

Waxhaw's African American History

UNION COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



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Union County, North Carolina

Report Submitted to

Town of Waxhaw 4218 Waxhaw-Marvin Road • Waxhaw, North Carolina 28173

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Abstract

New South Associates (NSA) created this report to fulfill the requirements of a grant obtained by the Town of Waxhaw from the National Park Service's (NPS) Historic Preservation Fund for Certified Local Governments. The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) administered the grant which was intended to document the town's history from an African American perspective by conducting oral history interviews, identifying and documenting historic resources that are illustrative of this history, and then making recommendations to the state's Study List based on those findings. NSA recommended that two resources, Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044) and Western Union School (UN1237), be considered for inclusion in the Study List. The North Carolina National Register Advisory Committee (NRAC) placed these two resources on the state's Study List during its October 9, 2025, meeting.

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Acknowledgements

NSA would like to thank Waxhaw's African American History Project Committee members: Gypsy Houston, Vivie Miller, and Janet Peirano. They each have a passion for their community and provided invaluable assistance by identifying and contacting interviewees, gathering sources, providing venues for meetings and interviews, answering countless questions, securing access to properties, and even conducting driving tours. They are to be commended for their dedication to this project. NSA would also like to thank the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's staff, specifically Sarah Woodward and Jeff Smith, for their guidance over the course of the project.

This project would not have been possible without the individuals who shared their time and knowledge during the oral history interviews. They are the heart of this project. They are Deonne Barnes, Estelle Coffey, Rosa Covington, Riva Covington, Mildred Culp, Harry Hood, Gypsy Houston, Louise Massey, Lorenzo Massey, Sylvester McManus, Vivie Miller, Hubert Mills, and Edward Walker.

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1. Introduction and Methods

In 2024, the Town of Waxhaw received a federal grant from the National Park Service's (NPS) Historic Preservation Fund for Certified Local Governments, which is administered by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO). The grant funded a project to document the town's history from an African American perspective by conducting oral history interviews and identifying and documenting historic resources that are illustrative of this history. This type of project would not be successful without assistance from community members. The Waxhaw African American History Project Committee was composed of Gypsy Houston, Union County Local History and Genealogy Librarian, Vivie Miller, Waxhaw native and Waxhaw Historic Preservation Commission member, and Janet Peirano, Historic Preservation Planner with the Town of Waxhaw. The Town of Waxhaw contracted with NSA in March 2025 to gather historical research, conduct oral history interviews, document important African American sites, and develop a list of resources for inclusion in the HPO's Study List, a preliminary step in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) process. Sarah Woodard, Branch Supervisor for the Survey and National Register Branch of the HPO, presented the resources recommended for inclusion on the North Carolina Study List at the state's National Register Advisory Committee (NRAC) on October 10, 2025. NSA staff for this project included historian Velma Fann, architectural historian Jennifer Langdale, and project manager Brittany Hyder.

Oral History Interviews

This project was conducted in several phases, beginning with meetings between the Waxhaw African American History Project Committee and NSA in order to identify potential interviewees and develop a set of interview questions. The Committee and NSA held a public meeting on June 3, 2025, at First United Presbyterian Church in Waxhaw to inform the community about the project and gather photographs and ephemera for digital scanning. NSA Historian Velma Fann conducted in-person interviews on June 4–5, 2025, at the Duncan McDonald House in Waxhaw and at the Union County Southwest Regional Library. She recorded additional interviews on the phone. Although the Committee agreed upon a standardized list of questions, each interviewee was also given the opportunity to expand upon each topic and discuss aspects of Waxhaw's history not specifically addressed by an

interview question. In total, Fann recorded nine audio interviews with 13 individuals. Rev.com then transcribed the interviews. Fann mailed a copy of the transcribed interviews to each interviewee, who was then asked to correct the spelling of any names or places and make any necessary edits. Each of these interviews is included in Appendix A. The audio recordings will be housed at the State Archives of North Carolina, a division of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Culture Resources (DNCR).

Archival Research

NSA historians conducted archival research relating to the history of the Town of Waxhaw at the Dickerson Genealogy and Local History Room at the Union County Library in Monroe as well as online at Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and DigitalNC. Several individuals also provided historic documents such as church records and funeral programs.

Architectural Survey

Based on archival research and oral interviews, NSA staff compiled a list of buildings and places important to Waxhaw's African American community that are at least 50 years old, the typical age at which the NPS defines resources as historic. NSA selected 18 resources for the architectural survey and documented each of them using digital photography and HPO's survey site forms (Figures 1.1–1.5). The architectural survey recorded the primary building at each site, as well as auxiliary buildings, structures, landscape features, and representative streetscapes and landscapes.

Figure 1.1.
Map of Project Location and Historic Resources (1 of 5)



Basemap: NAIP (2023)

Figure 1.2.
Map of Project Location and Historic Resources (2 of 5)



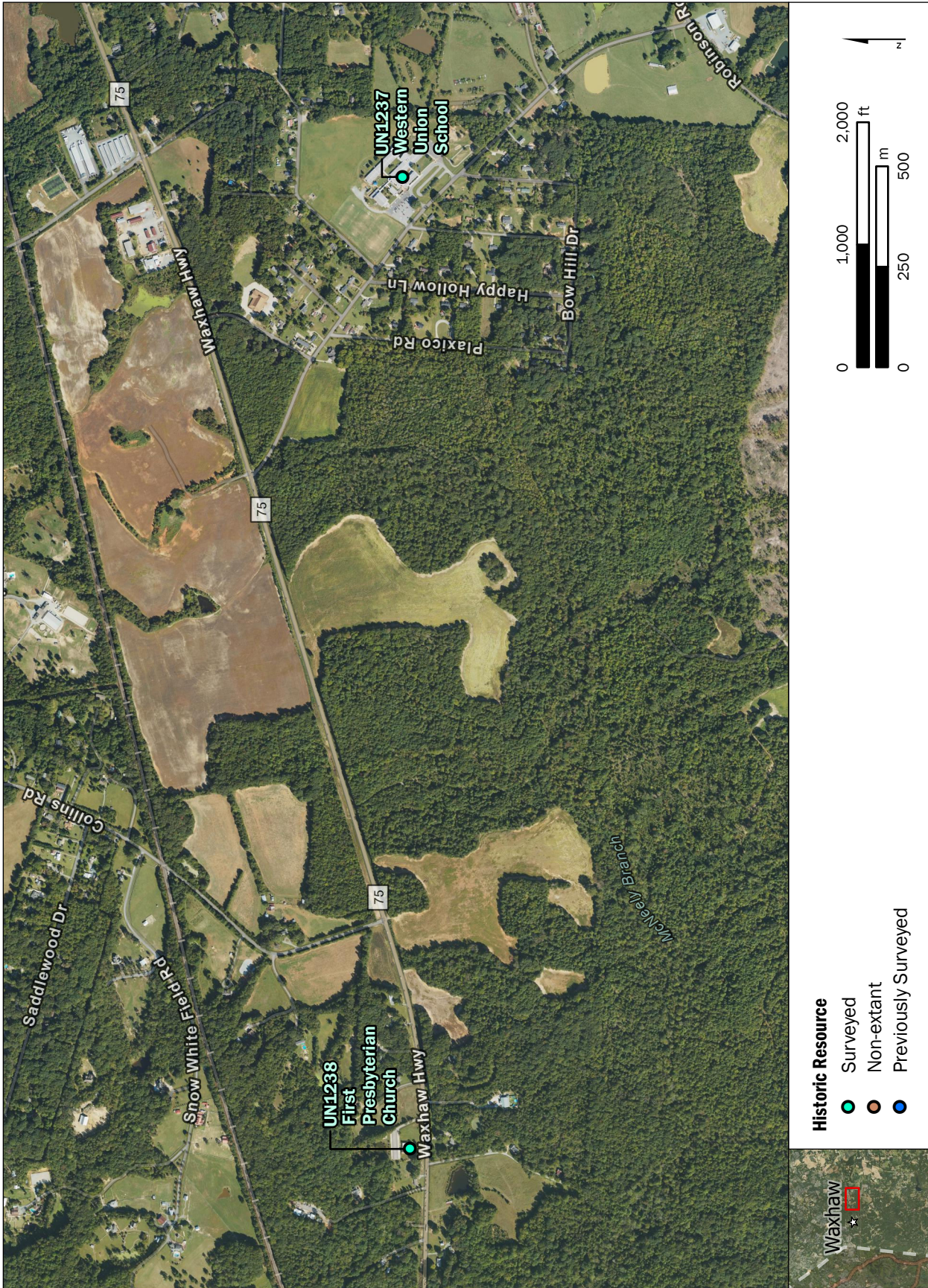
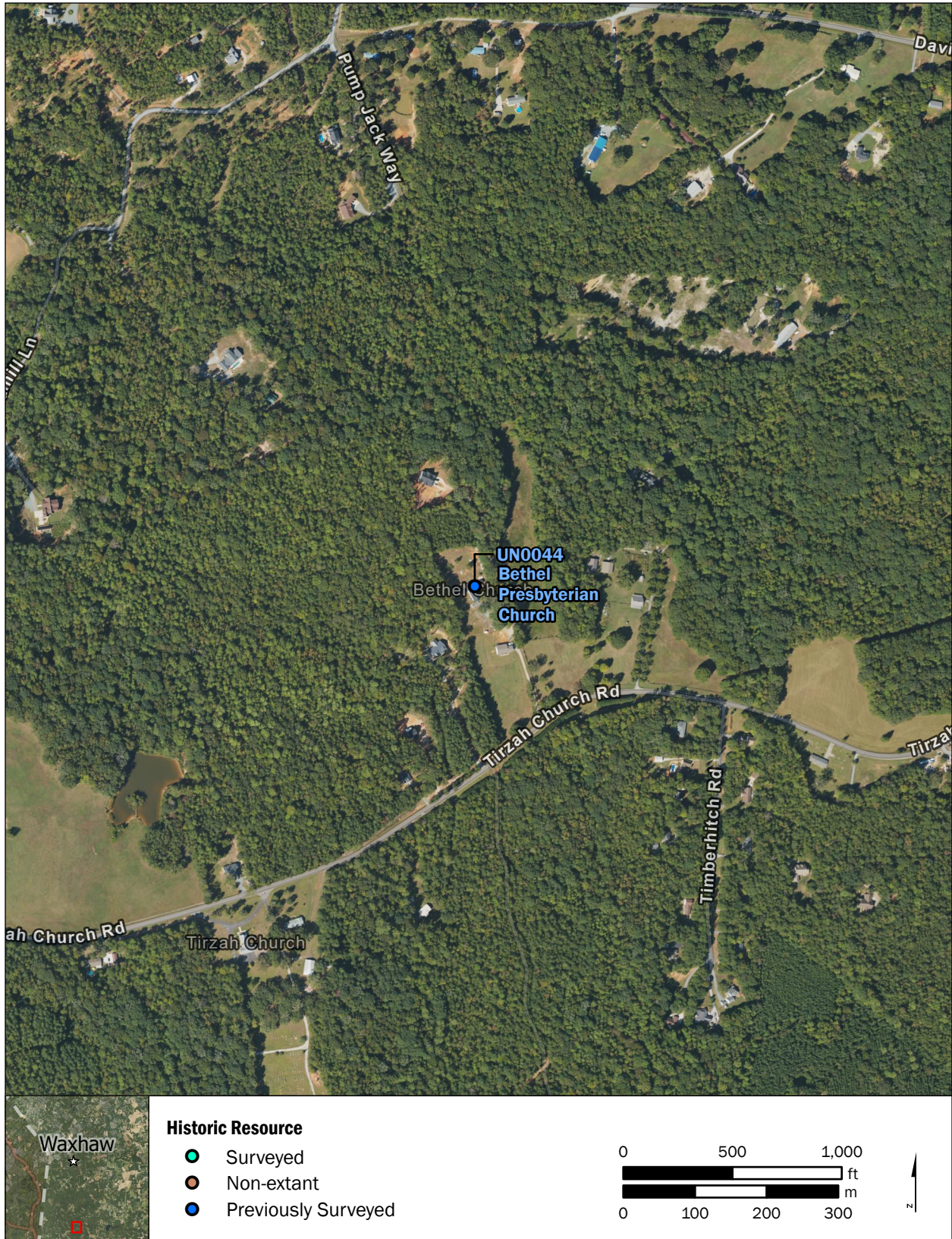


Figure 1.3.
Map of Project Location and Historic Resources (3 of 5)

Figure 1.4.
Map of Project Location and Historic Resources (4 of 5)



Figure 1.5.
Map of Project Location and Historic Resources (5 of 5)



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2. Historic Context

A Brief History of Union County: Colonial Period through Reconstruction

The Town of Waxhaw is situated near the South Carolina state line on the western edge of Union County in Jackson Township. The area surrounding the town, which also includes Lancaster County, South Carolina, is named after the Tribe that inhabited this region. Historically known as the Old Waxhaw Settlement, today it is often simply referred to as the Waxhaws. Disease and war decimated the Indigenous people who populated this area prior to the arrival of Europeans. The Catawba and Seminole Tribes absorbed the remaining Waxhaws after the Yamasee War, an early eighteenth-century conflict between Tribes and the Europeans (Adams 2016; Museum of the Waxhaws 2025). Many Scots-Irish and German immigrants, almost exclusively from Pennsylvania, moved into the area in the mid to late eighteenth century via the Great Wagon Road, a former Indigenous trail known as the "Warrior's Path", which linked Philadelphia to the north with Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, the North Carolina Piedmont, and the Upcountry of South Carolina to the south. This large influx of settlers led to the creation of five new North Carolina counties in a seven-year span from 1746 to 1753. These included Anson County in 1750 and Mecklenburg County in 1763 (Marshall 2006; Powell 1989:108–110).

The General Assembly carved Union County from portions of these two counties in 1842. Anson County's flatter terrain and sandier soil supported large plantations of thousands of acres of cotton and tobacco worked by enslaved people who made up 51 percent of the county's population in the antebellum period. Likewise, Mecklenburg County's enslaved population reached nearly 40 percent of the county's total. Union County's soil, however, contained more clay and was comparatively less productive (Dickinson, Patricia S. 1991; Hergesheimer 1861; Stowe, Gene 2006:17). It was, however, still well-suited for cotton and corn production. Cotton became the primary commercial crop in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in the Waxhaw area. Before the Civil War, farms and plantations contained from 1,000 to 4,500 acres, particularly in the western half of the county. Farmers did not grow cotton to any extent in the eastern part of the county until

after the Civil War (Derrick, B.B. and Perkins, S.P. 1916:9, 12). By 1860, enslaved people composed 20 percent of Union County's population (Hergesheimer 1861; Stowe, Gene 2006:17).

Union County saw no significant battles during the Civil War. The only notable event was a minor skirmish between Union and Confederate cavalry forces at Wilson's Store. Located approximately six miles (mi.) south of Waxhaw, the skirmish occurred late in the war on March 1, 1865, and resulted in the Union troops being "driven from the field" (Davis, Richard Harding 2018). Like the demographics of the antebellum period, Black Freedmen composed roughly 20 percent of Union County's 12,217 total residents in 1870. The 10-year span between 1870 and 1880 witnessed a nearly 48 percent increase in the overall population, the largest in the county's history, with African Americans totaling 25 percent of the residents. Population growth followed the arrival of the North Carolina Central Railroad, which linked Charlotte and Wilmington before extending through Monroe, the county seat, in 1874 (Kendrick, Virginia A.S. 1993:22; Wells, Jacob 1882).

History of Waxhaw: 1888–Present

During the Reconstruction Era, the community of Waxhaw consisted of a scattering of homes on the ridge between Twelve Mile Creek and Rone Branch, both tributaries of the Catawba River. With the arrival of the Georgia, Carolina and Northern Rail Line, a segment of the Seaboard Air Line, in the spring of 1888, the Town of Waxhaw sprang up along the tracks (Kendrick, Virginia A.S. 1993:22; Rand McNally & Co 1892). The line connected the new community with Monroe and ultimately to Charlotte, Wilmington, and Atlanta (Brown, H.C.). Workers laid tracks along the crest of the ridge and arranged North and South Main Street on either side. They constructed a depot in July of that year, and the first post office opened on September 28, 1888 (Gamble, Harry Y. 1989:4; Kendrick, Virginia A.S. 1993:22; United States Postal Service 2025). Chartered in 1889, Waxhaw's town limits originally extended one square mile from the center. The town quickly blossomed, and leaders extended the boundaries two years later (Kendrick, Virginia A.S. 1993:22).

Waxhaw became a market for cotton grown in the county. A large platform and storage buildings for guano and cotton seed appeared next to the depot. The construction of the Rodman-Heath Cotton Mill in 1899 just east of the Waxhaw's commercial district further demonstrated the importance of the crop in the area. It remained Waxhaw's largest employer until it closed in 1946. A wide variety of other businesses arose along the tracks in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century,

including several general stores, hardware and grocery stores, a furniture store, a hotel, a drugstore, and a bank (Dickinson, Patricia S. 1991). Levi Branson's 1896 *North Carolina Business Directory* lists one drug store, six general stores, a millinery, and two businesses that functioned as general stores and cotton buyers (Branson 1896:596). African American businesses are missing from early descriptions of Waxhaw. The 1900 Census, however, reveals that the Black community had two grocers, William Cureton and John Ford. Robert Potts operated a boarding house, as six Black boarders lived in his home at the time.

Waxhaw's population appeared in the census for the first time in 1900 and totaled 752 (Hunt 1901:12). Of the individuals counted, 151, or roughly 20 percent, were African Americans. Most of them worked in agriculture as farmers, farm laborers, or day laborers. Property owners divided the large plantations that existed before the Civil War in this section of the county, and by the second decade of the twentieth century, only 3.5 percent contained more than 260 acres, while 74.3 percent amounted to less than 100 acres. The average farm size was 74.1 acres and tenants operated 56.8 percent of farms in the county. Many of the tenants were African Americans (Derrick, B.B. and Perkins, S.P. 1916:12).

According to the 1900 Census, African American women who worked outside of the home often found employment as laundresses, housekeepers, or cooks, but many also served as day laborers on farms. A few African American individuals worked in other fields. For example, the census lists five African American railroad workers and three draymen (or wagon drivers). Although the cotton mill almost exclusively hired white people, it also employed three Black workers. The census documents nearly all of Waxhaw's Black residents rented their homes. The exceptions to this were Miss McCain, a 24-year-old washerwoman who held a mortgage on her house. She lived with her infant son, Luther, and two young nieces whose last names were McGill. Anthony Hood, 72 years old, also held a mortgage on his home. The 24-year-old Rev. J. Gregg owned his house outright, as did S. Dunlap, a 55-year-old drayman who lived with his wife, four children, and two grandchildren. His oldest son also worked as a drayman, and his oldest daughter was a washerwoman.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, Waxhaw was known for its cotton market and cotton mill and was the second-most economically important town in Union County (Derrick, B.B. and Perkins, S.P. 1916:7). Census records show that Waxhaw's total population decreased between 1900 and 1910 to 602, but the number of African American residents rose slightly to 163. In 1910, most of the Black workers continued as farmers, farm laborers, or were employed doing "odd jobs", and approximately 10 men worked for the railroad in some capacity. Businesses operated by African Americans included Robert Kilga's shoe shop and James and Peggy Springs' restaurant. Virginian Charley Pitchford served as a

Black Presbyterian minister, and the 1910 census lists Neal Massey as the only Black public school teacher in Waxhaw. Of the 48 African American heads of household in town, only nine owned their homes.

Waxhaw's total population increased to 750 in 1920, almost exactly the number recorded 20 years earlier in the 1900 Census (Hunt, William C. 1921:180). The 1920 Census also records several subtle changes in Waxhaw's African American population of 196 individuals and provides more detailed information than 1910. While most workers labored at farms and women continued to serve as laundresses and cooks, the types of jobs that were available to African Americans was slightly more diversified than in the previous decade. Three men worked as draymen for the white-owned stores in town. The railroad also employed several men, and the cotton mill utilized African Americans as truck hands and firemen. Isaac Weary was a janitor at a schoolhouse; Johnnie Simmons labored as a brick mason; Lee Hood worked at a garage, the first evidence of automobiles in Waxhaw; and again, Ned Massey was the only Black teacher in Waxhaw. Isaac Massey was the only Black minister, and he also worked on a farm. The 1920 Census also includes the first Black physician in town, Dr. Thomas Craig, who lived on Broom Street with his wife and three daughters. George and Sally Stinson operated a store and boarding house, and Charles Davis ran a barber shop. The boarding house served as a gathering spot for African Americans well into the mid-twentieth century. Chapter 3 provides more discussion of the boarding house.

The 1920 Census data reveals that African American home ownership increased from nine to 13 households between 1910 and 1920. It further provides information on where African Americans lived in Waxhaw, listing street names but not house numbers. From this information, it appears that a few African Americans lived on Broom Street including eight households, those of Dr. Craig, Isaac Weary, and members of the Hood, Massey, and Houston families. The census taker marked a group of houses on unnamed streets as the "Colored Section". This is where the majority, or 96 members, of the African American community lived.

By 1930, the population of Waxhaw had increased to 840 people, including 163 African Americans. While farm work was still the most common type of employment among the Black population, 19 individuals also toiled on road construction, and a slightly smaller number sought work as day laborers doing odd jobs. Three additional day laborers worked at the brickyard, while another held a job at the cotton mill. Again, women served as laundresses, primarily taking laundry into their own homes. Other women cooked, likely in white residences. Three Black public-school teachers taught presumably at Waxhaw's

Rosenwald School, which opened in 1924. Teacher Samuel Fulwood owned his home, valued at \$1,500.00, and lived with his wife, Rosa, and their five children. Teachers, Ida M. Dees and Mary E. Bush, boarded at the home of Clyde A. Massey on Mine Road (probably today's Howie Mine Road). Other occupations listed in the census include four railroad workers, a mail carrier, two shoe repairmen, a truck driver, several draymen at local stores, and a cotton trader on the town's cotton platform. There were two Methodist ministers: Robert Wallace and William H. Blackmon, who boarded at the home of Archie Cureton on Mine Road. Black business owner George Miller owned his own shoe repair shop, and Charles L. Davis, who also lived on Mine Road, operated a grocery store. Many African American families lived on Mine Road, as well as Hicks Road, Osceola Road, North Broom Street, and another unnamed road in the town.

The Great Depression reduced cotton production and retail trade in the region, but the Rodman-Heath Cotton Mill remained open. The development of man-made polymers such as nylon, first produced by DuPont in 1939, reduced the need for cotton, and the mill eventually closed in 1946 (Glass, Brent D. et al. 2006).

The 1940 Census documents a population of 1,510 residents in Waxhaw, including 192 African American residents. This census is not as thorough as previous ones, and therefore, the information gleaned is not as rich. African American men primarily worked as laborers on farms, on the railroad, or in construction work. This census lists fewer types of jobs, which may indicate a lack of work. There were no African American business owners included in this census except for John H. Thomas, who was a shoemaker, and the only teacher listed, Minnie Miller, was a widow who lived with her sister, Daisy Norwood.

By the 1950s, Waxhaw's downtown began losing business activity with the retail market shifting to nearby Monroe and Charlotte (Dickinson, Patricia S. 1991). The 1950 Census indicates that the population declined considerably in the mid-twentieth century to 729 residents; while the number of African Americans remained steady at 196. Occupations listed in the census varied widely. Twelve African American women were employed as maids, and others worked for the railroad, in construction, at sawmills, or in the cotton mill. Additional workers included a carpenter and five bricklayers. The only business owners recorded were J.C. Green, who operated a candy shop, and Willie Malone, who ran a shoe repair business. The sole African American woman employed outside of domestic service was 28-year-old Helen Massey, a primary school teacher at the county school.

In the late 1950s, Waxhaw developed a new antique-focused commercial market, beginning with furniture stores in the business district. The Waxhaw Women's Club inaugurated its first annual antique show in 1961, and numerous antique dealers opened shops, reviving the

downtown (Dickinson, Patricia S. 1991). The Women's Club hosted its last antique show in 2001; interest in the show and stores began to wane late in the late twentieth century (Waxhaw's History 2025). The Waxhaw Historic District was added to the NRHP in 1991. The town experienced relatively little growth in the late twentieth century with a population of 1,208 in 1980 and 1,294 in 1990 (North Carolina Division of State Budget and Management 1991). The twenty-first century brought rapid growth to the region. As part of the expanding greater Charlotte metropolitan area, Waxhaw has experienced accelerated development. Its population more than doubled between 2010 and 2020, reaching 21,411 residents. The town limits grew from 7.83 square miles in 2000 to 12.7 square miles in 2023. Numerous housing and commercial developments have appeared throughout the town, and continued growth is anticipated (Town of Waxhaw 2023). Today, Waxhaw features a vibrant downtown area with a wide variety of shops and restaurants.

African American Life in Waxhaw: Circa 1950–Present

The Oral Interview Process

Information about African Americans in Waxhaw is lacking in the written historical record. Census data, grave markers, church records, and government documents only provide a glimpse of the history of Waxhaw's Black population. The interviews conducted by NSA for the Town of Waxhaw are an attempt to fill in this gap. From the interviews, NSA historians were able to document additional details about African American life in Waxhaw during the mid to late twentieth century. The full transcripts of these interviews are included in Appendix A.

African American Neighborhoods

One of the first questions posed to interviewees concerned the geographic boundaries of Waxhaw's African American community. Their responses helped identify the locations of significant extant and nonextant buildings and sites for documentation. Because no city directories exist for Waxhaw and, as noted above, only the 1920 and 1930 censuses include street names, determining where African Americans lived and worked is difficult to reconstruct from the surviving historic record. The 1920 Census describes households as

either white, Black, or Mulatto (a term used during this period to refer to individuals of mixed Black and white ancestry). At this time, Black and Mulatto households were scattered throughout the town, with a group of five families living adjacent to one another on Providence Street and Broom Street. A much larger section of Waxhaw, simply labeled "Colored Section," located on a "street not named", was home to 26 African American households totaling 96 individuals. The 1930 Census provides more information. Waxhaw's Black residents lived primarily along Mine Road (presumably today's Howie Mine Road) and adjacent streets. This neighborhood contained 51 African American households totaling approximately 219 people. Unfortunately, the 1940 and 1950 censuses do not provide street names.

Through the oral history interviews gathered for this project, we now have more information about where African Americans lived in the mid-twentieth century, and this data seems to correspond with the census records, suggesting that African Americans have lived in the same area likely since the establishment of Waxhaw. Deonne Barnes (b. 1971) provided a thorough description of areas in and around Waxhaw where African Americans resided,

I would say one of the dividing lines would be the railroad track. North of the railroad track was where most of the African Americans lived when I was growing up. There was a community to the left, or I guess to the west, it was called Sandy Ridge, and many African Americans lived there. And then on the east side, there was Howie Mine Road, which is where a lot of other African Americans lived. But we did have an area south of the railroad tracks in an area called Western Union, which was heavily populated with African Americans as well. But I would say the majority would've been north of the railroad tracks in Waxhaw (Deonne Melissa Barnes 2025).

Several interviewees labeled the area north of the railroad tracks on Howie Mine Road as the Low End (Harry Hood 2025; Vivie Miller 2025a). Sylvester McManus III (b. 1959) provided similar information, "So, a majority of the African Americans here in Waxhaw would live off of Old Howie Man [Mine] Road...It's also called Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. So, you probably got about 90 percent African Americans in that area" (Sylvester McManus, III 2025). Hubert Mills (b. 1950) identified this neighborhood as the Low End and also mentioned Sandy Ridge. "Sandy Ridge is one area, which is on Waxhaw-Marvin Road. Then we have what we call the Low End, which is Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. And on that, that's where we had Waxhaw Schoolhouse" (Hubert Mills 2025).

Although a sizable number of African Americans lived in the Town of Waxhaw, there were also many who lived in the surrounding rural area and considered themselves part of the Waxhaw community. Vivie Miller (b. 1949) noted that many African Americans resided on the east side of Waxhaw as well as on "the west side, on the same side of the track...it was [called] Sandy Ridge...[and] there were those who were out in the country in the more rural areas" (Vivie Miller 2025a). Estelle Coffey (b. 1939) lived outside of Waxhaw and described Waxhaw as being rural with, "There's houses here, houses there" (Estelle R. Coffey 2025).

Education

NSA asked all interviewees about their education, which resulted in discussions on a variety of topics related to their schooling. One was the practice of split terms, which existed to allow students to help harvest the cotton crop. Hubert Mills described it as, "the time that the cotton was ready to be picked or whatnot. In other words, once the cotton was all picked, then you went back to school" (Hubert Mills 2025). Edward "Sid" Walker (b. 1951) said, "We'd pick cotton. Truck would come by and get us, we'd jump on the back of the truck, go to the cotton field. You had something called a split term in school, and you was able to get out of school for so long, I don't know how long it was, to pick cotton" (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025). This practice continued into the 1960s (Western Union High School 'Grand'Bi-Annual Reunion, 1940-1968, Committee 1968:7).

Interviewees born before 1965 recounted their schooling during the Segregation Era when schools, businesses, recreational facilities, and neighborhoods were strictly divided between Black and white citizens. Officials did not fully integrate schools in Union County until 1970. As noted by Harry Hood, the eastside or Low End neighborhood of Waxhaw was centered on the Waxhaw School, also known as Waxhaw Elementary School. Deed records show that Frank and Lucille Armfield of Concord, Cabarrus County; N.S. and Lena Matthews of Charlotte; and J.C.M. Vann, Administrator for C.N. Simpson, deeded to the Union County Board of Education a 3 1/2-ac. parcel "for the purpose of erecting a public school and burying grounds for the colored population" in 1922 (Union County Deed Book 100:365). The community constructed Waxhaw School, a Rosenwald School, on the site in 1924. It served the African American students in Waxhaw until the early 1960s and then transitioned into a community center. Aerial photography shows that the school building was removed between 1983 and 1998. Western Union High School served Black students in Waxhaw from 1940 until it burned in 1954. Its replacement, Western Union School, opened in 1956 to Black students in all grades (Harry Hood 2025).

Waxhaw's Rosenwald School

The state of African American schools and education in the American South in the early twentieth century was dire. While the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case promised "separate but equal" facilities, Black schools in the South remained woefully underfunded and therefore, decidedly unequal. In North Carolina, legislators did not adequately fund schools for white students and provided even less for Black students. There were few teachers, crowded classrooms, minimal books and supplies, and dilapidated buildings. In some rural areas, there were no schools at all for Black children (Medlin, Eric and Putt, Alyssa 2022). Levi Branson's 1896 *North Carolina Business Directory* counted 76 white schools and 29 Black schools in Union County. The location and names of these schools, however, is not known (Branson 1896:597). Recognizing the disparity between Black and white schools, Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, began the Rosenwald Fund with \$25,000 in 1912 to improve educational opportunities in 15 southern states. With guidance from Black educator Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald developed a program to build schools, provided that local communities raise an equal amount for their construction (Medlin, Eric and Putt, Alyssa 2022).

Rosenwald's program was highly successful and is credited with decreasing the illiteracy rate for African Americans from 30.1 percent in 1900 to 5.5 percent in 1950. The number of Black students attending school in the South rose from 40 percent to more than 70 percent when the Rosenwald Fund dissolved in 1948. The program resulted in the construction of over 5,000 schools and educational buildings. North Carolinians built 813 Rosenwald Schools, more than any other state (Hanchett, Tom 2025a). The Union County School Board constructed 32 Rosenwald schools between 1918 and 1929 (Hanchett, Tom 2025b).

Although the school board acquired the 3.5-acre parcel in 1922 on which to build the Waxhaw Rosenwald School, the Rosenwald Fund required the community to raise funds to construct the building itself. Black Waxhaw residents began planning and fundraising in 1923. An article in the *Monroe Journal* noted, "The colored people of Marvin community and Waxhaw are now paying money and assembling building material for the erection of comfortable school buildings" (The Monroe Journal 1923). Their efforts were rewarded, and the Rosenwald Fund approved the construction of the Waxhaw School, known as #66-D, on October 15, 1924, just four days after receiving its application (Credle, W.R., personal communication 1924; Smith, S.L., personal communication 1924a). In December 1924, the Fund paid \$500 to the North Carolina Department of Public Education for the construction of the school and the school opened that year (Smith, S.L., personal communication 1924b).

The Rosenwald Fund also provided plans for the school buildings, as well as teacher-living quarters and privies. The design guidelines even included details on lighting, landscaping, and building materials (Medlin, Eric and Putt, Alyssa 2022). Because many of these schools did not have electricity, the building designs included bands of large east-or west-facing windows to take advantage of the natural light. The Waxhaw School was a Type 3 plan, which had three classrooms plus an industrial room. A movable partition divided two of the classrooms allowing the space to double in the size and create an assembly room (Smith. S.L. 1924). Hubert Mills described it as, "...it was one big building, and they had partition doors, and that's how they separated the class" (Hubert Mills 2025). The Waxhaw School, also known as Waxhaw Elementary School, served only grades 1–7 (Figure 2.1). There was no high school for African American students in this area until Western Union High School opened in 1940 (Union County Board of Education).

A 1949 report on public education produced by the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, provides some details on the conditions of Waxhaw Elementary School:

Waxhaw Elementary School has an enrollment of 115 pupils with three teachers who use three of the four classrooms in the building. Classrooms are inadequately equipped for a complete program. Two classrooms may be thrown together for an auditorium. Warm morning heaters are used. Pit privies are in bad condition. Drinking water is secured from the city system. The entrance to the building is in bad condition, as are also the doors and windows. One incandescent light fixture is provided for each classroom. Housekeeping and maintenance are poor (George Peabody College for Teachers 1949:134–135).

Several interviews shared additional details about the Waxhaw Rosenwald School. Mildred Culp (b. 1945) attended Waxhaw Elementary in the 1950s. She remembered the three classrooms, and her description of recess provides some insight into the school grounds,

When we went out at recess, we played hopscotch. We played hide-and-go-seek. We built playhouses out there in the edge of the woods and with the trees and stuff. You made your games. You didn't have swings...You had to hang something on the tree to make a swing. You didn't have a whole lot of gymnastics stuff outside. You just made your own games. And it was fun because that's all we knew...But after the recess, I think it was like 30 minutes. You come in, and you do your work (Mildred Culp 2025).



Source: Rosenwald Fund Card File, The Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, 1918-1948, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Fisk University

Figure 2.1.
Waxhaw Rosenwald School

Culp also provided other details. The school water fountain, "had a long pipe...you turn the water on, and the water came up...It was about seven, six or seven, holes on that, so all of us could drink water" (Mildred Culp 2025). She also described the interior of the school,

We had little rooms. We call them cloak rooms...you hang your coats up in the cloak room...when it's time to go home, somebody go get all the coats...we had one room that we did was an activity room. You went in there. We used to paint jars and put pictures on them and that kind of thing (Mildred Culp 2025).

Lorenzo Massey (b. 1935) also remembered the three classrooms at Waxhaw Elementary and the "stove to get warm...we used to have to go to the woods, we was in the woods, had to cut the trees down to keep the fire going" (Lorenzo Massey 2025a).

