying out there. And then, too, down the road [Chastain Road] here is a cemetery they used. They're blacks buried there, original members of Mt. Zion Church who were slaves. Indians were also buried there before they was removed from Cobb County or North Georgia. The black people called it Franklin, the white people called it Hamilton. So I looked it up and the Franklins--I guess there was a family of people, the Franklins and the Hamiltons that land kind of, you know, bordering or met there. And I just assume that's how it got it's name.

MC But both the Franklins and the Hamiltons were black families?

AJ No, they were white. So some descendants from the Hamilton family was out here 1983. Mr. Harold Chastain sent them to see me; and she was talking to me about [the cemetery]. They buried people from the poor house out there, too, you know. And she said her auntie was buried out there and she was looking for the grave where the stone's at. She did locate the grave. Mount Zion, I don't know, they quit using Franklin Cemetery. And they started burying at Chalker, Gresham, and finally at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church on Wade Green Road.

TS You're talking about the north side of Chastain Road for the Franklin Cemetery?

AJ Right.

TS About how far from Bell's Ferry would that be?

AJ Oh, maybe about -- it's not all that far. It wouldn't be nothing like a mile.

MC The other side of Bell's Ferry from here?

AJ No, on this side.

MC So it's west of Bell's Ferry?

AJ It would be west.

TS West of Bell's Ferry and north of Chastain.

AJ Right, uh-huh. And it's just above or beyond on the left where they've got this new entrance to the subdivision here.

TS Chastain Lakes?

AJ Chastain Lakes, that's right.

TS Well, was Mount Zion at that time in a different location than it is today?

AJ Well, Ms. Slocum, that was Mrs. Priscilla Slocum's daughter--she used to live out here, too. So before she died she told us that her parents always told them that Mount Zion started out in a shop over here on the Booth Road. But see, the Booth Road, it didn't come into Bell's Ferry like it do now. It come down through what was Chastain Lake and come out approximately somewhere

down there by where Ms. [Alfie] Chastain lived there on this side of the Durham place. And back up there somebody owned some land that had a shop there and Mr. Clifford Booth was saying--and this happened during some of the times Mr. Jackson was making the syrup. Mr. Booth, he come around, he liked to talk, you know. And over on this branch that ran into the Chastain Lake was an Indian village. And I assume that's the reason why those Indians was buried down there at what they call Franklin or Hamilton, whichever. And they had a close association with those--some of them was those people at Mount Zion. I would assume that was the reason why maybe they buried there. You can't find any information much on that cemetery there. But anyway, she was saying that the Indians and the slave members of Mount Zion buried there. And up until about the 1880's; of course, the Indians had gone then and I don't know what was the reason they decided to stop burying there. And Mount Zion started out in the shop --

MC What kind of shop?

AJ A blacksmith shop. You know, each place would have a shop where you would sharpen your tools for your plow or made things, you know, a million things. And they called it a blacksmith shop. They would let them use that shop, and I think some of them went to Noonday. But they wasn't Baptist, they were Methodist. And this church, Mount Zion, was not founded here in Cobb County. He came from South Carolina. Somebody had let them have the use of that shop until they moved up there. And somewhere over there where that shop [was] originally was a couple of graves there. Like up here--of course it was white--where this little restaurant across there from the Texaco station--the Waffle House.

TS The Waffle House?

AJ It's almost sitting in a cemetery.

TS Is that right?

AJ Right.

TS This was a black cemetery?

AJ White.

TS A white cemetery where the Waffle House--are there any markers up there?

AJ I imagine they're destroyed.

TS So the Waffle House was the destroyer?

AJ No. Way before that Waffle House had it. It was turned into a pasture, and it was just over the years just ruined. Because Ms. Chastain, Ms. Cassie Chastain--some people came back wanting them to inquire to her about it. See, she was about the oldest resident in this part of the county at that time. And well, she really at her age--she remembered it, but she couldn't tell them very much about it, because all the evidence of the cemetery was gone.

TS Let's go back, if we could, and talk a little bit about the school that you went to at Mount Zion. Was this a one-room school house?

AJ A one-room school.

TS And so you had all the grades?

AJ Right. You had first through the seventh grade was taught by one teacher. Now the last teacher I went to at Mount Zion is still living. She lives out here in Kennesaw, Ms. Jessie Mae Taylor.

MC Jessie Mae Taylor?

AJ Taylor, that's right. One of the best teachers I ever went to. And at that time she was a Spears. That was before she had married.

MC Was she from Cobb County?

AJ Right, she was reared here. In fact, when she started teaching us they lived up there on Mr. Chalker's place there.

MC Did they?

T  
S And you say she still lives in Kennesaw?

AJ Right. There on Duncan Drive.

TS Oh, really? She'd be a good one to [interview].

AJ And up there at Mount Zion -- I'm quite sure Ms. Taylor could tell you a whole lot more than I can. And there was a shop sitting there at the forks of the road. The one road around the edge of the woods ran through back to Wade Green Road, back into Shiloh; and then Wade Green

Road connected there, just the top there above Mount Zion church. And when I started school all that woods up there and Mr. Chalker cleaned that up. And see, we could go around the old road around the edge of the woods and cross the field and go to school. And in the fork of the road, of that little road--which didn't have no name and Shiloh was a shop. Mr. Charlie Rutherford ran that shop there. On Monday mornings, we'd go to school. People would have their mules there to be shod and all that kind of stuff. Sometimes he'd get after us or tease us; we was afraid of him.

