

Annie Gavin: —wash the dishes and he made meals for the men at the factory. There used to be a—The fertilizer factory that's over here now was down there on the railroad. You remember when that was there though, don't you?

Grace George: No.

Annie Gavin: If so, you were very little.

Grace George: Is that the same one that Mr. Ike Long was the overseer? I have his book record showing the men of James City that worked there.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, that's the same. They eventually moved it all the way over here. We just cross the road, they still operate.

Grace George: That's the Meadows Company?

Annie Gavin: Meadows Company. And the Meadows Company, I guess at one time they owned slaves, but they always were outstanding in the Black community. Whatever went wrong, the Meadows always came to the rescue.

Grace George: Well, is it true that when they were told to leave Old James City, Meadows Company owned a lot of properties in the area?

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. And came over here

Grace George: And bought the land from them?

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Now there's a man, Mr. Brooks, that was a Black man from the area that had so much land over there.

Annie Gavin: That was was Emma Hicks and them's grandfather, the Brooks's and the Browns owned this area. The Brooks's on one side of Emma and them's granddaddy and the Browns on the other, which is Brownsville. And they used to live—You remember the house [indistinct 00:01:47] lived in?

Grace George: Mm-hmm.

Annie Gavin: That used to be their house. They used to live right—

Grace George: Right behind Shiloh church?

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. And the Brooks's on this side of the track.

Grace George: Where we are.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. They had land they sold after the fellows—My daddy bought his place, I think, from the Brooks's when we—

Grace George: Apparently, they were free before. How did they come about so much money from property? Just like everybody owned property back there. How did they come into—?

Annie Gavin: Well, not everybody.

Grace George: well—

Annie Gavin: Some people don't want anything anyway. They going depend on somebody else. But they inherited it from somebody.

Grace George: Yeah. [indistinct 00:02:36] I don't know. Because for the short period of time, they owned so much land in this area. We know that over on the other side of this area—

Annie Gavin: You couldn't own it. That's the reason they had to come over here.

Grace George: Yeah. So they came over here and they were the ones selling it.

Annie Gavin: Uh-huh. Now, actually, according to my grandmother and those other people that knew, James City was given to the slaves, but they never had a deed to it. They gave it to them to use maybe because that's what they did—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:03:10]

Annie Gavin: Then after a while, I guess government maybe took it over and they had to pay rent. That's where your granddad came in and started that revolution. He told them he wasn't—My—what they used to say, young ones' heads was sticking out all of them windows.

Grace George: Yeah, just looking.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. I said, Mr. Washington Spivey said, "I ain't paying no more rent because it belongs to me."

Grace George: Well, they went to court years ago in the 1800—About a hundred years ago. So finally they had to go and that's when they thought purchasing land over the [indistinct 00:03:57] But Ms. Anna, the strange thing is that apparently they said it didn't belong to the people. But for so many years, they never did anything with that land, over there in James City.

Annie Gavin: Maybe the number of years they had to let it lay before the government could take it because it was given to them. It's like Old Man Washington Spivey said, he wasn't going to pay for what belonged to him. But they had lived that thing—

Grace George: It was more like a reparation for their enslavement and helping them during the war. Whereas a lot of countries, they have been paid, like the Chinese, Japanese, all these other people for wartimes. So I would say that seems, with a little research, that was given to the people, turned over. Instead of money, the land was turned over to them. [indistinct 00:04:54]

Annie Gavin: Well, I think one thing was when the government freed them, they had to make arrangement, some place for them to live.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: Well, I guess it was about the same thing all over. But these people that were brought to James City, they understood that these makeshift houses belonged to them.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: But yet one real estate man got greedy and started making them pay. Well, I—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:05:34]

Annie Gavin: That's where Washington Spivey and his followers rebelled. "We ain't going to pay for what belong to us."

Grace George: I understand they had post offices over here. Hospital—

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: —that the Union left.

Annie Gavin: Well, after they put the slaves down, Washington—What's his name? James something.

Grace George: Horace?

Annie Gavin: Huh?

Grace George: Horace James.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, they sent a priest here, Catholic. Then the house that Annie Stove used to live in. You remember that two-story house?

Grace George: Yep, that house. Yeah. I remember.

Annie Gavin: When I was growing up, that was kind of a school. The missionaries had a school there and I wasn't old enough to go, but I used to go there and they taught the girls how to sew, how make clothes and crochet and knit and stuff like that. Then some of the missionaries stayed with Reverend Dudley and those missionaries stayed in touch. They used to come and go, and they had brought Goldie. You know Goldie? Ms. Marula Goldie?