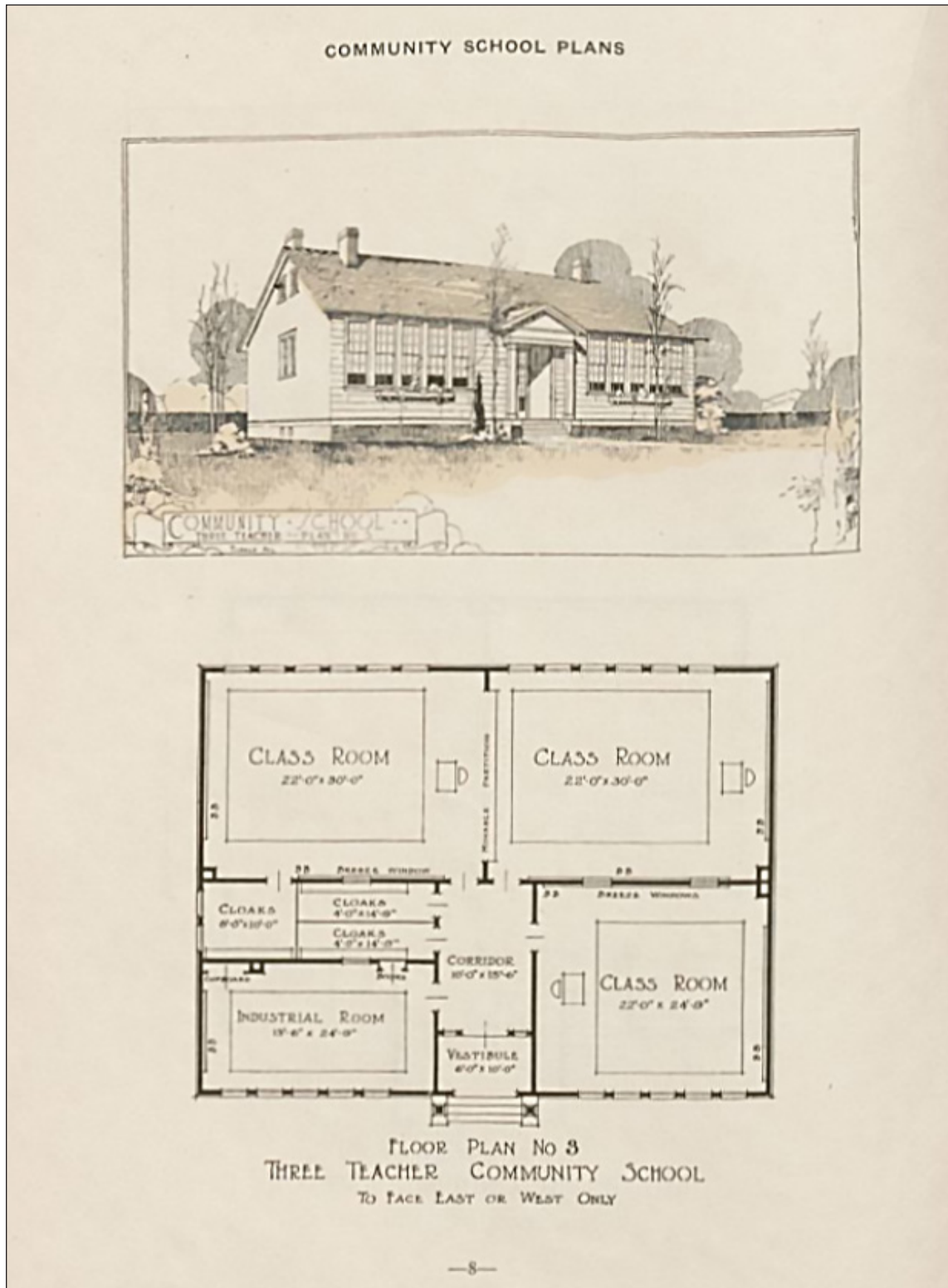
In North Carolina, many of the Rosenwald schools closed when officials consolidated schools during integration (Medlin, Eric and Putt, Alyssa 2022). This included the Waxhaw School, which closed when the Union County schools were integrated in 1970.

Booker T. Washington envisioned the Rosenwald schools not only as schools, but also as community centers serving as spaces for adult education and community gatherings (Hanchett, Tom 2025b). Waxhaw's school certainly seemed to serve that purpose. Nearly all the individuals interviewed for this project fondly remembered annual 4th of July celebrations, baseball games, parties, and wedding receptions held on the grounds of the school. These events will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Western Union School

The Union County School Board constructed Western Union High School for African American high school students in the Waxhaw area. Located in Marvin, approximately seven miles northwest of Waxhaw, the Western Union High School building initially served as an elementary school for white students, but it had "been abandoned as a white school." Consequently, it opened as the only brick school for African American students in the county in 1940 and served grades 8–12 (Monroe Enquirer 1945). During its first year, enrollment totaled 137 students with three teachers. The school had four classrooms, an auditorium, a lunchroom, and a library with 219 books (NC State Department of Public Education 1941; Western Union High School 'Grand'Bi-Annual Reunion, 1940-1968, Committee 1968:6).

Figure 2.2.
Rosenwald Type 3 Plan



Source: Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924

The first principal was John William Brown (1910–1968), who had also served as the principal of Waxhaw Elementary School (the Waxhaw Rosenwald School) beginning in 1935. Credited with the establishment of Western Union High School, it was his dream to offer a high school education to African American students in the western section of the county. The school grew, and in 1946, the school board added a two-room frame building to house the Home Economics and Agriculture Department (Charlotte Observer 1968; Union County Board of Education; Western Union High School 'Grand'Bi-Annual Reunion, 1940-1968, Committee 1968).

Rosa Covington (b. 1934) attended Marvin Elementary School, also a Rosenwald School, and then Western Union High School. She has fond memories of her experience there. "They did a terrific job training us...They trained our men different things like working on cars, building houses. I remember one of our instructors, Mr. Wilson, they always taught our young men how to do things like that" (Rosa Covington 2025).

While the opening of Western Union High School was a notable step in the education of Black students in Union County, the school board still spent significantly less on Black schools compared to the white schools. In 1945, school property valuation was about \$49,000 or \$31 per Black pupil, while white schools were valued at over \$130 per pupil. Buses did not serve any of the Black elementary schools in the county, forcing students to walk as many as 3–5 miles to school, which inevitably led to attendance problems. "The two negro high schools were served by two buses each, which are entirely inadequate to provide educational facilities for all negroes of high school age in the county. As a result of the average class of 454 negro pupils entering school each year, only 97 in the entire county complete their senior year of high school" (Monroe Enquirer 1945). Several interviewees also remembered that their books had been passed down from white students and were sometimes missing pages or were in poor condition (Mildred Culp 2025; Vivie Miller 2025a).

The same 1949 report from the George Peabody College for Teachers provides information about Western Union High School. It noted that the classrooms at Western Union High School were housed in a brick building, and the campus also contained an additional frame building for the vocational and home economics facilities. The room used for vocational classes included a blacksmith shop and was "fairly well equipped." The home economics classroom contained three sewing machines, one range, and one refrigerator, and was also used as a lunchroom. The auditorium, which seated 175 people, functioned as an assembly space and playroom. In the main building, however, "Walls, ceilings, and floors are dark. Transoms above doors are closed and ventilation is poor." There was no science equipment, and the library had only "One light bulb [which] adds little supplemental lighting in this room

[library]." The teachers also lacked "equipment". The campus had poor sanitation, "Water is supplied from a well and drawn by a hand pump. Privies are unusable" (George Peabody College for Teachers 1949:134–135).

In April 1954, the main building at Western Union High School burned. Newspaper reports explained that classes continued in the wooded structures on campus and at a nearby church (Marshville Home 1954a). The County Board of Education conducted a survey two months later to determine the location for a new school (Marshville Home 1954b). They decided that the original location in Marvin was too far from many of the students' homes and opted for land more centrally located near the community of Mineral Springs. The county purchased 30 acres near Mineral Springs in December 1954 "as a site for the Negro consolidated school" from Dewie Howie between the Monroe-Waxhaw Highway and old Mineral Springs-Waxhaw Road (Marshville Home 1954c). The North Carolina State Board of Education allocated \$101,193.64 for a new school on this site in 1955 (The News and Observer 1955).

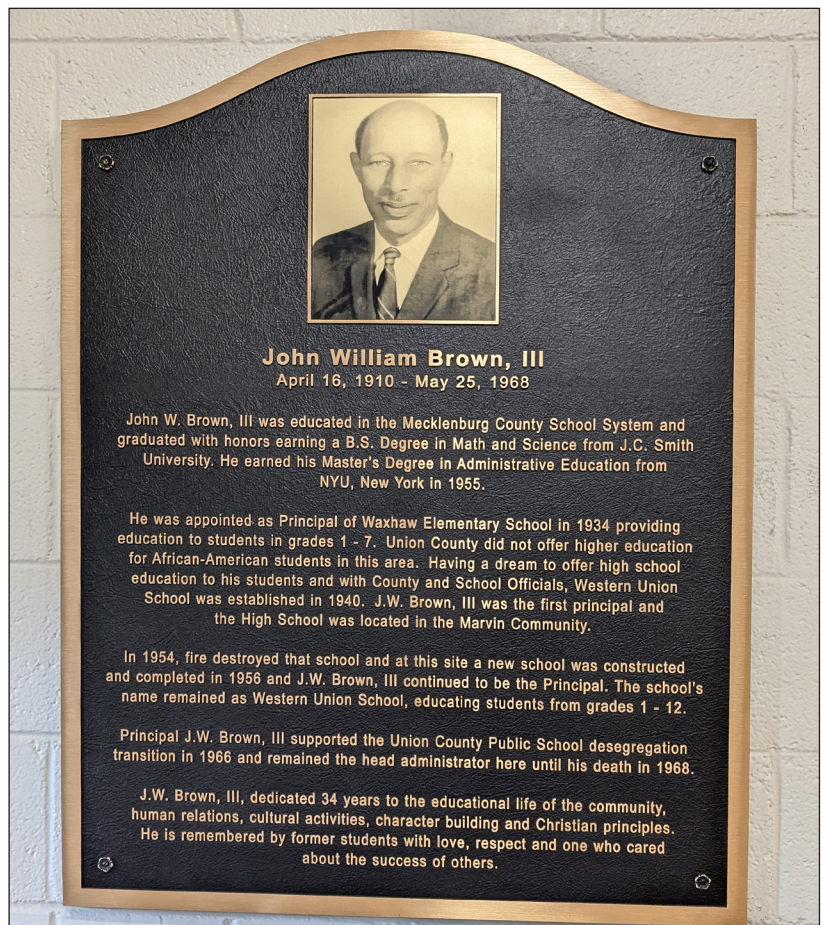
The school board opened the 14-classroom Western Union School in 1956 to African American students in grades 1–12 (Figure 2.3). In addition to the classrooms, this new facility also contained an auditorium, a science laboratory, a home economics room, an agricultural science room, a library, a lounge, and office space. J.W. Brown again served as the principal and oversaw 27 teachers and over 900 students (Western Union High School 'Grand'Bi-Annual Reunion, 1940-1968, Committee 1968). A growing student population resulted in the addition of a new wing of 10 rooms in 1959–60 to house elementary and middle school grades. In 1964–65, the school added another six rooms and a gymnasium. In contrast to the lack of buses in the 1940s, 13 buses transported over 1,000 students by the 1960s. As integration spread into Union County, school officials transferred students in grades 9 through twelve to Parkwood High School in the fall of 1968. "With total integration, Western Union High School became a middle school in 1970" (Western Union High School 'Grand'Bi-Annual Reunion, 1940-1968, Committee 1968). It remained a middle school until 1975 and now functions as an elementary school (Western Union Elementary School 2025).

Figure 2.3.
Western Union School



A. Western Union School, Circa 1956

B. John W. Brown III Plaque in
Western Union Elementary School



School Integration

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* ruling ended the previous separate-but-equal decision determined by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case and declared that separate facilities were inherently unequal and paved the way for the integration of schools. In North Carolina, the Brown ruling was met with resistance through legislation, that delayed meaningful integration for more than a decade. True desegregation did not occur until 1966 when a federal court ruling struck down North Carolina's Pearsall Plan, which had amended the Compulsory Attendance Law so that students could be excused from attending an integrated school, unconstitutional (Criner, Allyson C. et al. 2025). Union County schools began integration in the late 1960s. High school students who were in school during the integration transition were given a choice of which school to attend: Western Union School or Parkwood High School in Monroe. Vivie Miller chose to finish high school at Western Union and graduated in 1966 (Vivie Miller 2025b). The county schools reached full integration in 1970. When Western Union School became a middle school in 1970, Black elementary and high school students transferred to Waxhaw Elementary or Parkwood High School in Monroe.

Several interviewees recounted their experiences as the first Black students to attend white schools in Union County. Harry Hood recalled a violent incident,

I wasn't there two weeks before there was a riot and they sent everybody home... That happened in 1971...It was something about the Black guy had sit down in the lunchroom, and the white guy said something about, "This is not y'all's table. Get away from this table," or something. They caught themselves suspending the Black guy and didn't do anything to the white guy. So when we got to school that next morning...and I heard all the commotion...People running around, go out, try to go out one hallway to fight that way, and go this way here, and then arguing, and hollering, and pushing one another. It was a mess. For a 15-year-old boy, at that time to make the right decisions, to do what's right, or do what's wrong, or get in that thing with the Blacks or even get in there with, I said, "You know what? I know what's waiting for me if I get in trouble (Harry Hood 2025).

Sylvester McManus remembered,

I guess one of the challenging experience I had as a young kid was fifth grade I got transferred from Western Union to Waxhaw. And that was a big change, because I wasn't used to being around Caucasians. And there used to be some battles, I mean, physical battles, name-calling, but not a whole lot, but kind of worked my way through that. So, that was how the schools were kind of set up back then. Once I got to high school, things really started changing for the better (Sylvester McManus, III 2025).

Later in the interview, McManus recounted that the integration process was not distressing, "So, I did see things like that when I was young. But I mean, my experience when I went to the segregated school for the first year, was it real bad? It wasn't real bad, but I saw the other side. I saw the other side."

African American Businesses

During the oral interviews, NSA historians asked respondents about Black-owned businesses in Waxhaw. They mention only a few and describe them below. For the most part, Black Waxhaw residents frequented the white-owned stores in town or traveled to neighboring Monroe to shop or receive medical care. Prior to the Civil Rights Movement, stores and businesses operated under segregation, and interviewees told several stories of what life was like during the Segregation Era.

Hubert Mills recalled,

Now, I can remember walking the streets of Waxhaw, and if it was two or three people walking together, they expect you to get off the sidewalk. If you walk in the store, first thing that's, "Boy, can I help you?" Or something of that nature. And Mama always taught us, don't never go in the store unless you've got money. Never go in the store unless you've got money. But yeah, like I said, it was just as segregated here in Waxhaw as it was in Monroe (Hubert Mills 2025).

Mildred Culp remembered her family being welcome in white-owned stores, especially those where her family had credit. "The white people knew most of the Black kids. Knew whose kid that was. And you go, and you say, "My dad told me to get so-and-so." And then they would write it down. And when he got paid, he had to go and pay them." In other white-owned stores where they did not operate on credit, Culp recalled that African Americans could go in a store only "If you had money, you could go in the store. If they knew you was spending money, you could go in the store" (Mildred Culp 2025).

Sallie Gladden's Hotel

Sallie Gladden's Hotel was one place where African Americans in Waxhaw could purchase items and congregate. As mentioned above, Sallie and George Stinson operated a boarding house and grocery store as early as 1920. The building itself is no longer standing, but it once stood on the northeast corner of N. Broome Street (also known as Providence Street or NC Highway 16) and Howie Mine Road (see Figure 1). Sallie Stinson was born Sarah Vinson in Lancaster County, South Carolina, in 1873. She married George Stinson around 1891. According to the 1910 Census, they lived in Waxhaw by that time. The 1920 Census shows that George and Sallie owned their home and business on Providence Street and lived with their two daughters, an adopted toddler, and a Black servant and her 8-year-old daughter. Adjacent to them was another Black business owner, Charles L. Davis, who operated a barber shop. Probate records show that George Stinson died intestate in 1921 with no children, which contradicts the census data. The probate records, however, are likely to contain the most accurate information. These records also show that they owned several lots in town (North Carolina Superior Court (Union County) 1921). Sallie married 55-year-old Zack Gladden, a farm laborer, in September 1923 (North Carolina County Registers of Deeds 2015). The 1930 Census reveals that Sallie continued to operate her boarding facility, housing four boarders employed as road construction laborers in her home on North Broome Street, along with four other family members. By 1940, Sallie Gladden was a widow, but she continued to offer lodging in her home.

Interviewees fondly remember the hotel as a place to gather. Mildred Culp said, "...there was a lady named Sallie Gladden that owned that place. She was a relative of my mother's. A distant relative, but a relative...You had to walk up some stairs. I remember that...we used to always go up there" (Mildred Culp 2025). Sallie Gladden was Lorenzo Massey's aunt. "My aunt had what we called the old hotel. There was only Black places you could come in town and maybe get a room...we had a big two-story building. Well, we called it the old hotel." He also remembered having dances in the building (Lorenzo Massey 2025a).

Sallie's hotel building also housed other Black-operated businesses like George Stinson's grocery and Charles Davis's barbershop, as noted in the 1920 Census. Later in the twentieth century, Lorenzo Massey's uncle, James Henry Massey, "had a barbershop in that old big building. The same big building...only cut on Saturdays, I believe it was...we had doctors come in on a Wednesday. They had one room in there. They waited on people" (Lorenzo Massey 2025a). Sallie died in 1952. The people of Waxhaw proudly remember her as the first woman African American business owner (The Charlotte Observer 1952).

Howie Mine Road Businesses

As previously discussed, many of the town's African American residents lived in the East End or Low End of Waxhaw. This neighborhood contained Waxhaw Elementary School, several churches, and a few Black-owned businesses. Interviewees remembered two candy and convenience stores on Howie Mine Road owned by Jack Green and Rudolph Higgins. Neither of these buildings are extant.

Jack Green's Store

Jack Green's store was located on the south side of Howie Mine Road next to Shiloh Presbyterian Church. The 1950 Census lists Green as the operator of a "Candy and Pop Shop," and his 25-year-old daughter, Bonnie, worked in her father's business.

Mildred Culp recounted, "Mr. Jack Green had a store on that back road from where we lived. And he had those cookies and candy and little stuff like they have now. But nothing like the prices. There was something that would maybe... If my mama sent me to the store, she'll say, 'Well, take these three pennies, and get you some cookies.' You got six cookies" (Mildred Culp 2025).

Harry Hood fondly remembered the store: "the lady [Bonnie Green] that sells candy was right next door [to the Shiloh church]. Now, you know, some of that change that my father and mother used to give me to put in the collection plate, it made it next door to the candy lady" (Harry Hood 2025).

Hubert Mills also provided a remembrance of Jack Green's Store, "We didn't have but a few people that had their own business. One of them was Jack Green. He had a little store, you could go get your cookies...and Kool-Aid. Sometimes you'd get ice cream. Jack Green was his name" (Hubert Mills 2025).

Rudolph Higgin's Store

Rudolph Higgins' store was located on the north side of Howie Mine Road, near Waxhaw Elementary School. Mildred Culp recalled that,

Rudolph was a Higgins, and his dad had a store. And down right where I live now, near where I live now on Howie Mine. From the school, you could walk from the school up to that store, and you buy cookies, two, for a penny

cookies, and candy and sodas and different things. That's for your lunch if you didn't carry your lunch. And that was pretty good because, like I said, you only had pennies and dimes, and so you get two cookies for a penny. And you could get 20 cookies for 10 cents. We only had 10, 15 cents. And that was good (Mildred Culp 2025).

Vivie Miller also remembered Higgins.

I don't know if it actually had a name. Oh, may not have the name. It may not, Rudolph's Place or whatever. We used to call Rudolph. His last name was Higgins. And they used to call him Tony the Tiger, because he was a big guy and he had a light brown complexion, and he would do his little diddly dance around. He was a lot of fun (Vivie Miller 2025a).

Willie Malone's Shoe Shop and Pool Room

Willie Malone owned and operated a shoe repair shop in the Low End on the south side of Howie Mine Road near Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025). The 1950 Census documents that he lived with his wife, Lillie, and two children and managed his own business. Interviewees remember that both Willie and his wife were deaf, and in addition to the shoe repair business, Willie also maintained a pool room at the back of his house.

Sid Walker remembered, "And then if you wanted something to drink, you went to Mr. Willie Malone, to his house, and he was deaf-mute, and you would push the button and the light would flash, and that let him know somebody was at the door" (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025). Hubert Mills also recounted that Malone had a pool room on the " Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road, right before you got to the schoolhouse... he had a shoe shop and a pool room in the back of house" (Hubert Mills 2025).

Work Life

As described above, census records record African Americans in Waxhaw primarily worked as farm laborers or domestic servants. There were, however, individuals, such as Jack Green and Sallie Vinson, who operated small businesses, and others who worked for the railroad or as draymen. The oral interviews confirm this.

Estelle Coffey, who grew up in the 1940s and 1950s, identified her family as sharecroppers:

...sharecroppers means that you rent the land from someone else, and then you plant your cotton and corn. And the part about planting the cotton, you would buy your fertilizer and everything, and then when the cotton produce, you only get half of it, and then you have to take your half, and pay for what you had gotten. That part I didn't like from a child, but that's how we was raised. We share crops. And we were rented. It was rental houses. You didn't own. I don't think you could about count who owned the house. Not many people owned houses, Black people as well (Coffey, Estelle R., personal communication, June 4, 2025).

Rosa Covington grew up during the same period as Estelle Coffey. Her family also worked as sharecroppers near Marvin and grew cotton. Their living conditions in the rural areas outside of Waxhaw were poor, " I can remember my mom sometimes tacking newspapers to keep the wind out when it was cold. And I always hated when it was my time to get up and start the fire because it was cold" (Rosa Covington 2025).

Mildred Culp's family moved into the Town of Waxhaw from Sandy Ridge, where "we didn't have all the conveniences. [We had a] Wood stove and that kind of thing...but after we moved out of that community, we moved up into Waxhaw area, and we did have lights." Her father did construction work when they moved to Waxhaw. "We didn't make very much money doing construction work," but then her father got a job working for the railroad. "He worked on the railroad on the rails and stuff, that kind of road motorcar and stuff. And then he started to...make a little bit more money. And, to us, it seemed like he made a lot more...it was better for us" (Mildred Culp 2025). As compared to farming and sharecropping, railroad jobs provided a steady income. Sid Walker described them as "good jobs" (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025). Vivie Miller also recounted that her paternal grandfather worked for the railroad and her maternal grandfather, Samuel Massey, was a drayman for Niven-Price Company, a general store in Waxhaw (Vivie Miller 2025a).

Brick Masons

The oral history interviews also revealed that there was once a sizable number of African American brick masons and concrete finishers in Waxhaw. Deonne Barnes noted that "one of the things Waxhaw was known for is having a lot of excellent brick masons. I had an uncle, several uncles on both sides of my family who were brick masons, and there were a lot of concrete finishers." Mildred Culp also remembered that "we had the brick masons who made lots of money at that time" (Mildred Culp 2025).

Vivie Miller's father, Roscoe Miller, was a contractor and a brick mason, as were several of his friends, including interviewee Lorenzo Massey. Several of the masons in Waxhaw designed and constructed their own homes in the mid-twentieth century. Lorenzo Massey built his house around 1970 at 302 Washington Street (UN1247) and worked on commercial projects in Charlotte. He ran his business, Massey Masonry, from his home, with his wife Louise assisting as his bookkeeper (Lorenzo Massey 2025a). Massey learned his trade from Tonsy Norwood (1912–1987), a white contractor who lived outside of Waxhaw in Jackson Township. He is listed as a 37-year-old bricklayer in the 1950 Census (Charlotte Observer 1987; Lorenzo Massey 2025b). The vocational programs at Western Union School may have also pushed young African American men into the construction and masonry trade. During his interview, Hubert Mills recounted learning to lay foundation at school, "...we'd be laying bricks to get that experience, what they call hollowing out the ground. Otherwise, you don't have all this nice straight walls. You got to know how to, what they call hollowing out the ground. But we enjoyed it" (Hubert Mills 2025).

The earliest mason to appear in the historic record is Johnnie Simmons, who is listed in the 1920 Census as a brick mason. The 1950 Census shows four Black brick masons in Waxhaw: Tom Gaston, Johnny Barber, J.C. Vinson, and James Robinson. Of these, J.C. Vinson's brick house still stands on Pearl Street (UN1248). NSA historians identified other brick masons during oral history interviews. Those with extant homes include Ervin Massey (UN1240), Lorenzo Massey (UN1247), Sylvester McManus, Jr. (UN1246), and Roscoe Miller (UN1249). Ervin Massey (1925–1979), who constructed his home just outside of Waxhaw around 1960, worked as a masonry contractor and was also the first African American to serve on the Union County School Board (The Enquirer Journal 1975a). Sylvester McManus III described his father, Sylvester McManus, Jr., "he was a brick mason, and he was an excellent brick mason. My dad was also a smart individual...me and my brother, we talk about this to this day, that he should have started his own business instead of just working for other people" (Sylvester McManus, III 2025). He also mentioned in his interview that his father did concrete work as well. McManus' home (UN1246) features unusual detailing, including intermittently spaced smooth and scored glazed, blond bricks within the red brick walls (Figure 2.4a). McManus' family plot at Eastside Community Cemetery contains retaining walls constructed of the same materials (Figure 2.4b).

Figure 2.4.
McManus House and Family Plot



A. Sylvester and Calberta McManus House (UN1246) Detail



B. McManus Family Plot, Eastside Cemetery (UN1243)

African American Women

Census records from the early and mid-twentieth century identify women who worked outside of the home were primarily laundresses and domestic servants. Vivie Miller's grandmother took in laundry and ironing for Waxhaw residents (Vivie Miller 2025a). Mildred Culp began work as a domestic after her mother died when she was 17 (Mildred Culp 2025). Deonne Barnes remembers both of her grandmothers and many other older women in the community as domestic workers when she was a child. Her parents, however, were teachers (Deonne Melissa Barnes 2025). Sylvester McManus' mother worked in the cafeteria at Western Union Middle School. "And she was there for about 15 to 20 years. She would also bake cakes, sell cakes in the community, and everybody just loved her cakes. But she was an excellent cook" (Sylvester McManus, III 2025).

The Corner or The Meeting Place

Women who were domestic workers often commuted to Charlotte. Those who did not have transportation into the city stood on the northeast corner of Broome Street or Providence Road and East North Main Street to wait for rides (see Figure 1.1–1.5; Figure 2.5). Mildred Culp recounts,

They stood up there for a ride. They would stand on that corner and catch a ride to wherever their job was. And I remember my mom used to catch a ride. And she made, I remember this, \$4 a day. She made \$4 a day, and that's not including what she had to take out of that to pay for her rides and whatever...Yeah, going up. They called it up Providence Road. That's what they said (Mildred Culp 2025).

Vivie Miller added to Culp's description,

...people who had cars who were going in that direction would take them to Charlotte. Because my mom would do that also when she had her car, she would pick people up. And then there was also a place on Highway 16 in Charlotte, just outside of Charlotte, where...they would stop and pick up whoever was going to Waxhaw on that side of the road. They would just pick them up (Vivie Miller 2025a).

Figure 2.5.
The Corner (Providence Road and East North Main Street)



African American men would also wait at this corner to catch rides to work sites. Harry Hood described it:

I remember a lot of the older Black guys just stand on the corner waiting for their day work. Somebody would pick them up, getting work done and everything...That was the meeting place. And you knew Black folk way back as long as you can remember, they're always down on the corner, and that was their corner... Looking for work, somebody might come by..."Hey, can I get a couple guys to help me do this, and that and everything?" They'd run to that car and get in there. But I know when I come back from service [1977], all that was gone (Harry Hood 2025).

Social Life

Interviewees fondly remembered many social activities, but one was universally mentioned – the Annual 4th of July Celebration. Held at the site of the Waxhaw Elementary School and Eastside Community Cemetery (UN1243), the day-long event included food, baseball, and fireworks. This annual event continued for several decades in the twentieth century, with the last one being held around 1975.

Fourth of July Celebration

The Annual Fourth of July Celebration was a major festivity that drew hundreds of attendees and functioned almost like a community Homecoming. Edward Walker described the attendance like this, "...the cars would be almost lined up to Providence Road right there. I mean, people would come, if I lived in New York or somewhere, you came home for that. It was people from everywhere. People from everywhere" (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025). Deonne Barnes remembered, "I don't even know how the word spread, because we didn't have social media, so I guess people just got on the phone and how it was coordinated. I don't know how that was done. So that was a big event, and you look forward to it every year" (Deonne Melissa Barnes 2025). Sylvester McManus said, "I'll tell you what, as far as here in Waxhaw, every Black individual was probably there. And then you got Black individuals coming out of Monroe, out of Charlotte, out of Martin [Marvin] (Sylvester McManus, III 2025).

Estelle Coffey said the 4th of July "...would be a big event. I mean, that's where you meet up with a lot of people. That's where you buy your new clothes to wear down there, dress up. You go to the 4th of July down in Waxhaw" (Estelle R. Coffey 2025). Several people remember getting new clothes for the day. "I remember, one year, my parents took me and my brother to Kmart, and we got bell-bottom slacks. And boy, boy, we thought we were a thing. But yeah, everybody would just dress so nice. So, that was special" (Sylvester McManus, III 2025).

The day-long event included many activities, including, "The pig run, where you chase down a greasy pig. Yeah, you chase down a greasy pig. You catch the pig, you get to keep them. There was horseshoe tournaments" (Sylvester McManus, III 2025). Baseball "Games would go on all day, game after game"(Hubert Mills 2025). Rosa Covington recollected,

And the baseball teams would... They would invite other teams up, and they start out early in the morning...All the ladies hollered when they made a score and stuff. That was a lot of fun. The kids were, of course, just running around playing and eating. But the best part about it was that the men were engrossed in the baseball, and the women supported them. They were out there everywhere...Every time another team would come up, the women would just be hollering and screaming, and it was like going to a concert. It was fun (Rosa Covington 2025).

Edward Walker remembered the baseball games played in a field next to the Eastside Community Cemetery,

...right behind the ball field was the graves, and it was a few high tombstones, and some of the people that would come down...Because everybody would take their vacation from up north and stuff and come down here to the game. They would be sitting on them tombstones. And we didn't have a fence, because if the bat catcher would miss a ball or foul ball, it went back up in the woods around the cemetery. You ran back up in there and found it (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025).

There was lots of food, including booths for cotton candy and candied apples (Deonne Melissa Barnes 2025; Harry Hood 2025). Deonne Barnes and Rose Covington recalled eating soup cooked in big cauldrons or washpots. Women also fried fish, and "There was one man named Mr. Gaston, and he made snowballs. It was what we thought was one of the greatest things that could happen to us because we didn't have very many activities" (Rosa Covington 2025).

Baseball Games

In addition to the baseball games held during the 4th of July celebration, men played other games at the same location. Lorenzo Massey remembered that his team was called the Baby Blues (Lorenzo Massey 2025a). The Waxhaw team competed against other teams from the surrounding communities. While we know that these games occurred, oral interviews did not reveal substantial information about them.

Masonic Lodge #250

Black Freemasonry in North Carolina dates to just after Emancipation with the creation of the first lodge in New Bern in 1866. In 1870, four newly established lodges in New Bern, Wilmington, Raleigh, and Fayetteville formed a statewide organization called the Most Wonderful Grand Lodge of the State of North Carolina. Black freemasonry spread throughout the state, first beginning in urban areas and then to more rural communities. All lodges focused on social and benevolent activities, and members were primarily businessmen and landowners. Philanthropic interests included providing insurance for widows of members, the United Negro College Fund, the Legal Defense Fund for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and an orphanage for Black children in Oxford, North Carolina. By 1910, there were 358 lodges and 10,000 members in North Carolina (Kenzer, Robert C. 2006). In 1959, the organization changed its name to The Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina. The name changed again in 1999 to The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina and Jurisdiction, Inc. (The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina and Jurisdiction, Inc 2022). The exact date of the formation of Waxhaw Lodge #250 is unknown, but the historical record documents that it was in place in 1925 with approximately 35 members, including Zach Gladden, husband of hotel-owner Sallie Gladden (Brown, C.S. 1926:165; Figure 2.6)

Figure 2.6.
Members of the Waxhaw Lodge No. 250, 1925

<p>MASONIC LODGE, NO. 250—WAXHAW, N. C.</p> <p>Meeting: First Friday in each month.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OFFICERS</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>H. C. Coffey.....</td> <td>W. M.</td> <td>W. M. Stinson.....</td> <td>J. D.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S. L. Massey.....</td> <td>S. W.</td> <td>E. D. Washington.....</td> <td>S. S.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P. B. Brown.....</td> <td>J. W.</td> <td>E. D. Crow.....</td> <td>J. S.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A. J. Vinson.....</td> <td>Treasurer</td> <td>B. J. Crow.....</td> <td>Marshal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Z. W. Gladden.....</td> <td>Secretary</td> <td>B. C. Crawford.....</td> <td>Chaplain</td> </tr> <tr> <td>John Williams.....</td> <td>S. D.</td> <td>H. D. Reid.....</td> <td>Tiler</td> </tr> </table> <p>Representative: H. C. Coffey.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MEMBERS</p> <p>J. S. McKinney, E. H. Couzart, A. R. Cureton, J. M. Heart, Henry Anthony, M. L. Hood, H. W. Gladden, Z. A. Gladden, W. J. Sullivan, Blake Davis, J. T. Tillman, J. T. Hough, John Coffey, S. L. Fullward, E. D. Hough, John Hough, Hilliard Coffey, Lindsay Washington, George Bailey, Richard Campbell, George Crawford, H. H. Hood.</p> <p>Excluded—W. G. Gassis, Charlie Robinson, D. W. Murray.</p> <p>Grand Lodge Dues Paid: \$15.15.</p>		H. C. Coffey.....	W. M.	W. M. Stinson.....	J. D.	S. L. Massey.....	S. W.	E. D. Washington.....	S. S.	P. B. Brown.....	J. W.	E. D. Crow.....	J. S.	A. J. Vinson.....	Treasurer	B. J. Crow.....	Marshal	Z. W. Gladden.....	Secretary	B. C. Crawford.....	Chaplain	John Williams.....	S. D.	H. D. Reid.....	Tiler
H. C. Coffey.....	W. M.	W. M. Stinson.....	J. D.																						
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John Williams.....	S. D.	H. D. Reid.....	Tiler																						

Source: Proceedings of the fifty-fifth communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M.: held at Rocky Mount, North Carolina, December 8-9, 1925. Durham, N.C.: Seeman Printery, 1926.

Waxhaw's lodge building (UN1245), located on Howie Mine Road, is likely the third one in the community. Lorenzo Massey recalled that, "They had one on over by Mt. Nebo Baptist Church at one time, and then they moved it here on Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. And then they got sold, they tore it down, and we started building another one" (Lorenzo Massey 2025a). Harry Hood also stated that the current building is the third lodge in Waxhaw. He recounted that one was bricked up, and the current one is in poor condition (Harry Hood 2025).

The lodge buildings were not only used for meetings, but also for social events. Rosa Covington remembered, "That's where we used to hold all the banquets and birthdays...I think they do bingo, or they used to do bingo there a lot" (Rosa Covington 2025). Many African American women, such as Harry Hood's mother, were also members of the Order of the Eastern Star, an affiliate of The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina. They also used the facility for their meetings.

Movie Theater

For several years in the mid-twentieth century, a movie theater operated in downtown Waxhaw at 107 West South Main Street (UN0964). The one-story building, constructed in 1903, originally housed the A.W. Heath Company Stores. Interviewees remembered that during the Segregation Era, African Americans sat in the balcony, accessible from street level, and white moviegoers sat in the main seating area, now the basement. Mildred Culp remembered, "Downtown, they had a movie theater. And I remember...The price, I remember, was 14 cents to go to the movie. And of course, the whites walked in one door, and the Blacks had to walk in another door upstairs. Everything was separated" (Mildred Culp 2025). Hubert Mills also recalled the theater, "You go in the movie theater down here in Waxhaw. You got a ticket before you go in, and you get that ticket and you got to go upstairs, which you could be overlooking, the movie screen was down low. And we had popcorn and whatnot, we get and sit up there and watch the movies. And like I say, I always thought we had the best seats in the house" (Hubert Mills 2025).

Edward Walker recounted,

The white people sat downstairs, and the Blacks had to go up, just like we had to drink out of colored water fountains when we went to the stores and stuff. Some of the stores, well most of the stores here in Waxhaw, downtown, like the drugstore, you couldn't go in there and sit down out in the open...But that's how the movie theater was. And later on, once we started getting comfortable in the movie theater to be up top, the Black kids start throwing popcorn down, down, you know (Edward "Sid" Walker 2025).

The Corner

As mentioned above, the corner of Highway 16 and East North Main Street served not only as a place to catch rides into Charlotte, but also as a gathering spot (see Figure 2.5). Mildred Culp called it The Corner and said, "And at that time, the Black kids were the ones who were up there in Waxhaw on the corner. We called it the corner and we stood on the bridge. That's where our activities were... The Black kids were always up there. There was always... I guess because the other kids had so much other stuff they could do. That was our only activity was just by going up there, standing on the corner, kids laughing and talking" (Mildred Culp 2025).

