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Interviewee: Samuel Watson

Interviewer: Bernard Herman

Bernard Herman (BH): This is an interview with Samuel Watson.

Samuel Watson (SW): That's me.

BH: That's you. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 and I'm Bernie Herman. Mrs. Watson I don't know your first name.

Annette Watson (AW): Annette.

BH: And Annette Watson sitting in. So I will put these, I'll just put them right here, this is good enough for what we're up to. I was wondering if you could start by just saying how long you've lived here and what it was like growing up.

SW: Well, I was born here in Newark, down at 55 New London April 2, 1927, right down here 55 New London Avenue. We were poor. My father, he worked at the railroad. My mother did housework. It was four of us boys. I was ornery and the dumbest one. I lived here, I'm 77, and I lived here for 69 years. I was in the service a little over five years. The Second World War and my first job I had was down, I was making a dollar an hour down at cork plant. Down there where Chrysler is now, we used to store Cork down there and they let me quit school so I could go to work. I think. I knew I was going to war. That must have been '42, '43. These mills wasn't making but 50, 58 cents an hour, and my first job was a dollar an hour, and I left there after the job ended and what did I do after that? I think I worked over at Curtis Mill until I went in the service. I went in service '46 got out in '49, went back in '50 and got out in '51. Where did I work? Oh I worked in [inaudible.] outside, and I worked at a plastering outfit.

BH: A plastering outfit?

SW: A plastering outfit. That was for ten months. That's when I went back in service, and when I got out again they had to put me to work and I went to Richmond and stayed with the company for about six months then I quit. Then I come back here, and I was doing odd jobs like roofing. Roofing around here with some guys come out of Boston. Then I got a job at Chrysler, '55, and I worked there for thirty years. It's been—what?

...

SW: Before I went to Chrysler I think we was building houses. I think I was building houses. Let me see, we built three on Ray Street. Three, six, nine—nine on Ray Street. I was working with George Wilson. That's before I went to Chrysler. Built nine houses over there on Ray Street, four down on Church Street. I was a handy man. What was I doing? I went to Chrysler, yes, in '55. It was hard for black people to get in there. They was hiring one black to ten whites, and I went down there, I was shingling roofs then. It was cold, March. I told the guys, "Look, man, I got a family. This is my home," and you know how these people are in West Virginia, "I need a job man, it's cold out," he told me get out of the office before he had me locked up for vagrancy,

and I told him, I said “Man, I need a job.” I went down there twice a day for thirty straight days before I got a job. The guy told me, “You come down here tomorrow morning eight o’clock. If you ain’t got your discharge or your birth certificate, don’t come.” So when I got down there, I had a friend worked down at the State House, and they called him told him to bring my birth certificate, because all my papers were in Philly. They got destroyed. So he brought my birth certificate on down there. And I got to talking with guys at the plant, a [inaudible.] boy named Nick from Wilmington, he said, ‘Well when you get your sixty days in, go up there and punch him in the nose, for not hiring you,’ so when I went up there, sixty days, ninety days, ninety days, after you belonged to the union. So I went up there, I [inaudible.] fired ‘cause I was screaming up there. We didn’t fight or nothing, but they transferred that boy back to Detroit, ‘cause everybody in that office new I was right. And I worked there, never had no more trouble down there. Then they stopped making cars and then they started hiring a bunch of black people in there, but you could count them on one hand during the tank plant until that shipyard in Chester closed. Then they got all them burners to come out, burners and welders come out of Chester, come down and they start hiring all them boys at the tank plant, because that was a government job. Chrysler was building tanks for the government then. Then in ’56 they sold their contract to somebody else, and then I think ’57 they started making cars I think. Then I worked there for thirty years, then I retired, and I ain’t doing nothing now. When I retired from Chrysler I was demolition with George Wilson. We stand out in Wilmington, on the freeway. I worked there ‘til a guy got killed on Kirkwood Highway, then I quit. There was three of us out there then I said that’s it, I think. [Inaudible.] always telling me it was time for me to quit that, and I quit, and I’ve been messing around here ever since. I got in the habit of cutting people’s hedges, old people’s hedges, so I think, I had eleven one time. I think I got three now, the Elks Home, church, Mikey. I got four now, but after that, I think after this year I’m going to finish that, quit that, because I’m getting too old, and too tired for this stuff.