MC His name was Charlie Rutherford?

AJ Rutherford.

TS Well, what kind of books did you use in the school? Did you use McGuffey's Readers or anything like that?

AJ We had -- I started off in what they called the Baby Ray Reader.

TS The Baby Ray?

AJ The Baby Ray. And it had these little Mother Goose stories like. Jack and Jill went up the hill, Little Boy Blue and Little Bo Peep, stuff like that--little short stories like that, you know. And we all began with the little reader. See, a part of my books my daddy had to buy and approximately until I got to about third grade. And then second grade you would advance a little bit more, study more books. In the seventh grade we had arithmetic; we had geography, English; and I don't remember all. But maybe five, six or seven books we had to study--civics, spelling, stuff like that.

MC Did many of your fellow classmates go on to high school or did most stop?

AJ A few of them. Not very many. I went for a little while. But, see, we didn't have any transportation. They were running the bus through here; and then I don't know whose idea it was, whether it was the principal's in Marietta or not--he didn't want the bus off of the highway. So therefore, it had to run down through Kennesaw--it couldn't come through here. See, my daddy didn't have no automobile or nothing that could get to it. To a high school in Marietta I would either had to walk from out here--from over here where, above the Cracker Barrel, where that little shopping center is where I was living--to Marietta. You'd have to walk down there and back.

MC And you did that for awhile?

AJ No, I didn't. They had the bus coming through here. And it stopped here. And therefore, that got me out of getting to school.

TS Well, you would have spent half the day walking to school.

AJ That's true. You had to get up early in the morning to get down there in time enough to be there for school.

TS Did anybody ever board down in Marietta while they were going to high school?

AJ I don't remember anybody out here boarding down there.

TS So most people just didn't go to high school?

AJ Didn't go.

BC It just wasn't available.

AJ When you finished Mount Zion that was it.

TS Did you feel like you got a pretty good education at Mount Zion?

AJ I think it was excellent, for what they had to work with. You had seven classes in one schoolroom. You had one teacher keeping control and she had to teach those seven different classes. And just like I said, Ms. Taylor out there did a wonderful job. She would even go beyond what was in the book to teach you morals and things. And God knows, we sure need that now--stuff like that, you know. And she was just a superb, wonderful person.

TS How did you teach seven classes at the same time?

AJ Well, you didn't. She'd be teaching maybe the first grade or the third grade--you know, you waited your turn.

TS Well, what were you doing while you waiting your turn?

AJ You studied.

MC They kept it controlled and quiet.

AJ Controlled. She kept order in there. That's right.

TS So she had one eye on the group she was teaching and another eye on the rest?

- AJ There didn't very much go on in there she didn't know about. Even after a limited time she could tell you about if you were doing anything whether she was looking at them or not.
- TS Now I would think in the summer time it would be mighty hot in that room.
- AJ Well, they would raise the windows but I don't know. It was just something you just didn't think about. And sometimes there was another lady, Ms. Hattie Lee Floyd; she would substitute for us sometimes. Now she was from the old school--we'd hear a pin fall in there. She was a strict disciplinarian. I'd hate to see her come to us. She lived there close to the church. And then she was the Sunday School superintendent. She was just as strict in there, you know. You had to go through those laws on Sunday morning and all that. She'd be going through the Ten Commandments . . . in back of the Sunday school quarterly. She would say something like: "I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And the class was supposed to say: "Lord, have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law." Going down through the Decalogue the response changed to "Lord, have mercy upon us and write these laws upon our hearts." My uncle would just do everything, I guess, for kids at that age. And he would continue saying "incline our hearts." She'd say, "All right, you're going to have to straighten up over there."
- TS Did you learn a lot through repetition? Was that important in the schools, what we call rote memorization?
- AJ Oh, yes, yes. There was never a poem in a book that you didn't have to memorize. And the Reader was full of poems or maybe in the English books. Each one in there you had to memorize, and I thought Longfellow wrote more poems than anybody.
- MC And they were long poems.
- AJ They were long. And I can remember we had this--this was in the sixth grade--this Of the Village Blacksmith. We had to learn all that. Under the spreading chestnut tree, you know, and all that stuff. And to me, Robert Louis Stevenson was my favorite. Regardless of who wrote it, you learned it.
- TS Did they ever work any black authors in to the curriculum?