Harry Hood also referred to the spot as The Corner, "That's what it was. That was the meeting place. And you knew Black folk way back as long as you can remember, they're always down on the corner, and that was their corner" (Harry Hood 2025).

Waxhaw Elementary School

As mentioned earlier, the 3.5-acre parcel containing Waxhaw Elementary School also encompassed Eastside Community Cemetery and a baseball field. After the school closed in the 1960s, the building continued to function as a gathering spot. Hubert Mills recounted, "...it became like a community center. That's where we knew we got all this activity going on down there. Baseball game, 4th of July. You want to have something, have it down at the Waxhaw Schoolhouse" (Hubert Mills 2025). He also remembered attending dances there. Sylvester McManus recalled the 4-H Club using the old Rosenwald School as a community center. "When that school closed, I believe it was the 4-H community that created a community center down there. So, they had things like boxing gloves, weights, all kinds of different things for the kids to do. They used to have dances down there. They had live bands" (Sylvester McManus, III 2025). Residents also rented the building for private events like wedding receptions. Mildred Culp held her wedding reception there in 1974, and Rosalyn Miller Wade, Vivie Miller's sister, also used the building for her wedding reception (Gypsy Houston 2025; Vivie Miller 2025b).

Religious Life

Nearly all the interviewees remembered that church played a significant role in their lives. Committee members and interviewees identified seven African American churches in and around Waxhaw, representing three denominations: Bethel Presbyterian Church, First

Presbyterian Church, Ebenezer AME Zion Church, Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church, and Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church. Interviewees also mentioned Shiloh Presbyterian Church, formerly located on the south side of Howie Mine Road, which was demolished around 1975. Although written congregational histories are limited or do not exist, available information suggests that Bethel Presbyterian is the oldest of these churches. Additional details on each congregation appear in Chapter 3.

Interviewees fondly remembered attending services and events at their churches. Sylvester McManus recalled,

Where I grew up at, and this church is no longer there, there was a church that was called Shiloh Presbyterian. That used to be right behind my house. Many good times at that church, especially when we had the Bible school, vocational [vacation] Bible study, because there would just be games and everything, snacks, all your friends there...But back then, everybody was in church... Everybody was in church. That's a big change to this day. Everybody was in church, everybody was in suits. Yeah. And then after church, and this is something that don't happen today, you go home to that nice Sunday cooking. My mom used to always do that (Sylvester McManus, III 2025).

Hubert Mills also remembered vacation Bible school, "And Presbyterian Church used to have the summer Bible school. That was important to us too. When we'd get out of school, we'd go to summer Bible school" (Hubert Mills 2025).

Although families and individuals may have been members of one church, they often attended events at others. Deonne Barnes grew up attending First Presbyterian Church.

I spent a large portion of my life in church, whether it was being on the choir, active in the youth. We traveled from church to church, and that's pretty much how you got to know people in the community. Even though I was Presbyterian, we would go and sing at the Methodist Church or at the Baptist Church. And so, a lot of the people that I went to elementary school with, when we went on to middle school already knew some of the other people because they either went to a church that I had met them at activities. So I was very active in church and my church was pretty large at that time...But it was the thing when I was growing up, and I loved church, loved singing on the choir still to this day. I love that (Deonne Melissa Barnes 2025).

Vivie Miller also recounted visiting other churches,

We had people coming in from different churches like South Carolina and Charlotte, because we would have...sing-offs. We would have concerts where we would invite choirs from all over. They would come into the church, they would sing one or two or three songs, and then they would leave. Then another one would sing. So, that's what we did. But those were the three bedrock churches in town. And a lot of my friends, I had friends in all of them (Vivie Miller 2025a).

The Civil Rights Movement

NSA historians also asked interviewees about their recollections of the Civil Rights Movement. Robert Williams, a resident of Monroe and president of the local chapter of the NAACP, ascribed to a violent strategy, a stance that contrasted sharply with the nonviolent strategies of most civil rights leaders. He formed the Black Guard and trained members to protect and defend the Black community in Monroe using weapons. In 1961, when the Freedom Riders came to Monroe, violence broke out, and Williams was accused of kidnapping. He and his family fled to Cuba, where he launched his "Radio Free Dixie" (Agan, Kelly and Jordan Scott 2025).

Despite such a significant incident occurring so close to Waxhaw, none of the interviewees recalled any protests or marches in the town. Many remembered events held elsewhere and the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Deonne Barnes remembered, however, that "the civil rights era was very prevalent here. We had people like Robert Williams in the community that was a civil rights activist, and the churches would meet about various events. Even when I was a child, I recall people mobilizing to vote and to stay engaged in what was going on in the political arena and how it was impacting us locally" (Deonne Melissa Barnes 2025).

3. Architectural Survey

Based on information gathered during the oral history interviews, NSA's architectural historians created a list of resources that are important to Waxhaw's African American community and recorded them using digital photography and HPO survey forms. In total, NSA surveyed 18 resources, including seven churches, seven dwellings, one cemetery, one school, one lodge, and one commercial building. Table 3.1 lists the surveyed properties. The resources were then analyzed and assessed for their NRHP eligibility. Two of the resources, Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044) and Western Union School (UN1237), were placed on the HPO's Study List on October 9, 2025.

Table 3.1. Surveyed Resources

HPO SSN	Name	Address	Date	Eligibility
UN0044	Bethel Presbyterian Church	7310 Tirzah Church Road	1942	Study Listed
UN0964	A.W. Heath Company Complex II	103-109 W. South Main Street	1903	Listed as part of Waxhaw Historic District (UN0828)
UN1237	Western Union School	4111 Western Union School Road	1956, 1960, 1965, 2002	Study Listed
UN1238	First Presbyterian Church	7624 Waxhaw Highway	1977	Currently Not Eligible
UN1239	Ebenezer AME Zion Church and Cemetery	6308 South Providence Road	Circa 1960, 1970	Currently Not Eligible
UN1240	Ervin and Lottie Massey House	6221 South Providence Road	Circa 1960	Currently Not Eligible
UN1241	Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West and Cemetery	6712 Sims Road	Circa 1970	Currently Not Eligible
UN1242	Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery	1504 South Providence Road	Circa 1970	Currently Not Eligible
UN1243	Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site	635 Price Street	Circa 1900	Currently Not Eligible

Table 3.1. Surveyed Resources

HPO SSN	Name	Address	Date	Eligibility
UN1244	Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church	512 Howie Mine Road	Circa 1960, 1966	Currently Not Eligible
UN1245	Waxhaw Masonic Lodge #250	387 Howie Mine Road	1988	Not Eligible
UN1246	Sylvester and Calberta McManus House	212 Howie Mine Road	Circa 1955	Currently Not Eligible
UN1247	Lorenzo and Louise Massey House	302 Washington Street	Circa 1970	Currently Not Eligible
UN1248	J.C. Vinson House	400 Pearl Street	Circa 1960	Currently Not Eligible
UN1249	Roscoe and Vivian Miller House	524 Miller Drive	Circa 1950, 1960	Currently Not Eligible
UN1250	Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church	700 Miller Drive	Circa 1970, 1984	Currently Not Eligible
UN1251	David Barnes House	1415 Sharon Drive	1973	Currently Not Eligible
UN1253	Samuel Massey House	400 Washington Street	Circa 1910	Currently Not Eligible

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation Criteria

Cultural properties are evaluated for the NRHP based on eligibility criteria specified in the Department of Interior Regulations 36 CFR Part 60: National Register of Historic Places. Cultural properties can be defined as significant if they “possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association;” if they are 50 years of age or older; and if they

Criterion A) are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (history); or

Criterion B) are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (person); or

Criterion C) embody the distinctive characteristic of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or

represent a significant entity whose components may lack individual distinction (architecture); or

Criterion D) have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history (archaeology).

Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not considered eligible for the NRHP. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of historic districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- Criteria Consideration A: a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- Criteria Consideration B: a building or structure removed from its original location, but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- Criteria Consideration C: a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with their productive life; or
- Criteria Consideration D: a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves or persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- Criteria Consideration E: a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- Criteria Consideration F: a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- Criteria Consideration G: a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

North Carolina's Study List

The HPO uses a unique process that is codified in the state administrative code and directly involves the NRAC (Subchapter 4R, section .0304 of the administrative code). The Study List has been part of North Carolina's NRHP program since the first nominations were reviewed and submitted from the state in 1969. Screening for resources is usually done by the HPO or their staff. The Study List screens out properties that are clearly not eligible or that are highly unlikely to be eligible for the National Register, saving time and effort on the part of the properties' sponsors and the HPO staff in preparing and reviewing unproductive nominations. It also identifies properties and districts that are likely to be eligible for the National Register, allowing property owners, government officials, and other interested parties and staff to proceed with a formal nomination with reasonable assurance that the property can be successfully nominated. The Study List is a useful tool for local preservation planning because it identifies properties and districts that appear likely to be eligible to the NRHP. While the Study List has no official role in environmental review procedures, it does have a practical role. Under federal law, all federal actions are reviewed for their potential effects on properties and districts that are listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP. Where no previous survey or identification of National Register eligibility has taken place, this may require time-consuming and expensive field surveys and evaluations. Although not an official "determination of eligibility" (DOE), inclusion on the Study List can be a step in that process and can help avoid conflict and lead to early mitigation of impacts on significant properties (North Carolina State HPO 2025).

Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044) 7310 Tirzah Church Road

Formerly enslaved members of nearby Tirzah Presbyterian Church formed Bethel Presbyterian formed in 1873. Church history indicates that they constructed a building here in the late 1880s. The present building dates to 1942 and is the third on the site. Some members of Bethel broke away and established the Shiloh Presbyterian Church (no longer extant) in the Town of Waxhaw in 1885. These two churches combined in the early 1970s to form First Presbyterian Church (UN1238). The new congregation constructed a building just outside of Waxhaw in 1977, and the Presbyterian Church ceased using the Bethel and Shiloh church buildings. Gospel Way Church occupied Bethel Presbyterian for a few years, but today it stands abandoned (First United Presbyterian Church, Waxhaw, North Carolina 1978). The church and cemetery were originally surveyed in 1987.

The front-gable church is of frame construction and clad with weatherboards (Figure 3.1). The façade contains a front-gable vestibule clad with aluminum siding that was added around 1970. At the rear of the building is a concrete block, gable-roof addition that was constructed around 1960, according to aerial photographs. The main sanctuary is set on brick piers that have been infilled. Windows on the side elevations are six-over-six wood sash with lancet tops. They contain pebble glass in the tracery. The interior of the church was altered around 1980 with the addition of a blown-on stipple ceiling, wood paneling below the chair rail and sheetrock above, ceiling fans, and fluorescent lighting. Original materials that do remain in the sanctuary include the window surrounds, the doors, and the hardwood floor underneath the carpet. The pews are a combination of two different styles suggesting that some are replacements.

The interior of the church was altered around 1980 with the addition of a blown-on stipple ceiling, wood paneling below the chair rail and sheetrock above, ceiling fans, and fluorescent lighting. Original materials remaining in the sanctuary include the window surrounds, the doors, and the hardwood floor underneath the carpet. The pews are a combination of two different styles, suggesting that some are replacements.

Since the church was surveyed in 1987, two side-gable, frame buildings were added to the property on the northeast and southwest sides of the church. A wood ramp was also attached to the façade. The 3.3-acre lot contains the church along with a cemetery. The earliest marked graves date to the 1880s. The cemetery is still used for burials today.

Evaluation

NSA recommends that Bethel Presbyterian is locally significant under Criterion A for its contribution to the history of the African American community in Waxhaw and Union County. It is the first church in this section of Union County to have formed after Emancipation and served as the original church for two other congregations in Waxhaw. It is still an important site in the Black community of Waxhaw, as attested by the recent burials, including that of David Barnes, who died in 2024 and served as Waxhaw's first African American town councilman.

Bethel Presbyterian Church retains its integrity of location, as the resource remains in the same place it was constructed. The church also maintains its integrity of setting as the building is still in a rural area with its cemetery and landscape features intact. Although the church is presently vacant, the property is being maintained, and it appears as it did when it was an active church. Bethel Presbyterian Church also retains its integrity of feeling. While it has undergone alterations, such as the addition to the façade and rear, they are historic changes. The nonhistoric buildings and ramp are not attached to the church and could be

Figure 3.1.
Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044)



A. Façade and East Elevation
Looking Northwest



B. Interior of Sanctuary
Showing Altar



C. Interior of Sanctuary
Showing Original Entry Doors

removed. The church also retains its integrity of association. Although not in use today, the church is owned by and remains associated with an existing Presbyterian church congregation in Waxhaw, and the cemetery is also still used for burials.

Bethel Presbyterian Church also maintains its integrity of design. It retains its original form and building materials on the exterior. Its additions are historic, and as stated above, the nonhistoric buildings are not attached to the original church. The interior has been altered with the addition of the blown-on stipple ceiling, wood paneling below the chair rail, and sheetrock above, ceiling fans, and fluorescent lighting. Original materials, however, do remain and include the window surrounds, the doors, and the hardwood floor underneath the carpet. The church retains its original materials on the exterior and some of its original interior materials. It is possible that the original materials are in place under the modern changes, however.

Due to its status as a religious property, Bethel Presbyterian Church was also assessed under Criteria Consideration A, which states that “Historic significance for a religious property cannot be established on the merits of a religious doctrine, but rather, for architectural or artistic values or for important historic or cultural forces that the property represents” (Joeckel 2002). Because the Bethel Presbyterian Church is recommended eligible for the NRHP due to its significant historical association with the Black community in Waxhaw and Union County, which reaches back to the Reconstruction Era, and not for religious purposes involving the Presbyterian denomination, the property appears to meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration A. NSA therefore recommended that Bethel Presbyterian Church be considered eligible to the NC Study List. This recommendation was accepted by the NRAC on October 9, 2025.

A.W. Heath Company Complex II (UN0964) 103-109 West South Main Street

From 1903 to 1966, this was the A.W. Heath Company, a general mercantile firm created from the merger of the Morrow Heath Company and Massey Brothers in 1903. After A.W. Heath's death, the firm remained in operation under the control of his son-in-law, Charles Massey, and grandsons, William, Henry, and Olin Massey. The company closed in 1966. Since that time, there have been a variety of occupants. During the mid-twentieth century, there was a movie theater at 107 West South Main Street. African American community members who were interviewed for the Waxhaw African American History Project remember purchasing tickets on the sidewalk and entering the theater through a different door than white moviegoers. They were then segregated to the balcony.

This building is listed on the NRHP as part of the Waxhaw Historic District.

The A.W. Heath Company Stores consist of two buildings with a total of five storefronts, located on West South Main Street in the center of Waxhaw. A two-story Romanesque Revival building occupies the corner of S. Broome Street and West South Main Street (Figure 3.2). Built around 1898 by McCain-King Mercantile as a general store, the building has two storefronts separated by a rounded entry arch. Plate glass windows on either side of the arch are framed with cast iron pilasters and a cornice.

Above the plate glass windows on the second level are round arched windows with one-over-one sash windows topped with a wood panel and then an arched transom. Above the arch on the first floor are three narrow, one-over-one sash windows. A set of three arched, single-light windows is set above them. A corbeled cornice and parapet crown the building. The S. Broome Street elevation shows brick laid in a five-to-one common bond. There is a series of single-light as well as four-over-four wood sash windows along this elevation. All have rounded arched openings. The parapet on this elevation is also corbeled and contains a series of six evenly spaced chimneys.

Attached to the two-story building is a one-story brick commercial building divided into four storefronts (103-109 W. South Main Street) separated by patterned brick and identified with sign panels below the parapet. Each recessed entry is flanked by plate glass windows framed with cast iron pilasters. This building was constructed around 1903.

The rear of the building features six-over-six wood sash windows with arched lintels and projecting brick sills.

Evaluation

The A.W. Heath Company Stores is a contributing resource within Waxhaw's NRHP-listed historic district. While its history as a Segregation Era movie theater is an important part of this resource's story, the interior features that reveal this history are no longer evident. The balcony has been removed, and the first floor is now one level. This resource is, therefore, recommended as not individually eligible for the NRHP at this time.

Figure 3.2.
A.W. Heath Stores (UN0964)



A. Façade, Looking South. (The theater was the center storefront.)



B. Rear Elevation, Looking North

Western Union School (UN1237) 4111 Western Union School Road

Western Union School, now known as Western Union Elementary School, sits on a 30-acre parcel in the city limits of Mineral Springs, although its address is in Waxhaw. The original core of the school consists of an irregularly shaped building containing a custodial room, kitchen, cafeteria, auditorium, and classroom wing constructed in 1956 (Figure 3.3). A separate classroom building was added in 1960, northeast of the original building, and a gymnasium was constructed in 1965 to the northwest. A shop building used for auto mechanics and agricultural sciences was added between the original school and the gym around 1965. All of these historic buildings are brick with flat roofs. Large brick smokestacks are situated atop the custodial room and gymnasium. The gymnasium and auditorium retain their original wood floors. While the auditorium still has its original wood seats and stage, the original bleachers in the gymnasium were removed in 2025. The interior walls throughout the school are painted concrete block. The ceilings are primarily acoustical tiles, and the floors are vinyl composition tiles. Alterations to the school include the replacement of the original windows, the insertion of stucco panels on the classroom wings, and three additions, all completed in 2002. The additions include a portico on the former shop building, which is now the school's main entrance and the administrative offices, a media center attached to the original 1956 classroom wing, and kindergarten classrooms attached to the 1960 building.

Constructed as a school for white students, Western Union High School was located near Marvin and became an African American school in 1940. The original school building burned in 1954. School board officials chose not to construct a new school on the original site of Western Union High School and instead opted for this 30-acre property near Mineral Springs, which was more centrally located in the western portion of the county. Western Union School opened in May 1956 and served Black students in grades 1–12. It remained a school for African American students until the integration of Union County schools in 1970. After integration, most Black high school students in Waxhaw attended Parkwood High School in Monroe. Western Union School became an integrated middle school and then an elementary school in 1975. It continues to serve this purpose today.

Figure 3.3.
Western Union School (UN1237)



A. Auditorium,
Constructed 1956,
Looking Northeast



B. Auditorium Interior



C. Main Entrance
and Gymnasium,
Looking Northwest

Evaluation

Western Union School was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. This resource was constructed as an African American school in 1956. It served the community as a segregated school until integration in 1970. It is one of two historically Black schools remaining in Union County and is significant on a local level under Criterion A for its contribution to African American history and education in Union County. Although it has faced alterations, it still retains its original form and key components such as its brick exterior and smokestacks, as well as the intact interior of the auditorium. NSA recommends Western Union School as eligible to the NC Study List. The NRAC accepted this recommendation on October 9, 2025.

First Presbyterian Church (UN1238) 7624 Waxhaw Highway

First Presbyterian Church formed on October 28, 1973, by joining congregations from Shiloh Presbyterian Church (nonextant), which was located on Howie Mine Road in Waxhaw, and Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044), which is located eight miles south of Waxhaw. In 1973, the Presbytery of Catawba began discussion with the United Presbyterian Churches in the Waxhaw area about merging these two congregations "in order to increase membership and financial commitment, and to engage in a wider and more effective ministry to its members and the community" (First United Presbyterian Church, Waxhaw, North Carolina 1978). Upon completion of this merger, church leaders immediately formed plans for the construction of a new church on a neutral site. According to the church's cornerstone, the present building was constructed in 1977 (Figure 3.4). The church remains active.

First Presbyterian Church is an L-shaped building constructed of running bond brick veneer. The front-gable sanctuary features a vertical row of four narrow pebble glass windows on the main façade and a row of three identical windows on the rear or north elevation. The east and west elevations contain unevenly spaced, narrow, single-light windows. All windows are aluminum. The sanctuary is accessed through a recessed entrance on the rear, or north, elevation. Attached to the sanctuary on the east elevation is a single-story building that houses classrooms and a fellowship hall. It features a hip/mansard roof and narrow, single-light aluminum windows. It is attached to the sanctuary with a flat-roof hyphen, which serves as the main entrance to the church. The double-entry doors are single-paneled metal with a transom and sidelights. The church is set on a 9.49-acre parcel and is accessed by a concrete driveway leading from Waxhaw Highway. To the north of the church is a concrete parking lot and a pond enclosed by a six-foot metal fence. Adjacent to the pond is a playground enclosed by a chain-link fence.

Figure 3.4.
First Presbyterian Church (UN1238)



A. Façade, Looking North



B. Rear and West Elevation, Looking Southeast

Evaluation

First Presbyterian Church was evaluated under Criteria A, B, and C. Normally, resources are not considered eligible to the NRHP if they are less than 50 years old unless they are of exceptional importance. Because First Presbyterian was constructed in 1977, it has not met the historic age threshold as defined by the NPS. Because of its association with SL-listed Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044), First Presbyterian may be eligible under Criterion A once it reaches 50 years of age. NSA recommends reevaluating the resource at that time.

Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion B if they are associated with a person or persons significant within the community, state, or national historic contexts. Background research did not indicate that First Presbyterian presently has these associations and is therefore, not recommended as eligible under Criterion B.

The resource was also evaluated under Criterion C for its significance in the area of architecture. While the church is one of many Presbyterian churches in Union County, and it does possess some characteristics of late Modernist architecture such as its vertical windows. It may be eligible in the future once historians have historic and architectural contexts for such buildings. As this time, First Presbyterian is not recommended as eligible under Criterion C, but once the building reaches 50 years old and further research is conducted, that perspective may change.

Ebenezer AME Zion Church and Cemetery (UN1239) 6308 South Providence Road

Tax records show a construction date of 1920 for Ebenezer AME Zion Church, and the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century grave markers also suggest that a church has been on this site since that time; however, the current church building does not appear to date from that period. Aerial photography suggests it was constructed between 1956 and 1965, and its rear ell was added between 1969 and 1983.

This front gable, brick veneer church has a T-shaped plan and a one-bay façade consisting of a set of double, six-panel doors with an arched transom filled with blue slag glass. This glass is also present in the two-over-two horizontal light metal windows on the north and south elevations (Figure 3.5). The window openings were once pointed, but the upper section has been infilled with brick. The rounded arched entry is outlined with three rows of bricks. A gable porch set on square posts partially covers the arch and was added later. There are two additional entrance doors on the north elevation. One is accessed by a

Figure 3.5.
Ebenezer AME Zion Church and Cemetery (UN1239)



A. Façade, Looking West



B. South Elevation Showing Cemetery Looking North

concrete ramp with a wrought iron railing, and the other is sheltered by a flat-roof porch set on plain posts. Attached to the rear of the building is a circa 1970 ell, which also has entries on its east, west, and south elevations. Also constructed of brick veneer, the ell has two-over-two horizontal sash aluminum windows. There is a small, shed roof addition clad in vinyl siding on the south elevation with a separate entrance door. It appears to have been added since 2000. There is also vinyl under the eaves of the church.

In addition to the church, the 2.42-acre plot also contains an associated cemetery located to the south of the church and its unpaved parking lot. The earliest legible marked graves in the cemetery date to the 1890s. There are also several graves marked with natural, undressed fieldstones and likely many burials that are unmarked. The church and cemetery are active today.

Evaluation

Ebenezer AME Zion Church and Cemetery was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Background research did not indicate that the property was associated with any historically significant events or persons. Ebenezer AME Zion Church is one of several AME Zion churches in Union County and does not stand out for its connections to historical trends or events. Therefore, Ebenezer AME is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A or B. It was also evaluated under Criterion C for its significance in the area of architecture. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value. It is one of many front-gable churches of this period in Union County and one of four surveyed in Waxhaw for this project. Therefore, Ebenezer AME Zion Church and Cemetery is also not recommended as eligible under Criterion C as of 2026; with the passage of time, that perspective may change.

Ervin and Lottie Massey House (UN1240) 6221 South Providence Road

Tax records claim that the house was built in 1951; however, aerial photography clearly shows that the house was constructed between 1956 and 1965. Interviews with Waxhaw residents revealed that Ervin Massey (1925–1979), a farmer and masonry contractor, constructed the house (The Enquirer Journal 1970). In 1975, Ervin was selected as the first African American to serve on the Union County School Board. He was also an active member of Ebenezer AME Zion Church (UN1239) and served as the Worshipful Master of the Masonic Lodge for 20

years (The Enquirer Journal 1975b). He was married to Lottie McCain Massey (1924–2019). Like her husband, Lottie was also active in Masonic life and served as the Worthy Matron for the Order of the Eastern Star for many years, as well as serving on many other boards and community organizations, such as the Extension Homemakers Club, the 4-H Club, and as vice president for the Community Development Organization (Blakely Funeral Service 2019). Both Ervin and Lottie are buried at Ebenezer AME Zion Church Cemetery (UN1239) located 500 feet southwest of their house. The property is presently owned by their heirs, Evelyn Massey Jeffries, Carolyn Massey Greene, and Mamie Duree Massey.

The hip roof Ranch House is set over a basement and features wide, overhanging eaves and a five-bay asymmetrical façade (Figure 3.6). The recessed entry features a four-panel entry door with an arched light. The entry is highlighted by cut stone veneer that wraps to the façade, weatherboards to the left of the door, and a small two-light window to the right. The façade features a set of paired windows, as well as three single windows. All windows have been replaced with vinyl sash. On the north elevation, there is an open carport supported by brick pillars. The house also features one interior brick chimney. The building sits on a 3.5-ac. parcel.

Evaluation

The Ervin and Lottie Massey House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A if they are associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the local, state, or national level. While the house was constructed by Ervin Massey, a master mason in the Waxhaw community, it does not possess an association with important patterns of history. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion B if they are associated with a person or persons significant within the community, state, or national historic contexts.

While Massey served as the first African American on the Union County School Board, his work in this role is better reflected in buildings directly associated with education in the county. These properties include the Western Union School (UN1237), where Massey served as PTA president and likely in other capacities (Western Union High School 'Grand' Bi-Annual Reunion, 1940–1968, Committee 1968). The school is now on the NC Study List.

The Ervin Massey House was also evaluated under Criterion C for architecture. While it is a brick Ranch House like hundreds of others in Union County, and although possibly designed and constructed by Massey's hand, it is not a distinctive or unique architectural resource. It is presently not recommended as eligible under Criterion C, but with the passage of time, that perspective may change.

Figure 3.6.
Ervin and Lottie Massey House (UN1240)



A. Façade and South Elevation, Looking Northeast



B. Grave Marker for Ervin and Lottie Massey, Ebenezer AME Zion Church Cemetery (UN1239)

Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West and Cemetery (UN1241) 6712 Sims Road

Tax records suggest that this church was constructed in 1970. A 1956 aerial photograph reveals a building on the site of the cemetery, which is located to the west of the current church. That building was removed sometime between 1969 and 1983, and the current structure appears on the 1983 photograph, which suggests that the 1970 construction date is accurate. The previous building may have been an earlier church.

Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West is a brick building with a T-shaped footprint and a striking A-frame roof. Exposed I-beams secured in concrete footings extend from the roof to the ground on the east and west elevations. The façade features a front-gable vestibule with an inset entrance (Figure 3.7). The entrance consists of a pair of four-panel entry doors with two lights. Multiple blue slag glass lights surround the entry doors and extend to the gable apex. Surrounding the inset entrance are stone accent walls. The church is clad with running bond vermiculated brick. In the sanctuary, the gable has a four-light vertical window with blue slag glass. The east and west elevations each contain a row of three narrow, aluminum, two-pane windows under the roof eaves. These windows are also present in the rear cross gable ell, which is attached to the sanctuary. Both the west and east sides of the ell have concrete ramps with a metal railing, as well as another door on their end gables. The roof is asphalt shingle. This 4.01-acre parcel also contains a concrete parking lot, a cemetery, pumphouse, and nonhistoric storage shed. The cemetery is located to the west of the church. The earliest marked graves in the cemetery date to the 1910s.

There are also several graves marked with undressed fieldstones. The cemetery is still actively used.

Evaluation

Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West and Cemetery was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Background research did not indicate that the property was associated with any historically significant events or persons. Piney Grove Church is one of several Missionary Baptist churches in Union County and does not stand out for its connections to historical trends or events. Therefore, Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West is recommended as not eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A or B. It was also evaluated under Criterion C for its significance in the area of architecture. The church does

Figure 3.7.
Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West (UN1241)



A. Façade and West Elevation, Looking Northeast



B. Façade Detail

possess some characteristics of late Modernist architecture such as its vertical windows and exposed I-beams. However, more information, such as the identity of the architect, is needed regarding the construction of the church. It may be eligible in the future once historians have greater historic and architectural contexts for such buildings. As this time, Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church West and Cemetery is not recommended as eligible under Criterion C, but pending more research, that perspective may change.

Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery (UN1242) 1504 South Providence Road

Hugh Howey, King Morrison, Samuel Morrison, and Anthony Sims founded Mt. Pisgah Church in 1906 according to the cornerstone. Tax records claim that the church was constructed in 1950. The church constructed a significant addition to the building sometime between 1969 and 1983. This addition is depicted on aerial photography.

Mt. Pisgah is located 7.2 miles north of downtown Waxhaw and is set on a 5-acre plot also containing a cemetery, a brick wellhouse, a playground, a picnic shelter, and a prefabricated shed. Set approximately 450 feet west of Providence Road South, the church and cemetery are surrounded by a six-foot chain-link fence and accessed by a paved driveway. The church building consists of an L-shaped, front gable, brick veneer sanctuary topped with a steeple containing arched louvered vents. A vinyl-sided gable porch set on Doric columns shelters the three-bay façade, which consists of central double doors and flanking slag glass windows (Figure 3.8). There are six slag glass windows on the side elevations of the sanctuary. Attached to this main sanctuary building is an L-shaped, front gable, brick veneer building with a set of double doors on its façade. Windows on the side elevations are six-over-six wood sash. The two sections are attached at the rear with a brick hyphen.

The church was constructed in phases, perhaps beginning with a frame sanctuary, later reclad with brick veneer. Later additions include the ell at the rear of the sanctuary as well as the front-gable building to the northwest of the sanctuary. The porch and steeple are also nonhistoric additions.

Figure 3.8.
Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery (UN1242)



A. Façade, Looking Southwest



B. Southeast Elevation Showing Portion of the Cemetery, Looking Northwest

Evaluation

Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery were evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Mt. Pisgah Church is one of several Missionary Baptist churches in Union County and does not stand out for its connections to historical trends or events. Background research did not indicate that the property was associated with any historically significant events or persons. Therefore, Mt. Pisgah is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A or B. It was also evaluated under Criterion C for its significance in the area of architecture. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value. It is one of many front-gable churches of this period in Union County and one of four surveyed in Waxhaw for this project. The church also suffered several nonhistoric alterations that negatively affected its integrity, including the addition of the steeple and porch, possible new brick veneer, and the addition on the northwest of the sanctuary. Therefore, Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery are recommended as not eligible under Criterion C currently; with the passage of time, this recommendation could change.

Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site (UN1243) 635 Price Street

Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site is located on a 3.782-ac. parcel in the Low End or Eastside neighborhood of Waxhaw. In addition to the cemetery, the parcel also contains the site of Waxhaw Rosenwald School. The property is owned and maintained by three different churches: Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church (UN1244), Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church (UN1250), and First Presbyterian Church (UN1238). The parcel is bisected by Cureton Street, an unpaved road. On the west side of Cureton Street is a grassy field that contains a historic marker for the Waxhaw Rosenwald School, along with a brick sign for Eastside Community Cemetery. On the east side of Cureton Street is an open field and the cemetery, which is accessed by an unpaved circular driveway. While this property has been used as a cemetery since the 1920s, the earliest marked grave dates to 1932. There are approximately 130 marked graves in the cemetery (Figure 3.9). The parcel slopes east to a wooded area and a dry creek bed. Along the edge of the woods are approximately six hand-carved concrete markers. The earliest of these concrete grave markers appears to date to 1935. In the woods are numerous graves marked with wooden crosses that were placed in the twenty-first century and several rough-cut stone markers. It is unknown how many unmarked graves are in the cemetery. Recent research undertaken by Patricia Poland, retired Union County Genealogy and Local History Librarian, suggests that a portion of this cemetery near the creek bed was originally the Cureton Family Cemetery (aka Craig Family Cemetery).

Figure 3.9.
Eastside Community Cemetery (UN1243)



A. Baseball Field, Looking North



B. Marked Graves, Looking Northeast



C. Unmarked Graves near Dry Creek Bed, Looking North

Records show that this land was deeded to the Union County School Board by Frank and Lucille Armfield of Concord, Cabarrus County; N.S. and Lena Matthews of Charlotte; and J.C.M. Vann, Administrator for C.N. Simpson "for the purpose of erecting a public school and burying grounds for the colored population" in 1922 (Union County Deed Book 100:365). The Waxhaw School opened in 1924 and served African American students in Waxhaw until the early 1960s. It then functioned as a community center. Aerial photography shows that the school building was removed between 1983 and 1998. This property was also the site of the annual 4th of July celebrations and community baseball games for several decades in the twentieth century.

Harry Hood remembered, "And right on the other side [of the school], where they used to play the baseball, there was also a cemetery. And that cemetery goes back, well, I've seen the headstones there dated back to 1942, I think. And I remember as a little boy during them baseball games, I would run to get the ball...And I remember jumping over graves and everything, going to get that ball, so I could catch that ball" (Harry Hood 2025).

Evaluation

Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site was evaluated for NRHP significance under Criteria A and B. The property is not only a burial place for African American community members in Waxhaw but was once the location of their school and a central gathering place for social events like the annual 4th of July celebrations. NSA initially recommended this resource to the HPO as eligible for the NRHP at the local level under Criterion A for its contribution to African American history in Waxhaw. The HPO staff requested that NSA reassess the resource for its eligibility as a Traditional Cultural Place (TCP). After reviewing *The National Register Bulletin: Identifying, Evaluating, and Documenting Traditional Cultural Places*, NSA recommended that Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site does not meet the requirements for a TCP (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior 2024).

According to the TCP Bulletin, to be listed or eligible for listing in the National Register, a TCP will have the following characteristics:

- The place must be associated with and valued by a living community.
- The community that values the place must have existed historically and continue to exist in the present.

- The community must share beliefs, customs, or practices that are rooted in its history and held or practiced in the present.
- These shared beliefs, customs, or practices must be important in continuing the cultural identity and values of the community.
- The community must have transmitted or passed down the shared beliefs, customs, or practices, including but not limited to spoken or written word, images, or practice.
- These shared beliefs, customs, or practices must be associated with a tangible place.
- The place must meet the criteria for listing in the NRHP:
- A place must have significance: it must be important in a community's history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.
- A place must have integrity: it must retain the ability to convey its significance.

There are some characteristics of a TCP that are applicable to this resource. The cemetery and the site of the former Waxhaw School are associated with and valued by a living community, and this community of people continues to exist in the present.

NSA does not, however, feel like the scope of this project allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the shared beliefs, customs, or practices of the African American community in Waxhaw, so it is difficult to discern if these beliefs, customs, and practices are practiced in the present or are important in continuing the cultural identity and values of the community, or how they relate to this site. It is also not known if the community has transmitted or passed down the shared beliefs, customs, and practices in any form.

While it may be an important place to the African American community, NSA does not find it retains its integrity due to the loss of the nearby school building. The school was the most important component of the resource and what brought community members to the property for events and activities. Once it was demolished, the property did not serve the same function. It is still used as a cemetery, but that is its only current purpose. The TCP Bulletin notes that one of the most important aspects of a TCP is that its period of significance extends into the present. "Because significance to a living community in the present is a key characteristic for recognition of a National Register-eligible place as a TCP, the period of significance of a TCP extends to the present and may continue into the future" (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior 2024:82).

After discussing this topic with members of the Waxhaw African American History Project Committee, NSA determined that Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site's significance no longer extends into the present. It has not been used for the annual 4th of July celebration for at least 40 years. Committee member Gypsy Houston confirmed that her children do not have knowledge of the significance of the site, and she herself does not remember the resource being used as a place of community gatherings within her lifetime. There are no annual events such as Decoration Days or community-wide cemetery cleanups held here. The community members who find it important are individuals born before 1970. The TCP Bulletin states that "a TCP is a place significant for its role in a community's traditional and continuing beliefs, customs, and practices" (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior 2024:62). Waxhaw's African American continuing beliefs, customs, and practices are not evident in this place.