BH: Well let me ask you about—you were born here on this street.

SW: Yes.

BH: What was it like when you were growing up? What was your family like?

SW: Well my father, he worked at the Pennsylvania railroad and mom did housework, and they used to bring food around for people who didn’t have no jobs. A government surplus or something, I don’t know what they called it. They used to deliver it around here on trucks.

BH: This was in the thirties?

SW: This was in the thirties, the early thirties, and they stopped over that house over there. They used to put the food on the back of the truck like flour and I guess potatoes. I think they had canned meat, rice. I think you got butter, cornmeal, and they’d stop that house, they’d take it off. They’d have it on the tailgate, but if they was coming up this house, they’d put that back on the tailgate, so I went over there. I asked the guy, said, “How come you don’t give us no food?” He looked at his list and said your name’s on there. He said, “Your father work?” I said, “Yes, he works for the Pennsylvania railroad,” “You won’t get anything.” They went back in that house. I took two bags off that when they went in the house, off that tailgate. They went in the house,

they come out and they said, they know they put it back, what happened to it? I'm peeping out the window, so ma and pop come home, they want to know where that stuff come from. I said, 'I don't know,' because I'd have got a beating, for stealing. [Laughter.]. They was rough out here. It was rough. We played football out in here in the street. There was a lot right there. See where that hedge is? Before they cut that street there was a lot right there. We used to play ball on that lot. Then my father and mother broke up. A lady across town Cleveland Avenue raised me from eleven until I went in the service.

BH: Who was that?

SW: Zedra Harris. You know her on that? Zedra Harris?

BH: I haven't heard her name before.

SW: Yes, she raised me, Berkie, [name]. I think I was the last one she raised and that's when I stopped getting beatings. When she raised me she would holler at me, but she would never beat me, and that's when I started being ornery. [Inaudible.] about a hundred times.

BH: So did the neighborhood have a name at one point?

SW: The Row, and over there, North Street was The Row too, where the Italians lived at. You know Angelo?

BH: No.

SW: He's down [inaudible.]. Yes, he was living over there. Man, them guys was rough over there. In fact, guys said you go over there, you better be able to fight. We used to play ball down here on Cleveland Avenue. What's the name of that coral house. Right down here.

BH: Where the old lumber yard used to be?

SW: Yes, right here. What was the name of that lumber yard? Hollingsworth. Hollingsworth. We used to play ball down there. We used to mix up everybody and let me see, I used to play with Bobby Greg and Junior Greg and Old Man Barice. He bought all the gloves and all the bats so his grandson could play. He couldn't play shit. Didn't know Bubsy, and didn't nobody pick him, the old man would take all his gloves so the game would be over with. He'd take all the gloves. He had all the gloves, all the bats and all the balls. Didn't nobody pick Bubsy, he'd take his stuff on back home. Then we used to go down play long sided Continental down there. Back in Newark old high school. We'd go down there and play them. Then we used to play down the field right here.

BH: That's what they called the Big Field?

SW: Right here, yes. We used to play ball there, but them guys would never come up to School Hill and play. They'd play here, but they wouldn't play up there. I don't know why. We'd go down to Continental, and I used to play football. We used to play Frasier Field. The white boys

played black boys, and Bobby Greg and them wouldn't play unless I played with them. I had to play with them so we could play football that day. And most of them guys now gone. I think the only ones that I know that are living [inaudible.] and there three or four years younger, younger than me. Let's see, Brandon Davis is still living. He's my age I think. Brandon went on to play [inaudible.] for the University of Delaware. Last time I see him was at a banquet. I said Brandon you couldn't carry my [inaudible.] how'd you get picked to [inaudible.] for the University of Delaware, and he just laughed. I was ornery, but I wasn't scared of nobody. I used to go over there, it was a couple guys I used to go over to North Street with. We used to go around together, Hard Rock and Whitey. We'd be raggedy as a bowl of [inaudible.] but we were buddies. We hung out together. Go up the creek swimming and stuff like that. Dumb stuff, and I haven't seen them guys since I was young. I wouldn't know them if I seen them right today. And these streets, you didn't see no cars. You could play football out here in the street. Maybe one car would come through, and you'd stop. I don't know.