- AJ No. I never recall any black authors in any of the school curriculum.
- TS You were talking a little bit earlier about the farming in this area. Where did you all go to do your trading, your shopping?
- AJ Marietta.
- TS All the way into Marietta?
- AJ In Marietta. It was eight miles from the intersection up there at York's to Marietta and eight miles back. Then you knew everybody until you got to the city limits. Mr. so-and-so lived below us, you know. There was Mr. Kirby, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Poteet and Mr. Westmoreland and the Durhams and the Chastains, you knew all of them down the road there. Just about knew everybody.
- TS How long did it take you to get into Marietta?
- AJ They would hitch up the mule and the wagon and drive down there in maybe--I don't know. I don't know whether it would take an hour or what.
- MC Where did you trade? Do you remember some of the places your daddy traded?
- AJ They used to trade there at a place down there at the railroad track called Durhams. Then there where Brumby Furniture Company used to be was Rogers. They did a lot of trading there, you know; they would trade there. Durhams and Rogers and Mr. York's brother, Mr. Frank York--he had a store there down there on Powder Springs Street. Sometimes my grandfather would go down there. Well, they mostly traded at Rogers and Durhams or, you know, places like that.
- TS Did they ever go to DuPre's?
- AJ My family didn't trade at DuPre's.
- TS You say Durhams was right next to the tracks?
- AJ That's right. It was right across from--I guess they call that the Kennesaw House now.
- TS Oh, it's the other side of the track?
- AJ Right. It would be west of the track. It was in there somewhere about where Krystal is.

TS Where was Rogers?

AJ Rogers was on the corner of Mill and Church Street there where Brumby Furniture Company was [northwest corner].

TS Right.

AJ Until recently.

TS Yes.

MC In some of our research we found there was a black barber that had a shop there in the square. It was Andrew Rogers, and he just apparently did real well.

TS It was Frank Rogers as well that had that grocery store there.

AJ Yes, when I first started going to Marietta as a child across [Lawrence Street] was the grocery store. But I was too young to remember what the name of that place was.

TS Across the street where the [Barnett] bank is now?

AJ Yes. On that corner there. It was on Lawrence Street and Cherokee Street was the grocery store. And they traded at that one.

TS Did they have a line of credit when they went into these stores?

AJ Well, most of what my family would do, in the spring of the year when you're getting ready to start your crop-- they would go to First National Bank there and borrow enough money to run their crop. And then in the fall of the year when the cotton was gathered and sold they planned to pay it back.

MC And then that money was what they went shopping with?

AJ Right.

MC So they borrowed from the bank?

AJ See, they didn't spend it all at once. They just paid so much and used it as they needed it.

TS So they just paid cash all year around?

AJ Right. So they paid cash. I don't know how some others did, but that's the way they did it. So he or a place

like Mr. York would say, well, you know, something; and so he'd go there and make arrangements for them to borrow that money. He would stand for it.

MC Mr. York would have to go and like cosign the loan?

AJ Well, I don't think he would cosign. He'd just probably just go there and, they would let them have it.

MC Stood for them.

AJ Probably. I was too small to know how it was done.

MC Did you ever go to the bank with your parents?

AJ Sure did.

MC Was that overwhelming to you to go in there?

AJ To me to look at--of course, I don't know nothing about architecture or nothing--but to me First National was the most prettiest building I thought I had ever been in. There was marble and all that, and it was beautiful to me.

MC Do you remember any of the people?

AJ No, I really don't.

TS Well, your family must have been pretty successful for you to be able to buy this place.

AJ Well, it wasn't from no success from my family. I did it on my own.

TS Oh, I see. So you actually bought it for you and your family?

AJ Yes, I bought it, I bought it.

TS Well, did you have to leave here to go to work somewhere else?

AJ No. I bought it from P. L. Lowe over there. He was a barber, too. My daddy would go around on Sunday morning; he would visit him on Sunday morning; you know, they were friends. I said, "When you go over there this morning, ask him will he sell me an acre of land." And I said, "I don't want it back up there on" (see, that was referred to as the Pack woods). And I said, "I don't want it up in the Pack woods." And he sold me this acre of land.

MC How did you earn money to be able to buy it?

AJ Well, see, I worked at Dobbins Air Base for about fourteen years.

MC Did you? Okay. When you left farming how old were you?

AJ Oh, I was barely grown, because I started to work at Dobbins Air Force Base maybe sometime or another in the fifties. And I don't remember--

MC After Bell was gone--Bell Bomber?

AJ Oh, Bell had been gone, because we went out there and worked a little while in 1948, you know, they had machinery stuff there in the Lockheed plant. And they had to send representatives from various companies to check out their machinery. And I worked out there from sometime or another in December before Christmas.

MC In the Bell facility?

AJ Right.

BC Was that the Tumpane Company?

AJ No, the Air Force had their machinery stored in there. I know they possibly moved that out of there from Lockheed when they bought their planes and opened it up. And when I started working at Dobbins we was living over here--so was my father at that time--over here well, above the Cracker Barrel where that shopping center is [Outlets Limited Mall] there. And all this has changed now.

TS So when you got through the seventh grade you started working farming at that time?

AJ On the farm, that's right.

TS With your father?

AJ Right.

TS And then, let's see -- you would've been in your twenties, I guess, by the fifties?

AJ Well, see, I went in the service. I went into the Navy. And I was in there a couple of years.

MC During the war?

AJ During the war, that's right. The Second World War. And I went into the Navy. I was drafted. And I stayed there just a little over two years. I was in the South Pacific over there.

TS You went in when you were eighteen years old?

AJ Right. That was exactly.

