

Annie Gavin: You couldn't tell JT Barber from—You didn't ever know him, did you?

Grace George: Yeah, I seen some old pictures.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, he couldn't tell him from White, but his mother was dark. Dark as I am.

Grace George: What's that, the wind?

Unknown Interviewer: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh.

Grace George: Oh, okay.

Annie Gavin: It blows through the trees.

Grace George: Okay. Ms. Annie, 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
[indistinct 00:00:46]

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

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Even before then, the men like George Brown and them walked the bridge across town, way across town where the mills—There's still mills over in the area over in the area. Over near Miller Ice Cream company, over in that area. They would walk that bridge mornings, even Bill Spivey's generation, and walked back at night. They carried a lunch. For the most part we lived in almost the same type houses that they built for the slaves when they brought them here. Just some straight boards, framing, straight boards. 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.

Annie Gavin: But some of them were lucky enough to work around the big house. The big house was the master's house, the owner, and whatever they learned, they carried back.

Grace George: To their community.

Annie Gavin: Some of the younger people learned how to read, how to write, because little children they

played with taught them and they carried that back. But they had to hide the books.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: They had a slot in the floor, 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. Then this man that was a fighter, he's a heavy-built 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, telling the White man everything.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:03:09]

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

Grace George: Yeah, I heard.

Annie Gavin: He's descendant of a slave. And 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. And Ms. Hannah Smith, her daddy was a White man, was her slave owner. Her mother had children for him. But he made a special house for her. She had to work and 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: Uh-huh, 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—

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

City sign, dedicated to James City on the highway.

Grace George: The marker.

Annie Gavin: The marker, you know 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 didn't. I was a little girl.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: I remember that though. And Ms. Fields, you know Mr. Fields?

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: His wife's granddaddy was teaching and he was half White. You could look at her and tell that he was almost White. But that's when most of them went to the school. Then the Baptist people built the building way down in there were where Norca and them lived, right back there. They had a schoolhouse there and a dormitory set up.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Because the children that lived farther away, like Bryces Creek and all, they could get rooms there all the week and go home.

Grace George: Oh, they stay over the weekend—

Annie Gavin: Weekend.

Grace George: —and go back.

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 them—

Grace George: Yeah. Well, was this the missionary? Some of them were—

Annie Gavin: Missionaries. Then, yeah, they start sending missionaries and you know where Annie Stove 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.

Grace George: On the other side of the railroad track.

Annie Gavin: Like you're going up. Eve and them, Annie Stove lived in there.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: You remember Annie Stove?

Grace George: Yeah, I know Ms. Annie.

Annie Gavin: —Well, they were the last people lived there. That was a school.

Grace George: Okay.

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

Grace George: Ms. Annie, let me ask you this. Have you ever heard why they picked James City when they captured New Bern? Why did they set up 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 what my great-grandmother said. They didn't really tell the slaves that much, but wherever one worked in the house, whatever they heard, they carried it back.

Grace George: Carried it back home.

Annie Gavin: They had a mouth-to-mouth source of—

Grace George: Had their own.

Annie Gavin: —communication. 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.

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: Yeah. That's what my mama was saying, dirt floors.

Annie Gavin: Dirt floors.

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

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

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

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, they had churches after they were free. They had nice churches.

Grace George: Did you know much about Jones Chapel? 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 right nice wooden building, just down from where Ms. Martha lived, the next [indistinct 00:08:47]

Grace George: They couldn't [indistinct 00:08:48]

Annie Gavin: Yeah. The only thing I remember about that church was that, when 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 burlesque show.

Grace George: Oh, okay.

Annie Gavin: Dancing girls.

Grace George: That was before it turned 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.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Reverend Thurston put bricks around us. And my Aunt Rosa was the first person to get married in Jones Chapel.

Grace George: Oh.

Annie Gavin: She married George Bell. You remember George Bell?

Grace George: Yeah, I remember George Bell.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Reverend Bell, he was a reverend?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, Reverend Bell. Our Presiding Elder at that time was his uncle. He was from down Newport, but he was a preacher. But Aunt Rosa never liked to hear him preach. But he was a preacher. Frances 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-uh. John—Yeah, George Washington.

Grace George: Which was Washington Spivey's son.

Annie Gavin: Son, yeah.

Grace George: And Martha—

Annie Gavin: And Washington Spivey was the one 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 the fight. He started the fight, you going build it up.

Grace George: Pass it on down.

Annie Gavin: Well, and another advantage I had, I was brought up around the store. My dad always kept a store?

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: And they say that Washington Spivey started it. Then they got brick bats and sticks and boards and everything and ran the law overboard.

Grace George: Yeah, when they come to take the 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.

Annie Gavin: Which was good sense. But as a whole, the James City people stood up for themselves.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: Even though we had a hard way to go, because even in your time when you start to going to school in New Bern, y'all did—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:11:26]

Annie Gavin: The children that were born and reared in New Bern tried to look down over you 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. We always had plenty of food.

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.

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. They had gardens and fields and stuff. Then the Lavenhouses settled over there, he was a farmer and he gave them a lot of work. But they still had a living through carrying, washing and ironing and Ms. Ida and Ms. Mae Lizzie, you remember, used to carry them big old baskets on the head?

Grace George: 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 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: Made wooden plates in this area.

Annie Gavin: Probably some of the stones from it still down over there by where Rimbell was. 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. We didn't get a good road until 1922. I remember that very well. That's the year they 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: 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 farmland, mostly factories [indistinct 00:14:04]

Annie Gavin: And two mills, sawmills, and Mungum Bennett Mill was over there on that side, and Cooper's Mill was over on that side. Gave work to people in New Bern and all around the area.

Grace George: Also we had a fertilizer factory.

Annie Gavin: Fertilizer, yeah.

Grace George: I remember Mr. Aaron telling me about that.

Annie Gavin: Well, the fertilizer factory—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:14:21]

Annie Gavin: —at the beginning was in James City.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Then it moved over here and we still got a fertilizer factory.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: But that was the Meadows Company.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: And still on the Meadows' offsprings around.

Grace George: From what I hear, they sold this land. When they told the people from James City they had to leave, they start 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 when he got—because he went to work Mungum Bennett Mill, he grew up down Havelock. His daddy was a huntsman's guide and Papa was scared to go in the woods to the traps. And that was one of 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 his daddy wasn't going to go by there anymore because if you go to look at the traps and find something in there dead, he know his papa didn't go there.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: So that's when he left home at 11 years old. Went to New Bern and got a job. Then he

transferred from that mill over there and came over here. That's where 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 fellas 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. Simons Phillips, you know they went from one—Then your granddaddy—Ran taxi too, Newt's daddy. But just like everything else, is some people ambitious and some not.

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

Annie Gavin: Yeah, taxi. but—

Grace George: Like a wagon.

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

Grace George: Buggy.

Annie Gavin: A buggy with two seats.

Grace George: Brought them to New Bern. [indistinct 00:16:32]

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

Grace George: You knew—

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

Grace George: [indistinct 00:16:54] farmer.

Annie Gavin: 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 into the store business.

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

Annie Gavin: Wes Foye, yeah. Your granddaddy.

Grace George: Right, right.

Annie Gavin: He had a taxi too.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Had a big house up on the hill.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Right there. You don't remember nothing about that house? You should remember that house being there.

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

Annie Gavin: He was the first one had a big two-story house. That's where Newt and Alma were born too. Of course, Alma was my age. But as a whole, the people that were here from the beginning, as to those slaves, which my mama was.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:17:50]

Annie Gavin: And my daddy's daddy was from Edgecombe 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 Cherry Point is now. That's still belongs to Black people, never got the money for it.

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

Annie Gavin: Came here looking work, farm and 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. I got a book with all different people that lived in James City, going back as far as to Silas Niel.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. But Silas Niel was always, he was a slicker or something. But he was a preacher too. He belonged to our church.

Grace George: Yeah, that's what [indistinct 00:18:36] He was a—

Annie Gavin: But he was a wise man.

Grace George: Yes, but they called him a slicker.

Annie Gavin: A slicker, yeah.

Grace George: But he was a wise man.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. The reason they called him a slicker because he could out talk them out of their money, I guess. But you learned a lot from Silas Niel and he was kind of jack leg preacher and he had a lot. All those people helped each other.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:19:42]

Annie Gavin: Yeah, they helped each other to survive because the women would make quilts. My grandmother and Willie Stalon's grandmother, George's grandmama, all would quilt. And Gracie and May Zellarmar wouldn't let me play with them because they were courting. They kept away from me because I'd tell—

Grace George: You'd tell everything. They didn't want you to—

Annie Gavin: So I had to sit around the old folks. That's why. And I enjoyed hearing them talk about things that happened.

Grace George: Okay.

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

Grace George: [indistinct 00:20:27]

Annie Gavin: Because my grandmother, I was 12 years old when Mama's grandmother died. So I was a big girl, so a lot of that stuff I heard from them that was interesting. Ms. Hannah, that was Stella 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.

Grace George: Oh.

Annie Gavin: Those White women went through a lot during slavery time. You know that from Roots because that one was looking right at her husband, going to tessie. Those White women had to take a lot too—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:21:29]

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

Grace George: Okay. Even back then?

Annie Gavin: No, she didn't work. She took good care of her and the wife couldn't do anything about it. Them White women had to go through a lot.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: And we hear he had 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—

Grace George: Done to them.

Annie Gavin: —he would bring it back. So they learned first hand. So 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?

Grace George: No. He found that—They named James City after him.

Unknown Interviewer: He was the chaplain.

Annie Gavin: Oh, oh.

Grace George: The chaplain.

Annie Gavin: Oh, he was—

Unknown Interviewer: [indistinct 00:22:47]

Annie Gavin: 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 and he was a priest and then he had a school. That house that Annie used to live in, that used to be the school—

Grace George: The mission—

Annie Gavin: Mission school. 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.