For these reasons, NSA does not recommend Eastside Community Cemetery and Waxhaw School Site as eligible to the Study List as a TCP.

Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church (UN1244) 512 Howie Mine Road

Wesley Chapel, initially known as Cherry Chapel, first appears in a mortgage sale ad in the *Monroe Journal* on March 22, 1904. Deed records show that by 1963 the church was known by its current name (UCDB 183:69). Aerial photographs reveal a building on this site in 1956, and by 1969, it was in its present form. Tax records suggest that it was built in 1960.

Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church has a front gable and a T-shaped footprint. The building is clad with long, narrow bricks laid in a running bond. The three-bay façade has a central set of double doors and flanking windows (Figure 3.10). A gable entry porch set on square posts shelters the entrance. At the apex of the front gable is a steeple constructed of sheet metal topped with a cross. The gables on the façade and on the porch contain T-111 siding, while the gables in the rear ell have weatherboards. There are four windows on the east elevation and three on the west elevation. Windows openings are pointed, but the transoms of the arch have been infilled with vinyl. The windows have also been replaced with one-over-one vinyl sash. The rear ell also contains the same windows and appears to have been constructed after the sanctuary, as the sanctuary gable is visible above the side-gable ell. The entire building includes the same veneer, so it is possible that the original building was bricked when the ell was constructed. Aerial photography suggests that the ell was added between 1965 and 1969. Other alterations to the building include the removal and infill of a door on the east elevation, as well as on the ell on the west side of the building.

Figure 3.10.
Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church (UN1244)



A. Façade and West Elevation, Looking Southeast



B. Façade, Looking South

The church sits on a 0.412-ac. parcel at the intersection of Howie Mine Road and Dunlap Street. There is a prefabricated frame shed to the south of the church and a brick sign on Howie Mine Road. On the west side of the parcel is a gravel parking lot.

Evaluation

Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Background research did not indicate that the property was associated with any historically significant events or persons. Wesley Chapel is one of many AME Zion churches in Union County and does not stand out for its connections to historical trends or events. Therefore, Wesley Chapel is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A or B. It was also evaluated under Criterion C for its significance in the area of architecture. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value. It is one of many front-gable churches of this period in Union County and one of four surveyed in Waxhaw for this project. Therefore, Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church is also not recommended as eligible under Criterion C in 2026. This could change in the future.

Waxhaw Masonic Lodge #250 (UN1245) 387 Howie Mine Road

Oral history interviews revealed that this is the third Prince Hall Masonic Lodge in Waxhaw and the second on this site. Tax records set a construction date of 1988. It is not known when this lodge was founded, but it was in place as early as 1925, according to the Proceedings of the 55th Communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge F.A.A.M. Community members used the lodge not only for meetings, but also for social events such as bingo games and parties.

The Waxhaw Masonic Lodge #250 is a front gable, two-story building constructed of running bond brick. It is rectangular in form with a three-bay, symmetrical façade (Figure 3.11). Windows are one-over-one vinyl sash, and there is T-111 siding in the gable field. While a space for the cornerstone is located in the lower right portion of the façade, no cornerstone is set there. The building is in poor condition, and the roof is almost collapsed. It is no longer used.

Figure 3.11.
Waxhaw Masonic Lodge #250 (UN1245)



Evaluation

Waxhaw Masonic Lodge #250 was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. The Masonic Lodge is not associated with any historically significant events or persons nor does it possess distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value of exceptional importance. NSA, therefore, recommends that it is not eligible for listing on the NRHP.

Sylvester and Calberta McManus House (UN1246) 212 Howie Mine Road

Sylvester McManus, Jr. (1926–2007), a master brick mason and minister who founded Faith Community Church on Howie Mine Road, built this house around 1955 according to tax records. He transferred the property to his son, Sylvester McManus III, and daughter-in-law, Elaine McManus, in October 1999 (UCDB:1309: 354). They, in turn, sold the property to Bobby W. Griffin (UCDB 1908: 380) in 2002. McManus and his wife, Calberta (1924–1985) are buried in Eastside Community Cemetery (UN1243).

This L-shaped, Ranch House is clad with red brick laid in a running bond and features accents of intermittently spaced smooth and scored, blond, glazed bricks on each elevation (see Figure 2.5). The asymmetrical, four-bay façade has an inset entry and a brick stoop with wrought iron railings (Figure 3.12). The wooden entry door is four-paneled with an arched fanlight. The façade also features a Chicago window and two other single windows. All windows are one-over-one, vinyl sash replacements. There are two interior brick chimneys. At the rear of the house is a concrete patio, and there is a brick screen wall on the east elevation, which likely hides trash receptacles. The roof is clad with asphalt shingles. The 0.211-ac. lot contains the house, as well as a gazebo set on a brick foundation in the southeast corner of the lot and a shed. Along Howie Mine Road is a stone rubble retaining wall and a brick mailbox. The yard contains a pecan and an apple tree.

Figure 3.12.
Sylvester and Calberta McManus House (UN1246)



A. Façade, Looking South



B. East Elevation, Looking West

Evaluation

The Sylvester and Calberta McManus House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A if they are associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the local, state, or national level. While the house was constructed by Sylvester Massey, a master mason in the Waxhaw community, it does not possess an association with broad patterns of history, nor is it associated with a person or persons significant within the community, state, or national historic contexts. The Sylvester and Calberta McManus House is not recommended as eligible under Criteria A and B. While it has some unusual features, namely the glazed brickwork, this Ranch House is one of hundreds in Union County, and although possibly designed and constructed by McManus's hand, it is not a unique resource. It is, therefore, also not recommended under Criterion C in 2026, but further research in the future could change the current recommendation.

Lorenzo and Louise Massey House (UN1247) 302 Washington Street

Tax records place a construction date of 1960 on this resource. Owners Lorenzo and Louise Massey, however, remember building it around 1970 (Massey, Lorenzo, personal communication, July 12, 2025). Aerial photographs confirm a construction date of between 1969 and 1983. Lorenzo Massey was one of several master masons in Waxhaw. He designed and constructed this house himself, along with the help of other masons in the community. He also operated his masonry business, Massey Masonry, out of this home. The house remains occupied by Lorenzo and Louise Massey.

The brick Ranch House is set on a slab foundation and has a side gable and an asphalt shingle roof. The five-bay asymmetrical façade has a center door sheltered by a shed roof supported by square posts (Figure 3.13). There are two paired windows to the south of the entry door and two single windows on the north side of the entry. All windows have been replaced with one-over-one vinyl sash units. The south end of the façade was once a carport. It was infilled with vinyl siding between 2016 and 2022. There is one interior brick chimney. The interior of the home is primarily wood panel with a stone wall surrounding the firebox in the living area. The 0.413-ac. parcel also contains two prefabricated frame utility sheds located to the east of the house, as well as an additional frame, front-gable dwelling set on the corner of Washington Street and East Price Street. The Masseys occupied this house prior to the construction of their current home.

Figure 3.13.
Lorenzo and Louise Massey House (UN1247)



A. Façade, Looking East



B. Additional Dwelling on Corner of Washington Street and East Price Street, Looking North

Evaluation

The Lorenzo and Louise Massey House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A if they are associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the local, state, or national level. Research shows that the house does not possess an association with broad patterns of history nor is it associated with a person or persons significant within the community, state, or national historic contexts as required for Criterion B. The Sylvester and Calberta Massey House is, therefore, not recommended as eligible under Criteria A and B. This brick Ranch House is one of hundreds in Union County, and although possibly designed and constructed by Massey's hand, it is not an architecturally distinctive resource. It is also not recommended under Criterion C in 2026. With further research and the passage of time, this recommendation could change.

J.C. Vinson House (UN1248) 400 Pearl Street

Black master mason J.C. Vinson (1929–2004) constructed this house between 1956 and 1965. The 1950 Census shows that Vinson was already working as a bricklayer at 21 years old. At that time, he lived with his mother Pearl, his younger brother James, and his wife Louvenia. Vinson's heirs, Jonathan Vinson, Gwendolyn Vinson, Alvin Vinson, and Elison Vinson currently owned the house, and Jonathan Vinson occupies it.

The one-and-a-half-story brick, Minimal Traditional House has a side-gable roof and is set on a full basement. It features three gable dormers and one interior brick chimney with a rounded cap. On the east end of the façade is an engaged carport supported by brick pillars. There are two doors leading into the house from the carport. Both are wood with a single square light. There is a single, decorative wrought iron support at the main entry door. The asymmetrical façade contains two main bays: a paired set of windows on the west corner and a Chicago window in the center of the façade (Figure 3.14). The portion of the façade containing the Chicago window is inset. All windows in the house are original two-over-two wood horizontal sash. The side gables and dormers are clad with weatherboards, but the remainder of the house is clad with running bond brick. In the carport, there are several rectangular cut stones placed in the brickwork. The house and a pond sit on an 8.05-ac. wooded parcel at the end of Pearl Street.

Figure 3.14.
J.C. Vinson House (UN1248)



A. Façade and West Elevation, Looking Northeast



B. Façade, Looking North

Evaluation

The J.C. Vinson House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A if they are associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the local, state, or national level. Research shows that the house does not possess an association with broad patterns of history nor is it associated with a person or persons significant within the community, state, or national historic contexts as required under Criterion B. The Vinson House is, therefore, recommended as not eligible under Criteria A and B. This brick Minimal Traditional House is one of hundreds in Union County, and although possibly designed and constructed by Vinson's hand, it is not a distinctive resource. It is also not recommended under Criterion C in 2026. With further research and the passage of time, however, this recommendation could change.

Roscoe and Vivian Miller House (UN1249) 524 Miller

This house began as a three-room frame building constructed between 1956 and 1965, according to aerial photography. Roscoe Miller (1927–1996), a master mason, added brick he salvaged from a building in downtown Waxhaw to the exterior around 1960 and later constructed the rear ell. His daughter, Vivie Miller, presently owns and occupies the house. She described it as she remembered it,

...my dad bought some land and he built a house. It had three rooms, it had a bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen. And we all...slept in that same one room...And as time went on, he just added more and more and more onto it...that's the house I live in now...It was made with, actually, old brick, which is really beautiful, because it has black, it has pinks, it has grays, it has all different colored bricks in it. And I believe I was told that it came from a building that burned downtown (Vivie Miller 2025a).

The current house is a one-story, brick dwelling with an L-shaped footprint. The oldest section of the home has a hip roof with projecting side gables. There are brick quoins on the façade, as well as a front-gable porch supported by scrolled wrought iron (Figure 3.15). The porch gable field is clad with pressed wood. The four-bay asymmetrical façade has a set of paired windows on the north corner and a single window on the opposite end with a Chicago window and a wood single-panel door with three horizontal lights in the center under the porch. All windows are six-over-six wood sash except for a Chicago window on the north elevation.

Figure 3.15.
Roscoe and Vivian Miller House (UN1249)



A. Façade and North Elevation, Looking Southeast



B. Façade, Looking East

The center nonsash window has 16 lights, while the flanking windows are four-over-four sash. The end gables are clad with pressed wood and contain rectangular attic vents. At the rear of the house is a side-gable ell. This addition is also clad with running bond brick. There is one exterior brick chimney on the rear or east elevation and another interior brick chimney. At the rear of the house is a poured concrete patio with decorative concrete block wall surrounding it. The 0.211-ac. parcel contains the house, as well as a wood utility shed placed since 2022.

Evaluation

The Roscoe and Vivian Miller House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A if they are associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the local, state, or national level. Research shows that the house does not possess an association with broad patterns of history nor is it associated with a person or persons significant within the community, state, or national historic contexts as required under Criterion B. The Miller House is, therefore, recommended as not eligible under Criteria A and B. Although it possesses unique features such as the salvaged bricks and was designed and constructed by Miller, it is not an architecturally distinctive resource. It is also recommended as not eligible under Criterion C in 2026. With further research and the passage of time, however, this recommendation could change.

Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church (UN1250) 700 Miller Drive

Mt. Nebo Church began in the home of Steven Miller. Parishioners purchased a lot from J.L. Rodman in 1880 at the intersection of two alleys and built the first church the following year. The church was square and constructed without a baptismal pool. Congregants walked "600 feet north...to a pond in the woods" for their baptisms. The first pastor is unknown, but the second, Rev. J. Crawford, began his service in 1907. Members remodeled and expanded the building in 1931, and in 1938, placed a baptismal pool inside the church. In 1969, church members purchased additional land from Roscoe and Vivian Miller and constructed the present church building (Lee, Phonolia 1997). Aerial photographs confirm this construction date, and tax records show a sale date of December 31, 1969.

The historic core of Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church is a rectangular building clad with a front-gable roof that has running bond brick and pressed wood in the gable (Figure 3.16). The three-bay symmetrical façade contains two single windows flanking paired central doors, which are sheltered by a gable porch set on turned posts.

Window openings are arched, and the windows themselves were originally red but have been replaced with one-over-one vinyl pebble glass. The fellowship hall, located behind the sanctuary, was added in 1984. It is also constructed of running bond brick and has six-over-six wood sash windows. Additional renovations occurred in 1995. The church sits on 0.415-ac. There is a gravel parking lot on the north side of the church and a brick sign with a bell in front of the church on Miller Drive.

Evaluation

Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Background research did not indicate that the property was associated with any historically significant events or persons. Mt. Nebo is one of several Missionary Baptist churches in Union County and does not stand out for its connections to historical trends or events. Therefore, Mt. Nebo is recommended as not eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A or B. It was also evaluated under Criterion C for its significance in the area of architecture. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value. It is one of many front-gable churches of this period in Union County and one of four surveyed in Waxhaw for this project. Therefore, Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church is also recommended as not eligible under Criterion C in 2026. Additional research and the passage of time may allow this recommendation to change.

David Barnes House (UN1251) 1415 Sharon Drive

Developer Murco, Inc. built this house in 1973 and sold it to Rodrick M. and Laura S. Rogers (UCDB 260:510; UCDB 259:393). The Rogers, in turn, sold it to David Barnes and his wife, Emma M., on November 19, 1979 (UCDB330:347). David Barnes (1941–2024) was a Waxhaw native and attended Waxhaw Elementary (Waxhaw's Rosenwald School) and Western Union High School. He became a teacher and taught in Georgia and then at Waxhaw Elementary School for 28 years. He was the first African American to serve on Waxhaw's town council, holding the position for 28 years (1979–2007). A park in downtown Waxhaw was named in his memory in 2008. He attended Shiloh Presbyterian Church and

Figure 3.16.
Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church (UN1250)



A. Façade and North Elevation, Looking Southeast



B. Façade and South Elevation, Looking Northeast

then First Presbyterian Church. He is buried in Bethel Cemetery (UN0044) (First Presbyterian Church of Waxhaw 2024). His children, Deonne Barnes and Julian Dexter Barnes, inherited the house on January 12, 2024, and presently own it (Union County Will Book 24E: 314).

The Split-Level House has gable roofs and is clad with brick veneer on the lower level and T-111 siding on the upper level (Figure 3.17). The levels are separated by a wood beltcourse. The entrance is accessed by brick stairs and features a wrought iron railing. The six-panel, wood entry door has three-light sidelights and is slightly recessed into the façade. There are three single windows on the first level and one single and two sets of paired windows on the second level. The house is set on a full basement and has an asphalt shingle roof.

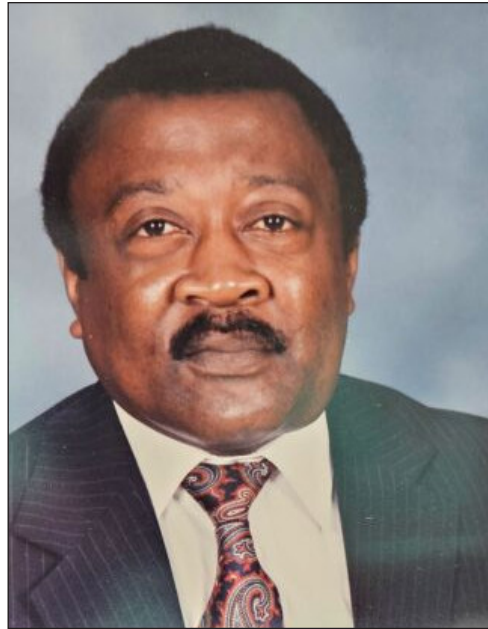
Evaluation

The David Barnes House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Properties can be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A if they are associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the local, state, or national level. Research shows that the house does not possess an association with broad patterns of history. Although David Barnes was Waxhaw's first African American town councilman, his life may be more accurately reflected in places where he served and not in his home. The Barnes House is therefore recommended as not eligible under Criteria A and B. Split-Level houses are a common residential building type in the area, and this example is not architecturally distinctive for its design or style. It is also recommended as not eligible under Criterion C currently. The passage of time and further research may, however, may change this recommendation.

Samuel Massey House (UN1253) 400 Washington Street

Constructed around 1910, the Samuel Lonzo Massey House is perhaps the oldest house in the Low End or Howie Mine Road neighborhood. Massey (1893–1963) was a World War I veteran and later worked as a drayman for the Nivens-Price Company (Vivie Miller 2025b). It is not known who constructed the home, but it appears that Massey lived in the house in 1930 according to the census taken that year. At that time it was valued at \$1,000 and described as being on Mine Road, which seems to be the name given to the general neighborhood at the time. Massey married twice, the first time to Christine

Figure 3.17.
David Barnes House (UN1251)



A. David Barnes (1941-2024)



B. Façade and East Elevation, Looking Northwest

Cureton, who died in 1930, and with whom he had six children (North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909-1976 1930). He remarried Mamie Barnes Massey (1907–1981) and had several more children. Massey died in 1963 and is buried at Eastside Community Cemetery (UN1243).

The house is of frame construction with a steeply pitched hip roof, which has exposed end rafter tails. There is an ell to the rear. The house originally sat on brick piers, but the foundation has since been infilled with concrete block. A shed roof porch extends across the three-bay symmetrical façade and is set on new turned posts (Figure 3.18). The house is clad with asbestos shingles, and the windows have been replaced with vinyl.

Evaluation

The Samuel Massey House was evaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Background research did not indicate that the property was associated with any historically significant events or persons and is therefore recommended as not eligible under Criteria A and B. While this is one of the oldest houses in the Howie Mine Road neighborhood, it is not an unusual residential building type of this period. Its integrity has also been compromised by the removal of the windows, and the addition of asbestos shingles and replacement porch supports. It is, therefore, recommended as not eligible under Criterion C at this time. Further research and the passage of time may, however, change this recommendation.

Figure 3.18.
Samuel Massey House (UN1253)



A. Façade and South Elevation, Looking Northeast



B. North Elevation, Looking South

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4. Recommendations

While this report provides an overview of the African American history of Waxhaw and documents some of the sites important to that history, it likely will reach a limited audience and only provides a starting point for future research and public exposure. Below are additional recommendations for utilizing this material.

1. Waxhaw's Story Map:

NSA recommends that the information in this report be added to Waxhaw's existing story map. The town's story map is lacking in information about the history of the African American community, and this document can provide a starting point to add to it. It may also be possible to embed excerpts from the oral history interviews within the story map.

2. Waxhaw's African American Master Masons:

In the oral history interviews, several brick masons and concrete finishers were mentioned. Realizing that there was a significant number of these individuals in this small town, NSA felt it was important to document their homes. Designed and built by their hands, they each have unique characteristics. NSA documented five of these homes: Ervin and Lottie Massey House (UN1240), Lorenzo and Louise Massey House (UN1247), Sylvester and Calberta McManus House (UN1246), Roscoe and Vivian Miller House (UN1249), and J.C. Vinson House (UN1248). Interviews revealed that there may be more. NSA recommends approaching the community for more information about the homes that have been identified, as well as others that may exist.

3. Eastside Community Cemetery:

This cemetery contains numerous unmarked graves that are situated on a slope and in danger of erosion. Attempts have been made to mark some of these graves, but without modern technology such as Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), the location of many of these graves is unknown. As one of the historic focal points of the African American community in Waxhaw, it is important that this property be properly documented. NSA recommends using GPR to identify the gravesites so that the community can protect them from further erosion.

4. Historic Markers:

There are many locations in Waxhaw where historic markers could be placed. Examples of locations are the corner of Highway 16 and East North Main Street, where African Americans waited for rides into Charlotte for work, and where it was acceptable for them to congregate prior to the Civil Rights Movement. Other locations for markers might be Western Union School, Bethel Presbyterian Church, and in the Low End/Eastside or Howie Mine Road neighborhood.

5. Walking Tour:

Like a Story Map, portions of this information can also be transformed into a walking tour around Waxhaw. This can be done through permanent markers along sidewalks or with a brochure. A walking tour could highlight African American history exclusively or be used in combination with a more generalized tour of the town. The tour can also be available to virtual travelers through a website similar to this one in Greenville, North Carolina which highlights the city's African American heritage: <https://www.visitgreenvillenc.com/things-to-do/african-american-cultural-trail/>.

Historic markers and walking tour signage can take many different forms. Information about the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program is operated by the North Carolina Division of Historical Resources and the Department of Transportation. Information about this program can be found on their website: <https://www.dncr.nc.gov/about-us/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program>. Historic markers, however, can also take other forms, such as those delineating the Asheville Black Cultural Heritage Trail (<https://bcht.exploreasheville.com/>) or interpretive panels like those found at many other locations, including Greenville, North Carolina's African American Cultural Trail, mentioned above. The City of Rocky Mount also has an interpretative panel about the 1978 Sanitation Strike at Tom Stith Park.

6. NRHP Nominations:

Both Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044) and Western Union School (UN1237) have now been added to North Carolina's Study List, which is the first step to listing on the NRHP. Nominations entail compiling more documentation, such as site plans and floors, as well as conducting additional historic research and photography.

7. Exhibits:

Exhibits documenting Waxhaw's African American history can be stationary or mobile and can exist in a variety of formats, such as panels or banners. Display sites can be in public places such as libraries, churches, schools, city government buildings, or other meeting places.

8. Publications:

Communities often request that the information gathered for reports such as this be published in a format like a brochure or booklet so that they can be sold at local shops and enjoyed by individuals who live outside of Waxhaw.

Whatever the next step is, NSA recommends that organizers first consult community members to determine who they would most like to reach with this information. Organizers could begin this process by holding public meetings or creating questionnaires. Community members may also share additional historic photographs and documents during these meetings, which would enhance any future publication, marker, or website.

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5. Conclusion

NSA, with the sponsorship of the Town of Waxhaw and the support of the community, recorded a series of nine audio interviews with 13 individuals, resulting in the identification of 18 historic resources located in and around Waxhaw. Historians recorded each resource with digital photography and an HPO survey site form. Of 18 recorded resources, only one was previously recorded. Staff members at HPO reviewed the resources and suggested pursuing Study List application for two of them: Bethel Presbyterian Church (UN0044), an Emancipation Era congregation that served as the origin church for two other Presbyterian congregations in Waxhaw, and the Western Union School (UN1237), a facility constructed during the Segregation Era for African American students in this section of Union County. Both resources were admitted to the Study List on October 9, 2025. With this study in hand, NSA recommends organizers consult citizens of Waxhaw to determine how they wish to use this information, whether it be for publication, historic markers, interpretative displays, or a walking tour. There is a rich history here that should be shared.

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Appendix A: Interview Transcripts

Deonne Melissa Barnes

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 5, 2025. Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is June the 5th, 2025, and I am speaking with Ms. Deonne Melissa Barnes for the Waxhaw African American History Project. Welcome.

Deonne Barnes:

Welcome. Thank you. Thank you.

Velma Fann:

Would you please state and-

Deonne Barnes:

I'm glad to be here.

Velma Fann:

Thank you. And spell your name for us, and give us your date of birth, if you don't mind.

Deonne Barnes:

My name is Deonne Melissa Barnes. And I spell that D-E-O-N-N-E M-E-L-I-S-S-A B-A-R-N-E-S. And my date of birth is 10/23/71.

Velma Fann:

Okay, so you're new. Okay. Are you native of Waxhaw?

Deonne Barnes:

I am. I was born in Charlotte, but raised in Waxhaw my entire life.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And were your parents born here?

Deonne Barnes:

My mother was born in Lancaster County, South Carolina, but raised in Waxhaw. And my father was born in Waxhaw and raised here as well. So, yes, they're natives.

Velma Fann:

So I often ask what the boundaries are for the African American community. Where did the African American community reside?

Deonne Barnes:

Well, I would say one of the dividing lines would be the railroad track. North of the railroad track was where most of the African Americans lived when I was growing up. There was a community to the left, or I guess to the west, it was called Sandy Ridge and many African Americans lived there. And then on the east side there was Howie Mine Road, which is where a lot of other African Americans lived. But we did have an area south of the railroad tracks in an area called Western Union, which was heavily populated with African Americans as well. But I would say the majority would've been north of the railroad tracks in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

So can you describe your community to us? What did the houses look like? Were they brick? Were they wood-frame?

Deonne Barnes:

Most of the houses when I was growing up were wood-framed. However, there were quite a few brick homes. I had to really think about that because one of the things Waxhaw was known for is having a lot of excellent brick masons. I had an uncle, several uncles on both sides of my family

who were brick masons, and there were a lot of concrete finishers. So we did have quite a few of both, but I would say the majority in my early growing up would've been wood-frame homes.

Velma Fann:

I've heard a lot about brick masons and African American men with that skill. I think that's really great.

Deonne Barnes:

It's a great skill.

Velma Fann:

Tell us about the schools that you attended?

Deonne Barnes:

I attended Waxhaw Elementary when I was a child, and it was the old Waxhaw Elementary School. There's a new school that was built, I think when I first went off to college, but Waxhaw Elementary School was, the old school. It's now South Providence, I think it's South Providence Alternative School in Union County. But that was the old Waxhaw school, and that's where I attended. A very small school. We probably had maybe three school buses at the time, maybe not even that many, but very small school, very quaint community in Waxhaw where people pretty much knew one another, whether you were Black or white, you knew one another.

Velma Fann:

How big was the school? Couple classrooms, four or five?

Deonne Barnes:

No-

Velma Fann:

30?

Deonne Barnes:

... I would say we'd had, let's see. I can almost see the hallways, wooden hallways, wide hallways when I think about that. I would say at least 12 or 13 classrooms.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And that was the old Waxhaw.

Deonne Barnes:

Right.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Did you attend church here? And if so, which one?

Deonne Barnes:

I did. I grew up in First Presbyterian, which is right off of 75 going into Monroe, but it's actually in Waxhaw. That's the church that I grew up in.

Velma Fann:

And what was that like? Are you the what they call the church girl?

Deonne Barnes:

I am. I spent a large portion of my life in church, whether it was being on the choir, active in the youth. We traveled from church to church, and that's pretty much how you got to know people in the community. Even though I was Presbyterian, we would go and sing at the Methodist Church or at the Baptist Church. And so a lot of the people that I went to elementary school with, when we went on to middle school already knew some of the other people because they either went to a church that I had met them at activities. So I was very active in church and my church was pretty large at that time. But now the Presbyterian Church has gotten a lot smaller with a lot of the newer non-denominational churches. But it was the thing when I was growing up, and I loved church, loved singing on the choir still to this day. I love that.

Velma Fann:

Very good. We talked about the kind of work that the men did. What work did the women do?
Your mom and probably her?

Deonne Barnes:

Yes. Women in this community, I guess it runs the gamut when I think about it because some of the older women when I was younger still did domestic work. Some of the older like my grandmother on both sides were still domestic workers when I was a small child. But we did have, my dad was a school teacher. My mom was a school teacher too, but she didn't teach in Waxhaw, she taught in Monroe area.

I had some great aunts and uncles who were also teachers. So we had teacher's assistants, cafeteria workers. There were quite a few women were seamstress, but they didn't typically do that as a profession. They were just known as being good at it, and so they would make money off of it. So I don't think they would really consider that their job. There were some people in the community who were really good cooks who baked cakes and were known for that, so they made money off of that.

Canning was a big thing. I recall helping my mom shell peas, snap beans, and a lot of times they would can these items and sometimes sell them at bazaars, church events and things like that. But pretty much I would say, oh, mill workers, that was a big thing at the time too. The people who were not domestic workers in the town often worked in, Elisa Mills was one of the big meals and Johnson Mills. Those were two of the existing plants or factories or whatever you want to call them in that era. And then when that kind of died out around the time I was in middle school, it was pretty much people made a living off of their husband's incomes being brick masons and concrete finishers and things of that nature.

Velma Fann:

Now, these mills, what were the mills for? Cotton or what?

Deonne Barnes:

Cotton, they were considered textile mills. Both of those were textile mills. I don't really know what product they produced, but it was probably some type of... I know some of the people who worked at Elisa Mills did something with shirts, decal or logos and things that you put on shirts.

That was one of the things that they did by the time I was in middle school and it was kind of dying out. But I think before that they probably made a lot of other things too.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Makes sense. So what did you do for fun as a child?

Deonne Barnes:

That's interesting because it's very different from what kids do now. This is a beautiful natural area too. So I know as a child we played by creeks. There was a little stream behind my great aunt's house, and a lot of times as children, we would run down into the woods and play along that stream. My father used to take us fishing a lot. That was something that we did. And then Cane Creek Park is an area that is well-known for recreation, but you had to drive to that. A lot of churches would have their picnics, A lot of family reunions would have cookouts down there. But mostly I would say it was outdoor playing. Baseball, little league and things like that were very popular. And the fishing, the good thing about the fishing, my dad would take us, and you could get live bait. I mean, we had tack shops in town. It was more like a mercantile era with the stores, mom and pop stores. And I remember when he would load the car up with all the fishing gear, the next stop would be we would stop and get fresh bait and then head down to a local pond, and usually somebody would've given you permission.

I don't ever remember him having a fishing license or anything, although he may have had to have that. But it was just like somebody said you could fish in their pond. We would go, and the interesting things you would see. We would see snakes on some of those trips. So that was quite fun.

Velma Fann:

Did your parents talk to you about their growing up and what-

Deonne Barnes:

They did.

Velma Fann:

... it was like?

Deonne Barnes:

Yes. Interesting time. I recall Christmas for my mom. She would often tell me what they would get. It would be a shoebox, and they would be so happy to get it. It would have nuts and fruit and things like that in there. And I'm thinking when I was a child, that's not what we were looking for. But they were happy to get that. And then I know at Easter time, she would tell me they would have certain aunts and uncles who would be known for buying them like nice clothes for Easter.

So that was one of the things that I recall from her growing up. And also that they had chores, real chores, meaning that my mom and her, she had an older sister, but they actually had to cook and take care of the younger kids while their parents were working so...

Velma Fann:

Right. Okay. Things have changed.

Deonne Barnes:

Right, very much so. Especially from today's generation that's so digital. We didn't have that.

Velma Fann:

I often laugh when we were punished it was like, "You cannot go outside and play." And now when you send kids outside to play, what did I do wrong?

Deonne Barnes:

Right. The irony of that. Right.

Velma Fann:

That's goodness. What were the relationships like growing up in your community?

Deonne Barnes:

I would say it was mad respect for the elderly. For older people, you were to be respectful. Certain people, you didn't dare call them by their first name. It was Mrs. Loma Massey, Mrs.

Calbert and McManus as you would call them by their name. I mean Ms.[inaudible?] and I would say people looked out for one another in the community. If you got in trouble in school, it was pretty much, you were sure if you didn't tell your parents or the school didn't, somebody was going to inform them.

But I guess one of the norms would've been just having respect for one another, whether you went to the same church, lived in the same community, helping people was a big thing. We had a garden, and I recall my mom helping the neighbors in their garden, and then they would come over vice versa and help in the garden, whether it was weeding or harvesting, whatever it was. But it just seemed more communal. People cared about each other.

Velma Fann:

What type of businesses were there? Were there any Black-owned businesses here?

Deonne Barnes:

We did have a few. I had to think about that. We had Louvenia and Rufus Coffey had two businesses that I recall, and they actually still go to church with me. They had a adult daycare for a long period of time. And it was a great business because it provided a place for when people are getting elderly and they're getting dementia. They didn't have all the care centers and things like that that we have today. So they would [take care of the people while their families worked]. And so people would drop off their older adults and they would stay there all day. And they also later had a business, it was Tracy's Adult Daycare was the name of their daycare. And the other business they had was Tracy's Charter Service. They had a transportation service. They had bought a, I guess kind of like a Trailways-like bus. And they would take people, whether it be churches on trips. I recall them taking us to the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, my church youth group.

They took a group of fourth graders to Raleigh for their fourth grade trip. I think that was Waxhaw Elementary. And they would take people on casino trips. That was something a lot of the elderly people would like to go to Atlantic City. I went a few times when I got older, but those were businesses that I recall. There was a lady who's now deceased, Loreen Baxter, had a hair salon. It was in the Sandy Ridge area, and the Tracy's Charter Service was in the Western Union area. That's the community where that was. Jack Gaymon had an accounting business,

which I think is still open today, so it's still operating today. I think he did taxes and accounting. And that's in the city limits of Waxhaw near the Circle K, I believe.

And who else? There were quite a few as I mentioned earlier, brick masons and concrete finishers. Richard Coffey is a well-known concrete finisher. Mr. Rich Hood who is deceased, was a concrete finisher. And Sam Crowe was another concrete finisher. And even though I say concrete finisher, I would call them early contractors because I can recall them building actual, almost building brick homes. I mean, they probably just knew enough people to put all-

Velma Fann:

Put together.

Deonne Barnes:

... their skills together, but they were really known as concrete finishers. But I think their skill went beyond that.

Velma Fann:

Did they construct any churches or any non-residential buildings?

Deonne Barnes:

Not that I know of. They probably did, but I don't know. Yeah, I really don't know that. Another person I thought of is Louis Hood. He's deceased, but he and his wife, Geneva had a transportation truck. He was one of the first people in the community to buy a large, I guess like a big rig or whatever you would call it. And they would lease this out to Johnson Motors and different companies would lease their vehicle to make deliveries and then he would also use it too, but that was kind of entrepreneurial for the time because not many people had trucks then.

Velma Fann:

And what years are we looking at, the '70s, the '80?

Deonne Barnes:

More like the early '80s.

Velma Fann:

Early '80s.

Deonne Barnes:

And some of those, most of the brick masons, the ones who are still living, I mean, they may still, they have children who have kind of taken over their businesses, but they still operate. Some of them, some are deceased. And let me see. Let's see if I had anybody else as a business owner. I don't want to omit anyone.

Velma Fann:

And during your parents' day, do you know of any businesses or shops or stores or grocery stores?

Deonne Barnes:

I did recall some names that they mentioned had stores.

Velma Fann:

Somebody had, I don't don't know if it was a Rudolph or something like that, had-

Deonne Barnes:

Mr.-

Velma Fann:

Got the corner store, get your candy.

Deonne Barnes:

Mr. Leroy Hagen.

Velma Fann:

I think they kept saying Rudolph.

Deonne Barnes:

I think that's his name, Leroy. I think that was his name, Leroy Hagen had a store. There was someone else. And I remember my mom telling me this, and I had it written on another sheet of paper, but that one I did not bring.

Velma Fann:

It'll come to you.

Deonne Barnes:

It may come to me, yes. So they did have people who sold, I think Ms. Bonnie Green also sold things out of her house, if I'm not mistaken. She lived right near, there was a church there, and I think it was Shiloh Presbyterian Church. And she sold things, I think out of her house. Now may be remembering that incorrectly. And if I am, I'll give you a call and make sure that I cleared that up for you.

Velma Fann:

So businesses like where we got our hair done, our barber shops or anything like that, or?

Deonne Barnes:

Well, Loreen's is the only one I can think of in the city who did hair. We have a few people here now, like Dorothy White has a salon that's attached to her house, but she also operates out of Charlotte. She has two businesses.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. All right, so those things are having our hair done. Was that done at home when you were growing up, or what are your parents saying about that?

Deonne Barnes:

Yes. When I was younger, I remember that hot comb quite well, getting my hair pressed, not having a perm early on, which I wish I had never gotten a perm. Now that I know what I know about perms. But yes, it was a ritual of getting between your mom's legs and falling asleep. Sometimes it would feel good to have someone working in your head.

And I also recall, as a small child doing my great-grandmother's hair. She would have me put the Bergamot Hair Grease on there. I would be plaiting her hair. I would probably be in fifth or sixth grade. But I knew she enjoyed that, and I would work in her hair. But yes, my mom would do my hair and it would be a long ordeal of burning and snatching my head and-

Velma Fann:

Sit still, girl.

