

Annie Gavin: You couldn't tell JT Barber from—You didn't never known him, did you?

Grace George: No, I've seen some old pictures of him.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. You couldn't tell him from White. But his mother was dark, dark as I.

Grace George: Mm-hmm. What's that? The wind?

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh.

Grace George: Oh, okay.

Annie Gavin: It blows through the trees.

Grace George: Okay. I'm just saying, just whatever. I really don't have any questions, but you always tell us about James City, how it used to look and how the people more or less survived. Or something about your home. I guess you wouldn't know.

Annie Gavin: Well, they really survived by farming and mills. It was always a meal in the area of James City, in my lifetime.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Even before then, the men like George Brown, them walked the bridge across town, right across town where the mills. There's still mills over in the area. Over there, the Miller Ice Cream Company over in that area. And they would walk that bridge mornings, even Bill Spivey's generation, and walked back at night. They carried their lunch.

Annie Gavin: For the most part, we lived in almost the same type houses that they built for the slaves when they brought them here. With just some straight boards, framing straight boards, and in some cases, wasn't no division. The way they survived was naturally they had to work on the farm and whatever they were asked to do. But some of them were lucky enough to work around the big house. The big house was the master's house, the owner. Whatever they learned, they carried back.

Grace George: To their community?

Annie Gavin: They learned, some of the younger people, learned how to read, how to write because little White children they played with taught them. They carried that back but they had to hide the books. They had a slat in the floor and they'd hide the books. But every night, come back with something else. There

were a lot of them had good education before they were free. Then, some of the White kids that they played with, they had to teach the little Black child in order to be able for her to know to play with them. That was interesting to me.

Annie Gavin: Then, this man that was a fighter, he's a heavy fella. They called him Uncle Tom. He really wasn't Uncle Tom because he was a fighter from the beginning, but he had to do it secretly.

Grace George: Yes, yes, yes.

Annie Gavin: Whereas Uncle Tom, you think of Uncle Tom as going back and telling the White man everything.

Grace George: Yes, yes.

Annie Gavin: But he learned everything he could from the White man to bring back to the Blacks.

Grace George: To bring back. Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Thurgood Marshall passed, you know?

Grace George: Yeah, I know.

Annie Gavin: He's descendant of a slave. A lot that they picked up, the White man didn't know that they were intelligent enough to remember. But then those little White kids had to teach them what they knew in order—

Grace George: To be able to play.

Annie Gavin: Be able to play with them. Ms. Hannah Smith, her daddy was a White man, was a slave owner. Her mother had children for him, but he made a special house for her. She ain't had to work. Ms. Hannah played with his children by his wife. That was Stella Johnson's mother. I was a big girl when she—

Grace George: All these people lived in James City?

Annie Gavin: Yeah. So, everything that Ms. Hannah would learn, she carried back to the other Black little children, so they passed it on. You'd be surprised how people can grasp things that they want to know.

Grace George: Did we have a school, you remember? Or your mother or all of them, I know you remember the schools here, but what were some of the first schools? If you remember in your day, before we got [indistinct 00:04:38]?

Annie Gavin: Well, the first school I remember was the little red schoolhouse right in there where the James

City sign they dedicated to James City, you know, on the highway?

Grace George: The marker. Where the marker?

Annie Gavin: The marker. Yeah, where the marker is. Just over bit on the hill, just before you get to the railroad, it was a little red schoolhouse. My mother went there but I didn't. I was a little girl. I remember that, though. Ms. Fields, you know Mr. Fields?

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: His wife's granddaddy was a teacher and he was half White. You could look at her and tell that he was almost White. That's when most of them went to the school. Then, the Baptist people built the building way down in there where Norca and them lived, right back there. They had a schoolhouse there and a dormitory set up. Because the children that lived farther away like Bryce's Creek and all, they could get rooms there all the week and go home.

Grace George: Oh, they stayed over on the weekend?

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm, weekend.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: The people that had some education, they pushed it, and they really tried hard to get the Black ones educated. Some of those people were educated way before the end of slavery because the White ones taught.

Grace George: Yeah, well was this the missionaries? Some of them were missionaries?

Annie Gavin: Missionary. Yeah, they start sending missionaries. And you know where Annie Stubb used to live?

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Well, that was—

Grace George: That's down there by that Ramada Inn area?

Annie Gavin: But it's on the other side of the road, going up.

Grace George: On the other side of the river.

Annie Gavin: Even then, Annie Stubb lived in there.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: You remember Annie Stubb?

Grace George: Yeah, I know who you're saying.

Annie Gavin: Well, they were the last people to live there. That was our school.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: They taught women, the girls how to sew and knit and all kind of craft. But they sent the missionaries from up north.

Grace George: Now, Ms. Anne, let me ask you this. Have you ever heard why they picked James City when they captured [indistinct 00:06:53]? Why did they put the setup, the camp, in James City? Have you any idea?

Annie Gavin: Well, they set the camp in James City because they had good soil, good water. That's why they put the slaves down there. That's why my great-grandmother said. They didn't really tell the slaves that much, but wherever one worked in the house and whatever they heard, they carried it back.

Grace George: Carried it back home.

Annie Gavin: They had a mouth-to-mouth source communication.

Grace George: Had that always. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Annie Gavin: Then, sometimes the White kids, if they were close enough to that Black kid, they'd teach them what they knew.

Grace George: Right, right, right, right.

Annie Gavin: They even let them have books. But when they carried back to the shanty, that's what they were.

Grace George: The houses?

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. But they sometimes didn't have any floors, just some boards nailed up around and the dirt was the floor.

Grace George: Yes, ma'am. My mom was saying dirt floors.

Annie Gavin: Dirt floor.

Grace George: The average house. Well, I know that you as a little girl, you just heard what your parents say. But they didn't have windows. They mostly had, what? Shutters or—

Annie Gavin: Well, they had boards for windows. Just a hole in a board.

Grace George: From what I understand, they had churches and everything in that area of whole James City?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, well they had churches after they were freed. They had nice churches.

Grace George: Did you know much about Jones Chapel or heard much about Jones Chapel Methodist Church over here before they brought it over here?

Annie Gavin: I know where it was. They had a nice wooden building, and just down from where Ms. Martha lived the next evening.

Grace George: They couldn't see the [indistinct 00:08:49].

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Only thing I remember about that church was that, I mean, I was kind of big sized girl and the church, they weren't using this church anymore, had dancing girls in there.

Grace George: Oh.

Annie Gavin: Let them use it for a burlesque show.

Grace George: Oh. Oh, okay.

Annie Gavin: Dancing girls.

Grace George: That was before it turned to Jones, to the Methodist church?

Annie Gavin: That was after.

Grace George: Oh, afterwards.

Annie Gavin: After they moved over here.

Grace George: Oh.

Annie Gavin: See, the first church over here was a wooden church, too, and Reverend Thurston put bricks

around us. Rosa was the first person to get married in Jones Chapel. She married George Bell. You remember George Bell?

Grace George: Yeah, I remember George Bell.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Reverend, though. He was a reverend, too.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, a reverend. Reverend Bell. Our Presiding Elder at that time was his uncle. He was from down Newport. He was a preacher, but Aunt Rosa never liked him preaching. But he was a preacher. Francis and Emma, the twins, and Aunt Rosa had I think four children for him. But she was married to your—

Grace George: George Washington.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. Yeah, George Washington.

Grace George: Which was Washington Spivey's son.

Annie Gavin: The son, Yeah.

Grace George: And Washington—

Annie Gavin: And Washington Spivey was the one who refused to pay the rent.

Grace George: Rent and went to court.

Annie Gavin: And went to court.

Grace George: Because of that land.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. He started to fight. He started to fight. He going to build it up.

Grace George: Pass it on down.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. But they say, and well another advantage I had, I was brought up around a store. You know, my dad always get a store.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: Say that Washington Spivey's started it, then they got brick bats and sticks and boards and everything, and ran them all overboard.

Grace George: Yeah, when they come to take their land.

Annie Gavin: When they came to put them out.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Because he refused to pay.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: He refused to pay for something that belonged to him.

Grace George: Right, right.

Annie Gavin: Which was good sense. But as a whole, the James City people stood up for themselves even though we had a hard way to go. Because even in your time when you start to go into school and knew when y'all did, the children that were born and bred in New Bern tried to look down over here. And they found out all of y'all were smarter than they were, but they were glad to come to James City to eat.

Grace George: Yes, yes. We always had plenty of food right here.

Annie Gavin: Plenty of food, yeah.

Grace George: From what I understand, James City used to support New Bern because this was a lot of open field and they used to farm, farming.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, that's what a lot of people, they earned their living going over there, getting the White folks clothes, bring them over here, washing them, getting paid for that. Plus, they pulled wagons of food every day.

Grace George: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. My mother said that.

Annie Gavin: They kept gardens and fields and stuff. And then, the Lavenhouses settled over there, which he was a farmer and he gave them a lot of work.

Grace George: Also, that [indistinct 00:12:17].

Annie Gavin: But they still had a living through carrying, washing and ironing. Ms. Ida, Ms. Mae Liz, you remember, used to carry them big old baskets on the head?

Grace George: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Annie Gavin: Then, the mills start growing and there were mills here. It was two mills, Mungum Bennett's Mill and Cooper's Mill over on this side, and that was a source of income.

Grace George: Was there a plate factory?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, there was a plate factory.

Grace George: That made wooden plates in this area?

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. Probably some of the stones from it still down there over there by [indistinct 00:12:59] Bell is. Or maybe not now though, because they made a lot of changes. But when I was growing up, some of the stones, the type of stones they made then were still standing. And we didn't get a good road until 1922. I remember that very well. That's the year we started the highway out there. It was mostly rock and stuff. That's when Edgar Grant came here from Georgia to work on that good road, and never did go back.

Grace George: Never left James City.

Annie Gavin: And people started to come. Wherever there was work, that's where they would settle. Because my daddy, when he had his both feet, he worked on the railroad. He was a brakeman, a cook. Because he lost—

Grace George: James City really was almost like an industrial area.

Annie Gavin: Yes.

Grace George: They had a lot of factories and farmlands, but mostly factories and mill yards.

Annie Gavin: Two mills, saw mills. Mungum Bennett Mill was over there on that side and Cooper's Mill was over on that side. It gave work to people in New Bern and all around the area.

Grace George: Also, we had a fertilizer tractor.

Annie Gavin: Fertilizer, yeah. Yeah.

Grace George: I remember Mr. Aaron telling me about that, that he always—

Annie Gavin: Well, the fertilizer factory at beginning was in James City, and then it moved over here. Still got a fertilizer factory.

Grace George: Yes. Yes, yes.



Annie Gavin: But that was the Meadows Company.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: And still, some of the Meadows offsprings are around.

Grace George: From what I hear, they sold this land when they told the people from James City they had to leave, they started selling land on this side.

Annie Gavin: Well, actually you couldn't buy the land in James City.

Grace George: Okay, that's—

Annie Gavin: Because I know my daddy said that when he got eight, because he went to work at Mungum Bennett Mill. He grew up down in Havelock. His daddy was a huntsman's guide and papa was scared to go in the woods to the traps. That was one of his things, his duties to do. But he'd go out there and shoot the gun, and Daddy think there's something. Rather, he'd shoot the gun, let him know he'd been there. So, after a while he knew Daddy wasn't going to go by Daddy no more because after he goes and look at the traps and find something in there dead, he knows Papa didn't go there. So, that's when he left home at 11-years-old and went to New Bern and got a job. Then, he transferred from that mill over there and came over here. That's when he met Mama.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: They got married about 16. I think he was 17, she was 16. That's what most of the fellows did. Now, in your case, Newt's daddy and his brother, I think they were about the first people that had a store. Then, Ms. Somas Phillips, you know they went from one—Then, your granddaddy ran a taxi, too. Newt's daddy.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Just like everything else, some people are ambitious and some not.

Grace George: Yeah. She said that he used to drive the horse like a cart for a taxi. Like a wagon.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, taxi. The first taxi was a cart. Not a cart, but a buggy.

Grace George: Yeah, buggy.

Annie Gavin: A buggy with two seats.

Grace George: Like in New Bern.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:16:49] farmer.

Annie Gavin: He'd get people to work and pick them up from work. And then, his brother had a store down in James City. I didn't know him.

Grace George: You knew of him.

Annie Gavin: But you knew Bud. I knew Bud and I know Mr. West.

Grace George: Yeah, he's a state farmer. That's right.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh, but I didn't know the one that had the store.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: I didn't remember him. But my daddy worked for him. That's what inspired him in going to the store business.

Grace George: I think my mom said it was Granddaddy Wes Foye and your daddy.

Annie Gavin: Wes Foye, yeah. Your granddaddy.

Grace George: Right, right. I'm going to talk to him.

Annie Gavin: He had a taxi, too.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Had a big house up on the hill right there. But you don't remember nothing about that. You should remember that house being there.

Grace George: Well, I don't remember the big house but—

Annie Gavin: He's the first one that had a big two-story house. That's where Newt and Alma were born, too. Because Admiral was my age.

Annie Gavin: But as a whole, the people that were here from the beginning as to those slaves, which my mama was, and my daddy's daddy was from Edgecomb County, Rocky Mount. And they came down here looking a better life because they would hunt and stuff. Then, they settled right in there where Cherrypoint

is now. That still belongs to the Black people that never got the money for it.

Grace George: Most people came here because they weren't on plantation. They were more or less, was able to get jobs into work.

Annie Gavin: Came here looking to work, farming and the mills. Mills were the traction really. But in my daddy's daddy's case, they were in Rocky Mount, Edgecombe County, and all that was up there was farming. I guess they came down here to make more money.

Grace George: Right. I found a book that Mr. Ike Long had, and he kept the record at the fertilizer factory. Back in the thirties, they were making like 25 cents a day at the fertilizer factory. I got a book where he kept with all different people that lived in James City, going back as far as Vasalas Neil.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, Vasalas Neil was always, he was a slicker or something, but he was a preacher too. He belonged to our church.

Grace George: He was a preacher. Yeah, that's what he was. He was a—

Annie Gavin: But he was a wise man.

Grace George: Yes. But they called him a slicker, but he was a wise man.

Annie Gavin: A slicker, yeah. Yeah. Well, reason they called him a slicker because he could out talk them out of money I guess. But you learned a lot from Vasalas Neil. He was kind of jack-legged preacher. All those people helped each other.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:19:39].

Annie Gavin: Yeah. They helped each other to survive. Because the women would make quilts, and my grandmother and Willie Stalin's grandmother, George's grand-mama, all had a quilt. And Gracie and Mae Zelamar wouldn't let me play with them because they were coating and they kept away from me, quite tell.

Grace George: Did you tell everything they didn't want you to tell?

Annie Gavin: So, I had to sit around the old folks. I enjoyed hearing them talk about things that happened.

Grace George: Yes. Okay.

Annie Gavin: That's why I know as much as to do.

Grace George: That's why you know. Very good.

Annie Gavin: Because my grandmother. I was 12-years-old when Mama's grandmother died, and so I was a big girl. So, a lot of that stuff I heard from them that was interesting. Ms. Hannah, that was Fella Johnson's grandmother, her daddy was her mother's owner, slave owner. He didn't let her work and he didn't let Ms. Anna be out with the slaves much. She played with his children by his wife in his house. Those White women went through a lot during slavery time. You know that from Roots. Because that woman was looking right at her husband going to Tissie. Those White women had to take a lot, too.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:21:30].

Annie Gavin: Because they say if the slave owner found a woman that he choose, she didn't work.

Grace George: Okay. He's going back then.

Annie Gavin: No, she didn't work. She took good care of her. And the wife couldn't do anything about that. The White women had to go through a lot. We hear a lot about Uncle Tom, but according to my grandmother and them people that I learned so much from, they called him Uncle Tom because he found out what was happening. He was a big man and he drove for the master, and whatever he would hear in regard to what was going to be done, he would bring it back.

Grace George: Bring to them.

Annie Gavin: So, they learned first-hand. Eventually, just somebody killed him.

Grace George: Is there anything you'd like to ask Mrs. Annie?

Unknown Interviewer: Did any of your relatives or any of the people you've heard speaking ever mention Horace James?

Annie Gavin: Horace James?

Unknown Interviewer: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Horace James. Wasn't Horace James Black?

Unknown Interviewer: No, he was the—

Grace George: No, he founded. They named James City after him.

Unknown Interviewer: Yeah, he was the chaplain.

Grace George: He was the chaplain.

Annie Gavin: Oh, oh, oh. Yeah. When they brought this group of slaves and put them down in James City, they picked that area because of the sand and the good water. Horace James was a preacher from Boston, and then he was over them. Horace James, his mission was to teach them. He was a priest and then he had a school. That house that Annie used to live in, that used to be the school, mission school.

Grace George: The mission. Mm-hmm.

Annie Gavin: Start teaching them how to read and write and sew and do craft. Taught them to be independent. He would come and go from Boston. Then the missionaries used to stay with Reverend Dudley. Oh, Lord. Yeah.

Grace George: Well, he always [indistinct 00:23:44] the freedmen.

Annie Gavin: Just turn that. Yeah. Yeah.

Grace George: He had plenty of [indistinct 00:23:57].

Annie Gavin: Hello, Anne. Come on in and let's join the slave party.

Anne (Neighbor): I'm just coming in three peppers.

Annie Gavin: Okay. Those that hadn't heard about James City, and by the time Grace get through working with this, they'll know about it.

Grace George: Yeah, everybody going to know about James City. So, maybe do you have time to continue? Or you can come back another time.

Unknown Interviewer: Can I come back another time?

Grace George: Sure.

Annie Gavin: Any special thing you want to know?

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: In school with [indistinct 00:24:33] and James was as well. That's good enough. We're going to use your tools.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, that was the main thing.

Grace George: Yeah, yes.

Annie Gavin: That's what it's all about.

Unknown Interviewer: I'm messed up, so wherever we were yesterday I guess.

Grace George: Okay. She was talking about James City, the original, when it was the first settle. And then what you heard and about Horace James and—

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, according to my knowledge and what I heard, they put them down here because of the good water and the sandy soil. That was one of the reasons. And then, they built these makeshift houses for them. I guess they built them themselves. They got material for them. Each family had their own little, I'll say, hut. This was after Abraham Lincoln went to—My great-grandmother saw Abraham Lincoln. He came to the plantation where they were, because they lived like the plantations, you know? He was not too well-dressed but he had some beautiful horses. He asked questions, because the stable boy, they had boys, young men to put up the horses and hitch the people's stuff. And he questioned them and asked them did they like the way they lived. But he was a homely man, which we know from his picture. But he had some nice horses. They still didn't know he was the president because he traveled alone.

Grace George: Right, right.

Annie Gavin: Well, I don't really think he had anything to feel back then. But anyway, the boy told him what he knew. And do they feed you good? Do they take good care of you? He said yes, because I guess that my grandmother said that their owner was good to his slaves. Some of them were very mean.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: But Abraham Lincoln stayed there a day or two. The slave owner's wife was pregnant. Her baby was a girl, but Abraham Lincoln didn't know what the baby would be. He left a name for the baby in the wall. They didn't even know he was the president. He traveled alone. After he got back in Washington, he wrote back and told them where to look and find the letter he had written. I even remember what he named. If it was a girl, Sophronia. That stuck with me because it was a—I'm surprised I didn't name one of mine Sophronia.

Annie Gavin: But anyway, soon when he got back in Washington, then they started sending troops and they start freeing the slaves. She said they didn't want to leave where they were because their master was good. Like everything else, there's something good, something bad.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: She said just as far as she was 12-years-old, I think she said, and just as far as they could look back, they looked back because they didn't want to leave. And said they were standing on the porch and

they waved as far as they could see. Then, they brought them to James City and put them over there and built makeshift houses for them. The special reason they settled in James City, that's why I guess all these hotels trying to get in for the good soil and good water.

Annie Gavin: Then, after he went back was so very long after then, the troops started coming in. The war started. Down on Battleground Parkway, used to carry papers down there that the ships and stuff, the boats used to come up there. Because it still got big holes.

Grace George: Yeah, okay.

Annie Gavin: Or did have last time I was carrying papers down there. That's one of the back—

Grace George: That's down on the other side by the Nissan building, in that area?

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Way down.

Annie Gavin: Way down in the Thurman Light.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: There were deep holes. Even when was carrying papers down there, there were deep holes where they dug to dig in. I guess the—

Grace George: Where they'd bring the ships in or something.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. And to hide while they were fighting, because they had battles down there.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: That's why it's Battleground Park. That's what they're called it.

Grace George: Oh, okay. That's what they called it.

Annie Gavin: Battleground Park. Down there by Monette's place and way back there. I used to have to go way around that and they had deep holes, still had deep holes and stuff.

Annie Gavin: But they had good and bad masters. Sometimes the master himself, the man was good and the woman was mean.

Grace George: Right. Yeah.

Annie Gavin: I knew Ms. Hannah. Now, her slave master was her father.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Now, they'd select themselves a Black woman. They put her in a house and she didn't have to work either. Her cheering. And Ms. Hannah played with her half sisters and brother. Stayed in the big house. She played in the big house.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: So, those slaves felt good.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: That's why there's such a mixture of Black people. They were fathered by them slave owners. Because originally, most naturally those Africans were Black.

Grace George: Were Black people when they came.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. But after he went back to Washington, then the soldiers started to come in, and going to different plantations and stuff. The war, Civil War, they called it, start freeing the slaves. Some of those slaves didn't even know how to take care of themselves because they had been taken care by their masters and stuff. That's why I guess it's still some Black people don't have enough to have a home of their own.

Grace George: Take care of themselves. Independent.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. And Ms. Martha's daddy, Washington Spivey. He's the one that had the name in James City.

Grace George: Yes. Yeah, I remember that.

Annie Gavin: He defied all of them.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: This was after the war, and they were coming over there collecting for those same huts that they had put them in. He decided he wasn't going to pay for them because it belonged to him.

Grace George: Still up.



Annie Gavin: Still got some your stuff. You say when Washington Spivey, he'd tell them off. He ain't going to pay no rent. To say, babies heads were sticking out the windows. But with him and the other men got together, and they got sticks and bottles and everything else. That's the why James City got the name here.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. They got the name because the Washington Spivey led them into battle.

Grace George: That's right. Washington Spivey.

Annie Gavin: Led them into battle and used bottles, sticks, whatever. But they ran the law overboard. So, even till today they're scared to come to James City. We still got a lot of it in us.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: Because I can remember, come and ask where people live, we wouldn't tell them anything. One man said to me, "You mean to tell me you live right here in the neighborhood and you don't know these people?" I say, "You can't make me know them."

Grace George: You were taught that way.

Annie Gavin: But then he showed me he was an insurance man and he had located a check that had been misplaced, and he was trying to find the person. I said, "When you come to James City you better show these people something."

Grace George: Show us something.

Annie Gavin: We don't believe it. You got to show it to us.

Grace George: Right, you got to show us.

Annie Gavin: But as a whole, James City people have been very outgoing people and very, very good people. They might fight this morning, but nobody else better come in there.

Grace George: Nobody else touch them.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: In reference to taking care of themselves, they were farmers, mills, they owned their own businesses.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: From what my mom said. You had stores. Many of the older people had shops in Old James City.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, like everything else, some people have ambition and some don't. Now, your mother's dad and uncle, they've had the first store over here. Because my daddy worked for your mother's uncle. I forgot his name. Most of the time you hear Papa. Then when Papa got his foot cut off, because Papa used to be a brakeman on the train, when he got his foot cut off, that's when he went in the store business. And he was a cook on the train. Always had a cafe.

Grace George: Ms. Anne, do you think that's why a lot of people wanted—Not only that they could be free once they come to James City, but it was like industrial area compared to other places with plantation?

Annie Gavin: Yeah. For a long time, the only work that Black women could get was on the farm and in the kitchen. A lot of them walked that long bridge, Ms. Ida and Ms. Mae Lizzie, with clothes on their head. Ms. Mae Lizzie and Ms. Ida wouldn't even have to hold it.

Grace George: Just carried the bags.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm, carried it right around the head. But I guess everybody has survived and I'll tell you something else they used to do back then. Didn't have linoleum for the floor. Scrubbed the floor and go down to the sand holes, and get buckets of sand and put on the floor.

Grace George: And sand, why?

Annie Gavin: The sand itself was a cover for the floor.

Grace George: A shield.

Annie Gavin: And you see, the sand helped to keep the floor clean.

Grace George: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Say, for instance, they spilled oil or anything. That would catch it.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. But you know, I knew this happened. Mama never did. She just scrubbed her floor. But Ms. Mae Lizzie and Ms. Ida and those people that were older than she was, everyone said that the children had to scrub the floor, especially kitchen.

Grace George: I understand.

Annie Gavin: And put sand on it, pretty white sand. It's still pretty white sand down there in them holes.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: And then you know we had a plate factory here, across over there near water, where Rimbell used to live. For years. Just since I've been growing up, since I've been back home, they told us it was a plate factory where they made plates.

Grace George: What did they make the plates out of? Did I hear wood?

Annie Gavin: Sand and some kind of way to put it together. But they had unique ways of doing things, but it had to serve the purpose for the time.

Grace George: Is this what the government helped set up for the people, for the community to survive?

Annie Gavin: Well, I don't think it was so much for the community but it was a good location to get plenty of sand.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Seemed like plates are made out sand somewhere. It wasn't in operation when I was growing up, but the building, part of it was still there. I think the reason they located it where they did, because there was a lot of sand there.

Grace George: Mm-hmm.