Annie Gavin: Oh Lord, yeah.

Grace George: Well, he also—

Annie Gavin: Just turn that.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:23:56] with the Freedmen.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, yeah.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:23:59]

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

Anne (Neighbor): I was just coming to get three peppers.

Annie Gavin: Okay, those that hadn't heard about James City and by the time Gracie through working with this, they know all about it.

Grace George: Everybody will know about James City. So do you have time to continue or you can come back another time?

Unknown Interviewer: Can I come back another time?

Annie Gavin: Any special thing you want to know?

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:24:34] school [indistinct 00:24:35] 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 all set. So wherever we were yesterday, I guess.

Grace George: Okay, she was talking about James City, the original, when they first settled in here, what she heard and about Horace James.

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 had their own little, I say, hut. And this was after Abraham Lincoln went—See, my great-grandmother saw Abraham Lincoln.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: He came to the plantation where they were, because they lived like plantations. And he was not too well-dressed, but he had some beautiful horses.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Then he asked questions because the stable boy, they had boys, young men, to put up the horses and hitch the people and stuff. He questioned them and asked them how did they like the way they lived and said, but he was a homely man, which we know from his picture. But he had some nice horses. But they still didn't know he was the president.

Grace George: All right.

Annie Gavin: Because he traveled alone.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: Well, I don't reckon he had anything to fear back then.

Grace George: That's right.

Annie Gavin: But anyway, the boy told him what he knew. "Do they feed you good? Do they take good care of you?" And he said yes because I guess—And 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 and the slave owner's wife was pregnant and she had had a little—She eventually had, 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. Then after he'd gotten—Well, they didn't even know he was the president, traveled alone. After he got back in Washington, he wrote back and told them where to look and find a letter he had written. I even remember what he named. If it was a girl, Saphronia. That stuck with me because I'm surprised I didn't name one of mine Saphronia.

Annie Gavin: But anyway, when he got back in Washington, then they started sending troops and they started freeing the slaves and she said they didn't want to leave where they were because that master was good.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Like everything else, was some good, some bad.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: 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 it—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:28:59]

Annie Gavin: For the good soil and good water. Then after he went back, wasn't so very long after then, the troops started to 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's still got deep holes.

Grace George: Yeah, okay.

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

Grace George: Down the other side, by the Nissan building, in that area?

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Way down.

Annie Gavin: Way down way in the Thurman like.

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 they—

Grace George: They used to bring the ships in.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. 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 call it.

Grace George: Okay, that's what they call 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. But they had good and bad masters. Sometimes the master himself, the man was good and the woman was mean.

Grace George: 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'd put her in a house because she didn't have to work either. Her children, Anne, Ms. Hannah, played with her half-sisters and brothers.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Stayed in the big house. She played in the big house.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: So those slaves fared good.

Grace George: Okay.

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

Grace George: Black people. [indistinct 00:31:31]

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. But after he went back to Washington, then the soldiers started to coming and going to different plantations and stuff. And the war, Civil War they call it, start freeing the slaves. Well, 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 given up enough to have a home of their own.

Grace George: Take care of themselves. They've been dependent.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. And your—Ms. Martha's daddy.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Washington Spivey. He's the one that had the name in James City.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Because 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 and he decided he wasn't going to pay for them because it belonged to him.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:32:35]

Annie Gavin: That's where you got some of your stuff.

Grace George: Yeah.

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

Grace George: Okay.

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

Grace George: That's right. [indistinct 00:33:01]

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 and 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. The 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.

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. We don't believe it. You got to show it to us."

Grace George: That's right.

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 not come 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 from what my mama said. They had stores. Many of the older people have shops now.

Annie Gavin: Well—

Grace George: 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 stores over here because my daddy worked for your mother's uncle. I forgot his name. [indistinct 00:35:00] 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. He was a cook on the train, always have café.

Grace George: Ms. Annie, 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 an industrial area, compared to other places with plantations?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, mm-hmm. 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. Ida wouldn't even had to hold it.

Grace George: Carry the basket.

Annie Gavin: Carry it right on with her head. But I guess everybody has survived. I'll tell you something else they used to do back then. Didn't have linoleum for the floor.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Scrubbed the floor and go down to the sand holes to get buckets of sand and put on the floor.

Grace George: Ms. Annie, why?

Annie Gavin: The sand itself was a cover for the floor. You see the sand helped to keep the floor clean.

Grace George: Say for instance, if they spilled oil or anything, that would catch it before [indistinct 00:36:37]

Annie Gavin: But I knew this happened. Mama never did that. She just scrubbed her floor. But Ms. Mae Lizzie and Ms. Ida and those people that were older than she was, every Saturday 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: Then we had a plate factory here, across over there near the water where Rimbell used to live. For years, just since I've been growing up, since I've been back home, they tored it down. 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 served the purpose for the time.

Grace George: Now 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 where they could get plenty of sand.

Grace George: Okay.

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

Grace George: Mm-hmm.