TS So that would have been about -- excuse me a second.

AJ May of 1944.

TS Toward the end of the war?

AJ Right.

TS You would have gone into the Navy. And so you got to the South Pacific before it was all over with then?

AJ Well before it was all over with.

TS Yes. I guess you were pretty happy when the A-bomb was dropped on Japan then?

AJ When the Japanese surrendered the fleet I was in was getting ready to go to Tokyo. I was in the third fleet and we was in Okinawa. And then this happened.

TS So you were on your way?

MC You were real relieved?

AJ We were real relieved because the Japanese were tough. But we fought all around the Philippines, and the South Pacific and had a unit in the China Seas which were rough it seemed like all the time. And I saw quite a bit of combat.

TS What was your job in the Navy?

AJ I was in the steward's department. We handled food and things like that--prepared it.

MC Based on that military service that you were able to get your position then with Dobbins--the Air Force?

AJ No, this was altogether different.

TS Were the ships pretty segregated?

AJ Yes, they were. We had our compartment which there wasn't very many blacks on there. And we had a different compartment, but right across from our compartment were some white sailors. But the majority of the personnel on there were white.

TS And the blacks were primarily steward's department?

AJ That's right. They had stewards and cooks and stuff like that. Of course, they had some whites in there, but it was mostly the crew.

TS Did you get any more education while you were in the Navy or at least an informal education?

AJ Well, I guess it would be informal. I never thought that I would have got to see some of the places that we studied about at Mount Zion.

TS Well, then once the war was over and you came back home here and then started farming, I guess?

AJ Right.

TS And then about 1948 you say you were working for awhile at least where Bell Aircraft had been?

AJ Right. That was something maybe like three or four months.

TS Well, what were you doing over there?

AJ We was opening boxes where they had stored machinery and parts. And we would take it out for the representative of that particular company to come by and check it or inventory it. Then we would put it back in the container. So I started over there some time or another in December before Christmas and worked until April. Then I come back to the farm, because the job was going to play out anyway. And maybe 1948 or the early part of '50 was when I started, because we just really couldn't make it after that. Then the next job I got were at the Dobbins Air Base, and I worked out there for fourteen years. Then I left there and I went and a Mr. Bennett-- Mr. James T. Bennett--he were working out there. And his son-in-law owned a trailer park in Mableton that he wanted him to come down and manage it. So he resigned from the job and went to Mableton to work to manage the trailer park, and he decided he wanted me to come down there with him. He called and got in contact with me. So I went down there and I stayed down there fourteen years. And there was two colonels bought the place from

Ms. Wallace. And this Colonel Ayers got me the job and where I'm at now. He was a colonel in the Air Force.

TS So you were fourteen years Dobbins and fourteen years at the trailer park and then back to Lockheed.

AJ Right. And then back to Lockheed, that's right.

TS What was your job at Dobbins?

AJ Dobbins--let's see, we was in maintenance. You know, like cutting grass, janitorial and what-have-you.

TS Did they pay you a decent wage?

AJ It wasn't too good. We worked for the state--it didn't pay too good.

TS Oh, I see.

MC You worked for the state, not the Air Force?

AJ That's right. See, this was Air National Guard. The Georgia Air National Guard.

TS But you did do well enough to buy the land out here?

AJ Yes, of course, land didn't cost that much.

TS How much did land cost in this area at that time?

AJ I got this for a hundred and fifty dollars.

TS A hundred and fifty -- and that was what year?

AJ [In] 1954. See, there was very few cars go through here; and if it rained for a day or so, they couldn't go through here then.

TS When did they pave the road out there?

AJ That probably was in maybe the sixties. There's more cars go through here in five minutes than went through here probably in a week. And the mail man, you can count on that--and the school bus. And the people that lived on the road that worked had to go out. Maybe every now and then a car would go down through there.

TS Were you living up here when you were working in Mableton?

AJ Yes. I was living right here before I started and when

I quit work out there.

BC So you drove -- you commuted every day?

AJ That's right.

TS So you started out on a dirt road here.

AJ Right.

TS How did you get to Mableton then?

AJ Well, I would just go down through Marietta, go out Powder Springs to Sandtown Road, hit Austell, go out and take the roads on into Mableton.

TS Were those roads all paved?

AJ They were paved then.

TS Was Bell's Ferry paved?

AJ Bell's Ferry now it was paved during the Roosevelt administration. What was that WPA? That was what did that construction on Bell's Ferry Road up through there.

TS I see. So did you go down Chastain to Bell's Ferry and then on into Marietta at that time?

AJ Right. So Bell's Ferry--my grandfather was still living on the York Place. This was back in the forties--I know 1940, probably about '39, 1940 they were working on that road over there and paved it in time of war. [Before] the war, Bell's Ferry Road wasn't completed. It wasn't completely paved all the way through. And I don't remember when they finished paving that. And that was the first rural road that I can remember them paving in this area. Because Canton Highway and that old 41 that ran through Kennesaw was the only two paved roads that they had paved.

TS What did you think when Bell Aircraft came into Marietta? Did you all have any feelings if that was going to improve things around here?