Deonne Barnes:

Get your ear, why? so you can burn my hand.

Velma Fann:

Were you close to your grandparents? I know you just mentioned your grandmother.

Deonne Barnes:

I was very close to my grandparents on both sides. Unfortunately, my dad's mom did not live as long, but she died when I was probably in the fifth grade, so I didn't get to know her as well as I got to know my great-grandmother who I stayed with after school. My brother and I would walk from elementary school to her house, and we would stay with her until our parents picked us up. So I got to know her quite well. I was very close with my mom's mom and my grandfather on my mom's side because they lived longer. My grandmother didn't live as long, but my grandfather lived up until the time I was in college.

So that was quite interesting because I remember speaking with my grandfather about just some of the things that he lived through. I asked him about history, what do you remember about World War II? And I remember him telling us about how they would sit by and listen to the radio to hear what was going on.

But I also remember, I think it was smallpox or some of the, yeah, my grandfather was born in 1901, so he knew a lot of that kind of stuff. So I remember him telling us when people had smallpox. I think I want to say, he said he was like a teenager. And one of their jobs was even the white neighbors who they had heard were sick, they would fix meals and take it on a tray and put it at the door and then knock and run, run away because they were afraid of getting smallpox.

And I thought that was quite interesting because I had never heard that. But then when I became a teacher, I recall one of the first field trips I took a group of kids on was to a cemetery. And this was up in Charlotte, but it was right off of 16. So right out of Waxhaw. And there were a lot of graves of white families who had died of smallpox. And right behind it, you could see little rocks where there's slaves that died from it also. And I thought that was kind of interesting because I thought back to my grandfather having told me about smallpox. And so I thought that was interesting how they helped the community, helped one another even though they were afraid. And I remember asking him, did y'all go back and get the dishes or whatever? And he said, "No." It was just like you left it there and you... So it was a different time. And then he told me a little about Ike Eisenhower, and I guess he was kind of fascinated with history too, because he named my uncle, one of my uncles was named MacArthur. He was named after General-

Velma Fann:

The General, yes.

Deonne Barnes:

... MacArthur. So I think my grandfather kind of had a fascination for history too.

Velma Fann:

Is this the grandfather who lived here, is that correct?

Deonne Barnes:

Yes, yes. Yes.

Velma Fann:

So when he came back from the service, did he tell you anything about life being different or what was what he anticipated coming back?

Deonne Barnes:

No, I don't think he was in the service. I just think he had a fascination with history. Now not that I know of that he was, I don't know that for sure, and I'm pretty sure that I've never heard that he was in service. But I did have on my dad's side his, I didn't know him personally, but his

grandfather was in World War I. And then we had a relative who died actually in 2020 who was in the Korean War who received a Purple Heart and was in, for some reason, I can't remember this group, but it's the Marine version of the Tuskegee Airmen. It has a name, and I can't think of the name of it, but he was recognized for that.

My uncle Jimmy Crow was in the Korean War. And then we had people who were in World War II because my great-grandfather was in World War I. His son was in World War II, and I think some of the other brothers were in World War II also.

Velma Fann:

That Marine Montford Point?

Deonne Barnes:

That's it. I couldn't remember the name of Montford Point, yes, yes, yes. You know your history. Oh, goodness, yes. He was in Montford Point, and he's been recognized for that. I think in Waxhaw and even when he died, they had a special ceremony for him so that was-

Velma Fann:

Congratulations on that.

Deonne Barnes:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

What areas of significance would you like to see commemorated, honored, memorialized here in Waxhaw?

Deonne Barnes:

I think that the unity here is something that is almost unheard of. It's like when something happens, kids, I mean, not kids, but the community comes together. And I think just the shared how Waxhaw has grown. And I think the impact that the African Americans had on the community is showing forth in just the diversity that we see here now. It's a welcoming community, and I know every community still has its elements of problems or whatever. But one

thing I say about Waxhaw is I truly believe that the African Americans wanted it better for future generations. And you can see that it was birthed in many families, really, you can see it.

And when I think about various families that may not have had a whole lot in early life, but people in the community came together, whether it was teachers to really pour into children. Some of the things like church camp. We had a camp at the church I grew up with, which was a longer ordeal during the summer. It was almost the entire summer for years. And it was geared towards young adults and children. But there was also a portion where adults would go to it.

And my uncle was saying this the other day, he remembers looking forward to that, even sitting in a class with some of the older teachers. And he was an adult at the time. I was remembering this event, it's like, "I thought that was just for us." But then I thought back, I'm like, "Yeah, adults were there," but I didn't think about what they were getting from this. So I think just pouring into education, encouraging people to think about your community, to give back and to encourage people who go on and do something great, to really use that.

And one example, when I was an English teacher, I was over an AVID program, which is a college prep course for usually first generation college students. And so many of them would be African Americans. And one of the people I had to come speak was John Tillman, who is a native of Waxhaw, who became an Olympian. He was actually in the, I think it was the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. I might have the year wrong, but it was in Barcelona, Spain. So I had him come talk to my class. And so I think just that giving back, caring about your community and then lifting each other up. So I would like that to be recognized in our future.

Velma Fann:

When we look back, and this is probably more your parents' era, did they ever speak about anything regarding the Civil rights movement?

Deonne Barnes:

Yes. I recall my grandmother on my dad's side was a domestic worker as well as my grandmother on my mom's side. But my dad was in college and he was at Fayetteville State, and I recall he was going to be in a sit-in, and he said he called his mom and wanted her approval before he did that because he knew it could affect her.

And she said, "You do what you have to do and don't think about me. You do what you have to do." And I thought that was really powerful, and to know that his mother could lose her job, or it could affect his ability to stay in school. But she said, "No, you do what you have to do and don't worry about me." And so that was major support. Another thing that I thought about was when my dad came home one summer, he was working at one of the grocery stores to try to have money to go back to college. And one time he was told by one of his managers that he was supposed to train someone, and he was training this person. And he quickly realized that he was training the person to become his manager. And he was, at that time, was thinking about not going back to college.

And it was something that the supervisor said to him that made him know that he had to go back to college. And so they scraped up the money, and he went back to college. But the years after that, he went to Atlantic City, and I thought this was amazing because I think he was only like 17. And he worked on the boardwalk and away from family. And I thought, that takes a lot of courage. And he had enough money to go back. But he did have support systems because he had a great uncle who, I'm not sure if he was a dean or a chancellor, but he had a big position at Fayetteville State. So he had a support system in place.

But yes, the civil rights era was very prevalent here. We had people like Robert Williams in the community that was a civil rights activist, and the churches would meet about various events. Even when I was a child, I recall people mobilizing to vote and to stay engaged in what was going on in the political arena and how it was impacting us locally.

But yes, my dad was in sit-ins when he was in college and just, yes, that was major, so major. And I do recall, I also had Franklin McCain, who is deceased now. I had him come speak to my class when I was first starting teaching too. And he actually is a relative of one of my relatives too. So even though he was in the Greensboro sit-ins, so he was one of The Greensboro Four. And so that was a big issue within my family. We talk a lot about politics and civil rights because we pretty much lived through it. I mean, we had family members who definitely had to be on the front line.

Velma Fann:

Now you probably went to high school after judging from your HD segregation, or were you among the first to go of African American students to enter white schools or-

Deonne Barnes:

No, there were people who, my mom's younger brother, I think was one of the first classes of integration. But when I came along, the schools were already integrated.

Velma Fann:

Did they ever speak about their experience being among the first-

Deonne Barnes:

They did.

Velma Fann:

... of other relatives?

Deonne Barnes:

I heard various stories. I know that they did have pushback at times, but as a community, I think people just forged ahead, and they dealt with the racism and things that came with that. But I never heard of any physical race riots, and I may not be aware of any, but those things I'm not aware of, of whether they did or didn't.

Velma Fann:

Is there anything that you would like to add? Oh, I need to ask you?

Deonne Barnes:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

The 4th of July events.

Deonne Barnes:

Oh, yes.

Velma Fann:

Probably not you, but maybe your parents and grandparents.

Deonne Barnes:

Well, no, it was still with us. 4th of July was a big event in Waxhaw for the African American community, and probably even before me, but even when I was a child. The old schoolhouse, it was the grade school where my parents went to elementary school. It was an area where Eastside Cemetery is now, but that used to be kind of like a red clay dirt area where they would play baseball, softball during 4th of July. And we would gather and people would cook soup and fried fish in a big cauldron, if you want to call it wash pot.

And the kids would play and have cotton candy and candy apples, and you could see the cars lining Howie Mine Road. And then I think it's Cureton Road that leads down into that area where the school used to be. That was a big site for the African American community. It was where Waxhaw, primary school was. I'm not sure what they actually called it, but it was the African American school.

And I remember asking one of my great-aunts, well, if you all went to that school, where did the white children go at the time? And I think she said it was called Jackson School or something. It was another school.

But when I was a child on 4th of July, that was the big event. And we would even bring fireworks when we got older and things like that. But it was more of a community thing. And I don't even know how the word spread, because we didn't have social media, so I guess people just got on the phone and how it was coordinated. I don't know how that was done. So that was a big event, and you look forward to it every year.

Velma Fann:

Sounds great. Well, I thank you very much for sharing.

Deonne Barnes:

Oh, you're welcome. You're welcome. Well, there was one event I didn't mention that I probably should mention. When I got to be in probably middle school, Sue Barber coordinated, and I'm not sure if she worked with a committee, but she was the one who originally started it. It was a Black history event that we would have uptown and various churches would get involved, youth

groups, and she would have guest speakers who would come. And I remember one year we had a guest speaker who recited Dr. Martin Luther King's, I Have a Dream speech. And he sounded just like him. It was so amazing.

And there would be singing recitations. We would do poetry, I remember Paul Laurence Dunbar and different poets. And so it kind of brought the community together, but also they had recognitions of people in the community. So trying to encourage the young people to see who came out of your community, who's doing something great.

One year, my aunt spoke also as a speaker for that. Well, she wasn't retired at the time, but she was an assistant principal in Charlotte at one of the schools. So that was a big event for a while. And then I think we even at a time they even had African American vendors that would set up and sell a few things, like T-shirts and things like that there.

Velma Fann:

And that was about which decade?

Deonne Barnes:

I would say that was in the late '80, early '90s. Right. Late '80s, early '90s. That's the timeframe I'm remembering.

Velma Fann:

Did your parents or grandparents talk about any Black doctors or midwives or prominent people, let's say in '40s or the '50s?

Deonne Barnes:

I want to say Dr. Perry, if I'm remembering the name right, was a doctor, I believe in the Monroe area. I don't know that they were actually operating here. Dr. Julius Chambers had a brother who was a doctor, and I recall he was my mom's doctor. I don't know if it was when I was born or when my brother was born, and I can't think of his name, but Dr. Chambers would be his name. I just don't know his first name. But Julius Chambers, who used to be the, I think chancellor at North Carolina Central. I may be wrong about what he did, but he had a big position within the state.

Velma Fann:

And then the athlete, his name again, that was in the Olympics?

Deonne Barnes:

John Tillman, that's one of the people that became an Olympian. We did have a doctor. We did have someone in this community that became a doctor, and I'm sorry, I didn't even think about this, but Dr. Parthenia Richardson grew up in Waxhaw, and she is, I believe, a gastroenterologist in Charlotte.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Deonne Barnes:

And I believe her brother was one of the, he was a nurse too. I had a cousin who was raised in this community who became a Moorhead Scholar, which is a major scholarship at UNC Chapel Hill. And he became an attorney, so that was a major accomplishment. His name is Cecil Hood.

Velma Fann:

And spell that one for me, please?

Deonne Barnes:

C-E-C-I-L, I believe. Roscoe Hood.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Deonne Barnes:

And there are some people doing some major things right now. Some young people that I don't want to leave out of this. There's a Tiffany Brown who's playing ball internationally. She's a professional basketball player, and I'm not sure which country, but I know we try to lift her up as a local hero because she's on my Facebook page, and I know we're very proud of her. And there's

a, I think it's Kimberly Miller, who is a senior athletic director at, I believe she's, it's either in Georgia, or she may be in Sioux Falls, Iowa.

She's been two different places. But to be an athletic director as a Black female so it's pretty big. So those are people that we're very proud of. When they go and do something great, we try to tell other people in the community about them so that's-

Velma Fann:

That's great.

Deonne Barnes:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Right. Well, thank you very much.

Deonne Barnes:

Thank you. Thank you for doing this. Our community deserves it. And I'm glad to know that the African American community is being well thought of in order to have this history put in the record books because oftentimes, I used to have conversations with my grandfather and my great-grandmother, and I don't know why I didn't pull out a tape and do this. Unlike some of the conversations we had were just amazing.

Velma Fann:

We can start now.

Deonne Barnes:

Now, amen.

Velma Fann:

Thank you.

Deonne Barnes:

Thank you.

Estelle R. Coffey

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 4, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Estelle Coffey:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is June the 4th, 2025, and I am speaking with Mrs. Estelle R. Coffey for the Waxhaw African-American History Project. Welcome.

Estelle Coffey:

Thank you.

Velma Fann:

Ms. Coffey, would you spell your name for us please and give us your date of birth, if you don't mind?

Estelle Coffey:

Okay. My name is E-S-T-E-L-L-E R. C-O-F-F-E-Y. And my date of birth is June 12th, 1939.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right. And your age, if you don't mind telling us.

Estelle Coffey:

My age, I'm 85, up until... I'm going to cut this off. I'm 85. I'll be 86 the 12th.

Velma Fann:

All right. Well, I'm going to give you a happy early birthday.

Estelle Coffey:

Thank you.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Now are you a native of Waxhaw?

Estelle Coffey:

I am.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Been here all my life.

Velma Fann:

All right. And your parents, were they born here as well?

Estelle Coffey:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So how many generations back can you go for people being in Waxhaw? Were grandparents here?

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah, my grandparents and my great-grandparents, they were all from Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Sometimes I ask where the boundaries were for the African-American community. Some people say, oftentimes it's on a certain side of the tracks or something. So where was the boundary for the blacks in Waxhaw?

Estelle Coffey:

It was on the south side of Waxhaw, the south side.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

And how far out did it extend? Was it a big community, or real close to the downtown area, or further out?

Estelle Coffey:

No, it was out in the country.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

It was out in the country.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

And it was spread out.

Velma Fann:

Uh-huh.

Estelle Coffey:

It wasn't close there. There's houses here, houses there.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

But not anything close like it is now.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. Because it is growing now.

Estelle Coffey:

Yes, it's growing. I've seen a lot of growth.

Velma Fann:

A lot of growth. Can you describe your community to us where you live? What did the houses look like? Were people farming? What was going on?

Estelle Coffey:

Yes, when I was growing up, we were sharecroppers. And sharecroppers means that you rent the land from someone else, and then you plant your cotton and corn. And the part about planting the cotton, you would buy your fertilizer and everything, and then when the cotton produce, you only get half of it, and then you have to take your half, and pay for what you had gotten. That part I didn't like from a child, but that's how we was raised. We share crops. And we were rented. It was rental houses. You didn't own. I don't think you could about count who owned the house. Not many people owned houses, black people as well.

Velma Fann:

What work did you do as a child?

Estelle Coffey:

As a child, I guess, I was just being bad. As a child, after I went to school, I got married at 18, and then my first job was domestic job.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

I did domestic work and after that I worked for Community Action. And then, I stayed there for 30 plus years. And after working for Community Action, I worked part-time at Walmart as a supervisor over the... I worked as a cashier. And then, I worked as supervisor over the cashiers.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

And I enjoyed Walmart, because Walmart was like having a party and getting paid for it. You see a lot of people you hadn't seen in a long time will come in Walmart. So that's what I do. And then, I do a lot of community work. I'm a lifetime member of the NAACP. I've been with ECA, I don't know if you remember Home Demonstration.

Velma Fann:

I remember hearing about those. Yes.

Estelle Coffey:

Home Demonstration. I've seen it change three times. I've been in it for 66 years.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

And so, I enjoy that really good. And then, I'm a lifetime member of my church, Pine Grove West Missionary Baptist Church. It's here in the Waxhaw area. And, I love volunteering. I love sharing. Even with not getting around good, I still can share with people, clothes, food, whatever I have, I share it. And if I get something and I can't use it, or if I think they can use it, I share it with them.

Velma Fann:

You share it?

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

Now, were you part of the family when they were sharecropping? Did you have to do any of that work in the fields when you were growing up?

Estelle Coffey:

I did.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. Never could pick much cotton. But yeah, I was with the sharecropper.

Velma Fann:

Ah, okay. What schools did you attend in Waxhaw?

Estelle Coffey:

The first school was Mill Springs. It was elementary school. Mill Spring Elementary.

Velma Fann:

Is that still standing? Is that area still like it was, or is the school still standing? They torn it down?

Estelle Coffey:

No, they built a house over that school.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

And then, we went to Western Union. The Western Union School.

Velma Fann:

People said there was a Rosenwald School here. Are you familiar with the Rosenwald School and area? Rosenwald. I think I have a picture of it that I can share. I think it was out maybe in the more rural areas. Is that familiar at all?

Estelle Coffey:

I don't remember that. It was before my time.

Velma Fann:

And what your churches did you attend? I know you're a member now of Piney.

Estelle Coffey:

Piney Grove. Before we got transportation, we went to a little church in Mineral Spring area, it was a Holiness church.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

And we attended that because we could walk there. And, until we got to where we could go to our church.

Velma Fann:

So what we are doing is trying to remember and find places in the Waxhaw area that were significant for the black community. They may have been churches, they may have been schools, they may have been stores owned by black people, they may have been community centers.

Excuse me. So if you wanted to give somebody a history tour, black places near Waxhaw, where would you point? Where would you show us? May not still be standing, but they were important at a time.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. You know what? That would be hard to do, because it was a Waxhaw school.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But it is not there anymore.

Velma Fann:

Okay. That's okay.

Estelle Coffey:

It would be down in the Waxhaw Elementary School. I mean, that would be the only place that was for black folks.

Velma Fann:

So for entertainment, I understand that in Waxhaw there was a movie theater, but we were sitting upstairs. Do you know anything about the theater down there?

Estelle Coffey:

I do not.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

I do not. That was for the city people. The black folks that lived in the city of Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

We were country folks. We didn't get to come to Waxhaw that much.

Velma Fann:

Oh, all right. So what did you all do for entertainment and fun?

Estelle Coffey:

Played with each other. Played ball in the yard. I don't know, hop ski up.

Velma Fann:

Oh, yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

And we just played with each other. And it was a good communication then, compared to what it is now.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

I mean, we got along, play ball, go outside. I had four brothers under me, so I played with the boys most of the time. But, we didn't do a lot of entertainment, because we had this called camp meeting different churches like Red Spring Camp meetings. And then, it was a Steel Hill camp meeting, that was big. And then, the other one. It was just different churches had camp meetings and we would go and that's where we'd meet up with a lot of people. And they had sold things, have the little tents up to sell fish and apples. Just a lot of things going on.

Velma Fann:

A lot of fun things?

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. That was one of our entertainments each year.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. I think I read something about the Redding Spring, that was pretty... Redding could get big. Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. And it's not there anymore.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. So the area where that campground was, is that developed now?

Estelle Coffey:

It has developed. And, it's not owned by blacks anymore. It's white folks there.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. So that used to be a black community?

Estelle Coffey:

Black community. And they had tents, the same way it was at Steel Hill, you had your tents and people would go and stay there for about a week, move in, and that's how they would entertain.

Velma Fann:

So they would go to the camp for a week and just participate in whatever was going on?

Estelle Coffey:

Right. That's what they would do. And that was fun. We didn't have a tent, but a lot of people did. And you'd go there, and they had their beds, and there's different things.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right. What work did the women do out here?

Estelle Coffey:

The women, back in my day, they were cleaning houses, working for white folks. When holidays and things come, she would go and work for the white folks.

Velma Fann:

Uh-huh.

Estelle Coffey:

And then, when they have food left over, they would give it to us. They would help raise the white children, that's what they did.

Velma Fann:

And the men? What work did they-

Estelle Coffey:

The men, my dad was a truck driver.

Velma Fann:

... Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Because I thought he was the best truck driver in the world. I didn't realize other folks would drive trucks too. But my daddy was a truck driver. And he drove trucks. Not out like they doing now, but he would just drive trucks and stuff.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Okay. And your mom, she worked in other people's homes. I understand that.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. When they weren't working in the field, that's what she would do.

Velma Fann:

I heard a lot about 4th of July celebrations and baseball. Can you share something about that?

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah. Now that's what was going down at the old Waxhaw School. That would be a big event. I mean, that's where you meet up with a lot of people. That's where you buy your new clothes to wear down there, dress up. You go to the 4th of July down in Waxhaw, but that's not anymore.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. And I hear the Waxhaw Church and Community Center, that's not anymore.

Estelle Coffey:

That's not anymore.

Velma Fann:

Uh-huh. What was going on there in its heyday?

Estelle Coffey:

Well, they would get together maybe once a year or sometime and just entertain. But see now, with the iPads and all that other stuff, it just took over. And, children's don't know how to communicate with each other anymore. They don't know the meaning of being... And see, when

our grandparents would come around, we cherished them. We sat down and talked to them. I mean, but grandparents, it's not anymore. It's not anymore.

Velma Fann:

Not like the old grandparents. That is true.

Estelle Coffey:

No.

Velma Fann:

Have you been here all your life or did you-

Estelle Coffey:

All my life.

Velma Fann:

... Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

I've been in the Waxhaw area. Haven't been anywhere else. And one of the reasons I didn't want to move because I like going. And I thought I might get out there in the fast world, and that was not good for me.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

So I stayed out so I didn't get caught up.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

That was in my mind, because knowing me, I'd be going this place, going... I love to travel.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But, I didn't want to get in the fast lane.

Velma Fann:

Okay, I understand that.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

What were the community norms like here? Were people looking after other people's children?

Estelle Coffey:

Yes. Uh-huh. Because my neighbors, I had a neighbor across the street, they redid that house, I don't like it, but they didn't ask my opinion. Then, all of my neighbors, that we looked out for each other, they're gone.

Velma Fann:

Oh, yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

Where I used to walk up and down my driveway. I don't know people going up and down the road now.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

And see, with me, being like I am, they could be sweet to me, but still, I'm just afraid of them, to be honest with you.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

So I just stay here and look at them, walk up and down the road.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. But when you were growing up, it was different, wasn't it?

Estelle Coffey:

When I was growing up, it was different than when I first moved here. Because I would've been on this land 50, 62 years. I've been in this area 62 years. And, this house only been here 11, for 12 years.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

And, that's how long I've been in this area.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. And how I can do it, I moved when I was pregnant with my third child, and that's how I can keep up with it.

Velma Fann:

Looking back, who were some of the community leaders?

Estelle Coffey:

Who were some of the community leaders? You mean the names?

Velma Fann:

The names or places. Maybe school teachers or some-

Estelle Coffey:

Right. It was the Massey. What is his name? He was on the school board that was real big back then.

Velma Fann:

... Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

That was, what was his name? He was a Massey.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. I've heard the Massey name was pretty prominent. Yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

I can't think of... What was his name. And then, Jim Russian was a leader in the community. And, Rich Hood, he was an older man that did concrete and stuff like that. And after him, then my ex and then his cousin, other people branched out from him and did their own little cement. They had their cement business.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. And who else? I believe in this area... And then, Roscoe Hood was a school teacher and he was from Waxhaw, in the Waxhaw area, but he taught at Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Oh, wow. Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But, Roscoe Hood, he was really good. And then, who else? And then, we had another teacher, Margaret Glenn, because she taught in the Marshall area, but she was a teacher from this area.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

So did you go to Waxhaw often? Maybe to shop or to go to the big city.

Estelle Coffey:

Well, I would go to Waxhaw... Now, it's more in Waxhaw to go to than it was back then. Back then, it wasn't anything to go to. You just go to Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But, right now, I think it's a lot. And I haven't been going since I've cut it out. But it wasn't much to go to in Waxhaw, like that movie, that was good. But see, as children's in the country, we didn't go to that. I mean, we wasn't out, like the children's in Waxhaw would just walk down to the movie. We couldn't do that.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. What would you like people to know about African-Americans living here?

Estelle Coffey:

Well, I would like for them to know that it's a good place to live. And I wouldn't know the difference, because I haven't been nowhere else. And I like being in the country life.

Velma Fann:

Uh-huh.

Estelle Coffey:

I'm not sure about what they're getting ready to do out here now.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

But, I like it to myself. And I think it's a good place to raise your children.

Velma Fann:

Good.

Estelle Coffey:

It was back then. But now, I'm not sure about right now, because they're building everywhere, everywhere. I mean, I'm looking at it, it was just trees out there, now it's nothing.

Velma Fann:

Yeah, they're cutting them down. How have race relations changed over time?

Estelle Coffey:

It has been a change with race relations, because when my children's was coming up, they were good with the other race. But now, it's better than it's been. You'll see black and whites together like nothing. So it's better than it was, because back in the day, it wasn't, but just the very few. Now when my daughter, who is 66 now, she was a cheerleader, and the children would come home and they would... I mean, they just got along good.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But, now it's better than it was then because, it's just like some of it don't matter. Just don't matter.

Velma Fann:

And then, when you were a child, how were race relations?

Estelle Coffey:

It wasn't around many of them. Maybe every now and then, I remember playing with... Having one little white friend, but it wasn't a lot, because back in the day, that's when the white was riding the school bus and we were walking.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

We used to walk to school, they were riding the bus. And then, we'd throw rocks at the bus. But, that's a change that happened, because, can you imagine? And then, it used to be where the white could go inside and buy their food, but the blacks had to go around to a window and get theirs. So that's not anymore.

Velma Fann:

Uh-huh. And that was mostly in the city?

Estelle Coffey:

That was in Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Monroe.

Estelle Coffey:

That was in Monroe, because they probably didn't have nothing like that in Waxhaw. And if they did, that's how they operate.

Velma Fann:

So did you go to Monroe often? That was the big city to go to?

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah, that was the place to go to do the shopping and everything.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Because at that point, it wasn't nothing much in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

It wasn't a whole lot in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Did you ever go to Charlotte or was that too far?

Estelle Coffey:

No, we used to go to Charlotte.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

And, Charlotte is so different now. I mean, we used to go to places. We used to go to places. That's where you go to buy your shoes, and get your nice clothes and stuff. But now, it's just, you can't go to Charlotte. You go to Charlotte, you get lost.

Velma Fann:

Too big, too busy?

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

Oh, man.

Estelle Coffey:

So that's where it was.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Anything else you'd like to tell us about what was going on here? I know country living must've been different than being in Monroe. I wanted to ask you, the civil rights struggle, particularly in Monroe, are you familiar with that? Did you hear about it?

Estelle Coffey:

I heard about it. But, I was not a part of it. But I did hear about it. Rob Williams had to get out of Monroe. And so, he stayed out of Monroe for a long time. And then, we was working, and the day he come back into Monroe, it was like all the lights went out. I don't know what that was.

Velma Fann:

What?

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. But then, he made it back to Monroe. And, I don't know yet how he got out of Monroe, but he did. Somebody got him out of Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. And then, they marched around a pool upon a golf court in Monroe. And I know some people that was in it, but I wasn't.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. So it was pretty quiet on this side, you think?

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

On this end, it was much quieter than Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Now, what other communities were black communities? Little small town names in this area?

Estelle Coffey:

Well, it was just Waxhaw and Monroe. It was Waxhaw and Monroe when I was coming up. I don't know of any other.

Velma Fann:

They mentioned Indian something.

Estelle Coffey:

Indian Land.

Velma Fann:

Indian Land?

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah. Well see, I wasn't familiar with Indian Land.

Velma Fann:

Okay, that's on the other end for you.

Estelle Coffey:

Right.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

I wasn't familiar with Indian Land and Wesley Chapel, because most of that was whites.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Back in the day, it was no black.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. Did this community have its own name? Or just the country part of Waxhaw?

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah, this is Western Union.

Velma Fann:

Western Union, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah, this is the Western Union area. And then, they do have Marvin. I'm sure you had a Marvin up in that area. A group of white and blacks up there. And then, Indian Trail is mostly white. It's not a whole lot of black.

Velma Fann:

When the schools integrated, now were your children going to those schools at the beginning of desegregation?

Estelle Coffey:

They were. Because I know when they integrated, that's when the school in Mineral Spring. And, my daughter was in the sixth grade, and she was the only black in that classroom. And then, I asked her, I said, "Well, how you feel being in a classroom with all whites?" She said, "Well, I just have to learn." I mean, it didn't bother her.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

But, that was the one that 62, when she was in the sixth grade.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

Then, that's when they integrated.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

People also talked about, what they call, a split school term, where you had to work in the fields at some point and go to school. Did you experience any of that?

Estelle Coffey:

I did. Yeah, you go to school, then they let you out so you can work the farm, then they go back. And then, they just started fixing it where it would be straight through.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah, I remember that.

Velma Fann:

So did you like the split or the straight through better?

Estelle Coffey:

The straight better.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

I didn't ever like working in the field.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

Number one, I didn't like it because... At a young age, I know it wasn't fair how the white man was doing, because he was getting everything.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But then, at that point, you couldn't tell our parents that, because they thought that was good. But I knew back then it wasn't good.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

They were taking everything. But, to them, they were helping them. But they wasn't.

Velma Fann:

Right.

Estelle Coffey:

And I never liked working in the field. I never like working outside right now. I don't like it. My daughter, she puts flowers and things around, but I just don't like it.

Velma Fann:

Did your parents talk to you about what their lives were like growing up here?

Estelle Coffey:

They didn't, because back then parents didn't talk to children's like they do. Parents talked to each other, but they didn't talk to children.

Velma Fann:

Just children.

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm. They just kept them clean and fed. And as far as talking about things, they didn't ever do that. Not a whole lot. Mine did.

Velma Fann:

So when things were going on in Monroe, particularly the civil rights, did the churches talk about anything here, or register people to vote, or anything like that?

Estelle Coffey:

I did register people. And I did work at the poll for about 30 years.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

Not registering. People worked at the poll when it was open. But yeah, they would go around and get people to vote, taking them to the polls and so forth. That was a big thing. But they did do that.

Velma Fann:

Was that easy? Getting people to vote to register?

Estelle Coffey:

Some of it was, and some of it wasn't. But, some of them just didn't think it was necessary, but it was important. So you had to teach them. Tell them how important it is to register and vote.

Velma Fann:

Well, tell me about the work you do now, the ECU, EUC?

Estelle Coffey:

The Extension and Community Association.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Estelle Coffey:

That's a home demonstration that back in the day when I started, they was teaching you how to cook, and can, and all that stuff. But now, it's more or less a political thing. Everything's on computer. And, it's not like it used to be. And the younger people are not participating in it, because they have their children's in different things. Back then, we didn't have a lot going on.

Velma Fann:

Right.

Estelle Coffey:

But they have a lot going on with children's. And, it's hard to get them to come in and be a member of the Extension and Community Association.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. Is farming still big in this area?

Estelle Coffey:

No. Mm-mm. What's really big in the area now is yard work. Lot of people have their own business in cutting yard.

Velma Fann:

Landscaping and all of that?

Estelle Coffey:

Landscaping. Not anything else.

Velma Fann:

Is there anything else you'd like to add or share?

Estelle Coffey:

I'm trying to think of... I enjoyed going to ball games. I enjoyed making sure that my children... I knew what my children were doing at all time when they were growing up. But now, some people just put their children out there and don't care whether they work with them or not. But you have to teach them. And if you don't teach them, then they're going to try teaching you.

Velma Fann:

I noticed there's a school up the street, right?

Estelle Coffey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

Yeah. It used to be a black school, but it's all white now. That's where Western Union come from. Up in the Marvin area. And they moved down here.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So you've seen some changes, huh?

Estelle Coffey:

I've seen a lot of changes. So it was a high school, now it's a elementary school, so it's been a lot of changes.

Velma Fann:

Very good. Well, I thank you for taking time to talk with me.

Estelle Coffey:

You are welcome. I hope I shared enough with you.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Well, we're going to pull some things out. People do talk about the Western Union, the school, and they always talk about Waxhaw Elementary School.

Estelle Coffey:

Right. That's right.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. That must've been really, really-

Estelle Coffey:

And, Waxhaw had elementary, Mill Spring had elementary.

Velma Fann:

... Mm-hmm.

Estelle Coffey:

And then, Marvin had an elementary, but then they all band together to go win with the white folk.

Velma Fann:

So how was school when you were younger?

Estelle Coffey:

School was good. Much better than it is now, because back in that day, they wanted you to go to the board and write stuff. Now, children can't write cursive.

Velma Fann:

That's very true.

Estelle Coffey:

That's sad. They don't know how. I was taking my granddaughter to school. And I wrote something down for her to tell my sister. She looked at me so innocent saying, "Grandma, I can't

read cursive." And she's in seventh grade. Well, why they not teaching them? Back then, they taught us. Now, they let the computers, and these iPads, and all that, which that may be good, but it's not helping the children. To me, it's not.

Velma Fann:

I remember the green notebooks that we had and had to learn how to make your capital letters.

Estelle Coffey:

Exactly.

Velma Fann:

Your small cursive writing. Yeah, yeah.

Estelle Coffey:

But now, they just don't do anything. So it make a big difference.

Velma Fann:

What's the bright hope for the future? You have grandchildren, you have great-grands or just grandchildren?

Estelle Coffey:

I have one great-grand and another one on the way in July.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Estelle Coffey:

But, hopefully, they realize grandparents are important. And they'll spend more time with them so they can learn what's going on, rather than using their iPads to pull up stuff. And they really need to know more about the future. But, I don't know.

Velma Fann:

There's a lot of wisdom with age.

Estelle Coffey:

It is. And they don't appreciate it now. They don't appreciate it like they used to.

Velma Fann:

They will. One day they'll say, "Oh, my grandmother told me something like that."

Estelle Coffey:

"Why didn't I listen?"

Velma Fann:

"Why didn't I listen?"

Estelle Coffey:

"Why didn't I listen?" That's what they're going to say.

Velma Fann:

Well, thank you so much for your time.

Estelle Coffey:

Oh, you are welcome. And so, how much longer are you going to be here?

Velma Fann:

We'll be here until Thursday and leaving on Friday.

Mrs. Rosa Covington and Ms. Reba Covington

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on July 3, 2025, Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is July 3, 2025, and I am speaking with Ms. Rosa Covington and Ms. Riva Covington for the Waxhaw African-American History Project. Welcome ladies.

Riva Covington:

Thank you.

Rosa Covington:

Thank you.

Velma Fann:

So Much. So Ms. Rosa, may I call you that?

Rosa Covington:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay, thank you. Ms. Rosa, could you state your full name and spell it for us?

Rosa Covington:

Okay. Rosa, R-O-S-A, Cherry, C-H-E-R-R-Y, Covington, C-O-V-I-N-G-T-O-N.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And your date of birth and your age, if you don't mind.

Rosa Covington:

Okay. September 16th, 1934. And I just had my 90th birthday.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. God is good. Ms. Rosa, are you a native of Waxhaw?

Rosa Covington:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Were your parents born there as well?

Rosa Covington:

My mom was, but my dad was born in South Carolina.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And when you were growing up, what were the boundaries of the African-American community? Where did we live?

Rosa Covington:

We lived on Wellington Road in Waxhaw, North Carolina, 28173.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And also when we talk about our community in general, where were we located?

Rosa Covington:

We were located on Marvin. I guess at that time we were calling it Route 16 in Waxhaw, North Carolina.

Velma Fann:

Route 16, okay. Were we ever living in the city proper?

Rosa Covington:

No. We were sharecroppers.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Aha. And for the most of us in the community were African-Americans in Waxhaw proper that you can remember.

Rosa Covington:

Repeat that.

Velma Fann:

Were any African-Americans actually living in Waxhaw proper?

Rosa Covington:

Oh, yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right. The community that you grew up in, could you describe it to us. What were the houses like? Did people have gardens, things of that nature.

Rosa Covington:

We were farmers. We grew cotton and we were known as sharecroppers. We did all the work and they collected the money.

Velma Fann:

Wow. That's something. And how large was your family?

Riva Covington:

I was going to interject and tell her about the living conditions you used to tell me about the holes and the newspaper and covering up the holes. Talk about that. And granddad raising all the animals.

Rosa Covington:

Well, being in, we were called sharecroppers [inaudible 00:03:19] we raised cotton. And I can remember one year that my dad decided he was going to do grow tobacco, and I begged and begged not to try because he didn't know anything about it. He said, "Oh no, we going to do this." But it was a waste. And I always remember that we worked like little Trojans, but we got nothing for the tobacco because daddy didn't do it right.

Velma Fann:

Oh my goodness.

Rosa Covington:

So we were cotton growers. And I can remember we were right on Providence Road and one year we had so much grass, everybody would ride by and say "Snakes, snakes." And we were out there working, trying to get the grass out.

Velma Fann:

Oh my goodness.

Riva Covington:

So what was the house like, the living conditions?

Rosa Covington:

Well, I can remember my mom sometimes tacking newspapers to keep the wind out when it was cold. And I always hated when it was my time to get up and start the fire because it was cold and it was something else. And it so happens that I'm the oldest girl in the family. So my mom, when she got pregnant, I had to do the washing. The first washing I did, she went out and checked it out and I had to take everything off the line and wash it all over. At that time, we had to rub board and I had to take everything off the line and wash it all over. Guess what? That was the last time I hung anything out that wasn't absolutely clean.

Velma Fann:

So she made you do it again, huh?

Rosa Covington:

Yep. That was the only time though, that taught me a lesson.

Velma Fann:

Now, how large was your family? You were the oldest girl. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Rosa Covington:

It was 12 of us. 10 girls, two boys.

Velma Fann:

That was quite a household, all those women.

Rosa Covington:

Yes, yes. And each time my mom got pregnant, she was sick. And I would say, oh Lord, another cherry. And that meant I had to do the work. I had to do the housework, and it was so funny. I was probably pretty much the one that... I always got sent to everybody that was sick. I had to go and take care of them until things got better. And I think that's where all my experience, I think that's why I really got into the medical field.

Velma Fann:

Okay. The medical field, tell us what your occupation was.

Rosa Covington:

Okay. I was a med tech and I started out working for the coroner for Mecklenburg County. He took a liking to me for some reason, I keep trying to place it all together. I had a degree in business, but he said, "You know, I think he would be awesome in the medical field." He said, "Okay, I'm going to train you." So he did. He took me under his wings and trained me and taught me. In fact, I used to do autopsies, and it was amazing because it ended up being a fabulous career for me, because I ended up working for a Good Samaritan Hospital and all the black hospitals in the area, I don't think we have any black hospitals anymore. And we used to be run by the state. So that's how I got started into it. So that was a beautiful start for me, and I loved it.

The only thing I asked him that I didn't want to do, I didn't want to help to do autopsies on babies, no drownings.

Velma Fann:

That's very interesting. Ms. Rosa, tell me about the schools that you attended in Waxhaw.

Rosa Covington:

I attended Marvin Elementary and Western Union High School.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And I've heard a little bit about Western Union. Can you tell me something about that?

Rosa Covington:

Well, let me start with my elementary. We had no electricity. Well, we had electricity, but we had to go in. The guys would always have to go in and start the fires for us in the wintertime. And after Marvin, we went up to Western Union, which was up the street. It's torn down, it's been down now. They've torn it down, but after I went up to high school, we finally got buses and they were all handout buses after the white kids had used them, and we would always be laughing because we could always see the road, the concrete, when we were on our way driving in those youth buses. I was in the 12th grade when I got a book that somebody's name, the white kids had written in them. So it was tough there. But my principal was Principal Brown, and they did a terrific job on training us. In fact, his wife taught me my elementary school days. So it was fast. And they really did do a good job teaching us. I will always remember all the beautiful things. In fact, I was able to skip seventh grade and I thought, wow, this is horrible. I'm going to miss so much. But it did turn out all because I was always so malby and easy to learn because God has always been with me, and I could always, 'Oh wow. He's so tremendous.' And he made a big difference in my whole life.

Velma Fann:

Wow. So Principal Brown and his wife, they were residents of the Waxhaw area, right?

Rosa Covington:

No, no, they lived in Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Rosa Covington:

They lived in Monroe and came in to teach, and it was so funny. His wife was in the music. She was really, really good. And she taught us everything about the music departments while we were still really, really young.

Velma Fann:

Did you know anything about the Rosenwald School in Waxhaw?

Rosa Covington:

The what school?

Velma Fann:

The Rosenwald School, the old school near the cemetery, the Eastside Cemetery. Ms. Riva, did you know anything about that old school?

Riva Covington:

No, I hadn't heard of that one.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Rosa Covington:

Was that the Marvin School? It's across the street. Do you know where the Marvin AME Zion Church is? It was across on the other side where there homes now.

Velma Fann:

And where they played baseball.

Rosa Covington:

You know what? I don't remember us playing baseball.

Velma Fann:

4th of July, everybody played baseball somewhere.

Rosa Covington:

Okay. And I'm not remembering that.

Riva Covington:

I'm thinking, was that near Park Road High School? I don't remember that.

Velma Fann:

Okay. We can come back to that. Ms. Rosa, you mentioned your faith. What church did you attend?

Rosa Covington:

Marvin. Marvin AME Zion Church. But let me explain this. My dad was Baptist. He went to Silver Mouth Baptist Church. My mom was Marvin, at AME Zion Church. We went there. One Sunday we might go to dad's church, and one Sunday we might go there. And at one time, Redding Springs and Marvin were connected really. Because the pastor preached at Marvin one Sunday and Redding Springs the next Sunday. So my background was Baptist and Methodist.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Okay. I understand that. And your church is still standing, is that correct?

Rosa Covington:

Yes. Well, the old church is on...Crane Road

Riva Covington:

Crane Road, Newtown.

Rosa Covington:

On Crane Road.

Riva Covington:

Newtown Road

Rosa Covington:

And now we at...

Riva Covington:

Backwards, the old church is on Newtown.

Rosa Covington:

Right. The old church is on Newtown and now we on Marvin Road.

Riva Covington:

No, the Marvin AME Zion is on Crane Road now.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right.

Riva Covington:

1525 Crane Road.

Velma Fann:

Good. We've got that. We were talking, I'm wanted to go back if I could, about the Rosenwald School. I think it was the site of the Waxhaw Elementary School.

Rosa Covington:

Okay. It could have been. It could have changed the name. Yeah. Oh, the Western Union. That's probably what happened. Because Marvin Elementary was down the street from the high school. So that's probably what that was.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So when you go back and think about growing up, what kind of work did the men in the community do?

Rosa Covington:

Most of the men in our community were sharecroppers. Now we had families that owned in the back of us, right where we were, we were mostly sharecroppers.

Velma Fann:

Okay. I hear a lot about men who were masons who could build their own homes and brick masons. Did you know any people like that?

Rosa Covington:

Well, you know what, we were really fortunate. One of our teachers at Western Union, they trained our young men different things like working on cars, building houses. I remember one of our instructors, Mr. Wilson, they always taught our young men how to do things like that.

Velma Fann:

Those are valuable.

Rosa Covington:

That was a blessing.

Velma Fann:

Now what years were you attending your middle school? Well, your elementary school and your middle school and your high school. What years were you in those schools?

Rosa Covington:

Oh, Lord. I finished in '54. I did skip one grade seven, so we can count back. Riva get a pen right quick count back to my elementary.

Velma Fann:

But you finished your high school in '54?

Rosa Covington:

Yeah. I'm sorry, '52.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Riva Covington:

So you were 18 when you finished?

Rosa Covington:

Yep.

Riva Covington:

Okay.

Rosa Covington:

Well, I was 18 that particular year, right.

Velma Fann:

And all that was before Brown vs. Board of Education.

Rosa Covington:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

So it was purely segregated.

Rosa Covington:

Yes. I remember my first school book, I was in the 12th grade when I received the first one that somebody's name, the white kids would hand it down to us.

Velma Fann:

How did that make you feel?

Rosa Covington:

Well you know then I guess we just enjoyed what we had, and our teachers did such a tremendous job with us because I remember in even my elementary school, Ms. Brown taught us all music. We were really blessed and didn't realize how much we were blessed.

Velma Fann:

And I often hear that the teachers, just throughout that whole experience for us, the teachers took what they had and made sure we learned.

Rosa Covington:

Right.

Velma Fann:

No excuses.

Rosa Covington:

No excuses. In fact, when I skipped the seventh grade, I wondered, said, "What in the world am I losing?" But I did all right. God has really blessed me.

Velma Fann:

What did you do in Waxhaw for fun as a child and then as a teenager?

Rosa Covington:

Well, as a teenager, I played basketball. I've sort of always been sort of active in sports. And I'll tell you this one before I forget it. I went out on a professional bowling tour and Riva was really small and I had to give that up. I said, I can't have my child sitting there looking at me and trying to love on me, and I'm trying to get a ball down the lane. Oh dear.

Velma Fann:

So where did you learn, well bowling?

Rosa Covington:

Well, you know what? I learned it in high school. Let me tell you the funny thing, that was when girls could only go half court, we couldn't run the whole court. The four of us had to stay on one side and the guards on the other.

Riva Covington:

She's talking about basketball now.

Velma Fann:

Yes, she is. I can tell. So this was at which school again?

Rosa Covington:

At Marvin. Marvin Elementary.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Started it young. Now, when did you learn to bowl?

Rosa Covington:

Oh, I did that after... I think I really started to do that when I moved in the Washington area and I went out and Love Bolder. And when Riva came, I had to give it up because I could... The first time I went out on the Boulders to, Riva was in a bassinet and hollering and crying and want me to take her. So I said, this is not for me. I got to give this up.

Velma Fann:

You got to do that.

Rosa Covington:

But at one time, I was really, really good because at one time I held the high scratch score at the tournament in Virginia.

Velma Fann:

Oh. Okay. It sounds like you may have left and went somewhere else and came back, or did you always stay in Waxhaw?

Rosa Covington:

After Waxhaw, we moved into the Wellington area, and then we moved down to Union County, and that's where I graduated high school. And after that I moved into Washington.

Velma Fann:

Washington D.C.?

Rosa Covington:

Right.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right then.

Riva Covington:

And Velma can I interject? I wanted mom to really paint a picture of when they were growing up in terms of the rural part of them raising all of their foods and crops and what they had to do, killing the chickens on their own and all that. I wanted her to paint that picture for you. So mama, talk about that and talk about Uncle John M and what with the chicken. But yeah, just talk about granddaddy and all the animals that he raised, okay.

Rosa Covington:

Yeah. Well, I don't know. I guess I was sort of a tom girl and my oldest brother, he was always so lazy and I always had to help him do his work. And we had an incident where he sat down and I was cutting the wood and I cut off a finger. And my dad, he was yelling and carried on, but he said, "It's not your fault. He should not have you out here doing his work." Now, that was my older brother and I didn't get a whipping, but after all that happened, I cut the tip in off his finger, and after that, he would always haunt me about that finger. That was one thing, but we lived on the farm farming and it was so funny. Do you know anything about our county?

Velma Fann:

I don't know that much about it. No, ma'am.

Rosa Covington:

Okay. Well, we lived off of Wellington Road, and it was so funny. My dad always wanted to do something different. So we had begged him not to do the tobacco thing, and he decided he was going to do it, anyway. He worked that much off, and I tell you, I don't think we got enough to maybe feed or clothe us for a month off of that work he made us do. But it was amazing growing up, picking cotton. And one year we had cotton on Providence Road and we had so much grass, folks would come by and eat as how are the snakes, snakes.

Riva Covington:

[inaudible 00:22:55]. Well, as a child with me visiting Waxhaw and my grandparents, my grandfather basically raised all that they ate. He had hogs, of course cows, chickens, and he had a mule, horses. And of course about a half an acre of vegetation of garden where they grew corn and watermelons, you name it, green beans, cabbage, all of that.

Velma Fann:

Wow.

Riva Covington:

So when we would visit North Carolina, that's where I got my experience in farming. And he taught me how to milk a cow. And he was very strong with me. And he said, "Make sure you grab her right, because if you don't, she'll kick you." I can recall that they basically raged their food.

Rosa Covington:

Yeah. Chickens, hogs, everything. Every Thanksgiving, we knew we had to kill our hogs and hang the meat. Now I just miss the smell of ham. You used to know when your neighbors were cooking ham, that's how the scent would go. But now you don't even know you're cooking ham.

Velma Fann:

Must be something different about that hog man these days.

Rosa Covington:

Yeah, but you know it is.

Riva Covington:

They made us almond butter. They churned their own butter, all that, all that.

Velma Fann:

That's something.

Rosa Covington:

Well, out of 12 of us, what do they have to do?

Velma Fann:

Right. That's enough. They had enough hands, all hands on deck.

Rosa Covington:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

I'm going to call off the names of a couple of places, and you can let me know if you know about them or visited them. They talked about a movie theater on South Main Street where we had to go upstairs if we wanted to see the movies. Did you ever attend the movie theater?

Rosa Covington:

You know what, I didn't but somebody in that area when with the screws, I'm trying to remember his name, my gosh. Because we were in always in the Waxhaw area area. And of course, my dad didn't start driving until I was thinking I was in my first year in high school. We didn't have a car. My dad wasn't driving until he was really almost too old to be trying to drive. But I remember one young man, his name was Ray Williams, he used to try to get us into movie

theaters and stuff in Monroe, and they actually ended up running. He left town because it was so bad.

Velma Fann:

Wow. That's something.

Rosa Covington:

But he finally came back, but I was already out and gone about, and I didn't know that much about him because I was out and gone into another area.

Velma Fann:

There was another place, and this is in Waxhaw, Rudolph Higgins, they called it a juke joint.

Rosa Covington:

But you know what, I probably had left then. I probably had left then because I was out of school. And mom, she told me, you out of here, you going to college.

Velma Fann:

Oh, wow. What college did you attend?

Rosa Covington:

Oh, I started at Carver. Well, you probably have never heard of Carver, it was in Charlotte. And it was a night school, so I got a degree in Secretariat, but then the Coroner for Charlotte, I don't know how, and I was trying to remember, I think it was Sue, one of my relatives. He found out about me and he just thought I was going to be better in the medical field. So he asked me to come in and let him train me, but I would have to go back and get more chemistries and stuff like that. But I started out in, it was a Coroner.

Riva Covington:

And after you left that mom, where did you go, in D.C. to school?

Rosa Covington:

Oh, in DC I went, oh gosh. I went to University of Washington Catholic University, and I worked for Dr. Scott at one time. He was at Howard. I worked at Howard. I went to work at Howard after I left North Carolina. And then-

Riva Covington:

But while you were at Catholic University, what area did you study? It was chemistry, right?

Rosa Covington:

Right, it was chemistry.

Riva Covington:

And you were what, one of the first black women that got a degree from that university?

Rosa Covington:

Well, that's so much to remember, isn't it, baby?

Velma Fann:

But that's important and impressive.

Rosa Covington:

It's very important.

Velma Fann:

Yes ma'am.

Rosa Covington:

But I did most of my chemistries out of the university at Washington. But then I did other studies out of the Catholic University, and I worked at Howard. I worked at Howard. At first I started working, it was still Freeman's Hospital then, and St. Elizabeth, that was the hospital in Washington also they... Somehow, oh, I know I had put in an application and they called me and went in for an interview. So they told me they wanted me to come to work there, but they wanted me to go back and get more studies in my field.

So then I went back and told Howard what was going on. So they asked me, "How much are they paying you?" So I told them, and at Howard, I was going to be on probation for a couple of years. And so they said, "Oh no, how much they going to pay you?" So I told them, and he said, "No, we are not going to do that. You coming off of probation and we are going to give you the salary that they're going to give you." So I stayed at Howard and I ended up in research with Dr. Scott, and that was a fabulous career because I got-[to go to all the medical conventions, medical conferences].

Riva Covington:

[inaudible 00:30:37]. Talk about that mama.

Rosa Covington:

Okay. I enjoyed that, working with Dr. Scott. And then I was into research with the sickle cell area, and it was a beautiful run. But one thing I did get to go every time we had a medical convention someplace, I was always assigned to go to do the workshops and all for the university. So it was tremendous.

Riva Covington:

She's missing an important piece at Howard, and she should be in some kind of newspaper affair in their publications. But they were one of the first pioneers to do the sickle cell testing in a mobile unit where they actually went into the community in a mobile unit to test all of the African-American black folk to see if they held either the trait or the disease. This is when they were really finding out about sickle cell. So she was one of the pioneers to do that research in Washington DC.

Velma Fann:

Wow. Well, I'm going to jump in here and let you know. I'm a graduate of Howard University.

Rosa Covington:

Oh right.

Velma Fann:

So when you talked about the hospital, I remember doing my research, it was Freeman's Hospital, and as we were speaking, I looked up Dr. Scott. Was that Dr. Roland B. Scott?

Rosa Covington:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Wow.

Rosa Covington:

My, my, my.

Velma Fann:

This is an honor to speak with you.

Rosa Covington:

You know what? And I was thinking, do you know how old I am?

Velma Fann:

I don't.

Rosa Covington:

I'm 90.

Velma Fann:

Oh, yeah. Wow.

Rosa Covington:

And I was thinking about all the things that I've been into, and I used to, I was really good in phlebotomy. I have long fingers and I've always had the neck, even kids, I worked in pediatrics because of that. And I used to train some of the doctors phlebotomy at Howard. So one day I was wondering, I said, "Oh my goodness, I wonder what they're doing." Because some of them

because I remember faces, but not necessarily names. And I said, "Oh, Lord." And he reminded me, he said, most of those folks are retired now. Just think about how old you are. They are retired now, and it's hard. How could you remember all the names?

Velma Fann:

Right. Wow.

Rosa Covington:

I've had a terrific career, really?

Velma Fann:

That is really good.

Rosa Covington:

Sometimes it brings tears to my eyes to remember all the things that I went through. You heard of Good Samaritan Hospital, right? Okay, I worked there, and when they closed the hospital down, they said, "Okay, the last one hired would be have to be the first one we had let go because they were breaking down everything." So I was the last one there, and the doctors raised so much [inaudible 00:34:37]. They said, "Oh no, she's not going anywhere. She's the best thing we got in this place." And I did not have to go until they actually just about close down the hospital. But then they changed it to, they were doing nursing home type setting, and I worked for a while there. And then I got married and moved to Washington. And that's where I got tired of... When I went there. It was Freedmen's Hospital we hadn't even gotten onto to the university.

Velma Fann:

Wow.

Rosa Covington:

So you know how long that been.

Velma Fann:

And where was Good Samaritan?

Rosa Covington:

Where's the what?

Velma Fann:

Where was Good Samaritan?

Rosa Covington:

Oh, you know where the football field is?

Velma Fann:

Yes.

Rosa Covington:

We were there. They tore down the whole hospital. That's where the football field is in Charlotte.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Rosa Covington:

So you see how long that's been?

Velma Fann:

Yes. Well, this is very, very interesting. I'm going to jump back in here and call out a few more places to see if you were familiar with any of these. And a lot of these are in the city proper. Now people talk about July 4th, and that was a big day. People would come from all around and there were baseball games, local teams competing against each other. Do you remember any of that growing up?

Rosa Covington:

Well, you know what? Not so much with love. I can't remember too much like that.

Riva Covington:

I can remember one summer coming down and on Delores tickets to the ball field, and I do believe that was around 4th of July, I think in summer time. And we would all pile up and go to the ball field. So yeah, I do recollect that. But it seems like it was more towards not the city part, but towards the rural part. And I just can't recall. I know it's past White Saw Elementary going down that road between 75 and another road. But yeah, sort of towards going to the White Saw Furniture Market.

Rosa Covington:

Oh yeah.

Riva Covington:

I think we down that way. Yeah, but I do recall us going to the ball field, and that was a big thing.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Rosa Covington:

Well, by that time, Western Union School, see, when I left, it was still there. After I left, they burned that school. And they always said the Ku Klux Klan burned the school, and that was for the Black. In fact, the name I was telling you about Ray Williams, he was one of the persons that was trying to get us really Union County into Monroe. And it was a real big thing about that. And he ended up leaving. But after I left, somebody was telling me that he had come back into the area. But one thing when my high school was that when I was in high school, my gosh, our teachers, they taught the men how to work on cars. When they left high school, they basically could do their own businesses because our teachers taught them, how to build, and how to build houses, how to be mechanic and all that.

Velma Fann:

Wow. You talked about a Williams. I know there was a Robert F. Williams in the Civil Rights Movement.

Rosa Covington:

Yeah, that might be. I might have the name wrong.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Did you know him?

Rosa Covington:

He had to leave Monroe at one time, but he came back.

Velma Fann:

Right. Right. Did you ever meet him? Did you know him at all?

Rosa Covington:

No, I didn't. I didn't ever meet him.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. I know you seem like you grew up in the rural area, but if, let's say you wanted to have a special date with somebody, where would y'all go?

Rosa Covington:

Oh Lord, that's been too long. One thing, our family, we were so big, and as I was saying, how my mom did me about washing and doing this, it was... So our neighbors, my dad didn't drive until he was too old to drive, almost. And we did not do a lot because we went to his church one Sunday and then maybe to our church one Sunday. My [inaudible 00:39:44]-

Riva Covington:

Go ahead.

Rosa Covington:

My great-great-grandma was 104. My great-grandmama, she was in her eighties. And I remember my great-great-grandma. They started our church, Marvin, where we attend now. Mother was so many kids, we were sort of sheltered from some of the goings and getting around

and doing this, that and the other. I think we were a little more into home than going out. I didn't learn to bowl and I played basketball. And at that time, and you can't even imagine this, we all, the one had the court, the four of us were on one side, and the guys were on the other.

Riva Covington:

Mom, talk about you and Mr. Hubert, when you all met. How did that happen?

Rosa Covington:

You what?

Riva Covington:

Mr. Hubert. You understand? Yeah, talk about how you met him and how he courted you and where did y'all go.

Rosa Covington:

We didn't do that much going.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Rosa Covington:

We didn't do that much going., That's how I got pregnant. My mom and daddy left me at the wrong time.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Riva Covington:

All righty. But...

Rosa Covington:

Why, anybody want to tell that?

Riva Covington:

Well, I mean, did y'all go for walks? I mean what happened?

Rosa Covington:

We stopped walking and not very much walking.

Riva Covington:

Okay.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Rosa Covington:

That's about enough, but it's been an awesome ride. At 90, I got so much I can remember. Did I tell you I taught some of the medical students phlebotomy, and I was thinking about it one day and I wonder what they're doing. So my father, the good Lord, [inaudible 00:42:20] said to me, "Most of them retired. Think about how old you are."

Velma Fann:

Wow. That's something.

Rosa Covington:

And I was trying to remember, I said, "Oh, I wonder what all those..." And some of the names you might remember, and that's just so long. And I said, "Wow, wonder what are they doing?" And he reminded me, most likely they all retired.

Velma Fann:

Retired. Oh, I wanted to ask you, and there may have been one in Monroe, but a Masonic Lodge in Waxhaw.

Riva Covington:

That's where we used to hold all the banquets and birthdays mom, where they had, I think they do bingo, or they used to do bingo there a lot.

Rosa Covington:

In Waxhaw?

Velma Fann:

In West Howey Mine Road.

Rosa Covington:

Oh, okay. You turn one way and go into Monroe and the other way you go to South Crown, yeah.

Velma Fann:

Did you know any Masons or did your family know any Masons or?

Rosa Covington:

My dad was a Mason.

Velma Fann:

Was his lodge in Waxhaw?

Rosa Covington:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Does that sound about the right address, the right area?

Rosa Covington:

Yes, it is. When you're coming out of Waxhaw, in fact, do you know very much about that area?

Velma Fann:

No. People have described it an old Masonic Lodge. I think they were going to rebuild it, but they didn't finish or...

Rosa Covington:

Oh, I don't know about that.

Velma Fann:

But he was a Mason.

Rosa Covington:

He was, yeah. And you know what? When he became a Mason, I think I was away from home. So that means I wouldn't know that much about what was going on there.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Rosa Covington:

Because after I left, I was into Charlotte and then into Washington, then into Maryland. Well, it just, well, yes, I'm 90, so that's been a long time.

Velma Fann:

That's a beautiful thing. You remember a lot. And we really are grateful for that. Grateful for that.

Rosa Covington:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Is there anything else you all would like to add?

Rosa Covington:

Riva?

Riva Covington:

No, I think you did good, mom.

Velma Fann:

You did.

Rosa Covington:

Well, thank you.

Velma Fann:

All right. Well, I really appreciate it and thank you so very much.

Riva Covington:

Thank you.

Rosa Covington:

You welcome, but I enjoyed it. So when are you going to be back in the area?

Velma Fann:

I don't know. I'm trying to do maybe one more by phone, but I'm sorry we missed each other. And I do understand and my condolences to you and the family.

Rosa Covington:

Yeah. It'd been a tough one for us because she's such an angel. But I know where she's having a ball. She's having a ball because I lost a brother in, what was it, Marge Reaver? And a sister. And they were all raised together.

Riva Covington:

Yeah. They all born and raised in Waxhaw. And my sister, after high school, she went immediately into the Army and served 28 years in the Army and a retired sergeant, Major Virginia, Nancy Cherry Smith.

Velma Fann:

Terry Smith, alrighty. Well again, ladies, I appreciate your time and thank you so very much.

Riva Covington:

Thank you.

Rosa Covington:

Thank you. Thank you for caring for us and listen to all the things that went on with us.

Velma Fann:

Yes.

Rosa Covington:

We love you. And we'll be praying for you and hope you, I guess, more interviews and they can tell a little bit more than I can because as I said, when I started, I didn't get to get a school book that didn't have somebody's name in it, I was in the 12th grade.

Velma Fann:

That's something else.

Rosa Covington:

You know how long that's been? [1952]

Velma Fann:

Yes ma'am. Thank you again.

Rosa Covington:

Thank you so much.

Riva Covington:

Oh thank you.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Riva Covington:

All right.

Velma Fann:

Bye-bye.

Riva Covington:

Bye-bye.

Rosa Covington:

Bye-bye.

Mrs. Mildred Culp and Mrs. Gypsy Houston

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 5, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and today is June 5th, 2025. And I am speaking with Mrs. Mildred Culp and Mrs. Gypsy Hudson.

Gypsy Houston:

Houston.

Velma Fann:

Houston. Thank you. For the Waxhaw African-American History Project. And welcome.

Gypsy Houston:

Hi.

Velma Fann:

Ladies, would you say your name and spell it for me? I'll start with you. Mrs. Culp.

Mildred Culp:

Mildred Culp. M-I-L-D-R-E-D C-U-L-P.

Velma Fann:

Date of birth?

Mildred Culp:

December 30th, 1945.

Velma Fann:

And age at this time?

Mildred Culp:

79.

Velma Fann:

All right. Gypsy?

Gypsy Houston:

Gypsy Culp Houston. That's Gypsy, G-Y-P-S-Y, Culp, C-U-L-P, Houston, H-O-U-S-T-O-N.

Date of birth. July 3rd, 1976.

Velma Fann:

Thank you, and welcome again ladies.

Mildred Culp:

Thank you.

Velma Fann:

We want to just start, and I'm not sure ... You can jump in, Gypsy, as you need to.

Mrs. Culp. Are you native of Waxhaw?

Mildred Culp:

Pretty much, yes.

Velma Fann:

What about your parents? Have y'all been here a long time? Your family?

Mildred Culp:

Yes. My mother was born near the South Carolina line somewhere [inaudible 00:01:27]. And my dad ... I'm not sure who he was over, but he's a native. He's been here.

I forgot what else you asked me.

Gypsy Houston:

Both of them. She was raised in Waxhaw, and my grandfather was raised in Waxhaw. Her mom was raised, like she said, at the South Carolina line but on the other side. Right, Mom?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

When we talk about the African-American community, what are the boundaries? Where were the communities?

Mildred Culp:

Where I lived, they now call it ... Where I was raised up starting out, they now called it Sandy Ridge community. That's what we called it. I was there for some years. And when I was in the first grade, I think, first grade, probably, we moved up to where we call now Waxhaw, all the way into Waxhaw, and I've just been in that area ever since.

Gypsy Houston:

We did leave out where ... You weren't actually born here?

Mildred Culp:

We didn't. I came here ... I can't remember. I think I might've been about six months old or something. I moved here from Boston, Massachusetts. My parents had lived there, had moved there and worked there for a while, and then they decided to move back to Waxhaw. I've been here ever since.

Velma Fann:

Do you know why they came back?

Mildred Culp:

Not really. At that time, from what I can understand, is if you had a certain amount of children, and you were in the Army or-

Gypsy Houston:

He was in the Navy.

Mildred Culp:

Huh?

Gypsy Houston:

Gramps was in the Navy.

Mildred Culp:

He was in the Navy. If you were in the services, if you had so many children, you could come out. They let you out. What was I? One, two, three. The fourth child?

Gypsy Houston:

The fourth living child. You were the fifth child.

Mildred Culp:

I was the fifth child. The fourth living one. He was able to get out of the Navy. And when they got out, they moved back home to Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Just wanted to come back home?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah, they come back home. And that's basically all I know about that part.

Gypsy Houston:

He had other siblings that did not come back. They stayed because it was a ... I don't know if they went as a group, but several of my grandmother's siblings went up, and my grandfather's

siblings went up. They're the only ones that came back. Right, Mom? Your parents are the only ones that moved back?

Mildred Culp:

Right. Then. Later, my dad had a brother that moved back. Well, he was in the service, too, at that time, and he moved back home after so many years.

Velma Fann:

Do you know why they left Waxhaw and moved north?

Mildred Culp:

Well, I think they thought they could get better jobs and better opportunities there. I think my dad worked at something like a shipyard or something. And you made more money. And I guess you got to see different things. I didn't ask a lot of questions when I was younger, but I know that's part of it because they got better jobs. And they seemed like they thought they had better opportunities.

Velma Fann:

Right. Can you describe your house and your community here when you were growing up? What was it like?

Mildred Culp:

When I was growing up. The nearest I can remember when we lived, like I said, down in that Sandy Ridge community. Our house, we didn't have ... We had kerosene lamps and stuff. No bathroom in the house. We had outside house. And it was just a ...

We didn't have all the conveniences. Wood stove and that kind of thing. And I can't remember exactly when that was changed, but after we moved out of that community, we moved up into Waxhaw area, and we did have lights. We had-

Gypsy Houston:

Electricity.

Mildred Culp:

Hmm?

Gypsy Houston:

Electricity.

Mildred Culp:

Electricity. And it was a little better. I guess each year got a little better. A little better. Not a whole big improvement but better. We didn't have ... When we moved up there, we had outside bathrooms. Still had outside. We didn't have an inside bathroom and something like that. I think my dad had a house built in 1960. I believe it was '60. And then of course they had the bathroom and the lights. And still not like a lot of people, but it was better for us. You knew you had running water and that kind of thing and lights, which was something that a lot of people didn't have. Most people didn't have TVs and stuff. And we had TVs. Different things like that. Electrical stuff, which we was not used to, which took a while.

Gypsy Houston:

At the house, the house now, or the second house? Which one?

Mildred Culp:

The second one.

Gypsy Houston:

When you moved from Sandy Ridge to-

Mildred Culp:

To Waxhaw. When we first moved to Waxhaw, we had electricity-

Gypsy Houston:

You did have electricity? That was a big thing.

Mildred Culp:

... [inaudible 00:07:37] kind of stuff, which was convenient considering what we had had. Of course, a lot of other people had those things. We just was not-

Gypsy Houston:

Some people did, and some people didn't.

Mildred Culp:

Some people did, and some people didn't. My dad worked on the railroad, got a job on the railroad, and things started to improve some.

Before that, he did construction work when he came back here, which we didn't make very much money doing construction work. But after he left construction, he worked on the railroad on the rails and stuff, that kind of road motorcar and stuff. And then he started to, like I say, make a little bit more money. And, to us, it seemed like he made a lot more, but we know that it was not a whole lot more, but it was better for us as a ... Before we moved to all the way in Waxhaw, I called in the city limits of Waxhaw, when I was first grade and stuff, I had to walk to school from Sandy Ridge, which was ... How far is that?

Gypsy Houston:

I'm not sure, but it was ... Sandy Ridge is ... She lived on Waxhaw, Marvin Road.

Mildred Culp:

We had to walk a distance, I would say. No school buses picked us up or anything. My siblings were ... I had two older sisters and a brother. The brother did not live with us. He lived with my grandparent. The two older sisters and I had to walk up from Sandy Ridge to Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

That sounds like quite a walk. It sounds-

Mildred Culp:

It was quite a walk.

Gypsy Houston:

It's a decent walk, just thinking about it.

Mildred Culp:

It was a walk. I wouldn't want to do it now, but we walked, and we survived it. Of course, we did.

When we moved to Waxhaw, I was considerably closer to the school. And it was quite a difference. I'll tell you that. But I was little, and they just pulled me along. I was a tag-along. And I pretty much can't remember a whole lot about that walking to school. But it would be several people ... Several families in that area that walked to school. Of course, you had to fight the kids that you walked ... You fall out with the kids, and everybody's fighting and all that kind of stuff. But like I said, we survived. And I was glad when we didn't have to do that anymore.

Velma Fann:

Now, what schools did you go to?

Mildred Culp:

I went to Waxhaw Elementary.

Gypsy Houston:

Which is the one that they keep referring to as the Rosenwald School.

Velma Fann:

And what did that school look like on the inside and the outside?

Mildred Culp:

Well, it had ... Let's see. First. Second. It had one, two, three classrooms. The first and second. And then I think third and a fourth. And then I believe it was the fifth and the sixth. That's how far it went.

I don't know what else. My memory is gone. But anyway, we-

Gypsy Houston:

What [inaudible 00:11:40].

Mildred Culp:

... had three different teachers. We had three different teachers.

Like I said, the first and second I can't remember. I can't even remember which teachers was which, but I do know the third grade teacher was Ms. Shorter. And the fourth grade teacher I can't remember. But the fifth and sixth grade teacher was Ms. Asbury. I think they're all gone now. But anyway, they were good teachers.

Then we had a Ms. Hood, but I can't place what year each one of these teachers ... I know Ms. Shorter was the third grade teacher, but I can't place ... Ms. Asbury was the sixth grade ... Sixth ...

Gypsy Houston:

Fifth and sixth?

Mildred Culp:

Must have been the fifth and sixth. I'm trying to think. Did it go sixth and seventh or ... I can't remember the order in which they taught. But she was the one that taught the higher class. Ms. Asbury. I can remember these teachers vaguely now. They all were good teachers with the ... They didn't have a lot to work with.

The books that we had, you could tell they had been passed down. They passed them on to us because there were so many names in the back of the book. You could see five or six. They'd have been belonging to five or six other kids. And-

Gypsy Houston:

Were these kids ... You mean white kids or other Black-

Mildred Culp:

They come from white schools. We got the leftovers, at least it seemed to me. Well, I know we did.

The teachers taught as best they could with what they had. And of course, I was not the best student because I just never really had a whole lot of interest in learning because sometimes you

think, what's the use? You just not going to progress no matter what. You doomed. But I found out later that that was terrible thinking because you should have learned all that you could.

But anyway, I thank God for what it is.

Velma Fann:

Yes. That's very good. What were some of the activities, the fun activities, that you engaged in?

Mildred Culp:

We did things ... When we went out at recess, we played hopscotch. We played hide-and-go-seek. We built play houses out there in the edge of the woods and with the trees and stuff. You made your games. You didn't have swings. And you had a swing out there. You had to hang something on the tree to make a swing. You didn't have a whole lot of gymnastics stuff outside. You just made your own games. And it was fun because that's all we knew. We played Mom and Daddy and just that kind of stuff. But after the recess, I think it was like 30 minutes. You come in, and you do your work, and then you go ... Next time, it's time to go home.

And the school buses that they did have came from other schools, other Rosenwald schools in the area. And they would come. Other kids would be riding it, and they'd come by and the bus stop, and the kids that rode the bus got on the bus, and they went on, and we walked home. We had to walk home. We didn't have much riding. The only kids that rode were the people, what we called at that time, the kids in the country area. We didn't know that we were country-

Gypsy Houston:

You were all still country.

Mildred Culp:

But they lived out in the suburban areas.

Gypsy Houston:

More rural.

Mildred Culp:

They got to ride the bus because they could not have walked from where they lived to. And I know I'm rambling on.

Velma Fann:

Well, tell me about this. Everybody talks about this 4th of July event.

Mildred Culp:

Down where we went to school, they had this 4th of July event. And my dad was a baseball player. A good one. And all my uncles and my dad played baseball. And the baseball teams would ... They would invite other teams up, and they start out early in the morning.

Kids always thought they had to have something new to wear because this was a big event for us. And the older ladies would cook fish, fry fish, and do that kind of stuff. There was one man named Mr. Gaston, and he made snowballs. It was what we thought was one of the greatest things that could happen to us because we didn't have very many activities. And we would go there, and we stay all day long eating. And they made vegetable soup in the wash pot and that kind of stuff. It was very nice. I sometimes wish we could go back to those days.

One more thing I wanted to say about the school was that they had something that I had never seen, and I've never seen it anywhere else, but they had running water, and the spigot was long from here to that main there. And it had a long pipe. And you turn the water on, and the water came up like now when we go out there and step on the-

Velma Fann:

The hose?

Mildred Culp:

No. On the ...

Gypsy Houston:

Sprinkler? No?

Mildred Culp:

No. The thing out here. If you go get some water-

Velma Fann:

Water fountain.

Mildred Culp:

Water fountain. The water came up out a little hole. It was about seven, six or seven, holes on that, so all of us could drink water. And I hadn't thought about that in years.

Gypsy Houston:

You haven't ever told [inaudible 00:18:31] that.

Mildred Culp:

But it had those little holes, and that was very convenient. Drinking water, of course the water was not cold, but it was water. And I can't think of ... Let me see. What else can I think of? In the school, we had little rooms. Am I acting crazy?

Gypsy Houston:

No, I'm just ... I hadn't heard some of this.

Mildred Culp:

We had little rooms. We call them cloak rooms. And we put our ... When you go and you hang your coats up in the cloak room, we had one or two. Each classroom had one out there. And you hang your clothes up in the cloak room. Of course, when it's time to go home, somebody go get all the coats. You go get your coats and stuff. I can't think of a whole lot about the schools.

But we had one room that we did was an activity room. You went in there. We used to paint jars and put pictures on them and that kind of thing. And you go in there. Some of this stuff she's never heard.

Gypsy Houston:

No, most of it I have.

Mildred Culp:

But you did different activities. The teachers had ... You had books that had different things that kids could do. Of course, they were ... The other people-

Velma Fann:

Had done them already.

Mildred Culp:

... had did them all. In the books, some of them already had did all the-

Gypsy Houston:

All the little activities.

Mildred Culp:

... activities and stuff, but you did what you could do. And that was fun because the teachers took a lot of time with us trying to show us how these things were done because we didn't have a lot of directions because half of the pages in the books were torn out. It was inconvenient, but we learned some things. I thank God for that. We did learn something. That's all I know.

Gypsy Houston:

What about the 4th of July thing?

Mildred Culp:

That's what we were talking about. See, I'm sorry.

Velma Fann:

No, you're doing well.

Gypsy Houston:

You're doing what you're supposed to do. I'm just here to draw you back.

Mildred Culp:

The older people ... My parents. My dad played ball, and my mom was one of the ladies who was out there frying fishing. All the ladies hollered when they made a score and stuff. That was a lot of fun. The kids were, of course, just running around playing and eating.

But the best part about it was that the men were engrossed in the baseball, and the women supported them. They were out there everywhere. If another team ... Every time another team would come up, the women would just be hollering and screaming, and it was like going to a concert. It was fun. And that was kind of our activity for the 4th of July. Of course, the kids walked up and down from where the school was because down where the school was, it was set off off the road. All the activities that we did down there, the kids playing and everything, was down there. The parents were always around to watch out for the kids and then watch the ball game and cook and do all that kind of stuff. I am rambling on.

Gypsy Houston:

No, you're doing fine.

Velma Fann:

No, you're doing good.

Gypsy Houston:

Was there a lot of courting at the baseball games? Did people try to find a boyfriend?

Mildred Culp:

Of course. You went dressed because you thought ... You have on your little shorts. They call them Bermuda shorts then. They had them on you. You were matching stuff because your parents, of course, had already bought you some new stuff. You'd go to a little store and get little cheapest little stuff, but we thought it was cute. And you got all dressed up because you knew you were going to see somebody that you cared for. Those were good days.

Velma Fann:

Sometimes people talk about a movie theater in Waxhaw.

Mildred Culp:

I can remember they had a ... Downtown, they had a movie theater. And I remember ... The price, I remember, was 14 cents to go to the movie. And of course, the whites walked in one door, and the Blacks had to walk in another door upstairs.

Everything was separated. I never understood that because we were all kids. I am not talking about ... I'm not supposed to say this, but if the adults had let the kids run thing, it might've been better because all kids know is that that's another kid over there. You do what your parents do, and that's what you do. You follow what your parents teach you. And that's what everybody did. But anyway, that's another story.

Velma Fann:

That's another story. There's been a mention of maybe a ... Not really a hotel. A motel or a rooming house that was owned by Blacks?

Mildred Culp:

I vaguely remember that up in Waxhaw. And there was a lady named Sally Gladden that owned that place. She was a relative of my mother's. A distant relative, but a relative. And I just remember you walked ... You had to walk up some stairs. I remember that. And it was up there where the coffee shop is. Now, right from the coffee shop.

I do remember that you had to go upstairs. Now, I don't ever remember if I went up the stairs or not, but I always remember where the building was and that you could just always see up there. I don't know a whole lot about how it was run or anything, but we used to always go up there. And at that time, the Black kids were the ones who were up there in Waxhaw on the corner. We called it the corner And we stood on the bridge. That's where our activities were.

The way you see it now, when you ride through there, and you see all the people walking and having fun and talking, who you saw was walking with the Black kids.

Gypsy Houston:

It was the Black kids?

Mildred Culp:

The Black kids were always up there. There was always ... I guess because the other kids had so much other stuff they could do. That was our only activity was just by going up there, standing on the corner, kids laughing and talking.

Velma Fann:

They said that, and also women who were domestics but maybe needed a ride to Charlotte or someplace, that that was the place-

Mildred Culp:

They stood up there for a ride. They would stand on that corner and catch a ride to wherever their job was. And I remember my mom used to catch a ride. And she made, I remember this, \$4 a day. She made \$4 a day, and that's not including what she had to take out of that to pay for her rides and whatever. But they did catch a ride. I remember that.

Gypsy Houston:

Most of them were going to Charlotte, right?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah, going up. They called it up Providence Road. That's what they said.

And then not only them. There was a time when, I think when I was a junior, I started doing that domestic work. I started. When I got out of school, I had to get a ride and go on up there and do whatever I had to do to cleaning up and stuff. I did it for a good while. I did it for a while.

What else? I can't think of nothing.

Gypsy Houston:

You did that when your mom was still alive or after she passed away?

Mildred Culp:

My mom passed away. I was 17 when my mom died. My dad pretty much took care of everything. But while I was going to school, if you could get a job, you got a job to try to help out. And so I did. While I was going to school, I started to do some domestic work. And then after that ... I'm about to be running out of stuff-

Gypsy Houston:

Well, she's going to ask you another question, so you're fine.

Velma Fann:

Well, this is good. Who were some of the leaders in the community?

Mildred Culp:

Me.

Velma Fann:

I didn't hear me. Say it a little louder.

Mildred Culp:

I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. No. No, I was not a leader. But you mean people ... We had some school teachers. People who were fortunate enough to go to school and become school teachers. Everybody was not that fortunate. But we had Mr. Hood. We had his wife, Mrs. Hood. Helen Hood. Roscoe Hood. That's who I mean. And then we had Virginia Massey.

I'm trying to think who else we had. We called them leaders. And then we had the brick masons who made lots of money at that time. Lorenzo Massey. Mambo Ababa. Richard Coffey. He was one of the younger ones. And Lorenzo was one of the younger ones at that time.

Gypsy Houston:

Who were some of the older ones?

Mildred Culp:

Let me try to think

Gypsy Houston:

Because you've never mentioned that.

Mildred Culp:

I can't right now not ... It's not coming to me right now.

Gypsy Houston:

That's okay.

Mildred Culp:

But there were ... I'm trying to think.

Gypsy Houston:

What about preachers?

Mildred Culp:

Preachers? Well, I was in AME Zion, and Reverend Silas Craig was a leader as far as a preacher. And the name's not coming.

Gypsy Houston:

Who is the preacher over at the Baptist Church at Mount Nebo?

Mildred Culp:

Reverend JW Threatt was one minister over there. He was there for a long time. And who else? It's not really ...

Gypsy Houston:

That's okay.

Mildred Culp:

It'll come to me tonight. It's going around on the carousel. It'll come back tonight.

Velma Fann:

It'll come back. It'll come back. During the Civil Rights struggle, were the churches involved with voter registration or anything like that?

Mildred Culp:

They had people come out to the church talking to people about who to vote for and that kind of stuff, but I don't remember a whole lot about it. It's gone away. Some of it's gone away. But like I said, I was in the AME Zion, and we did have people to come out and encourage you to vote and show you how to do it and probably gave you different names, who to do it, who vote for, and that kind of thing. And what was better for you.

I can't remember a whole lot about that either.

Velma Fann:

That's okay. You're doing well. There was a store? Mr. Rudolph's store?

Mildred Culp:

A Rudolph store?

Velma Fann:

Do you remember a store?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah. His parents had ... Rudolph was a Higgins, and his dad had a store. And down right where I live now, near where I live now on Howie Mine. From the school, you could walk from the school up to that store, and you buy cookies, two, for a penny cookies, and candy and sodas and different things. That's for your lunch if you didn't carry your lunch. And that was pretty good because, like I said, you only had pennies and dimes, and so you get two cookies for a penny. And you could get 20 cookies for 10 cents. We only had 10, 15 cents. And that was good.

Gypsy Houston:

What was his daddy's name? What was Mr. Rudolph's dad's name?

Mildred Culp:

Rudolph's dad's name was Leroy Higgins. Mr. Higgins. There was also a store before that. Jack Green had a store. And he had cookies and stuff. These were different at different times.

Gypsy Houston:

Doing at the same time?

Mildred Culp:

Because when we first moved away, we ... Mr. Jack Green had a store on that back road from where we lived. And he had those cookies and candy and little stuff like they have now. But nothing like the prices. There was something that would maybe ... If my mama sent me to the store, she'll say, "Well, take these three pennies, and get you some cookies." You got six cookies.

Gypsy Houston:

But you could buy other stuff at Mr. Green's store other than candy and cookies?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah. Sometimes they had some little things you used in the house. Little. Not big things. It was not a Roses.

Gypsy Houston:

No, but I mean, would they have something [inaudible 00:32:54]-

Velma Fann:

Would they have flour? Sugar?

Mildred Culp:

Buy little stuff that you needed.

Your time.

Velma Fann:

Well, I'm trying to think. Is there anything else? Anything, Gypsy, coming to mind?

Mildred Culp:

I'm trying to think.

Gypsy Houston:

I don't know. You talked about businesses. Talking about-

Mildred Culp:

Up in Waxhaw, I remember there was a store where my dad could get credit. When we got out of school, if we needed to go to the store and get some bologna, we could go to Farmer's Union. That store was called Farmer's Union.

Gypsy Houston:

Was that Mr. McCain's store?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah. We had to do was go there, and they knew all ... The white people knew most of the Black kids. Knew whose kid that was. And you go, and you say, "My dad told me to get so-and-so." And then they would write it down. And when he got paid, he had to go and pay them. We'd get bread. Anything that we needed. You couldn't get a lot of junk. You just had to go, but they 'bout knew what your parents would allow. And we would go up there and get whatever we needed for lunch. I mean for-

Gypsy Houston:

Dinner at home.

Mildred Culp:

... [inaudible 00:34:30] come home from school. And you could sign. You really didn't have to sign for it. They knew who you were.

Velma Fann:

They knew you?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah. That was pretty good.

Gypsy Houston:

Were there other white stores that you could go to or just ... I know you have told me about that one.

Mildred Culp:

We went to ... That's where my dad had credit. At that store. I don't know. Other people, I guess, had credit at other stores. On the end of that street, though, on Main Street, there was a drug store. And it was run by Mr. Henry Gamble. You could go there, but we didn't have any account there. You have to go there and buy your drugs or whatever. And you develop film. If you had a camera, you develop ... You know. That kind of thing.

Gypsy Houston:

You could do that at the Gamble place.

Mildred Culp:

I understand that that used to be a Belk store. That's what I've heard. I didn't know it when it was a Belk store. But then the Farmer's Union was the next door. And on down was something like a five-and-dime. And I'm not sure if that was the Nesbitt store. I think that's what that was called. And there was a baker's store. It was like a five-and-dime. And on down there was AW Heath that had appliances and household stuff.

Gypsy Houston:

And you guys were welcome in there? When I said-

Mildred Culp:

If you had money, you could go in the store. If they knew you was spending money, you could go in the store.

Velma Fann:

The color was green at that point.

Mildred Culp:

And then they had AW Heath. Did I say that?

Gypsy Houston:

Yes, ma'am.

Mildred Culp:

That was the one where you go in if you wanted to buy coal and stuff for kitchens and that kind of stuff. When I say coal, you don't know about that.

Gypsy Houston:

I do know what you mean.

Mildred Culp:

You don't know about no coal.

Gypsy Houston:

I do.

Mildred Culp:

And on down, there was one store I remember on the end. I remember that store well because, every Thursday, we like to get fish. We would go in there, and you could get fish. The man had a big box, and he had ice in it and all these fish in there. And that man's name was ... It was in my mind, and it's gone.

Gypsy Houston:

He was white too.

Mildred Culp:

He was white. Everybody that owned something up there was white. Right? I'm trying to think what that store was. Was it Moody? I can't remember what that store was, but they knew all of us kids because we always had to go to the store. And we'd always go and get fish. On Thursdays or Fridays, you'd go get fish. And let's see what else was out there.

Velma Fann:

But you felt safe enough going there, welcomed enough, to do the business that you needed to do?

Mildred Culp:

Right. You went there because, if you're spending money, of course you could go in there and spend it, but you just didn't-

Gypsy Houston:

You didn't just go hang out in there.

Mildred Culp:

No, you didn't hang out in the store. If you worked at AW Heath, you could ... Those men would come and sit. They would sit out there. They had two or three people, Black people, that worked for them, and they could come out front and sit on the stools or whatever they had out there.

Gypsy Houston:

What kind of stuff did they do for them? Carry stuff out to the car?

Mildred Culp:

I would see them sweeping. Doing that kind of stuff. Clean it up. Keep everything kind of halfway decent for them. And then I'm trying to think.

I'm lost-

Gypsy Houston:

I'm going to ask you a question, Mom, and I hope you don't mind. Where those stores were, that side of the tracks, right? But on the other side of the tracks where the well and the corner and all that, was that mostly Black people on that side once you passed where-

Mildred Culp:

What you mean mostly Black people?

Gypsy Houston:

You said y'all would be the ones out on the streets and stuff, but you wouldn't be on that other side of the tracks, would you? You'd just be on our side of the tracks?

Mildred Culp:

Well, on our side, on that side of the coming in from Monroe on that side?

Gypsy Houston:

Yes, ma'am.

Mildred Culp:

That's where those stores I was telling you about.

Gypsy Houston:

No, yes, I understand that.

Mildred Culp:

On the other side, there used to be a post office on that side. I'm trying to think. Jimmy's Cleaners. He was a cleaner. Jimmy Cadellias had a cleaners on that. He was on that side for a while. He was on this side for a while different times. But we didn't own anything. You always had to go to their stores. We didn't own anything. You just went.

Can't think. I was never treated bad. I was never treated bad, but I was always ... I always got along with everybody. Because I was a talker, and most people liked me. At least, they say they like me. I got along with most people. I didn't have any problem with them. But there was one time ... I don't remember this, and I was not old enough. When this man killed these people. Buck Patterson. I don't know a whole lot about that story-

Gypsy Houston:

She's going to probably hear some more about that from Vivie.

Mildred Culp:

I don't know a whole lot about that because I was a little girl, if I was a little girl.

Gypsy Houston:

But you remember hearing the story?

Mildred Culp:

I heard the stories about that. Walter knows a lot about that. Huh?

Gypsy Houston:

Did it scare you hearing it?

Mildred Culp:

It was scary just hearing it.

Velma Fann:

What did you hear?

Mildred Culp:

You just hear that this man coming to town. If he felt like shooting you, he just shot. You were Black. It didn't matter. I am not going to go into that because I don't know a whole lot about it.

Gypsy Houston:

But it wasn't good, right?

Mildred Culp:

It was not good.

They say that somewhere in Lancaster or somewhere they had a lot to say about that man because he come from somewhere else and come here. And he did a lot of ... If he didn't like you, he just didn't like you. If he wanted to shoot you, he shot you. But they was doing nothing about it because everybody was scared of him. I think the white and Black was scared of him, from what I could understand. Like I said, I can't go into that because I wouldn't be truthful telling you what I knew because I don't know a whole lot about that.

Gypsy Houston:

But you've heard about it?

Mildred Culp:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

Well, I think that's pretty good.

Gypsy Houston:

You did good, Mom.

Velma Fann:

You did well.

Mildred Culp:

From my memory, just ... I guess once you start to talk about some of it, some of your memory come back, but there's a lot that I know that I have left out because of the old memory is just not like it used to be.

Gypsy Houston:

She doesn't expect you to write a whole book about Waxhaw.

Mildred Culp:

I wish I could have.

Gypsy Houston:

I wish you could have too.

Velma Fann:

The train. Did you ever ride the train? Or did your families ever ride the train that came
[inaudible 00:42:16]-

Mildred Culp:

My dad worked on the railroad, so we rode the train all the time. We could ride free. We rode. My grandmother and my mama and me. We used to go to Boston, Baltimore, and all that free. And my grandmother ... I used to ride with her because she'd just ride the train. We'd go to Monroe, just wherever that was close that we wanted to go. We could just get a pass. My dad had passes, and we rode. And see, my grandfather before my dad worked on the railroad. My grandfather worked on the railroad. He worked at Pulp wood, and then he started to work with railroads. They were railroad men.

This has nothing to do what we're talking about, but my nephew lives in Maryland now. And he stayed with us when he was a little boy. And he was telling me about how he tell his friends how he wanted to be a conductor because that's what his grandfather was. And I was just looking at him. "Your grandfather was not a conductor on the train. Your grandfather rode the motorcar, putting cross tires down and stuff," but that's what he has [inaudible 00:43:41]-

Gypsy Houston:

In his mind.

Velma Fann:

In his head.

Mildred Culp:

I said, well, what they don't know won't hurt them.

Gypsy Houston:

No.

Velma Fann:

Well, I thank you very much for sharing.

Mildred Culp:

Well, I took up a lot of your time rambling on, but it's been very enjoyable just talking about it. And I'm glad that she made me-

Gypsy Houston:

Twisted your arm?

Mildred Culp:

Yeah. Well, anything I could do to help her with what she does. I always tried to, but I just felt that this time I think my memory won't let me do it, Gypsy.

Gypsy Houston:

You didn't do bad. You did well. I thought you did a good job.

Mildred Culp:

Thank you. I love you too. You said that because you love me.

Gypsy Houston:

I guess I do.

Velma Fann:

Thank you both very much.

Gypsy Houston:

Thank you, Velma.

Mildred Culp:

Thank you. I might add that she did tell me that she thought I'd be very relaxed with you.

Velma Fann:

Were you?

Mildred Culp:

She was right.

Velma Fann:

Good.

Mildred Culp:

She was very right.

Velma Fann:

I'm glad. Thank you so much, ladies.

Gypsy Houston:

All right, Mom. You ready to wrap it up?

Mildred Culp:

Yes.

Gypsy Houston:

Thank you, Velma.

Harry Hood

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 19, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

[Portions of this interview have been redacted due to the divulging of sensitive information.]

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is June 19th, 2025, and I am speaking with Mr. Hood. Give me your full name, would you please?

Harry Hood:

Harry Hood.

Velma Fann:

Mr. Harry Hood. All right, thank you. And this is for the Waxhaw African-American History Project. Welcome, Mr. Hood.

Harry Hood:

Thank you.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So Mr. Hood, could you spell your name for us please?

Harry Hood:

H-A-R-R-Y, H-O-O-D, Hood.

Velma Fann:

Very good. And your date of birth, sir?

Harry Hood:

01/13/56.

Velma Fann:

Okay, and that makes you how old today?

Harry Hood:

69 years young.

Velma Fann:

All right. I like that. Sir, are you a native of Waxhaw?

Harry Hood:

Very much so, born and raised.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And what about your parents? Were they natives of that place too?

Harry Hood:

Yes, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So when you were growing up, what were the boundaries of the African-American community?

Harry Hood:

What was the boundary?

Velma Fann:

Yes, sir.

Harry Hood:

Well, I can remember very well the laundromats, they had the whites only, and then they had colored signs up. And there was certain stores, mother and father always told us, "Don't go in those stores." [Especially my sisters.]

Velma Fann:

Oh, my. Okay.

Harry Hood:

Yeah. I remember those days well.

Velma Fann:

So was that in Downtown Waxhaw?

Harry Hood:

Downtown, yes, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

Okay. What places could you go to?

Harry Hood:

Well, we very much frequent the old Waxhaw School House.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And where was that?

Harry Hood:

And that was located, it was inside the city limit I think. It was on Waxhaw Indian Trail Road.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

And that's where, on the 4th of July, they had the big picnics, and we'd get to go. You had different booths up. People would go for the cotton candy here, hot dogs and everything there. And we used to go, and we had ball games down there as well, and that was a big event each 4th of July.

Velma Fann:

That sounds great. What schools did you attend?

Harry Hood:

I attended Western Union up until the eighth grade, and then the segregation kicked in. In 1970, and they had us going over to Parkwood High. They had integrated.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. So Western Union was the African-American school until about 1970?

Harry Hood:

Oh, yes.

Velma Fann:

Well, tell me what went on at Western.

Harry Hood:

Well, at Western Union we had some strict teachers, and they had that corporal punishment for you. And I was now glad, because it made me who I am today.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

Because it's one thing to get that whipping in that school, but if it get to your mother and father in the evening when they get home, you're going to get another.

Velma Fann:

There's another one waiting for you?

Harry Hood:

Oh, yeah. And it was the same around in the community as well, going down and some of the neighbors see you doing something wrong, "I'm going to tell your dad." "I'm going to tell your mama," if they didn't whip you, because a couple of neighbors got to whip me as well, a couple of times. But when I got to eighth grade though, all that changed. I got into the A group in my classes. And things went pretty well, but going to a high school is enough on a person. But when you go into a just integrated high school, that elevated that stress a little bit more. [We also used school books handed down from other schools.]

Velma Fann:

What were some of your experiences?

Harry Hood:

Oh, I wasn't there two weeks before there was a riot and they sent everybody home.

Velma Fann:

Oh, my goodness. And this was at what school? Park?

Harry Hood:

Parkwood High School. [Rebels]

Velma Fann:

Parkwood.

Harry Hood:

Parkwood. That happened in 1971.

Velma Fann:

Okay. What started everything?

Harry Hood:

It was something about the black guy had sit down in the lunchroom, and the white guy said something about, "This is not y'all's table. Get away from this table," or something. They caught

themselves suspending the black guy, and didn't do anything to the white guy. So when we got to school that next morning, I think we had just got to the first class of... No, we just got in the [inaudible 00:05:23], and I heard all the commotion. It was full. I never did that. People running around, go out, try to go out one hallway to fight that way, and go this way here, and then arguing, and hollering, and pushing one another. It was a mess. For a 15-year-old boy, at that time to make the right decisions, to do what's right, or do what's wrong, or get in that thing with the blacks or even get in there with, I said, "You know what? I know what's waiting for me if I get in trouble."

Velma Fann:

Were there ever any organized protests at the school, at Parkwood?

Harry Hood:

I wouldn't say it was organized, no, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

Because over the years, even after I had graduated, went on and they kept that logo name, Parkwood Rebels. After many times they tried to change that name, they couldn't get it done. They were outvoted or whatever. The community, they wouldn't change that Rebels sign. Now, Monroe High, they were the Blue Rebels. They changed their name to the Red Eagles. But Parkwood, I say up until about, I don't know, 10, 15 years ago, maybe they changed it.

Velma Fann:

Well, let me ask you, when you all wanted to have fun as young people, was there a movie theater, or any place that you went that you were able to go to in Waxhaw?

Harry Hood:

No, I can't remember a movie theater in Waxhaw. We had one in Monroe, which was 12 miles away. Yeah.

Velma Fann:

When you were coming up, who were some of the community leaders? Was anyone talking about registration, or civil rights, or voting, or any of that?

Harry Hood:

Only what we've seen on that black and white TV about the marches, and the things that Reverend Dr. King was doing. But me knowing personally, a representative, where we always had a few of the reverends. And they didn't really organize or anything like that, that I'm aware of.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So if you were to take me on a tour of Waxhaw, what would you show me that was important to black people, either in the city or maybe outside of the city?

Harry Hood:

Well, in the city, I'm just going to put it like this. I would take you to where the old Waxhaw school house used to be, because I'm still not on board with when I seen a house built on that place. They tore it down, moved it and put a house there. And right on the other side, there where they used to play the baseball, there was also a cemetery. And that cemetery goes back, well, I've seen the headstones there dated back to 1942, I think. And I remember as a little boy during them baseball games, I would run to get the ball or [inaudible 00:09:22] balls. And I remember jumping over graves and everything, going to get that ball, so I could catch that ball [inaudible 00:09:30].

And for me, I was the chairman for that committee, the Eastside Cemetery Committee, I sat for six years. And the work that was put in it and everything that I did, well, not myself because like I said, it was a committee with the three black churches there in Waxhaw, First Presbyterian, Mt. Nebo and Wesley Chapel. And the activities, and the meeting together there with the men of the churches down there, getting together, and cleaning it up, and doing this, and picking up old flowers. I had some poles where the baseball field was, it was like red clay. Well, I had it where it was poled off, where nobody could drive through there, and had the grass planted and

everything put in with the poles, the yellow chain going around each pole. And it was really looking so nice down there.

I said, "The only thing that's missing now is [inaudible 00:10:57]." But they got the sign-up at the gate, Eastside Community Cemetery. And I wanted the date put on there when it first started, but we never did get a chance to go down to a town hall and get that date. But to the day now, they're building houses all around it. And I'm afraid one day they just going to just try to move us. Just what's going on now is, they're building everywhere. And where now I can see where people go down there and park their car, drink their beers, throw their cans out and everything. I'm no longer the committee chair, but I'm still on the committee.

So that may be shut down, because I [inaudible 00:12:04] did three years, because Sonny McManus, when we first got that new committee started, he was having his sports bar built downtown. So he came to a meeting one day and he said, "Well, I want to let Harry remain as chairman, let him be the chairman while I get my sports bar up and going." So once he got it up and going, he came back to the meeting. And the next meeting he said, "I wanted to let Harry remain chairman, because I've got so much on my plate trying to run this sports bar." I said, "Well, that wasn't an agreement." So I could say anything. I seconded all this right here, so I finished his years off and I did three of my own. And then it took another year, because we could have an election to get someone else.

Velma Fann:

And what was this he was trying to finish?

Harry Hood:

Say again, please?

Velma Fann:

What was he trying to finish? That he couldn't stay on the-[committee as chairman]

Harry Hood:

He was getting his sports bar up and going.

Velma Fann:

Oh, his sports bar? Okay. Okay. Well, let me ask you about the cemetery. Was that an African-American cemetery, to your knowledge?

Harry Hood:

Yes, it is. And it goes back, like I say, the three black churches. And like I said, I'm afraid that they're trying to crowd us out. Every time I look around, I see some new markers down there. And when somebody's been having it marked off and everything, a survey. And I said, "Now, my goodness, what's really going on here?" They're getting mighty close. I'm serious. And with their marking off, I know there's some graves down there, because they're so old. Some of the people back in the day, now in the old days, they only had cement blocks, and they had some writing on the blocks. And you can see the indentations of the ground, and on going down that hill, that hill's crazy there. Those are graves. And my first or second year, I had some crosses made, and had them placed by each one of those indentations, so they'll know, but they're getting mighty close with these surveys.

Velma Fann:

Wow. Okay. Thank you for telling me that. I wanted to ask you, what kind of jobs did people have? I hear a lot about brick masons, I hear a lot about skilled construction jobs. Is that something you might know about, or know people who were involved in that?

Harry Hood:

Well, most construction jobs, I know a few of the bricklayers, but most of their work was up in Charlotte, but they lived in the Waxhaw area. But like I said, when I left and came out of high school, I went into the service. I did three years, came out, got married, got divorced, and then got married in '78. Got married in '78, and when we divorced, I moved to New York. And there I stayed for 18 years, and I moved back in 2001, about three days before they knocked the buildings down.

Velma Fann:

When you say knocked the buildings down, which buildings were they?

Harry Hood:

911.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Harry Hood:

I left out September the 8th. I was waving goodbye, looking back at those buildings. And I'm moving back to North Carolina, came down with my two daughters on vacation in 2000. And that was a long ride back, because no one wanted to leave. We had such a good time. I said to myself there, I'm moving back home. So I got my CDLs, because I wasn't depending on going down here, trying to find work. Well, up there in New York, I was... Let me turn this off. Excuse me. And what I did, I knew I wouldn't be able to find some good work, or working at a cemetery. That's what I was doing up there along out of National Cemetery, and where I was a union representative as well, a worker. And the nearest one was like 50 miles away, National Cemetery, Federal Cemetery. I didn't feel like commuting that far.

So when I got my CDL's, I came home. And the first job I took, well, I sent resumes out for the transit system in Charlotte, and they were too anxious. So I said, "You know what? Let me just..." Well, before I even left New York, they were asking me my uniform size and all that [inaudible 00:17:27]. Wait a minute. Wait until I get there. And when I got here, I found better paying jobs, driving the mail truck, hauling the mail. So that's what I did for close to 10 years. And I used to ride by the old Masonic Lodge. Now, I know that lodge was open for a number of years. But when I came back, the lodge was built, but a new one was built and I had to ride by, and I would see the [inaudible 00:18:08] there. They were putting in new windows, and this, and that and everything. And I felt so proud, because my mother was an Eastern Star, and my father was a Mason, and they belonged to that lodge.

Velma Fann:

Tell me a little bit more about that lodge. Where was it located? This is the first one, right?

Harry Hood:

Waxhaw Indian Trail Road, same highway. And I was just so upset to see it going down like that. And I said I'm going to see about joining. But then my ex-brother-in-law, he was like, "Well, we're supposed to meet." I said, "You know what? I'm going to join somewhere else. I'm not going to join that lodge." But I always said, if I could get that lodge back up and going, then I would admit it and go there, because of my parents.

Velma Fann:

So your mother was an Eastern Star, your father was a Mason?

Harry Hood:

Oh, yeah. Because back in them days, to become a Eastern Star, I think it wasn't a written rule, but most of the time, most of the women there, their husband, father or somebody was going to the lodge [inaudible 00:19:31]. So when I looked at my mother's plaque, and she had a plaque in honor of her for so many years... I still got the pack right here to get the numbers right. But anyway, from May of 1998, and I had to count back 42 years from 1998. And that put it at 1956 when she joined, a few months after I was born.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Harry Hood:

So I said, okay. It was no by accident that I became an Mason.

Velma Fann:

So what's standing there now on Indian?

Harry Hood:

It's still there. I remember when I became an elder of my church, the firemen, they wanted to park their vehicles there, because they was doing a little demolition on a house that was nearby the church. And I said, "Well, let me check and make sure that it's strong enough". Because most parking lots, they don't have the sticker country for a parking lot than they do a highway. Trucks

are heavy with the water and everything. So when I called him back and I said, "Yeah, it will be all right." And he said, "Well, I appreciate that. I've seen on your car that you're a Mason." I said, "Yeah." "Well, if there's anything we can do." I said, "Well, yeah, if you don't mind, someone went down there and wrote the word blood on the front in red paint right on the large."

I asked him, and the white guy was so nice, I was just impressed with him. "Yeah. What you want, us to wash it off?" "Yes, if you could, please." They wanted to be gang, but at least know what you're spelling on there. They even had it misspelled. So they did wash it off and everything. So I had a good relationship with the firemen and everything, and it was very nice of them to do that. [REDACTED]

Velma Fann:

Now Mr. Hood, is the old lodge still there? Is it still standing?

Harry Hood:

It's still standing.

Velma Fann:

And the new lodge is still standing?

Harry Hood:

No, no, no, no, no. The old lodge, that's new you and replaced. And it's bricked up and everything, but now the roofing is all down. [REDACTED]

Velma Fann:

So the building that's there now, this is the second building for the lodge, is that right?

Harry Hood:

Yes, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

And when did that second building go up?

Harry Hood:

They had that old one bricked up. Now, that could have been there, it could have been bricked up.

Velma Fann:

Okay, so that might be the original lodge, but just bricked up?

Harry Hood:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And when do you think that one was built, the one that's there now?

Harry Hood:

Well-

Velma Fann:

Is that the one your parents went to?

Harry Hood:

My mother was a member a couple of months after I was born, so I'm thinking it had to have been the early fifties.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Okay. Okay. Any other-

Harry Hood:

[inaudible 00:28:06]. Oh, go ahead.

Velma Fann:

Any other places around there in Waxhaw that means something to the black community, or used to mean something to the black community? I know there are churches there, the school, the Masonic Lodge. Anything else come to mind?

Harry Hood:

Nothing else comes to mind, now that most things have been brought over there, them being bought out and everything. And like the whole bridge, we could walk over the railroad tracks and everything. It's been redone and everything. I just love Waxhaw and my upbringing there, and seeing the changes and everything. But I'm so passionate about my Masons though, I tell you. When my wife passed, there were two Masons. She passed in church on Sunday. She had had a stroke, but I didn't think she was going, but her sister came and picked her up that morning. And I took her blood sugar and everything. I thought she was staying home. And when I come home from church, she was gone. But anyway, two of my Masonic brothers were here that Monday night, and I had a room full of Masons that second night. And I tell you, I was in a dark place where those brothers stuck by me. Even at the funeral, they were lined up, [inaudible 00:29:44] out there. And that's why I try to give back.

Velma Fann:

Right.

Harry Hood:

And right now I'm the [Worsherful District Grand Lecturer[WDGL] of the 27 districts, because I just try to give back, because it meant so much to me, for them being there for me at that time, so I'm grateful for them. [REDACTED]

Velma Fann:

So what else would you like to share with us? Any other stories or places? Because you left when you were after high school, right?

Harry Hood:

Yes, and I came back. I went to the service, and I returned in '77. And I've seen a lot of changes, when I came back from service. Well, even in service I would come down on the weekend

sometimes from Fort Bragg. And I noticed that, I remember a lot of the older black guys just stand on the corner waiting for their day work. Somebody would pick them up, getting work done and everything. I know that that was gone. They were no longer hanging out on the block, as they call it.

Velma Fann:

Where was that block?

Harry Hood:

Highway 16, and right downtown.

Velma Fann:

Okay. I think I know. Near the railroad tracks that you crossed over?

Harry Hood:

Yes. Yes.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Some people called that the meeting place.

Harry Hood:

That's what it was. That was the meeting place. And you knew black folk way back as long as you can remember, they're always down on the corner, and that was their corner.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

When we talk about things, because we get ready to leave church. What we used to call the old men bench now, because I'm old an man, I just call it now, the Amen bench. That's where we always sit and talk. And no matter how hard it was to try to slip in my car and get away from there, "Come here, Harry." Oh, boy.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. They told me they would meet there. And sometimes the women, when they caught a ride to Charlotte to work in houses, that would be the place. They could get a ride

Harry Hood:

On that corner. Get on that corner. Looking for work, somebody might come by [inaudible 00:33:22], "Hey, can I get a couple guys to help me do this, and that and everything?" They'd run to that car and get in there. But I know when I come back from service, all that was gone.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. What kind of work did your parents do?

Harry Hood:

Well, my mother worked at the airport for a while. And then she started, she was still having children when I was born. Then my little brother was born after me. I can't say exactly what year it was, but the sixties though. Anyway, she began doing housework. And then she had a couple of strokes, and she had to stop. But my father, he worked at Southern Railway for years, and then he worked for [inaudible 00:34:19] as well there. Cotswold Maintenance Group, because he could fix anything. They've been meeting, everything. And when he broke his leg at Southern Railway, then he went on to retire. And that's the only way you were going to make that man retire, because he was not going to retire. He just loved work.

Velma Fann:

He just loved work. Where did you all live? Were you in the city, or outside of the city?

Harry Hood:

We were outside the city.

Velma Fann:

Now, did blacks live in Waxhaw in the city proper?

Harry Hood:

Yeah, there was some down on, we used to call it the low end. And some of them was inside the city limits. I remember the barbershop where my father used to take me to, Fred's Barbershop, little old hut there, and that pole cut.

Velma Fann:

What street was that on? Fred's Barbershop.

Harry Hood:

That was still the same street, Waxhaw Indian Trail Road.

Velma Fann:

That was the big street, huh?

Harry Hood:

That was the big street. It still is. There's a number of black folks that still stay right in that area.

Velma Fann:

Is the barbershop still there? Is the building-

Harry Hood:

Oh, no. The barbershop's been gone.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

[inaudible 00:35:44] years ago.

Velma Fann:

And the building's gone too, huh?

Harry Hood:

The building's gone too.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

And the old Shiloh Church that I belong to now, I loved that church growing up. We [inaudible 00:35:58], because the lady that sells candy was right next door. Now, you know, some of that change that my father and mother used to give me to put in the collection plate, it made it next door to the candy lady.

Velma Fann:

To the candy lady. Who was this candy lady? What was her name? Do you remember?

Harry Hood:

I think it was, I know her last name was Green. I'm trying to remember her first name. I think it was Bonnie Green

Velma Fann:

Lavonne?

Harry Hood:

Bonnie.

Velma Fann:

Bonnie, okay. Did she have a store? Or this was just at her house?

Harry Hood:

It was at her house. You don't remember when those men would come by with the small gray boxes with candy? You may not remember that. You may not be old enough to remember that.

Velma Fann:

I don't think we had it in my neighborhood in Detroit.

Harry Hood:

In Detroit?

Velma Fann:

Yes.

Harry Hood:

Well, I've been to Detroit.

Velma Fann:

Were there any other little stores that you all went to? Any more candy stores, or juke joints? I know you were too young for the juke joints.

Harry Hood:

Our neighborhood where I grew up, there was a little store. I don't know if it had a name to it or not. What was it? Strike Leather. He had a little store there, and we used to go down and walk down to his store and come back. That was on Waxhaw. No, that was on Waxhaw-Marvin Road, where I grew up on Marvin Road. And there was a little grocery store there on the side, Simon Rogers store. And I remember my father at the Phillips 66 station where Mr. Mullis used to be. And I remember dad used to get his gas there, he had his little deal there. You can get all gassed up for the week, and on Fridays, [inaudible 00:38:08] up again on Monday?

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Any black-owned businesses in the area?

Harry Hood:

No. I can't think of any black-owned businesses. No more than the churches, the lodges and some of the people that had the [inaudible 00:38:33] businesses, and stuff like that.

Velma Fann:

So did black people own a bricklayer business?

Harry Hood:

Oh, yeah. We had Walt Davis, and his brother Garfield, who they split up and had their own businesses.

Velma Fann:

Do you remember the name of that?

Harry Hood:

The Davises.

Velma Fann:

Walt

Harry Hood:

Davis. And then there was Garfield Davis.

Velma Fann:

Was it called the Davis Bricklaying Company, or something like that?

Harry Hood:

Davis. I want to say Davis Bricklayer.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Was that downtown?

Harry Hood:

No, that was down Waxhaw-Marvin Road, where he lived.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Harry Hood:

Well, Waxhaw and Marvin were like, well, they still have one post office between the both of them. The Marvin [inaudible 00:39:34] is so big, they really need their own post office.

Velma Fann:

This is good information. Any other little businesses owned by black people that you remember?

Harry Hood:

I'm trying to remember. We're going back 50, 60 years here. That's all that comes to mind right now.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Well, that's good. Well, I appreciate what you've shared.

Harry Hood:

Well, I appreciate you listening, but I can go on and on. Basically, if I talk with Masons, I just get passionate about my Masons.

Velma Fann:

I know you do. I see you love your Masons, so we are good with that. All right. Well, give me just one moment. I think everything is good, and I appreciate what you've told me, and we will stay in touch. Okay?

Harry Hood:

Please do. I enjoyed speaking with you.

Velma Fann:

All right. Thank you so much.

Harry Hood:

Thank you.

Velma Fann:

Bye bye.

Harry Hood:

Bye.

Lorenzo Massey and Louise Massey

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on July 12, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is July the 12th, 2025, and I am speaking with Mr. Lorenzo Massey and Mrs. Louise Massey. Is that correct?

Lorenzo Massey:

Ms. Louise Massey.

Velma Fann:

Okay, Louise. Thank you. Mr. Massey would you spell your full name for us, please?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, my full name.

Velma Fann:

Yes, sir. Your first and last name?

Lorenzo Massey:

L-O-R-E-N-Z-O M-A-S-S-E-Y.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And Mrs. Massey, could you spell her first and last name for us?

Lorenzo Massey:

L-O-U-I-S-E M-A-S-S-E-Y.

Velma Fann:

Right. Thank you so much. And Mr. Massey, when were you born? What year?

Lorenzo Massey:

Born in '35.

Velma Fann:

So how old does that make you today?

Lorenzo Massey:

89.

Velma Fann:

All right then. Okay. Mr. Massey. Have you always lived in Waxhaw?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yes, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

Were your parents from there too?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yes, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

So y'all have been there a while?

Lorenzo Massey:

Been here all my life.

Velma Fann:

What about your grandparents? Do you know if they were from that area?

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, yes. Yeah, most of them were from this area.

Velma Fann:

Okay, good. When you were growing up, what sort of things did you all do for fun?

Lorenzo Massey:

How's that?

Velma Fann:

When you were growing up, what were you doing that was fun? What did you do for entertainment?

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, growing up I started out as playing baseball.

Velma Fann:

Oh. So did you play the 4th of July when they had that big time?

Lorenzo Massey:

That's right, I sure did.

Velma Fann:

Were you on the winning team?

Lorenzo Massey:

Sometimes.

Velma Fann:

What position did you play, Mr. Massey?

Lorenzo Massey:

I played shortstop and sometimes I used to pitch.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. All right. So could you hit as well?

Lorenzo Massey:

I could hit, too.

Velma Fann:

Okay. What was the name of that team that you played on?

Lorenzo Massey:

Let me see. At one time we was named The Baby Blues.

Velma Fann:

Okay. I like that. The Baby Blues. Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

Right.

Velma Fann:

What else was going on in Waxhaw for Black people?

Lorenzo Massey:

Really wasn't much going on.

Velma Fann:

What school did you attend?

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, we looked forward to 4th of July.

Velma Fann:

Okay. I heard that may have been courting season too, huh?

Lorenzo Massey:

How's that?

Velma Fann:

I heard that may have been courting season too. You find your girlfriend or your boyfriend on the 4th of July. That's what they told me now.

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, yeah.

Velma Fann:

Everybody got dressed up.

Lorenzo Massey:

That's right.

Velma Fann:

What are some of the churches that were there when you were coming up and are they still there?

Lorenzo Massey:

No, let me see. I went to Shallow Presbyterian, and it is not there anymore. It's First Presbyterian now. It's located up on 75, right out of Waxhaw. Well, they're still in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Any other old churches that you can recall?

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, Mt. Nebo Baptist is still here and Wesley Chapel is still here. That's a mess.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And when you were coming along, what schools did you attend, Mr. Massey?

Lorenzo Massey:

Waxhaw Elementary, and from there to Western Union.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Are either of those schools still standing?

Lorenzo Massey:

No.

Velma Fann:

Okay. They tell me, Mr. Massey, that there is a Masonic Lodge where the Masons used to meet. Do you know anything about that?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, I used to belong to it.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Can you tell me a bit as to where it was and a little bit about what all went on there?

Lorenzo Massey:

Right here on Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. That's right in Waxhaw, by the town of Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Now, was that the first building or the second building that's there now?

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, I guess that was about the third building. They had one on over by Mt. Nebo Baptist Church at one time, and then they moved it here on Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. And then they got sold, they tore it down, and we started building another one.

Velma Fann:

Well, I'm glad to talk to you. Nobody told me about the one, the first one near the church.

Lorenzo Massey:

There was one over there at one time.

Velma Fann:

Right. Okay. What kind of work did the men do in the community?

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, back in the day, they were farmers. They did farming. And as I was coming up, we had brick mills, and mostly that's what I did.

Velma Fann:

I heard you had some pretty good brick masons there. Some men who were really good at that.

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, yes. Sure did. I called myself good.

Velma Fann:

About to say, "Were you one of those?"

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, I was one of them.

Velma Fann:

All right then. So what buildings did you build? Were they houses or stores?

Lorenzo Massey:

Mostly houses and then I worked on commercial jobs there in Charlotte or wherever.

Velma Fann:

Who were some of the other good brick masons? Do you recall any names?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah. I, Sylvester McManus, Roscoe Miller. Let me see. We had Dave Bell. He still here. Well, a wife named was Odelle Davis. He's still here. And there was, huh? Oh, Ray Wellespoon. Well, now he wasn't from Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

That sounds like a pretty good crew.

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, we had a lot. That's we had.

Velma Fann:

Wow. Are some of the homes still standing that you helped to build?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yes, they are.

Velma Fann:

Can you name-

Lorenzo Massey:

The one I'm living in.

Velma Fann:

And when did you build that one? What year? Do you remember?

Lorenzo Massey:

Let see. When did we build this? You remember that?

Louise Massey:

I don't remember. In high school. My son was in the ninth grade.

Lorenzo Massey:

Said he was in the 9th grade. Oh, she said, "My son was in the ninth grade in high school," And we moved out here. He's 69. He'll be 70 or so.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right. When you were growing up, were you farming as well?

Lorenzo Massey:

Doing what?

Velma Fann:

Did you farm as a young boy growing up, what kind of work did you do to help the family?

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, construction.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, I was into construction. I did construction. At 16 years of age, I went and got a job.

Louise Massey:

He had a business.

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, yeah. Way later. My wife's trying to say I had a business of my own.

Velma Fann:

Oh, a construction business.

Lorenzo Massey:

Brick business.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Was that in Waxhaw too?

Lorenzo Massey:

That was in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

What was the name of your business, sir?

Lorenzo Massey:

Massey Masonry.

Velma Fann:

I like that. Where was it located?

Lorenzo Massey:

Right here. Well, I did work out of my house and I had, what's it called? The man that wrote checks? Oh, my wife was a bookkeeper for a while, and then she got tired of it and turned it over to a tax collector, while it helped me to get my papers on book. Yeah.

Velma Fann:

So you ran your business from your house there, right?

Lorenzo Massey:

Right.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And that's the current house?

Lorenzo Massey:

Huh?

Velma Fann:

Is that where you are now? 302 Washington Street.

Lorenzo Massey:

That's where I'm now.

Velma Fann:

Okay, and that's where you ran your business,

Lorenzo Massey:

Right.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

When I was first starting off, I was with Roscoe Miller. Roscoe Miller and I was together running a business.

Velma Fann:

What other Black businesses were in town?

Louise Massey:

What did she ask?

Lorenzo Massey:

What other Black businesses were in town at that time? None? None that I know of.

Louise Massey:

[inaudible 00:12:39].

Lorenzo Massey:

That was way out.

Velma Fann:

Did somebody have a restaurant?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, McManus, Sonny McManus.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

I think he was on the city council one time.

Louise Massey:

Yeah, he was on the city council.

Lorenzo Massey:

He was on the city council one time.

Velma Fann:

Well, I tell you what I heard.

Lorenzo Massey:

What?

Velma Fann:

I heard there was a juke joint in Waxhaw.

Lorenzo Massey:

Way back.

Velma Fann:

Way back. Do you know anything about that?

Lorenzo Massey:

Who's that?

Velma Fann:

A juke joint. What was his name? Was it Sonny? Somebody had a juke joint.

Louise Massey:

What did she hear?

Lorenzo Massey:

About a juke joint? What was it?

Louise Massey:

Y'all had that place down by the old hotel.

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, I stayed.

Louise Massey:

You go upstairs, y'all used to go to them.

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, but what was the name of it?

Louise Massey:

I don't know.

Lorenzo Massey:

I forgot the name of it.

Velma Fann:

Do you know where it was?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, I know where it was because I lived in the place.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

My aunt had what we called the old hotel. There was only Black places you could come in town and maybe get a room.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

We stayed up there at some, and then they turned it into, they put a pickle away in it and had where you go dance and go.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. What was your aunt's name?

Lorenzo Massey:

Sally Gladden.

Velma Fann:

Do you remember how to spell the last name?

Lorenzo Massey:

Huh?

Velma Fann:

Gladden. Can you spell the last name for me?

Lorenzo Massey:

Gladden.

Louise Massey:

Gladden.

Lorenzo Massey:

Gladden.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Do you remember the address of that house?

Lorenzo Massey:

No, I don't now.

Velma Fann:

Or the street that it's on?

Lorenzo Massey:

I don't remember the address. It was right behind the coffee shop, the building was. We had an old barn there we raised hogs in. You know where the coffee shop of Waxhaw was?

Velma Fann:

I think I do. Uh-huh.

Lorenzo Massey:

Okay. But right there on 16, we had a big two-story building. Well, we called it the old hotel.

Velma Fann:

Well, that's good information.

Lorenzo Massey:

What's the name of that place in there now, Lou?

Louise Massey:

It's real estate place now.

Lorenzo Massey:

It's a real estate place in the spots where that old big house was.

Louise Massey:

Yeah, and the coffee shop.

Velma Fann:

Okay, that's good. Any more businesses? Any dance halls?

Lorenzo Massey:

No.

Velma Fann:

Barber shops?

Lorenzo Massey:

Now, at one time, my uncle had a barbershop in that old big building. The same big building.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

His name was James. James Henry Massey.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And that was in that two-story building as well?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, that was in that old big two-story building downstairs. They had a barbershop in there. Only cut on Saturdays, I believe it was.

Velma Fann:

Very good. Who did the ladies hair?

Lorenzo Massey:

I don't remember who was doing the lady. Yeah, I don't remember.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

My wife says Bonnie Green, but she did it at her house that was on down the street from the old big two-story building.

Velma Fann:

I like that two-story building. Seems like a lot went on there.

Lorenzo Massey:

It did. We had doctors come in on a Wednesday. They had one room in there. They waited on people.

Louise Massey:

His name was Dr, Massey, wasn't it?

Lorenzo Massey:

I don't remember his name.

Velma Fann:

I heard of a Dr. Massey, I think that was his last name, in town.

Lorenzo Massey:

Okay.

Velma Fann:

And someone mentioned a Dr. Kraft, I think.

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, yeah.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Who made house calls?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, I remember Dr. Kraft. Yeah, he went around and made house calls.

Velma Fann:

Were there any midwives that you remember?

Lorenzo Massey:

Let me see. I remember. What was Ms. Amanda's name? Hilton. Yeah. Amanda Hilton. I remember her was a midwife.

Velma Fann:

Her first name. Could you spell that for me?

Lorenzo Massey:

Amanda. Let me see. Who was Amanda. Hilton?

Velma Fann:

Amanda? Okay. I got that. And her last name?

Lorenzo Massey:

Hilton.

Velma Fann:

Hilton?

Lorenzo Massey:

Huh?

Velma Fann:

Hilton. Hilton?

Lorenzo Massey:

[inaudible 00:19:16].

Louise Massey:

C-O-D.

Velma Fann:

I think I know that family name. I'll send it to you. You all can make sure we spell it right, okay?

Lorenzo Massey:

Okay.

Velma Fann:

Okay. That sounds good. Anything else? Who were some of the leaders there in the community?

Lorenzo Massey:

Let me see. I want to say something like Mr. Sam Massey, jewel one. And Paul Gaston. Who else would lead right here?

Louise Massey:

Who else would what?

Lorenzo Massey:

Kind lead over.

Louise Massey:

Well, there was Mr. Massey's cousin.

Lorenzo Massey:

Mr. Clyde? It wasn't.

Louise Massey:

Mr. Clyde's family.

Lorenzo Massey:

I called Mr. Sam.

Louise Massey:

Clyde and Loma?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah. Oh, my wife said Mr. Clyde.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

Mr. Clyde and Mr. Sam was brother.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So that was Mr. Clyde Massey, right?

Lorenzo Massey:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Were there any meeting places?

Lorenzo Massey:

There was another little business here to run. Mr. Jack Green. He had a little small store.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Okay. They talked about his store too. Do you remember that store?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah, I remember.

Velma Fann:

Whereabouts was that store?

Lorenzo Massey:

It was right there. Right by there, near the Shallow Church I was telling you about.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah. He was right there. He lived right there by the church and had a little store out there by the church.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Anything else you can recall?

Lorenzo Massey:

No.

Louise Massey:

I used to skate to pass the time.

Lorenzo Massey:

Huh?

Louise Massey:

I used to roller blade on the skate.

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, yeah. We used to roller blades on the skate.

Velma Fann:

Oh, you used to roller skate?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Where did you do that?

Lorenzo Massey:

All the way down 75 because that road was paved with cement at the time. We'd leave out of Waxhaw going towards South Carolina and skate all the way down to 521.

Velma Fann:

Wow.

Lorenzo Massey:

That was a long way.

Velma Fann:

Yes. That sounds like a long way.

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

So there wasn't much traffic then I take it, right?

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, no.

Velma Fann:

Not like it is now.

Lorenzo Massey:

Not like it is now.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. Sounds like you had a lot of fun.

Lorenzo Massey:

We did.

Velma Fann:

That sounds good. Okay. Anything else come to mind?

Louise Massey:

Did you tell about your old school?

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, see, I didn't know that. What I went to.

Velma Fann:

Was that the Rosenwald School?

Lorenzo Massey:

The what?

Velma Fann:

They called one of them the Rosenwald School. That may have been it. Did they tear that one down?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yes. The school had been torn down.

Velma Fann:

So what were your classes like?

Lorenzo Massey:

How's that?

Velma Fann:

What were your classes like in school? What did you take? What classes did you take?

Lorenzo Massey:

Down at grammar school?

Velma Fann:

Yes, sir.

Lorenzo Massey:

I don't remember that.

Velma Fann:

Was it a big school?

Lorenzo Massey:

No.

Velma Fann:

About how many classrooms?

Lorenzo Massey:

It had three.

Velma Fann:

Do you remember anything else about it?

Louise Massey:

They put a stove in there to get warmer.

Lorenzo Massey:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. My wife told me it had a wood stove. They finally started bringing us. Well, we used to have to go to the woods, we was in the woods, had to cut the trees down to keep the fire going.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

And then they finally started bringing us coal out.

Velma Fann:

Mr. Massey, I'm glad you talked with me. I got a lot of good information.

Lorenzo Massey:

Right. Thank you. I'm glad you did.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Lorenzo Massey:

Well, you live here?

Velma Fann:

No, sir. I'm in Atlanta, but I came up early part of June. And I know you weren't feeling well at the time, so I'm glad you're better and that we had an opportunity to talk.

Lorenzo Massey:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Lorenzo Massey:

All right.

Velma Fann:

All right. Can I speak to Mrs. Massey again?

Lorenzo Massey:

Yes. Yes, ma'am.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Louise Massey:

Hello.

Velma Fann:

Hi, Mrs. Massey. Thank you so much.

Louise Massey:

Yes, ma'am. You're so welcome.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Louise Massey:

Glad you got the information you needed.

Velma Fann:

Yes, ma'am.

Louise Massey:

Now, where you all going to be printing? Y'all going to be printing this in a book or something?

Velma Fann:

Yes. Hold on just one moment for me.

Sylvester McManus, III

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 5, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is June 5th, 2025, and I am speaking with Mr. Sylvester McManus III, for the Waxhaw African-American History Project. And welcome.

Sylvester McManus III:

Thank you, Ms. Velma.

Velma Fann:

All righty. So, would you please state your name, spell it for us, and give us your date of birth.

Sylvester McManus III:

Sylvester E. McManus, S-Y-L-V-E-S-T-E-R, and that's E for Everette, E-V-E-R-E-T-T-E, McManus, M-C-M-A-N-U-S, birth date, July 13th, 1959.

Velma Fann:

All righty. And are you a native of Waxhaw?

Sylvester McManus III:

I am.

Velma Fann:

And how long has your family been here, generation-wise?

Sylvester McManus III:

Generation-wise? Wow, I'm going to say probably close to 90, 100 years with my grandfather, and then my father, and myself.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

All righty. So, a lot of times I ask, what are the boundaries for the African-American community here in Waxhaw? What would you say the boundaries are?

Sylvester McManus III:

When you say boundaries, what are we-

Velma Fann:

In terms of where do we live? Sometimes they say on a certain side of the railroad track.

Sylvester McManus III:

Okay, okay. So, a majority of the African-Americans here in Waxhaw would live off of Old Howie Man Road.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

It's also called Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. So, you probably got about 90% African-Americans in that area.

Velma Fann:

And is that the area you grew up in?

Sylvester McManus III:

That's the area I grew up in, yes.

Velma Fann:

And describe your community to us when you were growing up, or because you're young.

Sylvester McManus III:

Right, yes.

Velma Fann:

Or what your father may have said, and your grandfather may have said, about Waxhaw back in the day.

Sylvester McManus III:

Well, back in the day, we all know it wasn't a good thing, because there was slavery back then. You kind of had to be in your own geographical area. There are things that you were told you can't do, you can't be here, and stuff like that. But my dad also told me things are now getting better, which, as I was growing up, I didn't really see a lot of that. Now, did I see racism? Yes. Did racism hit me hard? It didn't really hit me hard, because things were beginning to change. Things were beginning to change, yes.

Velma Fann:

Now, did your family live in a certain area? Were they in Waxhaw proper, or outside?

Sylvester McManus III:

No, in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yeah, in the town.

Velma Fann:

All righty.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

So, when you were growing up, what were the community norms?

Sylvester McManus III:

Like?

Velma Fann:

Sometimes they say other people could discipline other people's children.

Sylvester McManus III:

Oh, yeah, yeah. Yes, that's true. I mean, even though my mom and dad disciplined us, now, when we're talking about discipline, I mean, that doesn't mean that the lady down the street is just going like spank me. Not that, but they would tell us, "You shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't be doing this. And I'm going to tell your mom." That's basically what they would do.

I remember what was communicated to my mom, and probably one of the worst beatings I ever got, I had a minibike, and we were always told not to ride those minibikes on the road. We had a guy that lived across the street from me. He was kind of different. I mean, he get in a lot of trouble. So, he convinced me, with his minibike, we rode it down Waxhaw Indian Trail Road, about 10 miles. And that's a lot of people that saw us. And before I could even get back home, they reported this to my mom.

And my mom, when I went in the house, I remember her asking me, "Where have you been?" I just said, "Out riding the minibike." And she goes, "Where?" I said, "Wait a minute, something's up here." So, I was just honest with her. And then when I told her that, I probably got beaten for

about five minutes. But that's the way the elders in our community would discipline us. They would help. They would look out. They would look out for one another, yes, yes.

Velma Fann:

What kind of work do you do? And the men in your family, what kind of work did they do?

Sylvester McManus III:

So, my mom, for a while, was a stay-at-home mom. She was an excellent cook, and she became the cafeteria manager at Western Union Middle School. And she was there for about 15 to 20 years. She would also bake cakes, sell cakes in the community, and everybody just loved her cakes. But she was an excellent cook.

My dad was a brick mason, and he was an excellent brick mason. My dad was also a smart individual, which me and my brother, we talk about this to this day, that he should have started his own business instead of just working for other people. Now, did you need to know what I did, or just them?

Velma Fann:

Well, them, and you, and however far back you want to go, and whatever you would like to share.

Sylvester McManus III:

No, I mean, I think that's good with my parents. Myself, I was a network engineer for 19 years. That ended about 13 years ago. After that, I started a restaurant here in town called Sonny's Sports Place. I owned that for three years. Those three years, I never worked that hard in my life. And everybody told me how the restaurant business was going to be. So, it's like I was married to that business. And after three years, I said, "I got to sell this place," so I ended up selling my restaurant. And then I got into Lawn Care, which I've owned. My business is called Sonny's Lawn Care, which I've owned for 13 years. And over the years, it really evolved into something big. I mean, I'm not trying to toot my horn, but it has been a successful business.

Velma Fann:

Oh, good.

Sylvester McManus III:

It has been a successful business, yes.

Velma Fann:

So, it seems as though you come from a family of entrepreneurs.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes, yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And I hear a lot about African-Americans and brick masonry. So, was that pretty common?

Sylvester McManus III:

Yeah, it was. Yeah, that concrete, that was mainly what my elders did back in their days. Yes.

Velma Fann:

So, what are some of the sites or places of importance for the Black community here?

Sylvester McManus III:

Now, or back then?

Velma Fann:

Back then?

Sylvester McManus III:

Okay. So, I forget the name of the school that my parents attended, but it was down here, all above Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. When that school closed, I believe it was the 4-H community that created a community center down there. So, they had things like boxing gloves, weights, all kinds of different things for the kids to do. They used to have dances down there. They had live bands. The 4th of July, picnic down there. It was just humongous.

Velma Fann:

Tell me about that. Everybody speaks about that 4th of July picnic.

Sylvester McManus III:

I'll tell you what, as far as here in Waxhaw, every Black individual was probably there. And then you got Black individuals coming out of Monroe, out of Charlotte, out of Martin. They would do things like the... What was it called? The pig run, where you chase down a greasy pig. Yeah, you chase down a greasy pig. You catch the pig, you get to keep them. There was horseshoe tournaments.

Now, this was big. My grandfather was probably the best horseshoe player in the town of Waxhaw, and there would be so many young people just watching this horseshoe tournament, and me and my brother just pulling from my grandfather. But it was competitive. Every now and then, they would do baseball games down there, but it wasn't like... I never got a chance to see the Black Baseball League. I've heard stories about it. And he said my father was one of the hardest hitters that they had seen, but there was a lot of good talent that played back then. But they just seemed like they sold fish, hot dogs, hamburgers, and everybody would get dressed up.

I remember, one year, my parents took me and my brother to Kmart, and we got bell-bottom slacks. And boy, boy, we thought we were a thing. But yeah, everybody would just dress so nice. So, that was special.

Velma Fann:

That was special.

Sylvester McManus III:

And cars would be parked all up the road. I mean, yeah, that was fun. That was something that we looked forward to.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. I think that may have been the Waxhaw Community Center. That was probably the school at first?

Sylvester McManus III:

Exactly. Yeah, yes, yes.

Velma Fann:

Yeah, okay. Do you have any idea when that may have closed?

Sylvester McManus III:

When?

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm.

Sylvester McManus III:

Wow. No, that would be it. That would just be a guess. If I'm guessing, I'm probably saying in the early '70s.

Velma Fann:

Early '70s?

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Another landmark that people often speak of is the Rosenwald School.

Sylvester McManus III:

That was it.

Velma Fann:

Oh.

Sylvester McManus III:

That was it.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

That was it, the Rosenwald School.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right. Did your parents attend that school? Do you know?

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

All right.

Sylvester McManus III:

Mm-hmm.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. Did they tell you anything about it? What it looked like, or what school was like then?

Sylvester McManus III:

If they did, I just can't remember. I'm sure they talked to us about that. And from the experience that they had there at the school, I just know it was positive. But it's like they were in their own little norm, and then you had the white community that was in their own little norm.

When I was growing up, I went to Western Union. That was 1st through 12th grade, all Black. Here in Waxhaw, it was integrated, which was kind of funny. So, I guess one of the challenging experience I had as a young kid was fifth grade I got transferred from Western Union to Waxhaw. And that was a big change, because I wasn't used to being around Caucasians. And there used to be some battles, I mean, physical battles, name-calling, but not a whole lot, but kind

of worked my way through that. So, that was how the schools were kind of set up back then. Once I got to high school, things really started changing for the better.

Velma Fann:

Good.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

So, what years are we speaking of when you first came to the schools in Waxhaw?

Sylvester McManus III:

Well, I can say... I don't know, I started, but I graduated from Parkwood in 1977.

Velma Fann:

Okay. All right. So, Parkwood, was that the high school here?

Sylvester McManus III:

That's the high school here. It's actually a Monroe address, but it was a theater school for all of Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So, you went from your elementary school, Western Union, to which school here?

Sylvester McManus III:

Parkwood.

Velma Fann:

Parkwood? Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes. Because, yeah, it was Waxhaw Elementary, and then what happened at Western Union, it became only a middle school. So, then I go from Western Union to Parkwood in the high school.

Velma Fann:

So, by the time you were here in the city, things were changing.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Did your parents ever talk about life in the city, where segregation may have been? Sometimes I hear about a movie theater that was here. Did they talk about anything like that?

Sylvester McManus III:

They didn't talk about... Well, I mean, they just talked about the movie. I don't remember them talking about the movie theater, because, I mean, I don't even know if they would've been allowed to even go there. I don't know. So, I don't remember that conversation.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm, okay. During the civil rights era, let's say, but you would know, like in the late '60s, early '70s, anything happening here, or did your parents talk about voter registration, or what things were like before desegregation?

Sylvester McManus III:

All I know is we're talking about voting and stuff like that. Only thing I know that they talked to us about is that when they were kids, and now they are adults, that things are beginning to start changing. Things are beginning to get better.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yeah, so it's a lot of things. I just don't remember what we talked about.

Velma Fann:

Well, did they talk about the past?

Sylvester McManus III:

Oh, yeah.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay, okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yeah, they did, they did. And I could tell that that was really tough for them also.

Velma Fann:

Sure.

Sylvester McManus III:

I guess that's why I kind of had and have problems today, to this day, watching movies that deals with slavery, because you see all of this on TV. You saw all of this in magazines. And me, as a Black African-American, I just look at people as being people, but seeing people living on a... I forget what they were called, a farm or whatever, enslaved in houses, working all day in the fields, being beaten with whips, dogs being turned on them because they're protesting, because they want to see a better life for African-Americans, yeah, that kind of left a bad taste in my mouth. My wife, however, she can watch stuff like that, I just can't deal with that. And yeah, I'm so grateful now that things are so much better.

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm. So, you came along during the era of desegregation, and just that whole shift from leaving an African-American school, coming to a predominantly white school in Waxhaw?

Sylvester McManus III:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

You want to share a little bit more about maybe your first few years? How did you fit in?

Sylvester McManus III:

Well, I mean, now, as far as going to a segregated school, you mean when I came from Western Union to Waxhaw?

Velma Fann:

Right, mm-hmm.

Sylvester McManus III:

I mean, you got some people that are raised to be racist, and you know who those people are. And we could be walking down the hall, and you know this guy's a racist. And you think, you know what? There may be some words said, which every now and then, there would be said. But then you got some Caucasians who would stand up for you, and they would say, "What you're saying makes absolutely no sense at all." So, the way they viewed the world is, "You're just as good as I am. I'm no better than you. My parents don't treat African-Americans any different than they treat Caucasians." You got some people that used to run gas stations around here. They were just as racist as they could be. And sometime you didn't even want to go there to get gas or whatever you needed.

So, I did see things like that when I was young. But I mean, my experience when I went to the segregated school for the first year, was it real bad? It wasn't real bad, but I saw the other side. I saw the other side.

Velma Fann:

Any particularly older churches here in the city, or in the area that African-Americans attended? What are the landmarks here?

Sylvester McManus III:

Where I grew up at, and this church is no longer there, there was a church that was called Shiloh Presbyterian. That used to be right behind my house. Many good times at that church, especially when we had the Bible school, vocational Bible study, because there would just be games and everything, snacks, all your friends there. That church was probably torn down, probably right around '75. Off of Waxhaw Indian Trail Road, you've got Wesley Chapel Methodist, which is still there. Right below that, my dad built Faith Community Church, and he became a pastor there. Mt. Nebo Missionary Church is still here. I think it's all the churches that are left in this area now. But back then, everybody was in church.

Velma Fann:

Everybody was-

Sylvester McManus III:

Everybody was in church. That's a big change to this day. Everybody was in church, everybody was in suits. Yeah. And then after church, and this is something that don't happen today, you go home to that nice Sunday cooking. My mom used to always do that.

Velma Fann:

Wow.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

That's really good. Anything else you'd like to share about the places here, the people here, the communities here?

Sylvester McManus III:

Like now, or back then?

Velma Fann:

Well, now and whatever your parents might have shared.

Sylvester McManus III:

I think we've talked a lot about the past. So, I don't know if you know I was a town commissioner for 16 years?

Velma Fann:

No, I did not.

Sylvester McManus III:

So, the main reason I wanted to become a town commissioner is I wanted to be a voice for people who were afraid to go to meetings, even though they may be having problems in their neighborhood, this and that. So, I was a town commissioner for 16 years, and I wasn't only a voice for Blacks. I'm just going to say, I was a voice for minorities, which means that could be Black, that could be white. If you need my help, I'm going to do what I can to help you. I saw a lot of changes in my 16 years as town commissioner. I mean, we tried to do what we call Smart Growth. And if you look at what's going on now, it's an explosion.

Velma Fann:

Yes, it is.

Sylvester McManus III:

It's an explosion.

Velma Fann:

As I say, I'm not from around here, I see that.

Sylvester McManus III:

It's an explosion of growth. So, we did a good job with Smart Growth. I remember, the first time I heard, as a commissioner, that Lowe's Home Improvement was coming here, that was the first big store, big chain that came, everybody like, "Oh my goodness." And then I remember when the Burger King came here, we didn't have any fast food restaurant, that was huge. Then the Arby's came.

But one thing I did as a town commissioner, I created this nonprofit organization called The Community Works of Waxhaw. We did things like build volleyball courts, a walk and trail. We would have live music. We would have movie nights on Friday, be outdoor movie. The biggest thing we did, though, was, and I had a lot of kids, they always used to come up to me and say, "Hey, Mr. McManus, Mr. McManus, we would love to have a skateboard park." So, after about three years, when I got this Community Works of Waxhaw together, if we put in, say, like \$4,000, it would get matching funds. So, we got a skate park built. Have you seen it yet?

Velma Fann:

I haven't seen it.

Sylvester McManus III:

Okay. So, you got to see it.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Okay, if you cro... It's just three railroad crossing here in Waxhaw. If you take the one in the middle and you just go straight across, it's going to take you right to the skateboard park. And it is really nice, so make sure you get to see that before you leave.

But yeah, you see a lot of stuff on Facebook now, where the people that have been here for a while, they talk about how this town now, it's really changing. I mean, you got a lot of people coming out of Charlotte. You got a lot of people coming from up north. Probably, a majority of our commissioner board now is Northern. I think that's got a lot to do with the fast growth.

Velma Fann:

And what years were you commissioner?

Sylvester McManus III:

I knew she was going to ask me, and I was trying to find it before I left. I think I started 1988, I believe, so that would be '88, '98, 2004.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

And what inspired you to run for that office?

Sylvester McManus III:

Well, I mean, number one was what I told you before, I wanted to be a voice, but I also wanted to help try and shape this town. I mean, because when I came on the board, Waxhaw, it was a really, really slow town. And I remember one of the things we did, we created, we were in a meeting and what our goal was, was to create an environment here in town where you didn't really have to leave. Say, if you want to do dinner, there's numerous restaurants here in town now.

If you walk through Waxhaw on a Friday or Saturday, you'll know the people that are from out of town, and there's tons of people from out of town. So, what I'm trying to say is we wanted to create foot traffic. So, that foot traffic now is here. You got shops that are making money. You got restaurants that are making money. If I own my restaurant now, I might still be there.

But yeah, there's a lot of positive things that are going on here in town. One of the big negatives is the traffic. And from what I'm hearing, there's a road called Ray Road. If you're going up Highway 16, the four lanes stop there. So, from what I'm hearing, those four lanes are supposed to start up and come all the way into the town.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Sylvester McManus III:

Also, there is a parkway that they're currently working on right now. The parkway is down here at the Car Wash CVS. So, the parkway, if you're going to go east, is going to take you out to

Highway 75, for the traffic now that needs to go into South Carolina, if you go west. If you go east, it's going to take you into Monroe, