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## **Iron Hill School Oral History Project**

### **Interview with Nora May Thompson Williams**

Date of Interview: October 20, 2003

Interviewer: Roberta Perkins

Transcriber: Marcia Adams

Also Present: April Veness, Associate Professor of Geography, University of Delaware;  
Aaron Pillard, student, University of Delaware.

**Roberta:** This is Roberta Perkins and today's date is Friday, October the 10th, 2003 and I am here in Brookside Park at the home of Mrs. Nora May Thompson Williams and I am interviewing her as part of the Iron Hill School Restoration Project. Also here with us is Professor April Veness and Aaron Pillard. They are here as part of the geography course on Newark. At this time I would like to thank Mrs. Williams for being here. Thank you. Mrs. Williams I am going to start with getting a short biography of your growing up in the Iron Hill area and then Professor Veness and Aaron Pillard may have questions they would fill in and ask. The first thing I wanted to ask you is if I could have your name and place of birth.

**Nora:** My name is Nora M. Williams and my place of birth was at Iron Hill. I was born at Iron Hill on January 12th, 1937.

**Roberta:** Who were your parents?

**Nora:** My mother's name was Viola Thompson.

**Roberta:** And your father?

**Nora:** My father's name was James Thompson.

**Roberta:** Have they always lived in Iron Hill?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: Did your grandparents live in Iron Hill?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: Do you know how far back, how many generations?

**Nora:** Let's see it was 4 – my grandmother's mother's mother lived there so that was 4 generations of us right there. Her mother and my Mom's mother and my kids so there was 4.

Roberta: Do you have any record of when the first family member moved to Iron Hill?

**Nora:** No. That was before my time.

Roberta: No body ever talked about that?

**Nora:** No.

Roberta: How long did you stay at Iron Hill?

**Nora:** I lived there for 41 years I think, because I have been here almost 25 years.

Roberta: So you stayed in Iron Hill after you finished Iron Hill School?

**Nora:** I went to the 11th grade, I didn't graduate.

Roberta: But after Iron Hill School where did you go?

**Nora:** I stayed there with my grandmother and my mother and helped take care of them.

Roberta: So did you go to Iron Hill from grades what-to-what?

**Nora:** 1 to 6.

Roberta: And after you finished 6th grade

**Nora:** I went to Middletown, Louis L. Redding.

Roberta: When did you leave Iron Hill?

**Nora:** When did I leave Iron Hill? Me and my husband came here in '79, 1979 and that's when we moved here.

Roberta: So you got married and moved.

**Nora:** Yes. We moved here in '79.

Roberta: So you've been here in Brookside Park

**Nora:** Since '79.

Roberta: Brothers and sisters?

**Nora:** I have 1 brother living, Herman Thompson. He's at Brandywine Nursing Home. He's older than I am. He's 65.

Roberta: Did you have other siblings?

**Nora:** I had an older brother, he passed away.

Roberta: What was his name?

**Nora:** James. James Thompson, he died in 1982.

Roberta: Growing up – so you'd been there a long time and so where in Iron Hill did you live?

**Nora:** On Sandy Brae Road, they call it Otts Chapel now. I lived right down from that church.

Roberta: So are there still family members that still live there?

**Nora:** Yes there's some people that live out there but no body there in the house no more. They sold the house. The house was there for years and years.

Roberta: So the house is no longer there?

**Nora:** Yes it's still there unless the people done tore it down. The ones that bought it I don't know whether they tore it down or not.

**April:** What year did they sell the house?

**Nora:** They just sold it this year.

**April:** And they were living in it until then?

**Nora:** No. My daughter was living there. She moved away from there 2 years ago. It was 2 years ago this month, I think it was she moved out.

**April:** And that was the family home that went way back through all those generations?

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** It must have been a little sad.

**Nora:** Yes it was, I don't know what happened but they sold it.

**Roberta:** Now when you say 'they,' your daughter. was she married?

**Nora:** Yes she was married, but she got divorced.

**Roberta:** I want to go back and ask you some questions about what it was like for you living in Iron Hill, going to the school, just your family, what do you remember of your childhood?

**Nora:** It was fun living there. We had chores to do. We would walk to school 5 miles every day and then we would come home and Mom would make us change our clothes and then we would have to go out and we had to go out and pick up chips for the fire to keep the fire going in the morning. and we would have to bring in wood and sometimes we would feed the chickens and stuff like that. It was like a farm that they had. They had horses and cows and chickens and pigs and lots of stuff there.

**Roberta:** How big was it? Was it several acres?

**Nora:** It wasn't really, really big. Maybe 2 acres, maybe more. My grandfather and them they used to do the work on the farm. They planted corn and stuff like that and tomatoes and stuff.

Roberta: What was your grandfather's name?

**Nora:** Edward Webster. My grandmother was Daisy Webster.

April: These were the same grandparents to Reverend Smith?

**Nora:** That was his aunt and uncle.

Roberta: And your grandmother's name was

**Nora:** Daisy.

Roberta: Daisy

**Nora:** Daisy Webster.

Roberta: Do you know what her maiden name was?

**Nora:** Smith. She was a Smith and then she married Webster.

Roberta: You had chores, what do you remember as far as fun, entertainment, you know what did the children used to do?

**Nora:** We used to play hide and seek. We played that and we played blindman's bluff. We played hopscotch. Baseball was my favorite. I still like baseball a lot. We played baseball till it got dark.

Roberta: Now did the boys and girls play on the same team? Did they play together?

**Nora:** Yes. Sometimes the younger kids would play the older people.

Roberta: How was that?

**Nora:** It was good. We'd have a ballgame every Sunday after dinner.

Roberta: So where was the game?

**Nora:** Right out there in the yard. There was a big field out there. We played ball out there in the field.

Roberta: So do you know how that started – that the young people played the adults?

**Nora:** Ever since my aunts and uncles when they would come up they would play, we would be out there playing ball with them after we got old enough to play, the young ones played. It was fun. It was always something to do.

Roberta: What else do you remember? Hold on, just for the record, Mrs. Williams' grandson, Brandon is with us. His name is Brandon.

**Nora:** What else did we do – well we would sit down and play cards, sit down and play pitty pat and stuff like that, old maid cards and the we played with them. We played with jacks. Tic tac toe. Checkers, dominoes – we played all those little games. Chinese checkers.

Roberta: Was that mostly relegated to Sunday?

**Nora:** Well Sundays we played ball. We weren't allowed to play cards or nothing like that on Sundays. We couldn't iron no clothes on Sundays either. We'd go to church and come from church and eat dinner then we'd wash up the dishes then we could go out and play ball but as far as playing cards, she didn't allow that. No dancing on Sundays. We had some kind of old time wind up victrolas or whatever they call them for dancing.

Roberta: What ever happened to that victrola do you know?

**Nora:** No, I think they threw that thing away. It had the lid on top of it and you would crank it up. It had them big old records on there – 78's or whatever they called them.

- Roberta: So church was an important part of the community? Was it an important part of your family's life?
- Nora:** Yes it was. We had family prayers every Sunday morning before we ate breakfast. She would make you get out of bed and get down on your knees and recite the Lord's Prayer. That was every Sunday morning before we ate breakfast. We went to church. We had Sunday School at 10 o'clock and then we stayed for church at 11 and after that we would come home after church got out and we would eat dinner and after dinner we would clean up the dishes like I said and go outside and play ball.
- Roberta: Now in the wintertime when it got cold did you play ball outside or was it more in the spring and summer?
- Nora:** No. In the winter we mostly just stayed in the house and played checkers or jacks or something like that or listened to the radio. We had a no TV then back in them days.
- Roberta: So that brings up the question of communication. When there was news to be learned or shared, how was that done within that Iron Hill community? How did people get information to one another?
- Nora:** There wasn't too much information. Like when we went to school the teacher would talk about it. Like they do now, you don't get that much news on the radio and stuff. There wasn't that much.
- Roberta: Did people in the community get a newspaper or read a newspaper or did one or two people get the newspaper and share?
- Nora:** Not too many of them got it.
- Roberta: Celebrations in the community. What celebrations do you remember and which ones had more importance than others?



**Nora:** Well they used to have dances at the school. Maybe once a month or once every 2 or 3 months they would have a celebration, a dance to raise money for different things. At the church they would always have socials, we would always have socials to help you raise money and barbecues and stuff like that.

**Roberta:** Was money ever raised for the school? Was there ever a need to raise money for any activity in the school or to purchase something for the school?

**Nora:** No we never did nothing like that. We mostly got for the church or something like that.

**Roberta:** What was the money used for sometimes when you raised it?

**Nora:** To fix up the church and stuff. Things that they needed. Fix up the halls and stuff.

**Roberta:** What was the name of the church?

**Nora:** St. Daniel's of Iron Hill.

**Roberta:** So everybody in Iron Hill pretty much went to that church?

**Nora:** Yes. Just about. They had a choir and everything.

**Roberta:** How big a congregation was it?

**Nora:** They used to be packed in there but it ain't no more. People done got away from it. It's not like it used to be.

**Roberta:** Do you think its because more people moved away and they are just no interested?

**Nora:** A lot of them that was here have moved away. But I don't know it's not the same anymore.

**Roberta:** Do you have an idea of how many people it would hold when you had services? A couple hundred?

- Nora:** Yes, I guess it could be a couple hundred because it had a downstairs and an upstairs. A gallery upstairs.
- Roberta:** You said you used to sit up there.
- Nora:** I said gallery. Sometimes when they had something special going on – like they used to have a lot of singers come there and have candlelight services and stuff like that.
- Roberta:** Did they ever have programs where the program that's what it was, it was different choirs and different groups from different churches
- Nora:** Yes they had that too.
- Roberta:** What jobs were available that you remember for the African-American community in Iron Hill?
- Nora:** What jobs?
- Roberta:** What kind of jobs did people do?
- Nora:** There wasn't that many jobs. I guess for the men they would cut grass and stuff like that and for the ladies I guess they would have bake sales and stuff like that.
- Roberta:** People that had, you said it wasn't like a farm, but some people, did some people have enough acreage that they could make money from what they grew?
- Nora:** No really. Most of them grew enough just for their families. My grandmother and my mother used to can stuff all the time. They canned peaches because they had peach trees out there and they had apples and they had cherry trees and grape vines. She used to make grape jelly. All kinds of fruits, pears. Mom and them used to cook a lot too. They made homemade rolls and bread. My mother never bought bread she always made her own bread. She made bread sometimes 2 or 3 times a week. Homemade bread, you could smell it when you walked in.

**Roberta:** I remember that. The first time I ever had homemade rolls was a great, great aunt of mine and she made a coconut layer cake so I know what you are talking about. It was good.

**Nora:** I learned a lot of stuff from my grandmother. I like to cook and I make rolls and pies and stuff for the holidays and stuff. Homemade vegetable soup.

**Roberta:** Do you use chicken? Beef?

**Nora:** Mostly beef.

**Roberta:** So I would imagine your place is where the family gathers on the holidays.

**Nora:** We used to eat over to my mom's and then after she passed I finally took over. Here lately when they come here I cook dinner on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**Roberta:** Now you said after your mother passed who would take it over?

**Nora:** My daughter, Bonnie.

**Roberta:** Can you tell me – I'm going to get into the topic of discrimination when you lived in Iron Hill – do you remember any problems, you know racial problems when you were growing up?

**Nora:** Yes there was a lot.

**Roberta:** Do you have any that you remember that you care to share with us?

**Nora:** Well there used to be 2 schools. Iron Hill School was all Black and there was another school down the road right on the corner at that red light that was an all white school and they used to fight back and forth.

**Roberta:** Do you remember the name of the school? Did it have a name?

**Nora:** I forget the name of the school. It was right there on that corner. It was almost on the same road but I can't think of the name of it.

April Veness. I got the feeling this morning when you were speaking that it was on the corner of Old Baltimore Pike and 896.

**Nora:** But I can't think of the name of the school. The people bought it they turned it into a house. It was a house.

Roberta: That was not uncommon.

**Nora:** Unless they called it Pleasant Valley School. Pleasant Valley was right down the road.

Roberta: So it wasn't Pleasant Valley Road?

April: No its Otts Chapel and Old Baltimore Pike.

Roberta: Did you experience any discrimination when you were growing up? In school? In restaurants?

**Nora:** No not really. It was mostly the boys that was most always fighting. I wasn't no fighter – I never bothered nobody. I get along with everybody.

Roberta: If you had tried to go to a restaurant or buy something in a store you never had any experience or any problems that you can remember?

**Nora:** I remember when we used to go up to Grant's, a lot of people would follow us around when we first went in there they would ask you "could we help you" and we'd say we just looking.

April: What was Grant's?

Roberta: W. T. Grant's.

**Nora:** They used to be a clothes store. Well they sold everything it was right there on Main Street.

Roberta: A variety store. They had one in Wilmington too.

**April:** So you would go all the way into Newark to do most of your shopping?

**Nora:** Yes because there wasn't stores around there till they built this mall down here. Castle Mall. That was the first mall that they had it was right down here. All they had in Newark was the Five and Ten and Grant's and they had 2 banks there. One of the banks was the Wilmington Trust and they had a newsstand and Pelnick's Shoe Store and let's see, what else. There was a couple other stores that sold clothes Lee's I think it was. Then in the big shopping center they had movies over on that side but it wasn't there when I was growing up but after my kids got older they had movies in there. They just got rid of what was in there.

**Roberta:** This was off of Main Street?

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** The clothing store that you were talking about that was back in there. Yes, I remember when that closed. I can't remember the name of that right now.

**Nora:** Woolworth's. They closed it. It was in that big shopping center. Miles Shoe Store was in there too. There wasn't too many stores there. There wasn't really a whole lot of places to shop back in those days. On Sundays the stores were all closed anyway. They were closed early on Saturdays and on Sundays everything was closed up. They weren't open like they are now.

**April:** Did your parents have a car?

**Nora:** My father had a car.

**April Veness.** Did you ever go anywhere? Where would your family go if you went out in the car?

**Nora:** Maybe to the grocery store or something like that. Sometimes we would go to like they had those camps. Marydale Camp. He used to take us there. We really didn't have many places to go.

Roberta: There is one down state further, Franklin? And it's still there now.

**Nora:** I know where you're talking about. They still have it down there.

Roberta: So transportation was more for convenience rather than entertainment?

**Nora:** Yes. I remember when it snowed real bad my aunt she used to hook the horse up to a sled. My grandfather had a sled and she would go to the store and get milk and bread and stuff that we needed because no cars couldn't get out but she would hook the horse up to the old sled. My grandfather, he would always go to Dayett's Mill. He had a horse and a wagon. He would hook the horse up to the wagon and go get flour and meal and stuff like that because we would get them great big bags and they would last a long while.

Roberta: What was the name of the mill again?

**Nora:** Dayett's Mill. It's down there on Old Baltimore Pike. They sold all kinds of stuff down there. They had some big bags of flour – 50 pound bags.

Roberta: It was in the paper a few years ago. Do you remember any other activities in that sleigh, with the horse and sleigh, like in the wintertime? Did you go out for sleigh rides?

**Nora:** No, mostly they just used it for convenience. Like to go to school – they couldn't get out with the car. Sometimes they would walk. They would take the sleigh if they couldn't make it.

Roberta: So was the horse used for anything else besides the sleigh?

**Nora:** Yes. My grandfather he used to do farm work and they used to plow up the dirt and stuff so they could plant crops and stuff. He had 2 or 3 horses there. We used to ride horses too. We used to ride horseback. There was a big field and he used to rent that field and take the horses over there and the horses would go out there eat all day long and then we would go over and ride them back across.

Roberta: So it was bareback? You didn't have saddles or anything?

**Nora:** No. It was a lot of fun.

Roberta: It sounds like it.

April: You said a couple of times that it was fun living back then and I'm curious was the fun part just that you had the animals around you and you could do what you want?

**Nora:** I don't know. Everybody got along good, better than they are now I mean everybody fightin' and fussin' and going on. Back in them days it was just fun. We all hung together.

April: And you are saying today you don't think it is the same for people? You don't see the same thing for your grandchildren?

**Nora:** Well they got so much stuff going on now. I mean they got more stuff that they can do than we could. There wasn't that many things that we could do.

Roberta: This ends side 1 of Tape 1.

**Begin Tape 1, side B.**

Roberta: Professor Veness will continue asking questions of Mrs. Williams.

April: One of the questions I had was when we were following up we started off with you were talking about when you were born in 1937, not the end of the Depression but where – do you have brothers and sisters?

**Nora:** I don't have any sisters.

April: No sisters?

**Nora:** I have 1 brother living and the other one, he died.

**April:** Was your brother older than you?

**Nora:** The one that passed away was older but the one that is in the nursing home is younger than I am.

**April:** Did he pass away recently or as a child?

**Nora:** He died in '82. He had some brain tumors. That's not what killed him they said he had pneumonia or something that settled in his lungs.

**April:** Was your family considered to be pretty small at that time? With only 3 children?

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** Did the 3 of you end up marrying people who were from Iron Hill?

**Nora:** My oldest brother, he married a lady from Elkton, Maryland. Her name was Betty Thompson. My other brother married a lady from Cedar Hill and her name was Harriet Thompson.

**April:** Where was Cedar Hill?

**Nora:** Well her maiden name was Harriet Williams.

**April:** And Cedar Hill is in Delaware?

**Nora:** In Maryland.

**Nora:** And my husband was from Maryland too.

**April:** He was from Maryland too? What was the Maryland connection?

**Nora:** He was from Maryland but he went to school in Maryland but his mother lived in Elkton, Maryland but he went to school in Cedar Hill.



**April:** How did you get to know these folks from Elkton? How did you come into contact with them?

**Nora:** Well my family, a lot of them knew each other. My aunts and uncles and them they all knew Cedar Hill. They were all up and back and forth and I guess the kids we were back and forth.

**April:** So you got to know them as you were kind of growing up? Did you know your husband a lot of years before you married?

**Nora:** Yes, well he was out of school when I met him he just graduated.

**April:** Where did he graduate from?

**Nora:** From Elkton. Elkton High.

**April:** Ok so both you and your brothers went to Iron Hill School? And you continued to live over in that direction as I recall, you didn't move here until 1979 – did any of your children go to Iron Hill School?

**Nora:** No, my kids went to McVey. That's when they closed Iron Hill School.

**April:** So you children didn't enter into the school system until – when did your first child probably go to kindergarten, about what year?

**Nora:** They went to Head Start. All of my kids went to Head Start.

**April:** Your oldest child was born in what year?

**Nora:** 1959. October 1st, 1959.

**April:** And how many children do you have?

**Nora:** Three. A girl and two boys.

**April:** Ok, so the last one was born –

- Nora:** Ervin, the oldest boy was born in '60, November 7th, 1960. The youngest son, he stays here with me – he was born December the 6th, 1962.
- April:** So their experiences in the schools were very different from yours.
- April:** What kind of school was McVey? I have heard other people refer to it? It's there in Newark.
- Nora:** It's right down here by McDonalds. In back of McDonalds.
- April:** Was that one of the first integrated schools? Was it integrated?
- Nora:** Yes it was integrated.
- April:** And it was for a grade school?
- Nora:** Yes.
- April:** Your children would have been going in to school at about the time that it was being integrated.
- Nora:** Yes.
- April:** Did they experience any difficulties?
- Nora:** No I guess it was because it was just their first time. They never went to an all Black school like I did. They got along all right. They got along good.
- April:** Were you pleased about this or were you worried for them?
- Nora:** Not really. I knew they was going to do it anyway. They did it in Middletown too. They integrated Louis L. Redding, Black and White all mixed together.
- April:** Do you have any thoughts today about whether or not that experience of yours in this all Black school was better than what some of the children receive today? I hear you talking about the people fussing and fighting now was there less of that because your community was more closed off.

**Nora:** I guess it did do something to them.

**April:** I don't want to put ideas in your head it's just that I am curious if you are in an all Black school and you are interactive with the Black community obviously you got along with one another and I was wondering if as the Black community began to expand and move to new parts of town and came face to face with other people normally that's when some of the conflict begins, that you would see that but your kids. They didn't come home and tell you stories?

**Nora:** No.

**April:** They never came home crying or anything?

**Nora:** No they seemed like they got along good. I tried to tell them the kind of schools I went to now they wouldn't believe it. I've seen one of the teachers teach 6 classes. All we had was 1 teacher. She'd teach 6 classes. The said, "how would she teach 6 classes?" I said "well she did."

**April:** They would probably look at you and they would think oh that was back when the dinosaurs were here.

**Nora:** Sometimes they would be sitting down and I would be telling my grandkids and they can't believe it. I said they don't even want to walk out of here to catch a bus and I said I walked 5 miles every day to school and back and they couldn't believe that. And when it snowed or rains, it was always raining out there or snowing they said they was going to get cold just standing out there. I said suppose you had to walk, I said you are lucky, the bus stops right here in front of the house. Things have really changed. It's a big change from what it used to be.

**April:** When you left in 1979 to move here were a lot of the families already leaving Iron Hill at that point?

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** Why were they leaving?

- Nora:** A lot of them got married and they just bought homes other places.
- April:** Were there no houses that they could buy or land that they could use there in Iron Hill to build houses on?
- Nora:** I don't know there's just not that many people out there no more.
- April:** How did you happen to choose Brookside as the place that you wanted to live?
- Nora:** My husband was just out looking at houses and he found this one and said I would like to live here. There wasn't that many Black people lived out here now.
- April:** I was wondering if there was many.
- Nora:** There is only about maybe a couple of families. There was a couple that used to live down the street there. Leo and them lived down there first. When we moved out here I don't think there was more than a couple of Black families out here.
- April:** And during the time that you moved in were there any experiences there that stood out in your mind?
- Nora:** No. At first I didn't think that I would like it because I had never lived out here before and I said I don't know if I like it out here or not. He said you'll get used to it. I love it out here. It's so quiet. Nobody's gonna bother you. Some of my neighbors, one of my best friends, a lady that used to live along side of me, her and her husband and my husband used to get along – they were like brothers to us. Always together. I would cook and take stuff over to them and she would cook and bring stuff here. It was nice. Now she's gone. Like in a nursing home and he passed away. It's not the same no more. But the people that live there they don't bother you but you just don't see them anymore.
- April:** So to finish up with your children that went to school in Newark, did they go to Newark High then after they left McVey?

**Nora:** No, they went to Glasgow. They went to Gauger first. They left McVey, they went to Gauger and when they left Gauger they went to Glasgow and that's where they graduated from.

**April:** They don't live over in the Iron Hill area right now? You said your daughter lived there.

**Nora:** No, my daughter did until a couple of years ago but she lives down here in Fox Run now. The older boy, my oldest son he lives up around Kimberton.

**April:** When you go back to the church, that's St. Daniel's, are most of the people driving in like you are from Brookside and places all around?

**Nora:** Yes, most of them do.

**April:** Are they typically older people, more your generation?

**Nora:** Yes, my around my age. Some of them are younger. The ones that go to Sunday School out there.

**April:** Thank you. The men had told us about their work but it sounds as if women didn't go do any paid work. There were no jobs that your aunts, or you mothers or the older ones

**Nora:** My mother worked clean up until – she worked for one family for 25 years. She worked for Harber's in Newark. She worked for another family.

**April:** What was she doing for these families?

**Nora:** Housework. Cleaning.

**April:** She was a housekeeper? The Harber family, where did they live?

**Nora:** They lived right there in Newark, right down from Porter's on the right hand side in that big old house, it sets off to itself. She worked there for 25 years for them.

**April:** How did she get there? Did she drive?

**Nora:** Sometimes – you would walk. Sometimes someone would pick her up. She had to wash clothes, she washed on a board and stuff.

**April:** She did that at your house?

**Nora:** No.

**April:** At the Harber's house. She was their clothes?

**Nora:** Cause her husband, Mr. Harber, he used to wear white shirts all the time and she used to wash them and then starch them and iron them.

**April:** What was Mr. Harber's job?

**Nora:** I don't know what kind of work he did but he always wore a white shirt. Ironed them too and starched them.

**April:** So the kind of jobs then that the women were more likely to get would be housekeepers.

**Nora:** Yes. My mother and my grandmother both of them did that. Then my grandmother worked up here on Quality Hill. She was a cook up there. She helped to cook dinners and stuff.

**Roberta:** What was the name of the place? You said it was on Quality Hill?

**Nora:** Yes, I can't think of the name of the place. Up here in Newark.

**April:** Did they ever talk about their experiences with these families? Did they have any close ties to them after 25 years?

**Nora:** Her daughter used to come out and see my Mom. Every once in a while we would hear from them, but not that much. She really got sick and she wasn't able to get around.

**April:** Thank you. That was good. So the kind of jobs where they might have gone to work in a shop or like a cashier or whatever those were not

**Nora:** No, nothing like that. The ones that did work, they did housework. I know after I got older enough, after I come out of school – well I wasn't out of school, I was still in school, on Fridays when we didn't have nothing to do we would clean houses over here in Brookside. My aunt, she used to drive us. She used to have maybe a carload and she would bring them and then pick them up because she worked here too.

**April:** In Brookside?

**Nora:** Yes. I never cleaned on this side, always on the other side.

**April:** I didn't know that this development was that old.

**Nora:** They built these homes back in the '50's. '51 – '52. They built them for the Army soldiers.

**April:** Actually this one part of this surprises me because I guess I am from a different generation – these houses were probably built for pretty middle income people.

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** How could they afford to hire housekeepers? I used to think of housekeepers as a wealthy thing.

**Nora:** At least 6 of us used to ride over every – well Thursdays and Fridays we had off so I know me and my cousins used to work so she would drop us off.

**April:** Did they advertise or how did they know that you did this?

**Nora:** I guess one person would see us and they would ask us could they come and clean. We only got a dollar an hour. First it was seventy five cents.

**April:** Seventy five cents an hour? When would you have been doing this in the 1950's? Of course I like to tell everybody that I babysat in the 1960's for fifty cents an hour. I am trying to get a sense of what women's lives were like. Your mother

was very busy in the kitchen baking goods, putting up food for the winter, probably out in the garden.

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** I know she did some of the work there. The women, if they took other jobs, might be housekeeping jobs. Did you ever do any babysitting?

**Nora:** Well they babysitted for their own families for the kids that were right there in the house but not to go out

**April:** and really make money on that. Well that's interesting. And then your brothers, what kind of work did they pursue?

**Nora:** My oldest brother, well he did a lot of work before he died he retiree from the City of Newark, he worked there for almost 25 years.

**April:** What did he do for the City of Newark?

**Nora:** Worked around the sewer department or stuff like that.

**April:** Your cousin, you mentioned that he worked for the sanitation division of Newark.

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** Reverend Smith?

**Nora:** Yes that was like for trash and stuff. He drove the trash truck.

**April:** But your brother

**Nora:** But my brother he did, like cut off the water and stuff like that. He did a lot of other stuff cause he was real smart. He almost built his own home. He could do all kinds of work. He did electrician work and carpenter work. He could do a little bit of everything.

**April:** Where did he live?



**Nora:** He lived right down from my mom. He got a piece of land out there.

**April:** So he stayed in Iron Hill?

**Nora:** Yes. He's the onlyest one that stayed there.

**April:** And you other brother now in a nursing home, what did he do?

**Nora:** He worked for the store, like Acme. A & P. A & P was the first store when he came out of school he started working for A & P.

**April:** And what are your children doing?

**Nora:** My kids? My girl, the oldest, well I've only got one girl, she works for GM. She's been there for 23 years I think, almost 24 years. And Ervin, he's done had so many jobs I can't – he works at the Acme now but he used to work at Gore's, I can't remember all the jobs he had and my other son that stays here, he drives a truck and he does all kinds of work too. He's smart like my brother was. He can do electrical work.

**April:** They are very few men that I meet these days who know how to do any of that stuff. I certainly don't.

**Nora:** That electrician work – he puts in my fans and bathrooms and all that stuff. He does all that kind of work. He is really smart. He is gifted. He was gifted like my brother was and he never went to school for it. He took up electrician when he was in school but he never finished so he could get his license and stuff but he knows how to do that kind of work.

**April:** Thank you. I won't hold this up if you want to switch gears.

**Roberta:** I just have a couple of questions, one or two questions, as a left over from a line of questioning that you were asking Mrs. Williams. I am hearing the name of this town, Cedar Hill. How far is it from Iron Hill? It seemed like a lot of people interacting not only with Elkton but also Cedar Hill. Is Cedar Hill still there?

**Nora:** Yes, my husband is buried in Cedar Hill. He died in '93. It's about from here maybe like 7 or 8 miles from here.

**Roberta:** In Maryland?

**Nora:** Cedar Hill, Maryland, yes.

**Roberta:** How big a community is it?

**Nora:** It's more like Iron Hill.

**Roberta:** Is it?

**Nora:** It's not no big community but it's like one big family.

**Roberta:** Is it mostly African-American?

**Nora:** Yes.

**Roberta:** I guess I am just curious as to how did that interaction between Iron Hill and Cedar Hill start. Did you ever hear as far as you know people have always interacted back and forth?

**Nora:** Yes, I think my grandfather was from up around Cedar Hill somewhere. His family was up there.

**Roberta:** If you could have stayed in Iron Hill, if you husband was happy living there, would you have stayed in Iron Hill or

**Nora:** Yes, because we were going to build a house out there but the guy I worked for he was a contractor hisself and he said he told us not to trust that guy was going to build so he decided to just go ahead and buy and we looked around at some houses.

**Roberta:** Is that when you daughter moved and stayed there?

**Nora:** Yes, after my mom had got sick she stayed there.

**Roberta:** The questions that I will be asking about the school, I might be jumping around a little bit and they might be some that you have already answered. One question I do want to ask you is when you were in school in Iron Hill and one teacher taught all the grades do you remember how many students, total, from 1 to 6 when you were – any grades that you were in

**Nora:** Mostly maybe about 10 or 12 students in each class.

**Roberta:** Ok so you had 6 grades so you had about 50 to 60 students that she was teaching?

**Nora:** Yes, there was a lot.

**Roberta:** It didn't matter when you were in 2nd or 4th or 5th grade there was still that same number of students.

**Nora:** Yes cause there was always a bunch of kids around Iron Hill. That's why we couldn't figure why they would close that school down because there was always kids there every year. There was so many kids.

**Roberta:** They closed it in 1964 was it?

**Nora:** The year after I left to go to Middletown.

**Roberta:** And what was the student population then? Was it still about that – 50, 60?

**Nora:** Yes it was like I said, there was a lot of kids in Iron Hill. I helped to each Sunday School and we always had close to 50 or 60 kids in Sunday School on Sunday mornings. We would have about 4 or 5 classes then.

**Roberta:** I wonder if it had to do with consolidation you know they were starting to channel students from the smaller schools into the bigger schools. What was your teacher's name?

**Nora:** I had 2 teachers. I remember Miss Body, I don't remember what her first name was, we always called her Miss Body and then we had Minnie Ryder from Newark. She taught for years out there.

- Roberta: So when did you have Miss Body? I know Reverend Williams talked about her too.
- Nora:** Miss Body was there before Miss Ryder came. She was there when I first started.
- Roberta: So you had her for how many grades?
- Nora:** Maybe for a couple of years I guess.
- Roberta: So maybe like from 1 to 2?
- Nora:** Yes. And then Miss Ryder was there all the time. We had a substitute too, Miss Ethel Roy. She was a substitute. When Miss Ryder was sick or something she would come and substitute for her.
- Roberta: What was the school day like for you? What time did school start and when was it over?
- Nora:** I think classes started at 9 o'clock and I think we got out at 3.
- Roberta: So Miss Ryder lived in Newark so she didn't have far to travel. What about Miss Body, where did she live?
- Nora:** I think Miss Body lived in Wilmington. I don't even know what her first name was.
- Roberta: What about games in school, do you remember games that were played? Did you have a favorite?
- Nora:** Like I said, baseball. We played beanbag, some kind of a thing with a beanbag and we played blindman's bluff, we always played that. And crack the whip.
- Roberta: Crack the whip, what's that?
- Nora:** What else did we play? King on the hill. We would have a big pile of dirt out there and everybody would get up there and then they would push them off and who ever stayed on there was the king. We played that. A lot of kids played to

themselves, played jacks and stuff like that. Some of them would have roller skates and they would roller skate down the pavement. They would have a long pavement that they would roller skate down there. Swings, they had swings there and sliding boards.

**Roberta:** There was an activity called Field Days.

**Nora:** That was the big day when most of the times the schools would come together. Two schools. Somebody else would come to visit another school.

**Roberta:** Do you remember the activities?

**Nora:** They did different dances they would have. Square dances and stuff like that and they played ball. Volleyball, basketball, they would have all that stuff out there.

**Roberta:** In the classroom the teacher had so many students to teach, how did she handle it? Did she have assistance from the older students to help the younger students out?

**Nora:** Some times but most of the time she would give them, like 1st and 2nd grade they would be when she was talking to the older ones they would either be coloring or drawing in class or recess. She would always have something for each one of them to do. The ones in the older class they would do stuff, back in the 6th grade they would with the younger kids. They always had hot lunches over there too.

**Roberta:** Tell me about those. What was that like?

**Nora:** They cooked (the older ones) they had one of them big old pot-bellied stoves and they would make vegetable soup and they made rice, a big pot of rice, they would have that and hot chocolate. They always made a big pot of hot chocolate. Sometimes apple dumplings they would drop them in the pot – they had that. It was good cause when it was cold the kids needed something warm.

**Roberta:** Do you remember if it took a while for the class in school to warm up in the winter time?

**Nora:** Sometimes we didn't have no heat. When we walked all the way from home and we got there the fire would be out and then they would have to go get wood and stuff and start it all over again. It would be so cold and she would make everybody, after they got it started, everybody brought their chairs and stuff up and set up all around the stove so they could keep warm.

Roberta: While she conducted class.

**Nora:** Yes, then they would sing. She would have like a singing class or something like that or read, some kind of reading class.

Roberta: Do you remember whether the teachers had to discipline a lot? Where there situations where there was discipline or were there some funny stories.

**Nora:** They didn't have to – not really. Like I said the kids back in them days the kids were a lot different from the kids today. They ain't nothing like the kids are today.

Roberta: Did you feel like your students enjoyed school in Iron Hill?

**Nora:** I think they did.

**End of Tape 1, side B.  
Begin Tape 2, Side A.**

Roberta: I am asking Mrs. Williams what activities in addition to baseball did she enjoy.

**Nora:** I liked to play jacks when we played. I like playing blindman's bluff, it was fun. Dodgeball, I like to play that too.

Roberta: Did either of the teachers have the students put on special plays or activities?

**Nora:** For Christmas and Thanksgiving and stuff like that. How much did the students participate in preparing like either the program or the scenery?

- Nora:** Like they would always decorate the school. Some of them would make costumes and stuff or I guess the parents would make the costumes that they would wear for Halloween or stuff like that.
- Roberta: Did you trick or treat at Iron Hill?
- Nora:** At Iron Hill?
- Roberta: In the community.
- Nora:** We didn't know nothing about no trick or treating. When Halloween would come my mother would buy us a pumpkin and she would have cider and she would have maybe some hot dogs or something like that and give us some candy and stuff. We never went out trick or treating. We didn't know what trick or treating was but they always gave us our candy and stuff right there. I never started trick or treating only when my kids got older. We never went out trick or treating.
- Roberta: Now when your children were still in Iron Hill or here?
- Nora:** We were still in Iron Hill.
- Roberta: Now you were talking about when the mother had cider. Did the mother make cider or did you buy it?
- Nora:** They used to buy it.
- Roberta: Do you remember what the school looked like? On the outside?
- Nora:** Just like a big old building. It didn't have no vinyl siding or nothing like that on it, just regular boards.
- Roberta: So it was wood? What color was it, do you remember?
- Nora:** I think it was white or gray, I ain't sure. There wasn't no kind of shingles on it.
- Roberta: Were the woods when you were there, are they probably about the same distance from the school?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: Let's see, you left Iron Hill, what year was that again?

**Nora:** '79.

Roberta: 1979. Did they still have state superintendents and inspectors coming to the school?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: Once a year?

**Nora:** Yes and then they had a – I remember the dentist used to come there and they cleaned everybody's teeth in there and they filled their teeth or whatever they needed. The state would send us fruit, big crates of oranges and apples for the kids.

Roberta: The dentist came once a year?

**Nora:** Yes and they would clean everybody's teeth and fill them or whatever.

April: And they would do it right there in the school?

**Nora:** Yes, right there in the schoolhouse, right there in the back they would clean there and they would set their dentist chair and stuff up right there.

Roberta: So this was a state thing that was done for all of the schools? White as well as Black?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: What about nursing care or health care?

**Nora:** I don't remember no nurses coming out there.

**At this point there is a skip in the tape.**



**Nora:** He was from Dillon, South Carolina. When he came here he never went back home.

Roberta: Dillon?

**Nora:** Dillon, South Carolina, that's where he was originally from.

April: But as far as your grandparents, your great-grandparents

**Nora:** All the rest of them are from Iron Hill.

April: As long as you know they have always been in Iron Hill? How many main families do you think there are, African-American families that make up the Iron Hill, extended families members?

**Nora:** There are so many of them. The Smiths.

April: Wait a minute. The Websters, the Smiths, if I go to the cemetery I will see these names. The Earls. These were all families in that area?

**Nora:** The Chandlers.

April: Chandler?

**Nora:** Yes.

April: And then your family, the Thompsons, and that was the same grandparents of Reverend Smith? That was his grandparents? They were Thompsons?

**Nora:** No. That was the Smiths.

April: That was the Smiths. So Websters, Earls, Smiths, Chandlers, Thompsons, I don't know if we have come up with any other names. If I go to the cemetery I will probably see a lot of tombstones with some dates and these names over there. Did you church keep any records in the church of when people got married or

**Nora:** I don't know.

- April: We would have to go and ask in the office or who ever is there. Is there a secretary in the church?
- Nora:** Probably a deacon.
- April: They often will put on the marriage records where the people were from or something like that. The last part of this is has any one ever done a history or a reunion for your church? Have they ever had any kind of a gathering?
- Nora:** Yes. They have had one a long time ago but it's been a long, long time.
- April: So who would know about that?
- Nora:** Ain't too many of them would know now. Most of them are all gone. Most of the people are all dead.
- April: And Reverend Smith, would he know?
- Nora:** He might know.
- April: Do you think it happened ahead of him? Ahead of him being the minister, the pastor there?
- Nora:** He might know.
- April: I was wondering if I could find anything that way. But there has never been a reunion of any of you that went to Iron Hill School?
- Nora:** No.
- April: You need to have one. It could be something to be planned in with the whole opening of the thing. Thank you. I was trying to think if there was something else that I wanted to go here. These families that you were giving me were quite big so we could talk – so the community there could have been thousands of African-American families? Or more like hundreds? Everytime when someone mentions Iron Hill I keep expecting to see a town but I know there is no town

there so what is the geographical area? Where did Iron Hill end and Elkton begin? I'm trying to think, what is Iron Hill?

**Nora:** It's just like a little town.

**April:** But there is no extension of that town is there – it's just a spread out section of farms. I'm trying to think how would I know when I have left Iron Hill.

**Nora:** You left Iron Hill when you go out this way 4 or 5 miles from Iron Hill.

**April:** Ok, is the school considered right in the center of Iron Hill? Would it be? What would you call the center of Iron Hill if I had to go look for a center point?

**Nora:** You mean Iron Hill School?

**April:** Would you consider that to be right in the middle of what Iron Hill was? Did the families walk from all directions to that school or was it sort of on the edge?

**Nora:** It was more like back here and all the families lived on this side.

**April:** Ok, so if the school is located here how did you walk in? Here's Old Baltimore Pike and here's 896 I guess if you come on down, what's that next road, is that Otts Chapel?

**Nora:** Yes. Otts Chapel

**April:** Ok this is Otts Chapel and this is 896 and here's the Iron Hill School, where did you walk from? Go ahead and draw it on there for me.

**Nora:** We'd start from Otts Chapel and on up to Old Baltimore Pike.

**April:** This is Old Baltimore Pike right here. Where was your house in relationship to the school? When you did your paths that you walked to go to school kind of where were you walking?

**Nora:** Well we cut off on a dirt road, it ain't dirt no more, but it was all dirt.

**April:** Was it behind the school or in front of the school, which direction – because this is the front of the school down that way. I'm trying to think. You come in the parking lot this way and the school sits there and you come in the front door, if this is the school right here, we'll give you the school house – there's the front door coming in the school, did you guys walk from this direction to the school? I'm getting the feeling that most of the houses were this way. Because I think, no maybe not, I think you told me the White school was located down on this corner somewhere.

**Nora:** Yes. Pleasant Valley Road.

**April:** Which one is Pleasant Valley Road.

**Roberta:** The next one over.

**April:** The next one. So the White school was here, okay, so now again where were most of the Black families living? To the south of here?

**April:** No?

**Nora:** We was on this side.

**April:** So you guys were walking in this direction to go to the school. And Elkton is on further out this way so you keep going to Elkton, you go through Pleasant Valley and Newark is up here. There's Newark in that direction.

**Nora:** You would take a right to go to Elkton.

**April:** Newark is that direction.

**Nora:** You go to Elkton you make a right.

**April:** Yes, you would make a right. You're going out that direction. So your family - did you walk down Otts Chapel and come this way?

**Nora:** Yes.

- April: You did. A little bit. So you'd walk in but then you had some paths?
- Nora:** Like I said we had a dirt road we would take it because it was shorter and we would cut through there and then cut through the woods. There was a path through the woods we would use.
- April: So if the school is kind of on the edge of it, meaning once you got past your school and went on in this direction you were mostly more to the white part of this area I guess.
- Nora:** Yes.
- April: So it kind of was the dividing line somewhere here between white families and this was a white school, was this all white people that lived in that direction.
- Nora:** Yes, mostly all white.
- April: Okay so the black part of Iron Hill kind of
- Nora:** The Congos lived, they were the only one on that side.
- April: And they lived at Otts Chapel, this direction?
- Nora:** They lived down from Otts Chapel.
- Roberta: They lived more in the Pleasant Valley area?
- April: They lived down this way?
- Nora:** Yes the Congos did.
- April: Okay, the Congos on Old Baltimore Pike
- Nora:** Yes, they was what you call Old Baltimore Pike because they went right past the White school.
- April: So you went past it. They were closer – the Congos were out

**Nora:** They were closer

April: To Elkton? They were getting closer and closer into Elkton.

**Nora:** Yes it was closer for them to walk than it was for us.

April: And I think when we did – where was that log cabin that we went to. I think we went to here and down.

Roberta: Yes, I think you did. I haven't been to that yet. It was in that general direction. So you would be going toward –

April: So went to the south

Roberta: Right

April: We actually turned on – I think it is right down here. I am still trying to get at where the heart of Iron Hill is. If this is the edge I know that that was an African-American community but this White school almost looks like its right in the middle of what was the African-American.

Roberta: Or on the edge, like maybe if I am understanding you know a lot of the folks in the Iron Hill community lived kind of like up in here then you had a few that were over here because of the size of the property and maybe the White school was still on the edge so there was just a bit of a little overlap.

April: Except that this log cabin sits right here and across from it is some trailers. There is a trailer park kind of down in there.

**Nora:** That's down there in the –

April: And before you get to Route 40

**Nora:** That's on Pleasant Valley.

April: That's on Pleasant Valley so you know exactly where I am talking about – these trailers

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** And that's a fairly large African-American community

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** Is that part of Iron Hill?

**Nora:** No, that's Pleasant Valley.

**April:** Okay so that's called something different. I have to get my bearings here. So if I go out here – if I were to come around the corner on Otts Chapel and I don't know what roads, I guess you hit I-95 kind of up here if you keep going this area that kind of went up in this direction – where was your mother's house? Where was your house kind of in here? The house that you lived in when you grew up? If this is the school here and this is Otts Chapel here

**Nora:** We was right down from Otts Chapel.

**April:** Oh you were to the south of Old Baltimore Pike.

**Nora:** If Otts Chapel was on the left hand side my mom's house was on the right, the next house down from Otts Chapel.

**Roberta:** Oh, Otts Chapel was here?

**Nora:** Yes.

**Roberta:** Is that where it was?

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** So when you left the school and you walked down Old Baltimore Pike you turned left onto Otts Chapel?

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** How long did you walk before you got to your mom's house? About how far is that?

**Nora:** It's not that far.

**April:** Okay so its probably sitting somewhere in here.

**Nora:** Yes.

**April:** I don't know which side of the road it is on. Okay you said it's on the right if you are coming down Otts Chapel?

**Nora:** Yes, from Otts Chapel. Otts Chapel is on the left and our house is on the right.

**April:** Okay it's kind of right in here. Now I am starting to get that. So did your family home – would you call that the center of what was called the Iron Hill area or were you on the edge of it?

**Nora:** It was more like I guess like in the center part.

**April:** Okay, all right so it sounds like it may drift a bit to the south more than we realized. There may not be so many families coming from up here because this is the Pleasant Valley –

**Nora:** There was some colored families lived on Pleasant Valley. The Bullocks lived there and the Congos lived on Pleasant Valley.

**April:** On Pleasant Valley and did the farmsteads, did they all link up? Was it all kind of unified? You went from one family farm to another family's farm without ever crossing into a white family's farm? Or was it all mixed up?

**Nora:** No it was all mixed up like that.

**April:** Ok so it wasn't one big area

**Nora:** No.



April: And you don't know when the first families moved here?

**Nora:** No.

April: Do you have any sense of anybody who would know that that I could talk to?

**Nora:** I think everybody's all gone just about

April: Nobody would know

**Nora:** Ain't no real older people out at Iron Hill now.

Roberta: Do you know Lena Dyer Satchell?

**Nora:** Yes. I went to school with her. We're about the same age.

Roberta: Ok because we have to interview her a second time too and we will check with her. Do you think she might know?

**Nora:** I doubt it.

Roberta: Because she and her mother were pretty active.

**Nora:** But I don't think she would know because I was at Iron Hill longer than she was.

Roberta: That's right.

April: Where is your church? I still don't know where this church is? Where is St. Daniel's?

**Nora:** It's on Whitaker Road.

April: Where is Whitaker Road?

Roberta: It's back up this way?

- Nora:** If you come to Boston Chicken it is on Newark-Elkton Road, I mean 896 road, you know where Boston Chicken is? On the right hand side? Take that road. That's Whitaker Road.
- April:** That's Whitaker Road.
- Nora:** It's a little cut off road where you take it in and you come right to the church.
- April:** Now that church must be very old obviously
- Nora:** Yes, it's got the date is on the back.
- April:** Would you consider that to be right in the heart of what would be called Iron Hill? Is that church considered to be part of Iron Hill?
- Nora:** Yes. It's not that far from the school.
- Roberta:** Check with Laura too, she might have an idea.
- April:** I'll get my map out. Thank you I just needed to get my bearings. You can't be a geographer and not know where these things are.
- Roberta:** I am probably going to ask Mrs. Williams if this is a good time to stop. It seems like your family is kind of converging and it is probably getting on to dinner time. Should we wrap this up now?
- Nora:** Are you about done?
- Roberta:** I've got a few more questions I would like to ask you that pertain to this school and activities in the school.
- Nora:** You can go ahead
- Roberta:** You sure? Well let me get going and then you can tell me.
- April:** Then I am going to excuse myself.

Roberta: Let me go back and ask you some questions about the school work and material you used in school. Did each student have a book or did you share a book.

**Nora:** Yes we all had books.

Roberta: Okay you didn't have to share books?

**Nora:** No, we all had books.

Roberta: I have to remember the time frame that we are talking about too. You went to grades 1 through 6 right? So it was like 1941?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: 1941 to 1947. I will try to go through these as quick as I can. Do you remember like in the school you were talking about the school not being warm sometimes so you remember the stove, the potbellied stove.

**Nora:** A lot of times the fire would go out.

Roberta: What part of the school, like if you remember when you go in the school and you were facing the back of it where the teachers desk was, where would the stove have been?

**Nora:** The stove, like when you come in the stove was setting in the back like but it set off to itself and the teachers desk was over on the other side.

Roberta: No you are facing the back?

**Nora:** Yes. When you come in the front.

Roberta: So the stove would be to your left or right?

**Nora:** It would be to your right.

Roberta: Okay

**Nora:** In the back.

Roberta: Okay. When they fixed, the teacher or the students or whoever when they fixed the lunches, where did they fix them?

**Nora:** There was a table back in the kitchen.

Roberta: Like a little kitchen?

**Nora:** They cooked back in there.

Roberta: When students brought lunches did they have lunch pails? Bags?

**Nora:** Some of them had lunch buckets, most of them brought bags.

Roberta: Also somebody talked about the drinking. Each student had its own cup and had their name on it, do you remember that? Did they have that when you were in school?

**Nora:** No but I remember when I was there they used to bring water in in them big jugs and set them up on the –

Roberta: Cooler?

**Nora:** Yes.

Roberta: Okay so you had a water cooler. So you did not have to worry about a cup with your name on it.

**Nora:** I never brought a cup in but I remember they used to go across – the water that they liked washed dishes and stuff with they would get it from the neighbors. They would go over and get a bucket of water but most of the time they had a cooler, a water cooler in there.

Roberta: Did you paper cups?

**Nora:** I think they had those little paper cups.

- Roberta: What was the lighting like when you attended school?
- Nora:** I think there was them big ceiling lights. They didn't have them long ceiling lights like they got
- Roberta: Like florescence?
- Nora:** They didn't have those.
- Roberta: Did t he windows bring in a sufficient amount of light too? I know that was one of the purposes of having windows on one side of the school.
- Nora:** Yes.
- Roberta: To help bring light in.
- Nora:** That was the only air they had like too when it got hot, they would put the windows up. We had no fans or nothing like that in there.
- Roberta: Really?
- Nora:** Nope
- Roberta: So you had to depend on the movement of the air. I guess by the time it got really hot school was out.
- Nora:** School was about ready to get out. Sometimes we had to go to school in the summer to make up like on Saturdays, make up for missed days.
- Roberta: So normally when did school recess for the summer, for the year?
- Nora:** Sometime in June, around the middle part of June.
- Roberta: Was there every anything talked about a bench where you went to to recite, a recitation bench? Do you ever remember anything like that?
- Nora:** No.

- Roberta: That might have been earlier. Some of the students remembered that. That's where you would go in the front of the room if you had practice and you would just say whatever it was that you were working on and there was a special bench for that.
- Nora:** No I don't remember that.
- Roberta: Okay they must have stopped that by the time you went to school. The desks where the students sat, they were lined up. Were they placed so that they could be moved around or were they kind of nailed to the floor?
- Nora:** I think they were nailed to the floor. They had them old time desks with the lids on the top and you could lift them up and put your lunch inside and your books and stuff inside of them.
- Roberta: Were the classrooms used for other things besides school?
- Nora:** Sometimes they had, later on after it got older they had dances up there. They would have a dance maybe once or twice a year or something like that.
- Roberta: Was it a special theme dance?
- Nora:** Something to raise money for.
- Roberta: What was the involvement of the parents with the school?
- Nora:** They had those PTA meetings and stuff.
- Roberta: When they had PTA meetings was it parents and the teacher? Did anybody from the state office come?
- Nora:** I don't whether they did or not.
- Roberta: So what you remember is just parents.
- Nora:** Yes I remember they had those PTA meetings there.

- Roberta: What did they do? Do you know what problems did they solve?
- Nora:** I don't think they solved too many.
- Roberta: Who did maintenance on the building? If buildings needed repair was that handled by members of the community? Did that come out of state funds?
- Nora:** I don't know, maybe it was. I ain't sure. I never seen nobody repairing nothing.
- Roberta: What about keeping the school clean and swept?
- Nora:** A lot of the students would clean, pitch in and clean but I guess in the summer they probably had somebody come in and clean.
- Roberta: I know you had recreation and activities outside but did you have anything that was like physical ed? Like gym?
- Nora:** No. They didn't have noting like that.
- Roberta: So it was just the outside or what you did at recess time or lunch time. Did you have recess?
- Nora:** Yes we had recess and they had a lunch break.
- Roberta: Were you expected to dress in any kind of way?
- Nora:** All the girls mostly wore dresses then. You didn't see girls with pants on then. You had to wear dresses or skirts.
- Roberta: Other than your school books, did the school have a library?
- Nora:** No. I think they had library books that you could
- Roberta: Borrow?
- Nora:** Yes.
- Roberta: I was going to ask you, other than school work.-

- Nora:** I think that they had books back there that you could borrow
- Roberta: So they did have extra books in the school?
- Nora:** Yes.
- Roberta: Were they in the front or the back of the school?
- Nora:** In the back part. They had like a little case where they had these books.
- Roberta: Could you take them home?
- Nora:** Yes, I think they would let you.
- Roberta: What about tests? Did you have like quizzes and tests? Once a week, once a month, every year?
- Nora:** I think they just had one once a year before school let out they would have a test. The state would give us that test.
- Roberta: And what was that for?
- Nora:** I guess to see if we done passed to the next class or if you was leaving to go to another school.
- Roberta: Did you ever hear how well the students at Iron Hill did compared to other schools or just how well they did?
- Nora:** No. I never heard nobody say.
- Roberta: It sounds like from the quality of teachers you had you probably did very well.
- Nora:** Yes, I never heard nobody say.
- Roberta: I've pretty much gone through what I have on the list. I would like to ask you what the bathrooms were like.



**Nora:** They had two bathrooms. One for the girls and one for the boys. Everybody went in there and hung their coats up, like a closet.

**Roberta:** Did the boys and girls hang their coats together?

**Nora:** No. The boys hung theirs in the boys room and the girls hung theirs in the girls room. The toilets they had they flushed but it was just one big toilet in there. It was off to itself and they flushed it. But they didn't have running water and stuff over there then.

**Roberta:** Did the teachers give you homework?

**Nora:** Yes, we had homework to do.

**Roberta:** Did you have a lot of it?

**End of Tape 2, Side A**  
**Begin Tape 2, Side B:**

**Roberta:** Did you have any special

**Nora:** No some days we would have singing class. You wouldn't have to do no work. They would have singing and then they had a day when everybody would have art, you could draw or whatever.

**Roberta:** What day was that?

**Nora:** They would have – they would pick a day out of the week.

**Roberta:** Did you have a favorite activity of those non-academic activities?

**Nora:** I liked when they had the singing. Everybody could sing together. Art, it was good too.

**Roberta:** What kind of songs did you sing?

- Nora:** National Anthem and stuff like that.
- Roberta: Do you remember having scripture in school?
- Nora:** Yes, we had that in the morning we went in, always said The Lord's Prayer and somebody recited the 23rd Psalm and we would salute the flag. Those were the first 3 things we did.
- Roberta: What do you know about the railroad? There was a railroad near Iron Hill it was called Iron Hill Railroad. Was it still in operation?
- Nora:** It wasn't up there by the school it was way over like going to Newark.
- Roberta: Did you ever have to deal with it in anyway?
- Nora:** No. Reverend Smith and them they used to ride the train from Newark to Wilmington. But we caught a bus, we had two busses. Mr. Rudy would take us in one bus and then Mr. Herb would pick us up and take us to Middletown.
- Roberta: Now I think maybe earlier Professor Veness asked you about the busses and who was responsible for providing the busses?
- Nora:** Well Rudy Valentine he was our bus driver from Iron Hill and then he would take us to Howes Corner that was down there on 896
- Roberta: Howes Corner?
- Nora:** Howes Corner and then Mr. Herb would pick us up and he would come from St. George's and all around, Port Penn, he would pick us up and then go to Summit Bridge and pick up kids and all the way down till we got to Middletown.
- Roberta: Wow, he had a route didn't he? Evidently there was some houses I guess in front of the school on Old Baltimore Pike, across the street, do you remember who they were?
- Nora:** Yes there was some houses down there.

- Roberta: Do you remember who lived there?
- Nora:** I think there was always a white family that lived there. The Earls lived on Old Baltimore Pike too.
- Roberta: What part of Old Baltimore?
- Nora:** The same road that the school is on. They lived down this way and the school was up this way.
- Roberta: So they lived closer to Pleasant Valley.
- Nora:** Yes.
- Roberta: I think one of the people we interviewed talked about one of the teachers teaching ballet. Do you remember that?
- Nora:** Taught ballet?
- Roberta: Yes.
- Nora:** That must have been way before my time.
- Roberta: I didn't know if it overlapped or not. I'll have to find out which one it was because the name sounds familiar – I think it was one of these two ladies. Miss Ryder or Miss Body.
- Nora:** They taught ballet?
- Roberta: Yes.
- Nora:** It could have been after I left.
- Roberta: Do you have anything that you might remember or you want to share with the project that we haven't asked of you.

**Nora:** I think I done told you guys about everything that I know. I can't think of nothing else. I think you done covered just about everything that I remembered.

**Roberta:** If you think of anything and you want to share it and you want somebody to come back and interview you, just write it down. I'm sure it will be quite helpful. Mrs. Williams I want to take this time to thank you very much.

**Nora:** You're welcome.

**Roberta:** This ends tape 2, side B.

## **Additional**

February 27, 2004, Roberta spoke with Mrs. Williams concerning the editing of her interview. She remembered going to the movies in Maryland. This was in the early 1950's. She was about 23 or 24 years old. She remembered it as Elkton, Maryland Movies. The Black people had to sit upstairs in what was called the gallery. The stairs were wide but not well lit. The gallery was kept clean. They could buy the usual – soda, popcorn, etc. and were not treated badly.