BH: Well you talked about School Hill.

...

SW: Yes, they had the cow thing. They used to move cows, all of the cows down here, at South College Avenue. Right there where down under is, they had the cows thing. They used to unload the cattle off the freight. They'd take them all up the hill to the farms.

...

SW: Yes, that's the only school we had. Where the George Wilson Center is now. Yes, it was grades from one to eight.

...

SW: Yes. It was two grades. It had four rooms up there, and two grades. Two grades to every room. First and second was in one room. Third and fourth was in one room, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth. Then you left there and went to Howard.

BH: Well you mentioned George Wilson. George Wilson seems to have been a major force here.

SW: Yes, he was on the council once.

...

SW: He built Terry Manor. He build Terry Manor. Yes, we built that church over there.

BH: Mount Zion.

SW: Yes, before it fell down. Yes. We built it right? Yes.

...

SW: One of them caved that roof in. We had all that frame up there. All that stuff was used lumber. We took a [inaudible.] down there in Wilmington, brought all that lumber down here, and built that church up there.

BH: This is the old Mount Zion.

SW: Yes, the old one. This, the new one, they just put on there, a couple years ago, right?

BH: So this is the old part of the church that's up there now?

SW: Yes, we built that. We built that. [Because when the storm came--] Caved in on us.

...

SW: That was George Wilson's work. He built all them houses all on Ray Street.

...

SW: You remember Miss Perkins.

BH: I don't think I do.

SW: Yes, she's the one, she was over that building when they built that Cleveland Heights down there. Did she design that?

...

SW: Yes. Miss Perkins, she designed that church there, and she didn't charge them a quarter. That's right.

BH: Well tell me a little about, this seems to have been, where the Elks Lodge is now, seems to have been the center of the community. Are there a lot of buildings there that are gone? What was it like?

SW: Well that's the only place they had. No there was two, there was one here. Mr. Jacks, who was it? Miss Chambers owned that bar. There was two bars. During the war them things jumped. They were crowded just like the Deer Park is now, because most of them people worked over at [inaudible.] during the war, and you worked over in that powder plant in Elkton as many hours as you want, but they didn't have nobody. See them women, all them women worked over there, they come out of West Virginia and North Carolina. When did that start there? [Inaudible.] fifties. I remember when that house there was built.

BH: Sixty-four? Number sixty-four?

SW: Sixty-four, yes. That was Miss Saunders house, and she lived right there. Yes. Sixty-four was Miss Saunders house, and her son built that house there, next to it.

BH and SW: Sixty-six.

SW: And there used to be a little miniature golf course out there when I was coming up. Where that house is. Miss Saunders never even [inaudible.]. Miss Saunders had a store down there.

BH: Where?

SW: Right down here was a grocery store, a little grocery store. Down here. Let's see there was two houses down there, up on that hill, and—

BH: Is this where the corn stand used to be?

SW: Yes. Well, on this side, there was two houses, because she lived there, and the bottom of it was a store, and Miss Saunders had that store there, and everyone of her children, Miss Saunders's children, are school teachers, because she was a substitute school teacher herself. And she used to run that store down there, and she was substitute sometimes, up the hill. I used to go down there and get anything I wanted from Miss Saunders. Yes I did, and they had every Christmas, they had a big old train set they used to set in that front room, and the tracks would run all the way around the house, I mean the front room, and I'd be in there playing with that train all day until I fall asleep.

...

SW: She [Myrtle Vaughn] lives right down there, the first house. You go down to the other side of the street, and where that brick building is that's an apartment, well the next house is hers. The first one in Terry Manor. I guess her address ain't there now. She's pretty bright. She knows more.

BH: I'm going to go see, I think next Monday, Violet Pettijohn too.

SW: Myrtle lives right—Violet lives there, and Myrtle lives right down there. Yes. [Laughs.]. I used to live in Violet's house. We all used to live on, let's see, South College Avenue, North College Avenue.

BH: Well I meant to get your parents names.

SW: Samuel and Cleola Watson.

BH: The churches played a big role in this community.

SW: Yes, everybody went to church, almost. I used to go down there to Baptist.

BH: You used to go to Pilgrim?

SW: Yes. My father, my father was a big time deacon in that church. You better go to church. We lived in that house. Then we lived in a house up on Cleveland Avenue. We lived in two houses. The same two houses for four different boys. My oldest brother was born on Cleveland Avenue. I was born here. The next one after me was born up there, same house, then the baby was born back here at this house. [Laughs.]. Don't ask me what happened. The same house up on Cleveland Avenue, the same house here, 55, there were four of us born, but not the same house the same year.

BH: So did your family come from here? Were your parents from here?

SW: My mother was from Virginia. My father's from Delaware. I think he was out there in, not Glasgow, but, he's out there somewhere.

BH: So they moved here because he worked for the railroad.

SW: I think they moved here before. I don't know, I don't know. We didn't talk. We didn't talk. My old man was strict. You didn't ask him nothing if he didn't tell you something. [Laughs.].

BH: So how has the neighborhood changed over time?

SW: Ain't nobody here no more. You can see. All this is student now. That house up there for sale right now.

BH: I saw that.

SW: Oh yeah?

BH: We live right behind you.

SW: I know where you live at. I know where you live at. Let me see, one, two, three of us in this neighborhood right now. That's all. One on the corner. [Counts to himself.]. Girl live on that corner over there. I remember one time. Man I tell you, it's been a long time. Kids won't even walk up this street. White kids won't even walk up this street after dark, and we weren't allowed downtown after dark. You'd say that students doctors get you. [Laughter.]. Yes, they would say that. Student doctors would get you.

BH: When was this?

SW: Oh, that was in the thirties. What you doing down here boy? I remember when I used to go down to Miss Nell Wilson's and get food everyday. Miss Evie was the one who raised me. I'd go down there with a wagon everyday, bring up the leftovers. It was two old maids that lived down there and she worked for them. She cooked and cleaned for them

BH: Where was this?



SW: Wilson's. Miss Nell Wilson and Netta Wilson. They used to own that land where they put [name] Reed Village at.

BH: So she would walk from here to there.

SW: I would walk.

BH: You would walk.

SW: I walked down everyday to get leftovers, with a wagon. Miss Nell was the biggest Republican in Newark. Miss Etta was one of them. I think one of them, the youngest one, she did have a husband that split up. One of them never was married, and they lived in that house. That house is still there, on this side of the medical building.

BH: Oh, I know where you are. I know exactly where you're talking about.

SW: You know where I'm at? Well the Wilson's owned that, two sisters, and I used to go down everyday. The chief of police down at the bowling alley, where the Goodwill just left. You know where the Goodwill store was used to be on Main Street? Well it used to be a bowling alley first. They was stand at their job, and the chief of police say, "Hey Watson boy, what do you got in that bag?" I acted like I didn't hear him, and his buddies started laughing, and he got in front of me. I stopped. He said, "What you got in them bags," I said, "Don't you touch them bags. I will go back down there and bring Miss Nell Wilson up here, and you will lose your job," and his buddies started laughing, and he, "Get on up that road, you little ornery devil." And he ain't mess with me since. Every time he see me, "How you doing, Watson boy?"

BH: Well let me ask you some questions about places that people have mentioned?

SW: Yes.

BH: The Hollow.

SW: That was where Herb James and them lived down in there, right off of North College Avenue. The Lewises lived here, and the James lived the next, down, down, off the hill, there was a house down there, down the hill, and they called that The Hollow. [Laughs.].

BH: What about, you mentioned, Boogey Run?

SW: Yes, that's a bridge down there, used to call it the Boogey Run. I don't know where it come from, don't ask me.

BH: But you used to go down there.

SW: Oh, yes. Yes, I used to go down and catch bullfrogs, snakes. Yes. Ain't no water run down there no more.

BH: Used to be pretty full?

SW: Well, all that water come off of 896 up there. But the golf course, see the golf course cut most of that water off. They got a pond up there. They cut most of that water off up there. Yes, we used to play up in the golf course. We used to call—what'd we call that man? Guy up there used to cut grass. We used to go up there, was two pear trees up there, up in that golf course on the side. We used to go up there and get them pears and this guy would run a tractor. What did we call him? I don't know. He'd come down across that golf course with that tractor and we'd take off. What the hell did we call him? Oh man, Jesus, God, that's in the thirties. What'd they call that man? They had a name for him. We used to sled up there on that golf course, when the snow would be going off there'd be snow on that golf course up there. We'd go up there and sled. You had to go up there at night, and—that man would come out there on that tractor and run you off of there. What did we call him? I can't remember shit.

BH: What about Green's Field. A lot of people talk about Green's Field.

SW: That's right there on the other side of the road. I used to hunt over there. It was a pasture.

BH: So who are the Greens?

SW: There was a farmer up in there. They owned all that land up in there. I'd say clear up to them houses up in Fairfield. I think they owned, and they owned all the way over to Creek Road and on the other side, yes. You know where that field is when you go 'round that turn up to Creek Road?

BH: Yes.

SW: Well they owned that pasture over there I think. Ain't nothing over there but wooded area and field. There was a pasture over in there. Then they used to run the cattle up that road, go up that hill with them. Yes, I used to [inaudible.]. It was a big blackberry patch out in the middle of that field, about a hundred yards away from that street. I mean they was some blackberries up in there, and Mom would make go get us some blackberries and all these old women be out there picking blackberries and I had my bucket, looked like they's picking the biggest ones, and I'd holler snake. I'd go over there and holler snake, and they'd take off, and I'd get over there on the good side and get some big blackberries over there. Mom used to make blackberry mush with them things. Yes, I was ornery I tell you. I was the [inaudible.] that went and got apples. My oldest brother didn't do nothing.

BH: Where'd you go get apples?

SW: Down the orchard.

BH: What orchard?

SW: You know where Orchard Road is?

BH: Yes.

SW: All them houses almost had apples on them, and my uncle, my great uncle lived down there. He was a yard man down there, so he'd say, 'Come on down and get you some apples.'

BH: Who was your great uncle?

SW: Reverend [name]. You heard of him?

BH: I haven't heard that name before.

SW: Yes. He was oldest preacher I know was in this church, when I knew him. Yes, that was my great uncle. And always get the apples off the ground. So when they leave, and all them houses they never had windows on the side where the trees was. All them rich houses down in there, and as soon as they would leave, we'd get the apples off the tree and put them down the bottom and put some half ripe ones on top of them, but the bottom they'd be all good apples. We'd go down there once a week and get apples. They just let them rot and then the yard guys get them up and take them to the trash. There was a dump right over there then.

...

SW: Yes, she knows more than I do. Myrtle just turned eighty-- Myrtle just turned eighty-eight.

...

BH: Somebody was telling me that the church also did a quilt that was the history of the church, am I right?

...

BH: Not quite yet if you don't mind.

SW: Go ahead. You ask me some questions.

BH: Oh I will. So you're talking about Green's Field and the Big Field.

SW: Oh yes.

BH: Now you're talking about the Row, which is this area here.

SW: Yes. Here, Ray Street, and see we didn't go no further than that. One house on the other side of Elks Home, and across the street. Here, down here, through the [inaudible.] driveway [inaudible.] up top of the hill to Fairfield, and Corbit Street. That was us. And Ray Street, I did say Ray Street right?

BH: Right.

SW: And down here. Oh yes, we used to go down, old man used to live down there where the railroad track was, down Creek Road. Right there, the hill. There used to be a dump over there, and was a dump over here where the cemetery ends, right here. Right here on Ray Street.

BH: Ray and Rose.

SW: Ray and Rose Street, yes. The foot of that was a dump, city dump was over there.

BH: Right in the middle of the community.

SW: City dump was over there, I'm telling you. Rats, cats, Jesus, people would tell you, fifty-cent to get a cat, on account of the rats. I used to go over there and catch them, get fifty-cent. Scarred up. Wild cats, you turn them loose in your house, man you had to keep them doors closed two or three days, until that cat tired down, or fifty cent then, somebody gave you fifty cent then, that was a lot of money. You could buy a big bottle of soda for a nickel and a big piece of gingerbread cake like that for a nickel and eat all day long. Green's Field was, what did we do over there? We sled over there, course I hunted over there when I started when I was sixteen, when I started hunting by myself. Shot at the first rabbit, and that scared me. That gun scared me to death, but I remember them cattle used to be out there. Couple guys used to go to school up there worked over in that farm. They had to go over there milk cow before they come to school.

...

SW: Hern's farm was up there too on the left, there in Fairfield. Them boys used to come though here and walk to school, Herns. Let's see Dave Moore and them live up there, yes they'd come. Dave Moore and them used to go to school down here. You know where Moore's bar is up there?

...

SW: Yes, they know more than I do. You know where that Moore's bar is up there on 896? Right over the Pennsylvania line?

BH: Right.

SW: Well them boys used to walk down here to Newark High School.

BH: That's a hike.

SW: Yes indeed, they'd walk it though. [Laughs.] They'd walk it though.

BH: You were telling me there used to be stores. Miss Saunders' stores down here, and I've heard names of other things like The Wagon Wheel.

SW: Oh that was up top of the hill near George Wilson's. Yes, that was a nightclub.

...

SW: Miss Saunders, they had a co-op store down there, turned co-op didn't it?

...

SW: Miss Saunders [inaudible.] was in it.

BH: So it was for the community, it was a community co-op?

SW: Yes.

BH: When was that? This is the first I've heard of the co-op.

SW: It was in the forties.

...

BH: What led them to form a co-op?

SW: I think Miss Saunders got too old. She was getting too old. [Her son started it, Bernard Saunders.] Yes, used to run the store. [He's the one who had a gas station here on the corner, and a little eating restaurant and a pool hall.] Yes.

BH: This was next to the barber shop, or--?

SW: The barbershop was right there, see where them steps at?...See where them steps at? That's the barbershop. That was the entrance to the barbershop. [He built a little pool hall and—] A snack bar. [And they had a gas station right on the corner of New London and the, before the street was cut off like that.] That's why took a lot away from us... Yes, they owned that house. The Saunders owned that house. Yes, they owned that house.

BH: Was there a lot of social clubs or just the Wagon Wheel?

SW: No, just the Wagon Wheel. It was a bar there, and Elks Home, that was it.

BH: There was Bell's Funeral Home down there?

SW: Yes, that's where the Wagon Wheel was, behind his place. That was his Wagon Wheel [Laughs.]

BH: And so you then—I'm beginning to get a map in my head of how it all fit together. So this would be the Row, then you would have the Hollow, Green's Field up there, School Hill, Terry Manor, Terry Manor goes in?

...

SW: That was later. That was one house up there, Mr. Fred Underhill's. I guess that was all his land, I don't know.

...

...

BH: I was talking to Kenny Hall the other day and he mentioned that a lot of folks in the neighborhood made additional income by either doing take out food or having a little restaurant or little sit down cafes in their houses... There used to be a café on top of the Elks Lodge. A little café or restaurant on top of the Elks Lodge? I think that Arnold Saunders told me that.

SW: Oh, they used to sell food up in there. On weekends, that's all, upstairs. 'Cause them boys you talking to don't know nothing about when that place was a little pool room and somebody said they cooked food in there. In the Elks Home, before they rebuilt it. I remember when they put the back end on that thing. [inaudible.] Man, I don't remember what year that was. I do know I was around the back, and they had a whole scaffolding up there that fell, and I was back there laughing [inaudible.] killed up on there.

BH: So the back part's the new part, and the front part's the old part. I know what I want to ask you about is, the Pilgrim Baptist Church

SW: It was down there.

BH: [Flips tape over.] That church has been, do you know when that was built?

SW: No, no. I used to have to go there every Sunday. Three times a service. I told you my old man was a big time deacon.

BH: What were the services like when you were a kid?

SW: What were they like? Too long for me. [Laughter.]. I had no choice. I had no choice, I had to be there. That's when my great uncle was preacher there. Reverend [name].

BH: Where did folks go for baptism?

SW: They go up the creek.

BH: Where on the creek?

SW: What'd they call it the Baby Green? Right there, you go 'round the turn. You know where the bridge used to be?

BH: The railroad bridge.

SW: Right where the bridge used to be. Right down there. Ain't nothing there but them pillars, stones still up there right? Well right down there, used to go off down there and just baptize up there on Sundays. Yes that's what they did, yes sir. And I think that they built one in here, but I believe they had one over there where Mr. Dell and Mike had that cleaners, and I think that was a church before this one was here. Before my time, but it looked like place with a pool on the side of it, and I think that's what that was. Maybe Myrtle or somebody could tell you.

BH: Where was that?

SW: Right here where that house is sitting.

BH: On the corner of Church Street.

SW: Yes, on the other side of the street. Yes, it's a house sitting there. It was an old building there.

BH: Where David lives.

SW: On this side.

BH: Oh, on this side of the street that we're sitting on.

SW: No, right here. There was a house sitting on the corner. That white house sitting back there.

BH: Oh alright.

SW: Old building used to be there, and those guys used to have the cleaners, but I think that was a church before that. I don't know.

BH: That's where that minister used to live.

SW: Yes. Reverend Holmes.

BH: And now it's a student rental.

SW: Yes, but my Aunt's house was down the street there, and down there where the University got there office.

BH: Oh that was the beauticians. That was the hair salon.

SW: My uncle's house.[That used to be the pastor of the Pilgrim Baptist Church.] That was my uncle's house. But they sold it, I think. Sold it to who?

...

BH: But where's the burial ground for Pilgrim?

SW: [They used Mount Zion and Saint John's.] Saint John's, yes. They don't have a cemetery. They don't have a cemetery.

BH: So they're just all mixed in there with everybody else.

SW: Yes.

BH: I was going to ask you about, when we first moved here there was somebody that kept turkeys.

SW: Kept what?

BH: Turkeys.

...

SW: Turkeys?

BH: Turkeys. 'Cause I'd wake up in the morning and I'd hear them gobbling.

SW: Oh that was Mr. Patrick back here. Yes, they had turkeys one, couple years, yes.

...

SW: [Laughs.] Mr. [name]. Miss Emma, I know you know Miss Emma.

BH: I've met her I think, awhile back.

SW: Yes, yes. That was right here where the parking lot is.

...

BH: The house that got pulled down.

SW: Yes. They had turkey's back there one time.

...

SW: Yes, Clissy went and got a bunch of young turkeys one time. Old man [name] had a [inaudible] back there that big. I's "Man, why don't you kill that thing," "No, let him live." That thing died on him. [Laughs.]



BH: So the neighborhood was really self contained. It had its own shops. It had, well at some point it had a co-op, had its social clubs, its funeral homes, its churches, and the churches seemed to be really the glue that held a lot together.

SW: Yes. And there was the barbershop. 'Cause it was a lot of old men around here cut hair, 'round your house and cut hair, a quarter, ten cent.

BH: Oh, Mr. Green mentioned that at one point just about the only white person you would see coming through here was the insurance man.

SW: Right. Yes, the insurance man.

BH: What was that all about?

SW: He used to walk by and get that two cents insurance.

BH: What was being insured?

SW: Your life.

BH: For two cents.

SW: ... Yes. They was two cents. That's what we used to call it, 'Two Cent Insured.' You might have a hundred and fifty dollars when you died burial fund. Let me see, Shakespeare. Shakespeare was the insurance man right?

...

SW: Yes, old man whatcha-call-him was an insurance man. Whatcha-call-him's daddy. Davis, old man Davis. You remember old man Davis? Used to walk around here and collect insurance? Yes. Old man Davis was the insurance man around here. Walk around collecting that two cents insurance. That's [inaudible.] man I know was the insurance man.

...

SW: [Inaudible.] policy you had. Five cent, two cent. People didn't have no money. Old man Davis and so was Shakespeare. Then Shakespeare, he got a job at the bank, didn't he?

BH: Let's ask one more question, which is, before they cut the road through how did New London Avenue relate to West Main Street because what you have is the black community backing right into the white community and so they're together and so I was wondering, did people move back and forth between the two neighborhoods or did they stay separate pretty much?

SW: Stayed separate. Back up there where you live, that was the rich people.

BH: Well I can tell you, not anymore [Laughter.].

SW: I tell you that. I tell you that. [ But a lot of black people did the domestic work over in their homes, like, what was the dentist over there? ]

SW: Yes. Ain't that what Billy's mom worked for?

...

SW: Did you know Downs? [Oh, he ran a clinic.] He was doctor. Yes, well he took over whatchacallit's job. Mencher took his spot.

SW: Yes, Newark Clinic. [A little baby clinic, you know, you could take the—]

BH: Oh is this Flowers? What was that called? That clinic had a name.

SW: Flowers, flower.

...

SW: Flower Hospital was down the University. Down on South College Avenue.

...

SW: Yes, because I got that sewed up in there.

...

SW: I was going to school up there. I jumped across that fence. I got hooked on barbed wire. [It was a like a free clinic you could take your children there and they weighed them and give them shots and stuff. That was next to Dr. Mencher.]

BH: Did he run that?

SW: State.

...

SW: Downs worked for the state.

....

SW: Ain't that where there was a house? One of them houses used to be Dr. Mencher's office. Same place?

BH: Well there's the doctor's—but Dr. Mencher used to have the waiting room in his house years and years ago.

SW: Oh, yes. I used to go to him. He run me out of there one day. “Get out of my office all drunked up.” He used to call me Wilson all the time. Him and Mike Wilson were buddies, they around the same age. Mike used to go down there and talk to him all the time. I'd go in there, he'd say “Come on in here Wilson.” I said, “I told you, my name is Watson,” “Shut up boy your name is Wilson.” “Get out of my office you all drunked up.” [Inaudible.]

BH: I think we've covered a lot this morning.

SW: I think so too.

BH: But if you think of something.

SW: Man, I can't remember all that stuff now.

BH: But once you start trying to remember, there's more and more that'll come back, and you know I don't live very far away. [Laughter.] So we can get together.

...

BH: And I'm really hoping, I've gotten excited about this [the project], because I'm really hoping that this will come together and be something for the community, even though the community has lost a lot of its—

SW: It's breaking apart.

BH: It shouldn't be forgotten. It really shouldn't be forgotten. Even though Pilgrim has moved, every Sunday I still go out and sit in the garden and listen to services.

...

BH: Well they were singing yesterday, and there will occasionally be a minister who'll come in, there's one with a real deep gravelly voice.

SW: Yes. Hunter. Yes, he's a big man. Hunter's a big man.

BH: So it's a way to go to church without going to church, which suits me just fine. [Laughter.] I like parts of it, but I don't know if I can sit still that long inside. But anyway, thank you all very much.

SW: You're welcome. You're welcome Bernie.

[Tape shuts off.]