AJ Well, really I didn't think of it in them terms. I was too young. I was, approximately, you know, teenagers. And I knew my daddy--when they were building the plant he went down there and worked. Him and his brother. His brother lived up here with Mr. Emmett Dobbs, and he lived there by where the entrance that goes into Kennesaw College from this road. They would work down there in

the fall of the year. They didn't have nothing to do, and it wasn't time for them to gather the crops. They went down there, and they worked where they were building that plant there. But they didn't work for Bell.

TS Just on the construction?

AJ On the construction.

BC Did you know any blacks that did work for Bell?

AJ Right off hand I can't recall them. But there was some worked down there.

MC Were they? We know there were a lot of women.

AJ That's true. Ms. Taylor might have worked down there. I'm not for sure. I think she did, I am not for sure.

TS Tell me a little bit about where Kennesaw College is today?

AJ The land where Kennesaw College sits--way back--black people owned some of that land. The Benjamins. You know where the little electrical substation is [off Frey Road near the student parking lot].

TS Yes.

AJ The road didn't run like it is--it was a real curvy road then--was a house that burned down several years ago, and that was their old homeplace. It was John and Patience Benjamin.

MC Now you're talking about a long time ago?

AJ I'm talking about back now.

MC In the 1800s?

AJ It was a little later towards, you know. Now this was in 1880, yeah 1880; and John Benjamin was 75 years old then.

TS Did you find that in the census?

AJ Right. And his wife, Patience, was 65. They had two children--Richard Benjamin and Thelma Benjamin. Richard Benjamin's wife was Isom Gresham's daughter, Lizzie. And there was a George Gresham lived on that corner. Richard Benjamin--his granddaughter was telling me that her grandparents at one time owned that lake. And she said they didn't thought it was valued nothing and she said

- that it sold for a little or nothing. As little as--
- BC Who did they sell it to--do you--
- AJ I don't know. She didn't say. But these people are buried up there because they're dead now. Because Richard Benjamin, her grandfather, wasn't even married then. According to this here 28 years old and he had never married.
- TS Did you know the Freys?
- AJ Sure. I think Mr. Frey used to run a store there around the square there in Marietta.
- TS Is that right?
- AJ Yes, I believe he did. And I can remember when Mr. Frey moved up here. Let me see, that was Mr. and Mrs. Frey, and they had a daughter and two sons. I think the young son was named Ralph; John and Imogene was their children.
- TS So they were kind of newcomers, then?
- AJ In this area here. And finally, you know, he started to run that gin out there at Kennesaw--the cotton gin--there where the [Big Shanty] museum is now. But the first somebody I remember running that gin was Mr. Glenn Lewis. I was real small, and my daddy would be carrying cotton. We would go across Noonday Creek over there where the rock quarry is and go to Kennesaw that way. We lived at the Chastains, and I would be glad to get to go Kennesaw with him. I'd ride on the bale of cotton on the wagon. It would be loose, and we'd carry out there. That gin would bale it up and what-have-you--get the seed out of it and so forth. Then they would put this sacking over it, put these metal belts around it, you know, and weigh it up.
- TS How did you pay the cotton gin--was that in the share of the cotton or a part of the cotton?
- AJ I imagine that come somewhere another out of the ginning of it or something. There was some kind of amount to pay there, but I don't know how much it was a bale or something like that. I never seen any money change hands, but I know they had to pay for it.
- TS Well, if the Freys were relatively new out in this area here, the road must not have been called Frey Road?

AJ It didn't have no name. It was named after him. Like I said a few minutes ago, the road didn't run like it runs now. It went up through there. It curved where there's a little power station sitting there, and went around and it came in back into the Shiloh Road. There was only three houses on that road. There was one there where the Texaco station; there was one across the street from the Waffle House; and there was one up there at the curve at the power station right there where the Benjamin's old home place--that was a house there. And the first somebody I remember seeing there in the one that burned down was Walter Strickland. And see, this at the time was called the Dobbs Place. And you didn't get to another house from there to the Shiloh Road.

TS Would Walter Strickland's house be the one the Benjamin's once was?

AJ Right.

TS And so then the road just kind of curves up and comes into Shiloh somewhere?

AJ Right.

TS Do you know about where it came in?

AJ Let's see--I think they tore the house down. Mr. Charlie Chalker lived there at that fork, and it was just below his house. It might have been pretty close to where the overpass over I-75 is. East of the I-75 bridge over Shiloh Road.

TS Oh, I see. Where was the Frey farmhouse? Where was it located?

AJ Well, their farmhouse or their home was up there at the entrance where my uncle had originally lived when he lived with the Dobbs. And that was their home--that was their home. See, they took that house and remodeled it and everything, and that's where they lived. Over at that entrance into Kennesaw College off of this road.

TS Yes, off of Chastain and you're talking about where Frey Road is today or the other--there's three entrances into the college.

AJ As you go into it--you know where they've got the sign, the blocks there [Kennesaw State College Drive]?

TS Yes.