Grace George: Mm-hmm.

Annie Gavin: Well, the missionaries brought her here. Then those families that didn't have children and wanted children, they would bring them for them.

Grace George: That's what happened to my Grandma Becca. She was brought here with the missionaries

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Some of the people he adopted her, Mrs. Katherine Midgette.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, the Midgets.

Grace George: She raised grandma because her mother died at the time. She was a missionary from Boston. And she died. So the missionaries were going to take her back to Boston when they leave. But some of the people said they would take care of her. So they left her with Ms. Katherine Midgette.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. And she raised her. But the thing about it, your grandma was more White than she was Black. Let's face it. But you couldn't tell her from White.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: I guess it was not too many people, she was too White to be Black—

Grace George: And too Black—

Annie Gavin: And she had some Black, so she had to be Black.

Grace George: Right, right, right. I think that's why they were going to take her back to Boston. But Ms. Catherine, [indistinct 00:08:05] take her in and raise her.

Annie Gavin: I guess that's when she met Wes Foye.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: Married him.

Grace George: She was just a little girl.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Yeah. She fared good though because he was smart. He had a big house and Newt and them, and Alma, were kind of considered rich.

Grace George: With ponies and everything else, she said.

Annie Gavin: Huh?

Grace George: They used to have a pony in there.

Annie Gavin: Oh yeah. My daddy worked with one of the brothers, Wes Foye's brother. That's how he started in the store business. Those people that would work could have something.

Grace George: Could have something.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:08:49]

Annie Gavin: Because my daddy had a horse and cows, and all that stuff.

Grace George: That's what amazes me when I look back at all the things that those people had and tried so much and were successful. Today when I look around and I don't see those things, it alarms me.

Annie Gavin: That's right. That's right. Different things happened that broke everything up. Then I think the younger generations, they got along so good. They wasn't as ambitious. They weren't as ambitious.

Grace George: It was already laid out for them.

Annie Gavin: Already laid out for them. Sweat had already been sweated for them to have it and they didn't value it too much.

Grace George: That's why I feel it's important for us to preserve this history, so that they can go back and look and see some of the struggles that these people went through to—

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: —have where they are today, which they should be farther because of the struggle.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: Even with the '60s, they don't understand what took place, a lot of them, the struggles.

Annie Gavin: You're right. Well, some people have ambition and move on anyway and some have inherited it. But West Far, I don't know what happened with all the stuff that he did have. But something happened and some of it was with him because I think the reason he and Ms. Becca didn't get along, he was a courter.

Grace George: He loved women.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: That's usually the [indistinct 00:10:40] does it every time.

Annie Gavin: But Ms. Becca always was smart. She was a smart woman. She always had a garden. She sold the vegetables and she kind of kept her little flock together.

Grace George: My mom would say they'd had to get up early in the morning to go to New Bern to sell the—

Annie Gavin: Sell vegetables.

Grace George: —to sell vegetables before they'd go to school.

Annie Gavin: Before they went to school.

Grace George: Then in the evening, they'd go back and collect who was interested in more vegetables for the next day.

Annie Gavin: Right. But that was good in a sense, to be taught, because my uncle Ben and I had to get up before daylight. He worked at the railroad, had lost his foot. And we'd have to go out there to the shop and Ben would build a fire. I'd put on the coffee pot and put on rice. Then I had to make biscuits. I wasn't probably had a little counter thing. I wasn't tall enough, he had a block there. And I made breakfast for those men at the factory when I was about 12.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: I hated it so bad. But it put something in you.

Grace George: Yes, it does.

Annie Gavin: It makes you know that if you want something, work for it.

Grace George: You have to work for it. That's important today.

Annie Gavin: That's important.

Grace George: They want it to fall out of the sky.

Annie Gavin: That's right.

Grace George: If it don't make a million dollars on the first day's work, they don't want to work.

Annie Gavin: Right. But it gives you ambition. You got it double from Washington Spivey and Wes Foye.

Grace George: He's about to kill me [indistinct 00:12:24] trying to feed both—

Annie Gavin: Both sides. Mm-hmm. Then there's some people that don't have any ambition. It makes you kind of glad and proud that you were made to do things and—

Grace George: And you want to give it to them. Why? What's the matter? It's out there. Go for it.

Annie Gavin: Right, right.

Grace George: I have two sons and I think I drove them crazy telling them how they do it. You can't do this, and you can. They even look at me sometime, "Please, Mama, give me a chance to let me complete this first and then I'll try that."

Annie Gavin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Grace George: I think about three or four things at one time.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: And they're all happening. That's how I see it.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: And when it's all done, it's all done.

Annie Gavin: It's done. Right.

Grace George: I need to concentrate on one thing.

Annie Gavin: But I think that ambition goes on down through the line. Some of them, somebody will grab it after a while.

Grace George: Sometimes it takes a lot of generations.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, a lot of generations. Uh-huh.

Grace George: That's why I say don't believe in giving up hope because somewhere along the way, somewhere, somebody's going to pick it up.

Annie Gavin: Going to pick it up.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: True. Right now, Ruth Anne's daughter is very ambitious. She sews.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: She makes hats and suits.

Grace George: Designer.

Annie Gavin: Well, she took economics in school, but she makes a living sewing now. She's still in school though, in Richmond.

Grace George: It comes out.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Let me ask you, like you say, most of the social activities centered around the churches.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: I remember hearing people talk about excursions, going on excursions. Did you ever [indistinct 00:14:26]

Annie Gavin: Oh, yeah.

Grace George: —about the church, going on excursions.

Annie Gavin: The church. Then they went by train and get on the track up there by James— Well, I still call all of that James City for as I'm concerned.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: There where the Ramada Inn and all that, it's still James City because that's the center of James City.

Grace George: That's it. Forever.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. And get on the train and go to Morehead to the beach and the churches would run excursions, for a way of making money for the church.

Grace George: Your mom said everybody would be standing out when you come back to see who was on the train.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: It was a big thing to do.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. They would—

Grace George: Let me open the door.

Annie Gavin: No, I don't think there's anybody there. Wait a minute. Let me see.

Grace George: Sometimes the wind—

Unknown Interviewer: [indistinct 00:15:26]

Annie Gavin: Nobody.

Unknown Interviewer: [indistinct 00:15:28]

Annie Gavin: Yeah. But I tell you about James City, there was a time, there were just Black businesses and Black people. Then the Whites start to moving in, all out there. Well, you remember Mungum business, you remember the mill, part about the mill.

Grace George: I remember the mill, one mill that was there when I was little girl.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: That was the last one. You can still see some of the equipment still over there.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: I remember that one.

Annie Gavin: There were two mills.

Grace George: They say there was a lot of them on the water.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: By Ms. Lucy's [indistinct 00:16:09]

Annie Gavin: The mills over on that side. And mills on this side and out that side, that's where Ms. Dorcas lived. Y'all lived right to the end of that street though.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: But those people, they got along, except as I remember growing up, seemed like some of them people had too many fusses over children.

Grace George: Yeah, yeah, because watching over each other's children.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. See, Hill's grandmama and Niecy Beasley and them, they used to have fussing spells every week.

Grace George: I understand that there was always one or two in the community that kept something going.

Annie Gavin: And ended up in the courthouse.

Grace George: Yeah, yeah. My mama say every Monday morning, and I think that courthouse downtown New Bern, they would fuss and fight on the weekend and they'd all had to wind up in the courthouse Monday morning.

Annie Gavin: Right. Then they come back almost holding hands.

Grace George: Holding hands. But they'd have to go to court to have [indistinct 00:17:24]

Annie Gavin: Have to pay the money out.

Grace George: Pay the money out.

Annie Gavin: Fussing mostly over children fighting.

Grace George: Now I'd like to say that there is a place that nobody else knows, but in New Bern, where they would go for the hearing and it wouldn't be right in the courthouse. It's a building downtown. My mom pointed out on Raven Street.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: There was a lady that would sit there and they'd just come tell her what they did over the weekend and pay the money.

Annie Gavin: Pay the money. They satisfied, going home till next time. But I'll tell you what, they could fight among themselves, but nobody else better not bother them. Do them sides that were mad, jump off side, jump on over. They almost clannish. That's what they were. James City people were clannish. They could be ever so mad—

Grace George: With each other.

Annie Gavin: —with each other. Don't no outsider come in their mess, because they used to run Blacks back to New Bern. And the Blacks come over here to get food.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Because we always have food.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Even when y'all going to school—

Grace George: There was plenty of food because everybody had a garden. They always had some food.

Annie Gavin: I often think about that girl—Daisy. Daisy, Marian's Daisy was talking about what she had for breakfast. Collard green. And this girl made fun of it. She should've had some collard green because she got so skinny—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:18:55]

Annie Gavin: [indistinct 00:18:55] and she had plenty. But we ate what we had.

Grace George: That's it. You were—

Annie Gavin: Warm up them collard greens and dumplings and that fat meat.

Grace George: You know what—

Annie Gavin: When you come from school.

Grace George: We didn't have a special bacon and eggs—

Annie Gavin: No.

Grace George: —for breakfast. Whatever was available, they ate it.

Annie Gavin: We ate it.

Grace George: If you had it in the evening and it was left over, I remember my grandma. It wasn't like—When I came along, we started to have to have a separate breakfast, something different.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. But—

Grace George: But whatever you had—

Annie Gavin: If you had some collard greens for supper and some leftover, warm them up and eat them.

Grace George: Warm them up. Make those—What was—

Annie Gavin: That dumpling.

Grace George: —that flapjacks.

Annie Gavin: Oh, cutting the dumpling in half and turn it down into grease. It would stay healthy too.

Grace George: Maybe that's why we live long. We live a long time because they—

Annie Gavin: And they made soup. My mother and my daddy used to make big old pots of soup, and everybody ate. Well, even during my time, when y'all came around, there was always a biscuit.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:19:57] pot.

Annie Gavin: Always something.

Grace George: Ms. Annie, those big black pots. I have found one. They used to cook out, hang it, this is going way back a little bit longer, over the fire place.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: You don't remember any of that. But my mom said that. I used to say, "Well, how did they bake their biscuits or their bread?" And she said they would push it—

Annie Gavin: Put it in the ashes.

Grace George: In the ashes.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Cover it up.

Annie Gavin: I experienced that.

Grace George: Oh, you did?

Annie Gavin: Yeah. And they'd had the pot. They had it so the thing—Tryon Palace got all that kind of stuff.

Grace George: Yeah. Okay.

Annie Gavin: You could push the pot over the flame because you keep the fire under, it was fireplace. They didn't have stoves. The first stoves I know about was a cook stove. They push it over there and then they could have a way of pulling it out and stirring it up, pushing it back. And take potatoes and put it in the ashes, cook them and bake them in the ashes. Baked potatoes in the ashes. But the fireplace was the main heat.

Grace George: Heat.

Annie Gavin: Then after a while, they had cook stoves where you could bake inside the stove.

Grace George: For their beds. Oh, she was telling us they had—Most of the furniture back there, right after the war, they had was handmade.

Annie Gavin: Handmade. Handmade baby beds. But always some some carpenters because that's what your granddaddy was, a carpenter. George Washington. Which of them was Martha's brother—

Grace George: And Washington—

Annie Gavin: And May Washington, Washington Spivey. Yeah.

Grace George: He was a carpenter?

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. I say you and Burton, all them came in because George Washington was Burt's granddaddy. My Aunt Rosie married George Bill. Me and them came on. [indistinct 00:22:00]

Grace George: I have a picture of—[indistinct 00:22:02] let me share, of her grandma which was Mariah.

Annie Gavin: Maya, we call her Maya.

Grace George: I'm going try to put that on exhibit. We have Robert's father when he was an infant. How old would Robert be if he was alive now?

Annie Gavin: Robert would be old now because I'm going on 82.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Robert would've been, I guess—

Grace George: [indistinct 00:22:34]

Annie Gavin: Yeah, he was older than I was.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:22:38] So if he was a little baby in her lap.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. He was a baby in—That was Mama's and Aunt Rosie's mother.

Grace George: Yeah. So that's your grandmother—

Annie Gavin: My grandmother.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: I didn't know her. She died before I was born.

Grace George: You seen the picture?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, I've seen the picture.

Grace George: But I told her I would take—Sherry should take good care and put it back to the family until we get a real museum.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I didn't know that grandmother.

Grace George: She said she was born back in the 1830s.

Annie Gavin: But I—

Grace George: She was a slave.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, I don't know about her being a slave. I didn't hear about—I think she was born after the war. I think she was born here in James City.

Grace George: Ms. Mary, your grandma?

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Maya. Yeah, she was Maya's daughter.

Grace George: Go ahead. I'll get it out the car and let you look at it.

Annie Gavin: I know, I've seen it.

Grace George: So you know what we're talking about?

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm. Rob was sitting on the lap.

Grace George: Yeah. Yeah. And who's that other one [indistinct 00:24:00] her daughter.

Annie Gavin: Had to be Sarah.

Grace George: Sarah, Sarah.

Annie Gavin: Sarah. Because I didn't know Mama's mother. She was already dead when I came along.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: But I know Mama said that her daddy was a woman chaser.

Grace George: Okay. They all were. I tell you, I ain't been taught this, but my mom say that's why James City is so close-knit.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Everybody was a chaser.

Annie Gavin: Chaser.

Grace George: They had a family here and a family there.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Yeah.

Grace George: It was one of those, like the kings and queens over there, they'd keep the money in the family. They kept everything else.

Annie Gavin: Everything in the family.

Grace George: Yeah, it is true, there's very few families here that are not connected—

Annie Gavin: Interrelated.

Grace George: —families.

Annie Gavin: Connected either by birth or friendship, but they could be married. That came up through all of us.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: Because I remember when I was down on the corner and Lucy Spencer checked down Cherry Point had been misplaced and they had to put it in FBI, I guess it was. But he came there asking me where Lucy Spencer lived. I said, "Why?" Still right here. Just from where I moved from down there because I knew Net sold whiskey. I didn't know, I wasn't going to send him over there and maybe catch Net selling whiskey.

Grace George: Whiskey. That bootleg.

Annie Gavin: That bootleg. And he said, "Do you know Lucy Spencer? Where she live?" I said, "I don't know."

Grace George: That's right.

Annie Gavin: Then he looked at me so strange. I was supposed to know because I was keeping store. And that's when it was down on Compton. Then I reckon he say, "She ain't going to tell me nothing." So he

showed me her check. She was working at Cherry Point and her check had been misplaced, and he showed me the check. I said, "Why didn't you tell me that to start with?"

Grace George: That's right.

Annie Gavin: I said, "She lives right—" I had to laugh. It took a minute too. But I knew Net sold whiskey.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: And I wasn't sitting that White man over there and catching Net selling. We was clannish though.

Grace George: Yeah, they were—

Annie Gavin: Yeah, we were clannish.

Grace George: Yeah. When you come asking questions, you have to know the inside story.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. The children, people could fight among themselves in James City, but nobody else better not come in.

Grace George: Now they got that reputation. I remember some research that I did that they were saying that they would come over when they were talking about running them off the land and they sent the sheriff over here.

Annie Gavin: They ran him [indistinct 00:26:59]

Grace George: They ran him in the water, had to swim back. So he sit with the governor and said, "Look, if you want—you have to come over here, because these people were not—

Annie Gavin: That was the time they called the military.

Grace George: Yeah. They sent the—

Annie Gavin: National Guard, we call it now. They came to James City and James Daniels' granddaddy had a place up James City, had a flat farm. Well, I don't remember this. Mama say she was a child still. They made lemonade and the National Guard came and they called it the militia, which is what it was, and they all came and had a big party. James City people were pacified then.

Grace George: Yeah, yeah.

Annie Gavin: But they raised themselves some hell with sticks and bricks and bottles.

Grace George: They had sticks and everything, waiting for the—Well, we call it the National Guard.

Annie Gavin: National Guard

Grace George: For the military to come in, so that's when some of those attorneys and lawyers that they sent to Congress. Like George White.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:28:00] O'Hara.

Annie Gavin: O'Hara.

Grace George: Stepped in and [indistinct 00:28:03] into a settlement—

Annie Gavin: That's when they—

Grace George: —rather than have bloodshed during that period of time.

Annie Gavin: They had to show us something because they didn't mind dying. They didn't mind it because it felt like their rights were taken.

Grace George: Now my Grandma Martha stayed in that old house. That's why she refused to leave there, up until the—

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: We had to take her, literally pick her up and bring her out there because she couldn't take care of herself. And Old James City was speaking about that they loved that land, they loved that area so much to them. To them it was the promised land.

Annie Gavin: That's where they were brought up.

Grace George: Called it promised land.

Annie Gavin: The promised land.

Grace George: She said she would die there. And that was Washington Spivey's daughter. She was some of the last ones other than them Bill Spivey.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, right.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:28:52] So they still—that was like everything to them. [indistinct 00:28:58]

Annie Gavin: Well, one thing, Ms. Martha was a pusher.

Grace George: Strong.

Annie Gavin: When we used to raise money for the church, she played part of a bishop, had on the hat and the coat. She had a gross voice, and we would raise all them pennies and stuff.

Grace George: Raise a lot of—

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: I tried to mention some of those things in there, that these are things you should go back. People enjoyed them.

Annie Gavin: Right, right.

Grace George: It was fun. It was fun.

Annie Gavin: The Far graveyard that's where the slaves were buried.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Lot of slaves are buried there. That's one thing Jojo did right. He fought for that graveyard because they were digging that up for the airport and would've got away with it.

Grace George: We're not quite clear on it because now they have fenced it in. I don't know what they're going to do. It is a part of the airport. We're speaking about the Far Slave Cemetery out here on Howard Road. We used to call it—

Annie Gavin: Howell Road.

Grace George: Howell Road, but I used to call it Old Airport Road, but now—

Annie Gavin: Yeah, to me it's still Airport.

Grace George: Airport running through the Old James City.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: So he did fight for that. He brought attention to it that they were [indistinct 00:30:23]

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: What amazes me about James City, Sandy, is the cemeteries, how they're located. Now my mom says, not only that was the slave—

Annie Gavin: Well, the road came across the cemetery.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: Because of the cemetery on that side of the road.

Grace George: By Ramada, on the other side?

Annie Gavin: On the other side of the Ramada Inn.

Grace George: She said that's where her grandma is buried. Mama's—

Annie Gavin: I think Aden Howell was the last person buried in there. And you could see his grave clearly because people put all his—them watches and clocks and stuff, on top of his grave is a lot of that.

Grace George: So a lot of things are still in that area because from what I understand, as you said, way back there, how you lived, whatever things you did, you sort of put those pieces on your grave.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: So he worked on clocks.

Annie Gavin: All working on clocks and watches.

Grace George: So [indistinct 00:31:15] whatever he needed. So it's such a shame how they have disturbed those areas, historical areas.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: You would find a lot of old artifacts and things in areas like that.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, sure would because he had a whole lot of different clocks and stuff. He didn't, but the people put his stuff on his grave.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:31:34]

Annie Gavin: Because that's the way we used to have to come from James City over here. Unless we came down the railroad.

Grace George: Railroad.

Annie Gavin: I remember the Little Red Schoolhouse too.

Grace George: You do?

Annie Gavin: Set on that hill. I wasn't old—I must have been four or five.

Grace George: That was the first schoolhouse?

Annie Gavin: I didn't go to school there.

Grace George: But one of—

Annie Gavin: But I remember it. It was still there. And Frisell, Ada Davis' daddy, he looked like a White man. Well, you know they did because she did. He was the principal of the school. I think my mama said she went to school there. But we had the school down here because I didn't go to school in James City too much. I went Sutton School.

Grace George: But let me just say keep on with the schools. Now the Sutton School was in New Bern?

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, [indistinct 00:32:38]

Grace George: Okay. I want to come back to that too. But James City School. You were a big girl when that school was put up, or you were a little girl. My mother said she was some of the first ones that went to that school.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. But she and Addie in that group went to that school. The brick school that they burnt down not long ago, the school. You went to that school.

Grace George: Right here.

Annie Gavin: Mm-hmm.

Grace George: Yeah, before this automobile dealership.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, yeah.

Grace George: Okay. They burnt the old school down?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, they burnt the old school down.

Grace George: So I was on the [indistinct 00:33:14]

Annie Gavin: You went to the brick school.

Grace George: The brick school I went to.

Annie Gavin: I know. All my children went to the brick school. But we didn't have a brick school. In fact, I don't know why my dad always sent me to school in New Bern. I had to had the best.

Grace George: Was it at Barber's school that you went to?

Annie Gavin: I went to Sutton School. The AME Zion Church School.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: AME Zion Church had a school.

Grace George: Barber's school came along.

Annie Gavin: JT Barber was a public school. West Street.

Grace George: All right.

Annie Gavin: West Street.

Grace George: Because I received some calls from ECU. They have a lot of photographs.

Annie Gavin: Oh yeah?

Grace George: Old West Street. I mean West Street, JT Barber. And Barber was the principal.

Annie Gavin: Because you went to West Street too?

Grace George: Oh yeah. I did.

Annie Gavin: All of my children, and you did too. But they got a lot of photographs?

Grace George: Well, he asked me could I use them on the exhibit? And I told him yes, because I'm not turning anything down.

Annie Gavin: Right, right.

Grace George: I feel that eventually we will use all this.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: So that's what we're planning. We got a lot of little good pieces people are sending in.

Annie Gavin: That's good.

Grace George: Because people from James City did attend that school.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, so that was the high school y'all went to. Y'all had to walk. Didn't have bus. Did they have bus when y'all went—

Grace George: Oh yeah.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Later, yeah.

Grace George: It had a wooden bridge that I had nightmares many years after leaving here, of that bus going into that water.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: But the planks, my mom said first they used to go over—She don't remember, but her mom told her that it would go over on barges to New Bern. Then they put this bridge with the planks that you could look in the water.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, the plank bridge.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: I remember when they had didn't have a bridge.

Grace George: Okay, okay.

Annie Gavin: And the people used to walk on the railroad trestle to town. But you had to pick the time between when the train running. Some people, I reckon, walk that old bridge.

Grace George: Oh, yeah? I've seen them standing out there [indistinct 00:35:27]

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Boy, I would've died trying to cross that. You can't say—

Annie Gavin: Well, it wasn't too bad because the big cross ties and they were sort of close. Then it was a factory down there on that same creek.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Same railroad.

Grace George: Is that the one that you said preserved different fruits and things? I thought was later, because I remember on this side of the old bridge, there was a factory that they—

Annie Gavin: Oh, that's the one.

Grace George: —preserved peaches and tomatoes and [indistinct 00:36:00]

Annie Gavin: Oh no, that was Mac Lipton's factory.

Grace George: That was later years.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, that was later years. That was like, you're going to this bridge we still got. Mac Lipton had that and a lot of people got work down there. But then it was a fertilizer factory on that other bridge.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: The train could drive up there and load the bags of fertilizer and the White family, some of that family still lives—I used to go down there and play with a girl about my same age. We used to play under the house. It was so high up, Papa had had this café down there. All I had to do was walk down the railroad and be there. But so many changes took place. As far as integration goes, White and Black have been integrated among themselves for years, even before. But to be in friendship or have a Black friend, a White friend, they had to hide it.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: But White people and Colored people always loved each other. The biggest trouble came was

when other people got mingled up in it, because my daddy had a car and I forgot what the name, but the family there, two of the girls were teachers. My daddy carried them to the school every day because their daddy didn't have a car.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: But my daddy had the car because he lost his foot on the train and he was getting a pension and had a café. So he was kind of progressing. But your granddaddy's uncle, West Far's brother had the first Black business in James City that I know about.

Grace George: My mom said he used have a taxi and they would ride—Before the cars came along, he would chauffeur people around on the horse and buggy.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. He had a, what you call it? Surrey with the fringe on the top.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Against the front one seat and another seat. Sam Benson had one and Wes Foye had one, because Wes was always Bud's boss.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: They was brothers but Wes was ambitious. Had a big house, got burnt down. His house got burnt down. Somebody set his house afire, I think. But then before his house, all the houses on the other side burned too.

Grace George: Oh. I think what happened there, my mom said before his house caught on, the sparks from her house—

Annie Gavin: House, stopped the big house.

Grace George: Stopped the big house.

Annie Gavin: Because his house was kind of on a hill.

Grace George: On the hill. She left the stove on or something, that burned a hole.

Annie Gavin: And what they had the habit of doing is they wouldn't take time and cut the wood short enough and you could put the wood in at the end of the stove and it burned down. Then that other piece going to fall.

Grace George: Right, right.

Annie Gavin: —and be out in the street talking, like they burned up James City.

Grace George: Like they burned Old James City up.

Annie Gavin: Sure did. But it's interesting to let your mind—

Grace George: It's amazing when you speak about things, they sort of connect.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: You start connecting.

Annie Gavin: Now Bea used to drink her liquor.

Grace George: Liquor.

Annie Gavin: But you didn't go hungry around her.

Grace George: No. Sure [indistinct 00:39:42]

Annie Gavin: She'd feed you. She always had something to give somebody.

Grace George: She was something like Boocher.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Boocher's just as good. She going to ready to raise a whole lot of hell.

Grace George: Raise hell and feed you at the same time.

Annie Gavin: Same time. Sure would. Well, one thing James City, people would fight among themselves and they could be mad with you, but wouldn't let nobody else bother you. Boocher was one of them.

Grace George: Yes.

Annie Gavin: It's clannish. That's what we were.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Clannish.

Grace George: Had your little clan.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, clannish.

Grace George: I think there's still—the young people have that but they don't understand what it is.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, they have it.

Grace George: They have it.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, they have it.

Grace George: Because you can try to reach them, get into them.

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: But they will stand off, but once you in there, they sort of protect you. Don't let anybody else [indistinct 00:40:41]

Annie Gavin: All right, let me—

Grace George: Give it to you.

Annie Gavin: But nobody else better not.

Grace George: They stand on the sideline and watch.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:40:49] way back there. The people showed how he expressed it. But today they sort of like, "I'll wait and see."

Annie Gavin: I'll wait and see what's going to happen. Yeah, because the boys used to— James City boys get together, as Black boys come over from town and start courting the girls, they run them back.

Grace George: Don't bother with the ladies.

Annie Gavin: Don't bother with they women. But now, after they started going to school together, they were most mixing. Because I used to have a house full of boys and girls all the time. I had a record player and piano.

Grace George: Always was free to let them enjoy themselves.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, bicycle.

Grace George: She always had a store. Ms. Annie always had a shop. We were young children then and I grew up with her children. We would always, after church, we'd come to Ms. Annie's house and we'd just have a good time. We played in the piano, we sing.

Annie Gavin: Played records.

Grace George: We'd dance, we'd have our little boyfriends to come and sit down [indistinct 00:41:58] the parlor, because most of the parents still wasn't too [indistinct 00:42:01] about little boys talking to you. So we would have that little freedom to come and sit down and talk and everybody just have a good time.

Annie Gavin: Sure would.

Grace George: That was our afternoon, if it wasn't any church in the evening.

Annie Gavin: After church. Well, they had to go to church and Sunday school.

Grace George: I think that has made us strong.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, it did.

Grace George: They don't get that atmosphere. Something today is just tough.

Annie Gavin: But you know what happened? It follows you. Because when Gwen's children were little, growing up, and I'd go there to visit, they always had a lot of younguns all over the steps, all over the porch. So the man said, "Mama, go out there and look out that door. And see what it remind you of?" I said, "My house is full of everybody [indistinct 00:42:48]."

Grace George: [indistinct 00:42:48]

Annie Gavin: Sometime I come home, one day in particular, Bill Ryder was in the kitchen and had him some molasses and biscuits, because I'd make a lot of biscuits and food. We always had food. James City people always had food.

Grace George: Yes, yes.

Annie Gavin: That's one thing, we always had food.

Grace George: I think that's why you don't see a lot of them out there when things are being handed out. You don't hear of them running to grab. They have that—

Annie Gavin: Instinct of getting their own.

Grace George: Getting their own.

Annie Gavin: We were kind of clownish. We could be mad with you, but nobody else better not bother you. Yeah, we were clannish. Forget about being mad if somebody else bother you.

Grace George: Is there anything that you wanted to ask [indistinct 00:43:51]

Unknown Interviewer: I'm just curious, did you ever hear any stories of people who either fought with the Union as part of the Africa Brigade or perhaps worked as laborers, putting together Fort Totten or any of the other forts around here?

Annie Gavin: I mean, I didn't quite understand particularly.

Unknown Interviewer: Do you know of any stories of people who fought with the Union in the Civil War as part of the Africa Brigade perhaps, or [indistinct 00:44:14] their work as laborers, putting up the forts. I think some of the laborers came from here in James City to put up Fort Totten.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Well, I don't know. I probably know them but I wouldn't be able to pinpoint them because wherever they could get work, they worked. That's one thing about James City people, they would work.

Grace George: They would work. You can rest assured that many things that were built in that time in this area were probably built by—We can't, like you say, say right up front names, but—

Annie Gavin: Oh no. Because they weren't—

Grace George: —they in those areas, because back then most of the Whites, we had to work for them. So I'm almost positive that you could name some right up, but we don't have that. I don't.

Annie Gavin: No. Well, whatever work there was was to be done, they did it.

Unknown Interviewer: Well, not so much names, did you ever hear anybody talking about fighting with the Union or building those forts?

Annie Gavin: No.

Unknown Interviewer: No?

Annie Gavin: When you think about it, there's always been sort of a good relationship between Whites and Blacks in our area.

Grace George: This area, they didn't—

Annie Gavin: The Whites would fight for the Blacks, especially those that grew up on the farms and stuff together.

Grace George: We didn't have a lot of plantations in this area.

Annie Gavin: Mm-mm. No, just farms.

Grace George: So I think you had an independent—When they became free people, they sort of came to this area almost free, even before emancipation, from my research. So most of the people in the settlement, she said they gave them the little shanties and they had so many acreage of land around that that they were able to farm on. My mom also said about the fishing, that they could go take a pole and put a little pin on it and go and catch all the fish the family could eat and the rest they could sell. So with their little farms, they became—go over and they would sell it to the area—

Annie Gavin: Pull wagons.

Grace George: They had independence.

Annie Gavin: Sell vegetables.

Grace George: And you had carpenters in the area that, understand the Elliots and the Davis.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. They were carpenters.

Grace George: They a lot of carpentry work, like buildings. I think—