

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.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. You couldn't tell him from White but his mother was Dark. Dark as—

Grace George: That was the wind? Oh, okay.

Annie Gavin: It blows through the trees.

Grace George: Okay. Just for the—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—

Annie Gavin: They really survived by farming and meals. There was always a meal in the area of James City, in my lifetime, and even before then, the men like George Brown, them walked the bridge across town, way across town, where there's still mills over in the area. Over in that 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. And, for the most part, we lived in almost the same type of houses that they built for the slaves when they brought them here. Just some straight boards, framing, straight boards and, in some cases, wasn't no division. And 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. Some of the younger people learned how to read, how to write, because little White children they played with taught them and they carried that back. But they had to hide the books. They had a slat in the floor, they hide the books. But, every night, come back with something else. And there were a lot of them had good education before they were free. And 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. And that was interesting to me. And then this man that was a fighter, he's a heavy fella, they call 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: With Uncle Tom, you think of Uncle Tom as going back and telling the White man everything.

Grace George: Yeah, yeah.

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

Thurgood Marshall passed. 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 the White kids had to teach them what they knew and all to be able to play with them. And Ms. Hannah Smith, her daddy was a White man, was her slave owner, and 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. And that was Stella Johnson's mother. I was a big girl when she—

Grace George: All these people lived in James City.

Annie Gavin: And so, everything that Ms. hannah would learn, she carried back to the other Black little children. 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, do 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: The first school I remember was the little red schoolhouse right in there where the James City sign they dedicated to James—On the highway.

Grace George: The marker.

Annie Gavin: The marker, where the marker is. Just over a bit on the hill, just before you get to the railroad, was a little red schoolhouse. My mother went there but I didn't. I didn't. I was a little girl. I remember that, though. And, 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. But that's where most of them went to the school. Then the Baptist people built the building way down in there where Norca and them live, right back there. And they had a schoolhouse there and a dormitory set up.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Because the children that lived farther way, like Bryce's Creek and all, they could get rooms there all the week and go home.

Grace George: Oh. They stay over for the weekend.

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

Grace George: Yeah. Was this the missionary? Some of them were missionary—

Annie Gavin: Missionaries, then. Yeah. They start sending missionaries and you know where Annie Stove used to live? That was—

Grace George: That's own there by that Ramada Inn area.

Annie Gavin: But it's on the other side of the road, going up. Even then, Annie Stove lived in there. You remember Annie Stove?

Grace George: Yeah, I remember.

Annie Gavin: They were the last people lived there and that was a school and they taught the girls how to sew and knit and all kind of craft. But they sent the missionaries from up north quite—

Grace George: Ms. Annie, let me ask you this. Have you ever heard why they picked James City when they captured—You know why did they set up the camp in James City? Have you any idea?

Annie Gavin: 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 and whatever they heard, they carried back. They had mouth to mouth source of communication. And 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: And they even let them have books. But when they carried back to the shanty, that's what they were.

Grace George: The housing.

Annie Gavin: 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 mom was saying. Dirt floors.

Annie Gavin: Dirt floors.

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

Annie Gavin: They had boards for windows. Just a hole in a board.

Grace George: And from what I understand, they had churches and everything in that area of old James City?

Annie Gavin: Yeah. 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 and they had a nice wooden building, and just down from where Ms. Morrison lived, the next—

Grace George: They couldn't see the—

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: [indistinct 00:08:33].

Annie Gavin: And the only thing I remember about that church was that when I was a big sized girl and the church, they weren't using it as a church anymore, had dancing girls in there.

Grace George: Oh.

Annie Gavin: Let them music it for burlesque show.

Grace George: Oh, okay.

Annie Gavin: Dancing girls.

Grace George: That was before it turned into 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: And Reverend Thurston put bricks around us. And my Aunt 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: He was a reverend.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, and Reverend Bell, our Presiding Elder at that time with 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 and Francine and Emma, the twins, and Aunt Rosa had I think four children before him, but she was married two years to—

Grace George: George Washington.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, George Washington.

Grace George: Which was Washington Spivey's son.

Annie Gavin: Son. Yeah. 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 to fight. He started to fight. You could build it up.

Grace George: Pass it on today.

Annie Gavin: Another advantage I had, I was brought up around the store. My dad always go to the store and they say that Washington Spivey started it, then they got brick bats and sticks and boards and everything ran to blow overboard.

Grace George: Yeah. When they come to take your land.

Annie Gavin: When came to put them out. Because he refused to pay. 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. And even though we had a hard way to go, because, even in your time, when you started going to school and knew when y'all did, the children that were born and bred 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. Yes. Always. We always had plenty of food.

Annie Gavin: Plenty of food.

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. That's what, a lot of people, how 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. It had gardens and fields and stuff. And then the Laven houses settled over there. He was a farmer and he gave him a lot of work. But they still had a living through carrying, washing and ironing and Ms. Ida, Ms. Mae Lizzie, do you remember, used to carry them big old baskets on their head. And then the mills start growing and there were mills here. It was two mills, Mungum Bennett Mill and Cooper's Mill over on this side. And that was a source of income. And—

Grace George: Was there a plate factory?

Annie Gavin: Yeah, there was a plate factory.

Grace George: They made wooden plates in this area.

Annie Gavin: Probably some of the stones still down over there by where Ray Bell is. Maybe not now, though, because they made a lot of changes. But, when I was growing up, some of the type of stones they made then was still standing. And we didn't get a good road until 1922. And I remember that very well. That's the year they started the highway out there. It was mostly rock and stuff. And 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 sell. Because my daddy, when he had his both feet, he worked on the railroad. He was a breakman, a cook. Because he lost—

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

Annie Gavin: Yes.

Grace George: They had a lot of factory, farm lands. Mostly factories.

Annie Gavin: And two mills, saw mills, and Mungum Bennett mills 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. Yeah.

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

Annie Gavin: The fertilizer factory, at beginning, was in James City and then it moved over here and still got fertilizer factory. But that was the Meadows company and still some the Meadows offsprings around.

Grace George: But, 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: Actually, you couldn't buy the land in James City because I know my daddy said, when he got—Because he went to work at Mungum Bennett Mill, he grew up down Havelock. But he was scared of—His daddy was a huntsman's guide and papa was scared to go into 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 of something, rather he'd shoot his gun, let him know he'd been there. After a while, he knew his daddy wasn't going to go by daddy anymore because if you go to look at the traps and find something in there dead, he know papa didn't go there. That's when he left home at 11 years old and went to New Bern and got a job.

Annie Gavin: And then he transferred from that mill over there and came over here. That's where he met Mama. And they got married about 16. I think he was 17, she was 16. And 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. And then Ms. Simon Phillips, they went from one—Then your granddaddy ran taxi too. Newt's daddy. And, just like everything else, some people ambitious and some not.

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

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

Grace George: Buggy.

Annie Gavin: Buggy, with two seats. He had people who work, pick them up from work. And then his brother had a store down in James City. I didn't know him. But I knew Bud and I know Mr. West.

Grace George: He was a farmer.

Annie Gavin: But I didn't know the one that had the store. 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 it was granddaddy Westford. You and your daddy.

Annie Gavin: Westford. 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. 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 I remember—

Annie Gavin: He's the first one had a big two-story house. That's where Newt and Emmett were born because Emmett was my age. But, as a whole, the people that were here from the beginning, as to those slaves, because 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. And then they settled right in there where Cherry Point is now. And that still belongs to Black people never got the money for.

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

Annie Gavin: Came here looking work. Farming and the mills. Mills were the attraction, really. But, in my daddy's daddy's case, they were in Rocky Mount, Edgecomb County and all that was up there was farming. And 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. And, back in the thirties, they were making twenty-five cents a day at the fertilizer—I got with all different people that lived in James City going back as far as Vasalas Niel.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. But Vasalas 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 they said. He was a—



Annie Gavin: But he was a wise man.

Grace George: Yes. But they called it a slicker [indistinct 00:18:44].

Annie Gavin: Slicker. Yeah. Yeah. The reason they called him a slicker was because he could outtalk them out of money, I guess. But you learned a lot from Vasalas Niel and he was a jack legged preacher. And he had a lot—All those people helped each other. Yeah, they helped each other to survive because the women would make quilts and my grandmother, and I guess Willie Stalin's grandmother, George's grandmomma, all had quilt. And Gracie and Mae Zelamar wouldn't let me play with them because they were quilting. They kept away from me.

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

Annie Gavin: I had to sit around the old folks and I enjoyed hearing them talk about things that happened. That's why I knew 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 my mama's grandmother died. And so, I was a big girl. A lot of that stuff I heard from them that was interesting. And Ms. Anna, that was Stella Johnson's grandmother. Her daddy was her mother's owner, slave owner, and 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.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: You learn that from Roots because that woman was looking right at her husband going to Tissie. Those White women had to take a lot to because, say, if a slave owner found a woman that he choose, she didn't work.

Grace George: 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. And we heard a lot about Uncle Tom but, according to my grandmother and them people that I learned so much from, they call 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. They learned first hand. Eventually 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 mentioned

Horace James?

Annie Gavin: Horace James?

Unknown Interviewer: Yeah.

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

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

Unknown Interviewer: He was the chaplain.

Grace George: Chaplain.

Annie Gavin: Oh, he was—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. And Horace James was a preacher from Boston and then he was over them, at Horace James—His mission was to teach them. He was a priest and then he had a school in that house that Annie used to live in that used to be the school, the mission school. Started teaching them how to read and write and sew and do craft. Taught them to be independent. And he would come and go from Boston. Then the missionaries used to stay with Reverend W.

Annie Gavin: Just turned that—

Grace George: They also struggled with the freed men. [indistinct 00:23:13].

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

Anne (neighbor): I'm just going to need three peppers.

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

Grace George: Everybody going to know about James City. Maybe, do you have time to continue or you want to come back another time?

Unknown Interviewer: Can I come back another time?

Annie Gavin: There a special thing you want to know?

Grace George: Yeah. They went to school with [indistinct 00:24:00] James as well. That's good enough. We're going use your tools.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, that was the main thing.

Grace George: Yeah, yes.

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

Unknown Interviewer: [indistinct 00:24:12] we were yesterday, I guess.

Grace George: She was talking about James City, the original, when it was first settled and what you heard about Horace James and—

Annie Gavin: Yeah. According to my knowledge and what I heard, they put them down here because of the good water and the sand they saw. That was one of the reasons. And then they built these makeshift houses for them, I guess they built them themselves. They got the material for them. And each family had their own little, I'll say hut. Then 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 plantations, and he was not too well-dressed but they had some beautiful horses.

Annie Gavin: And then he asked questions, because the stable boy, they had young men to put up the horses on 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 but they still didn't know he was the president.

Grace George: Oh, right.

Annie Gavin: Because he traveled alone. I don't reckon he had anything to fear back then. But, anyway, the boy told him what he knew and do they feed you good? Do they take good care of you? And he said yes, because I guess that—And my grandmother said that their owner was good to his slaves. Some of them were very mean. But Abraham Lincoln stayed there a day or two and a slave owner's wife was pregnant, and 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. And then, after he got—They didn't even know he was the president. Traveled alone. After he got back in Washington, he wrote back and told him where to look and find a letter he had written.

Annie Gavin: And I even remember what he named, if it were a girl, Saphronia, and that stuck with me because it was a—I'm surprised I didn't name one of mine Saphronia. But, anyway—And soon when he got back in Washington, then they start sending troops. And they started freeing the slaves and she said they didn't want to leave where they were because their master was good. Like everything else, some good, some bad.

Grace George: Right.

Annie Gavin: 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 raved as far as they could see. Then they brought them to James City and put them over there and built makeshift houses for them. And the special reasons they settled in JC, that's why I guess all these hotels trying to get, for the good soil and good water.

Annie Gavin: Then, after he went back, it was so very long after then, the troops started coming in. The war started. And down on Battleground Parkway, used to have papers down there that the ships and stuff, the boats, used to come up there because they still got deep holes. Or did have, last time I was carrying papers down there. That's where one of the—

Grace George: That's on the other side of—By the Nissan building in that area?

Annie Gavin: Yeah.

Grace George: Way down.

Annie Gavin: Way down in the Thurman Light. And there were deep holes. Even when was carrying papers down there, there were deep holes where they'd dug to dig in. I guess—

Grace George: They bring the ships in.

Annie Gavin: And to hide while they were fighting because they had battles down there. That's why it's Battleground Park. That's what they called it.

Grace George: Okay. That's what they called it.

Annie Gavin: Battleground Park. And down by Monette's Place. And way back there, and I used to have 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. I knew Ms. Hannah now. Her slave master was her father. Now, they select themselves a Black woman. They put her in a house. She didn't have to work either. Her children— And Ms. Hannah played with her half sisters and brother. Stayed in the big house. She played in the big house. Those slaves felt good. That's why there's such a mixture of Black people. They were fathered by them slave owners.

Annie Gavin: Because, originally, most nationally, those Africans weren't Black. But, after he went back to Washington, then the soldiers started coming and going to different plantations and stuff. And the war. Civil war, they called it. Start freeing the slaves. But 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 that have given up 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 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. You got some of your stuff. You say Washington Spivey, he'd tell them off. He ain't going to pay no rent and say baby 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 because—They got the name because the Washington Spivey led them into battle.

Grace George: That's right.

Annie Gavin: Led them into battle and use bottles, sticks, whatever. But they ran law overboard. Even until today, they're scared to come to James City. And we still got a lot of it in us because I can remember, come and ask where people live, we wouldn't tell them anything. Then 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 said you can't make me know them.

Grace George: He was taught that one.

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 a 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. But, as a whole, James City people have been very outgoing people and very, very good people. They might fuss, they might fight this morning but nobody else better not 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 mama said. They had stores, many of their old people in shops and and old things.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Like everything else, some people have ambition and some don't. Now, your mother's daddy and uncle, they've had the first stores over here. Because my daddy worked for your mother's uncle. I

forgot his name. And then Papa got his foot cut off because papa used to be a brakeman on the train. And, when he got his foot cut off, that's when he went into the store business and he was a cook on the trains. Always half [indistinct 00:34:38].

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. And, for a long time, the only work that Black women could get was on the farm and the kitchen. And a lot of them walked that long bridge, Ms. Ida and Ms. Mae Lizzie, they got clothes on their head. Ms. Mae Lizzie and Ms. Ida wouldn't even have to hold it. Carry it right on the head. But I guess everybody had survived. And I'll tell you something else they used to do back then, didn't have linoleum for the floor. Scrub the floor and go down to the sand holes, get buckets of sand and put on the floor.

Grace George: In the sand? Why?

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

Grace George: Say, for instance, they spill oil or anything that would catch it.

Annie Gavin: But I knew this happened. Mama never did that. She just scrubbed her floor. But Ms. Mae Lizzie and Ms. Ida, those people that were older than she was, everyone said that the children had to scrub the floor, especially the kitchen, and put sand on it. Pretty white sand. It's still pretty white sand down there in them holes. And then we had a plate factory here.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: 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. They'd made plates.

Grace George: What did they make the plates out of?

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

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

Annie Gavin: I don't think it was so much for the community but it was good location where to get plenty of sand. Seemed like plates are made out of sand somewhere. But it wasn't an operation when I was growing up but the building, part of it, was still there. And I think the reason they located where they did was because there was a lot of sand there.

Annie Gavin: And then, beside farming, they started the mill and that's what people took care of themselves. Working at the mill. The Mungum Bennett Mill over there. Some of the pilings still there. And that's where most people lived. And then people from far and near would come and get rooms with people so they could work at the mill. For years and years. Then the war came, the first war. I can remember the end of it but I don't remember when—But I do know that my uncles and all went and then when the war came to the end, they start coming back home. I lived through about two wars, I guess, or three.

Grace George: Okay, okay.

Annie Gavin: But White people were—The church was the center of everybody's life then. They sometimes didn't get to see each other, those that lived far away apart, until they went to church and they prayed. Oh, they couldn't pray loud. As slaves. Had to turn the pots down and I always heard them say, turn the pots down. They have big old iron pots. The pots supposed to have caught the sound.

Grace George: What?

Annie Gavin: If they get happy or something.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. Isn't that something?

Grace George: That's why they holler so loud now.

Annie Gavin: Yeah. They pray.

Grace George: They let it out.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, they let it out now. And they had this Uncle Tom, dad explained to me about by an older person, had an old guy to call Uncle Tom. And now, when we think of Uncle Tom, we think of somebody who tells everything.

Grace George: Right, right.

Annie Gavin: But Uncle Tom wasn't a person that told everything. He gathered everything he could then they had to take them out to bring back to the slaves and to sneak out books. And the master's children by Black women, she had all the privileges. Now, Ms. Hannah, which was Stella Johnson's Grandmamma, she played with her sisters and brothers in the big house.

Grace George: Now, is that [indistinct 00:40:23]? Were they related to—

Annie Gavin: No. Ms. Hannah is your relative. This Hannah, Stella Johnson's grandma, she came late years. I

was a big girl when she came here. But she looked White.

Grace George: I heard mama talk about it.

Annie Gavin: Like Ms. Mary Sawyer, you couldn't tell them from White.

Grace George: That's right.

Annie Gavin: And then she didn't like White folk.

Grace George: Okay.

Annie Gavin: She didn't.

Grace George: It was close.

Annie Gavin: But it's the funniest thing. Those that had the most White blood dislike White people.

Grace George: Yeah.

Annie Gavin: Because nowadays there's no difference. People are people. And I guess that's what they were working toward.

Grace George: Ms. Annie, did you ever hear much about Paul Williams when you were growing up as a girl?

Annie Gavin: Who?

Grace George: Paul Williams?

Annie Gavin: No.

Grace George: He was supposed to be one of the committee of 12 leaders. He and Davis.

Annie Gavin: He was one of the leaders?

Grace George: One of the leaders in 1898.

Annie Gavin: What was his first name?

Grace George: Paul. Paul Lewis. I guess it's Paul Lewis.

Annie Gavin: Paul Lewis? Yeah. Old man Amos Williams and old man Arnold, they were some of the



outstanding—The Elliots. And, of course, Ms. Francis. I think she was half White. My mother's grandmother, mama said you couldn't tell her from White. And she hated White people. She wouldn't hang a calendar on her wall. Turned the face around. But mama say she had long black hair she could sit on. Said couldn't tell from White. But her mother was half White and her daddy was White. That's how she—

Annie Gavin: Now, I saw mama's aunt, they lived in Boston and she was very light. And she came to visit us a couple of times, I remember, as a child, and mama would go shopping with her. She'd say drugstore. The drugstore would be right down there on the corner. See? And, naturally, having lived in Boston, she had the accent and everything and she was White looking and something she wanted, the man, the druggist, couldn't understand what she's talking about. Told her to come around there and say if she could find it behind his counter. Mama said no one ever ask her. And my mother say her grandfather was half Indian. He came from the Florida Everglades.

Annie Gavin: But it was a general mixture of people. And you heard a lot of different stories. But, regardless to what happened, there were always somebody that was good because—My great-grandmother said that her master's wife was very good to them. A lot of things she did for them that she didn't want her husband to know. They had to work in the fields and everything. But some of them had some—And that Uncle Tom, we think of Uncle Tom as a tattletale.

Grace George: Right, right.

Annie Gavin: But that Uncle Tom was a person that drove for the master and his wife and stuff. He got to hear and learned. Everything he learned, he'd bring it back. He was tattletaling that way.

Grace George: Reverse of what they called him.

Annie Gavin: Right. And, finally, they killed him. But some of those people, they fared so good as slaves until they didn't want to be free because my mom, she already knew, said that, when the soldiers put them out, leading them to freedom, she was one of them they settled down in James City. She said they kept looking back. As far as they could look, they looked and the master, his family, were on the porch and they felt so bad. They hated to be leaving them because they were good to them.

Grace George: They were good. And they didn't know what they were going to be facing.

Annie Gavin: That's right. And then, you find in any situation, there's some good. No matter how bad people are, there's some good among them. Because there was a time, the James City people, I guess that was their set up, they didn't let no strangers come over here and start anything because, if it start with one, you got all of them to fight. That's when JC got a reputation for being bad.

Grace George: He's heard that story. No, they didn't take no jump.

Annie Gavin: They didn't take no jump. No way.

Grace George: I can understand that because when you went free, you had to protect yourself. You didn't have your master or anybody in that way.

Annie Gavin: Right.

Grace George: So you had to come together as a family.

Annie Gavin: Yeah, as a unit.

Grace George: Unity.

Annie Gavin: They could be mad at each other but nobody else better not come in there bother them.

Grace George: And they would share whatever they had.

Annie Gavin: They'd share whatever they had. Yeah, because, when I was growing up, there wasn't any such thing as welfare. And those people that didn't have children to feed them after they got old, they had to depend on whatever somebody would give them. Now, Reverend Dudley, you knew Reverend Dudley, he fed a lot of people. And my daddy fed a lot of people because, by this time, he had a little cafe down by the bridge and Ms. Jenny Roxanne, little kin to Bobby, would go down there and he'd let him scrub the floor—