- AJ It was there. Just a little above it.
- TS What were the Freys growing up there at that time?
- AJ I don't think Mr. Frey grew cotton. But he'd go around; he had this new combine and stuff and combine, you know, wheat and stuff for people and stuff like that.
- TS They had cattle up there?
- AJ I think so. I don't think he grew no cotton. I'm not sure about that, but after they bought the land they bought that gin out there.
- TS Do you know anything about the beginnings of Pinetree?
- AJ When we moved here there wasn't no such thing as Pinetree, you know. Mr. Luther Chalker owned that property over there; and our neighbors, Frank and Ed Johnson, lived there--they were brothers. Frank Johnson worked the land under the standard rent system. Ed Johnson's house was near where the country club is. At that time I don't think there was anybody else there. See, that was off the road. And they lived just below where that cemetery there is. And their father, Jeff Johnson, lived up there where the other shopping center is at Shiloh Road.
- TS How did they go about developing that country club back then?
- AJ Well, I guess I don't know who bought that. They went in there and bought up the land. And they surveyed it up and lotted it off and what-have-you, and then they built this Pinetree Country Club and stuff like that.
- TS Let's talk a little bit, if we could, about the Mount Zion Church. You've been a member there all your life, I guess?
- AJ Right.
- TS And about how far away did people come to go to church there? You know, if you think in terms of a parish, about how large an area did it serve?
- AJ Well, from my time you had members in Marietta as well as out here. And when something was going on there, the things that then were traditional--all right, like Homecoming or Quarterly Conference or revival--people come from Woodstock and various places.

- BC It was called Homecoming?
- AJ Homecoming. And they would come back, you know. Like Sunday was Homecoming, and a revival started Monday night and ran through Friday.
- BC They were people who had been members and had moved away?
- AJ Had been members or lived in the community, that's right. At one time--of course, this was before my time--see, Mount Zion and the black community was the church. And see, before this church--there you can see it [pointing to a photo], see, this one is new--the old church had a balcony in there. And you just had many people that lived in this community that went and belonged to that church.
- TS So you used to have a lot more members who went to that one?
- AJ Right -- sure did. As far as in the black community, see, at one time if you went to religious services, Mount Zion was the church you went to, because there wasn't any others in this community.
- MC Out here in this area you're talking about?
- AJ Out here in this area. And there wasn't too many anywhere else from the time--see, because like I said, Mount Zion was the only church available, and people came from Woodstock and elsewhere.
- TS When did they build the present building?
- AJ I would imagine that present building up there probably was built about 1910 or '11. It all wasn't built at the same time, you know.
- TS So that's the only one you ever remember?
- AJ The only one I ever remember. And Fletcher Johnson--he was Uncle Jeff Johnson's father--built that church. See, he was born in Virginia in 1832. The original members of Mount Zion came from South Carolina--South Carolina or Virginia or something like that. And that's how it started. After the Denmark Vesey slave conspiracy was put down in Charleston, and after Morris Brown started an A.M.E. church there, some of the members of that church came to Cobb County as slaves. Mt. Zion Church must date back to the 1830's, because Indians and slaves were buried in the Franklin Cemetery near the first site of the church, and the Indians were removed from Georgia in

1838. There wasn't no AME or African Methodist Churches in Georgia [before then]. And Mt. Zion is the oldest AME church in Georgia. We just discovered that a few years ago. [Some claim St. Phillip's church in Savannah] was the oldest AME church in the state. When I went in there and got to researching, it wasn't. We are the oldest. Somebody might come along and find something else different, you know. But St. Phillip's wasn't even in existence Mount Zion started up here. Sure wasn't.

After the Civil War, Henry McNeal Turner used Mt. Zion as his base to set up A.M.E. churches in North Georgia. He needed 10,000 members to set up the North Georgia Conference, and it took to 1874 to do it. I knew Anna Turner, his daughter, who would come out to Mt. Zion on occasion. She told me these stories. Henry McNeal Turner owned a house on Cherokee Street in Kennesaw. His children, Anna, Charles, Mary, and William Turner, are listed in the 1870 census of Cobb County.

TS Why did they tear the old building down?

AJ I don't know whether it was the conditions or they wanted a new building or what, but from the way I understood it the old building was larger than the new one. At first there was a brush arbor. The first building burned down; then they built the church with the balcony.

TS Tell me some more about Henry McNeal Turner.

AJ Henry McNeal Turner were the first pastor appointed by a conference, you see. Before Turner, they might have had some of what they call local preacher or something like that or maybe possibly unordained. He could have been an unordained preacher simply for the reason they weren't connected with no conferences, you know. And Henry McNeal Turner was the first who was appointed by the conference. Henry McNeal Turner was sent to Georgia by the South Carolina Conference. He was sent to North Georgia by Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne. Mount Zion was already there.

A.M.E. churches in Georgia were originally in the South Carolina Conference, then the old Georgia Conference. The North Georgia Conference was created on January 8, 1874, with T. M. D. Ward as bishop. It was abolished on November 13, 1956. At that time W. R. Wilkes was bishop. Churches in this area are now part of the North Atlanta Conference.

It would be amazing if we could just get the entire history on it. A lot of distinguished people in the

black race have been through that little church up there. And the most famous one we know at the present was Henry McNeal Turner. Henry McNeal Turner was a well-educated person in the day when it was unusual for a black person to even read or write. When they set up this Marietta district, there was only one person in the church from Atlanta to Dalton could write. And they said in the book, but if it got cold he probably couldn't read.

TS Where did you find your information about Turner being here--is it oral tradition?

AJ Oral--some of it is oral. Now Mr. Walter Jackson was the man I told you about cooked the syrup. I can remember we was there cooking syrup; and Mr. Booth, he was an old fellow. They were probably about the same age--Mr. Jackson was probably a little older than he were. And they would be at the syrup mill, talking and telling these things. He could just tell you--and then Ms. Slocum out here. But see, you just couldn't go on their word, and when you go back and check the First Hundred Years of Cobb County, Ms. Slocum and Mr. Jackson were dead on it, just like you were reading it in the book. Ms. Lisby Slocum said her mother, Priscilla Slocum, was, I believe, was 15 years old when Sherman's army came through here. And her and Mr. McMullins, her mistress, was over there somewhere where they was fighting around in that creek on Bell's Ferry Road and hiding behind the rocks to keep from getting hit. There was an old house--they tore it down on the left down there where I-75 crosses Chastain Road now--was a hospital. And she said after the battle they would bring them back down for first aid and take the bullets out of them and bound up the wounds and whatnot. And Ms. Hudson's grandmother, Ms. Priscilla Slocum, cooked there. She cooked for the Union soldiers there at that hospital. I did have a picture of her--it may be in this thing. And see, Ms. Priscilla Slocum didn't die until 1940. I remember her well. I'm supposed to have one. See, there's her picture we had at the last anniversary we had up here. Now see, that's some of the old members of Mount Zion church. And she said that her husband was ten years older than she were. As long as they could remember there had been a Mount Zion, and her husband was born in 1839.

TS And she dated back to 1849; so she would have known.

AJ [To] 1849. And said as long as they could remember there was a Mount Zion.

TS She was a Gresham, it says there. She was--

AJ Right. Isom Gresham was her father.

TS I see. What was her husband's name?

AJ John.

TS John Slocum.

AJ And his mother and father was Thomas and Leah Slocum. And they at one time lived back over there. Now there's some land--

TS Back where the college is?

AJ Back there where it wasn't quite as far. See, the old road here ran over there and came out down in yonder somewhere.

TS So they actually lived on Chastain Road?

AJ Yes. Would have been if it had had a name. But I think they was probably bringing mail from Marietta when they lived on that road then. He gave an acre--well, I don't know how much it was--he gave some land down there for a school they called Slocum Hall, about where I-75 is now. And see, you had two black schools in this community and that would tell you about the volume of people that lived here.

MC A lot of black families --

AJ That's right.

MC -- lived and owned land.

AJ Owned land. You had a school at Mount Zion, and you had Slocum Hall. And checking with the First Hundred Years of Cobb County, that was the only place that I found in the county that the black community had two schools in one community. When I was going to school there, they had to have two teachers there because they had so many children. They squeezed them in that one room up there, but she had to have a substitute teacher. And sometimes she got some of the older children or something to help out; so she could get around.

Anyway, that's how come they call that Slocum Hall, because Mr. Thomas Slocum gave some land over there. That land may be still over there. I don't know if anybody claimed it or not. I know before Ms. Slocum died

she said it was over there. Said if it was hers to give if she could the church could have it, but I don't know what happened to it.

TS I understand the church had three acres at one time, but it doesn't have all the three acres now?

AJ Not quite now. The road chopped off some of that, you know. To begin with it had one acre, and Mr. Chalker gave them two more acres to stop the burial over here in front of the Pinetree Country Club, which was called the Chalker Cemetery. And that's how they come by that land up there.

TS And the Interstate 75--

AJ Where it's at Wade Green Road--when they widened it through there it took some of it off.

TS So the State bought the land from the church?

AJ Right, the highway department.

TS About when was that?

AJ This was in maybe about 1970; I can't recall the year. But it was since we been here and probably was in the early part of the '70s.

TS Did the church hate to lose that land?

AJ Well, it never was satisfied with it, because they figured they got a raw deal on it. I think they did. Because all of them had agreed to sign it, because the first person from the highway department came down and said they could have pulled that road over further there.

TS Didn't have to go through the church's property?

AJ They didn't have to go through it, that's right. Then they left a fragment there, a ditch in front of the church; we had to go back and get them to fix that. See, that was an embankment there. We come back and asked them would they curb it and not leave it there, because when it starts crumbling off. And the right-of-way--you just step off the bottom of the steps on the right-of-way.

TS Did they give a decent price for the lot?

AJ No, they didn't. I think there was some makings in there with the church officials and not the local church

officials, the general church officials and the highway department. And I think there was something crooked--I can't prove it anyway. There's something strange went on there.

TS Does the local church and the AME church own the property or just the conference?

AJ The local church owns it.

TS But the negotiating was at the conference level?

AJ I think, see, the business transactions were made in Atlanta down there; and it was not transacted at Mount Zion. So those local trustees were supposed to make that transaction. If it had been abandoned property, then they would have had the right to negotiate with the State highway department. But they didn't just go to the board of trustees like they would've every other local church. The local trustees were supposed to handle that--they would be the one to handle that. There was just a makeshift thing that pretend that it did for a sham.

TS Let me ask you just another few questions if I could. I'd like to ask a few things about the race situation in this area. Did you find it oppressive maybe throughout your life in this area or how would you describe it?

AJ Well, in this area during my time I never found these things, you know, on race. Now when we lived over here on Big Shanty Road, Mr. Garrison, it wouldn't bother him to come down; and Mama would cook; and they'd sit there and eat. We'd sit there and eat together, you know. And that's just the way it was. When I lived up here on the York place, we had white people living in the neighborhood; and they would visit each other; and we just didn't have that problem around here. Not during my time. Everybody got along nice. You knew everybody; and maybe you had a white neighbor over there, you know; and like Mr. Poteet said, "Can you all help me pick cotton" or something like that. Well, there wasn't no way he could've picked it all--we'd be glad to get the work to do. And we'd go over there; and that's really how we had to make our spending money, pick cotton for Mr. Poteet or Mr. York or Mr. Tate or things like that. I just never found race relationships to the extent some people say that they have in other areas. The races in this area, as far as I've been here, have got along well.

TS So the people that you knew around here got along fine?

AJ Right. And if you've got any needs, you know, people got

sick, the black and white people would come and see them. And I reckon it was always that way because I remember Mr. Howard Chastain talking about it. As far as doing something to people and not getting along, this hadn't happened out here, not during my time. And they must have had good race relations even before my time out here. Because you take up at Mount Zion church there--you'd be surprised at what the white have did. There's been a lot of white people that did more for it than the people belong there. One person who lives not far from here, and he just walked up there and gave a thousand dollars. And Mr. Harold Chastain and Mr. Billy Chastain and Ms. Cassie Chastain used to always donate something for that church. And Mr. Black of Kennesaw who ran Southside Market was a contributor. Kennesaw United Methodist Church helped build the bathrooms in the extension. I've always found that if you've got a need or something, you know, a person is sick, during my time, whether you're black or white people, go over there and help you.

TS Was there any Klan activity in this area?

AJ There might have been in the Kennesaw area. Now I've heard of Klan activity in the Kennesaw area. Now it could've been in this area, but I've never seen any evidence of any. Now back when it was in maybe the fifties or--it probably was in the fifties, since we've been here, I guess there was some kind of Klan. There was a few crosses burned. There wasn't any on this road. I know there was one burned up at the church and over in the Liberty Hill area.

TS I was wondering, Kennesaw kind of has a redneck reputation today, I think.

AJ Kennesaw itself, you know, was somewhat a little different from what it were out here. I guess they would have Klans or something out there. I don't know--I heard, you know. But I know here a few years ago they were down there soliciting money for them, but they didn't bother anybody and maybe they are still out there, I don't know. I don't know where they were from. I don't know if they were from Kennesaw or not. But over in this section I never recall being harassed by any Ku Klux or anything like that.

MC Was that a frightening thought, though, when you were growing up?

AJ No, we didn't experience it.

- MC You just didn't--you were aware of it, just didn't touch your life?
- AJ Yes, we were aware of it, it just didn't touch our lives. Because where we lived on Shallowford Road we didn't have any black neighbors, you know, real close. And all our neighbors was white. And it was nothing for the whites there to visit my parents or the white family next door would come over there and visit here. Now we would have come to a black neighbor up here on Shiloh Road about a mile long. And all those peoples that lived in that area on the York place was white. And they knew us. They'd go over there and kill hogs, and back then it was a tradition if people killed hogs, they would give you a mess of fresh meat. If you kill you give them some. And that was the kind of attitude that existed where I lived. If a person got sick--I guess everybody got sick my daddy went to see about them, white or black.
- TS Are you happy with the changes in this area or do you wish that there wasn't any traffic out there on Chastain Road?
- AJ Well, I'm happy with it, because what I'm happy about, they moved it over. I wasn't happy with that road the way it were because it was dangerous getting out there, that was the reason.
- TS They took some of your front yard, I guess?
- AJ Just a little bit, uh-huh. I still have the use of it but they didn't take that much. I have less grass to cut.
- MC You still have an acre here?
- AJ An acre, that's right.
- TS In general, what do you think about the changes in Cobb County--all the growth and so on?
- AJ I think it's wonderful. Because when a place is growing like that it gives people jobs. Of course, you're going to have an element that wouldn't work anyway. But the people that would have a desire to work won't have to leave home to go somewhere and work. I think that's wonderful with the improvements in the county and what-have-you. I think Cobb--I know has made a lot of progress from the time that I can first remember up to the present. And if I had to make a choice I would still select Cobb County.

- TS Well, Mr. Jackson, we certainly have enjoyed talking to you today. Did you have any other questions you wanted to ask?
- MC No, I think you've covered it and given us a lot of information. We appreciate that.
- AJ Well, it seems nothing, but I hope it's something you can use.
- TS It's, I think, going to be very valuable. We appreciate it very much.
- AJ You're certainly welcome. Anytime I'm able to help you I'm glad to.

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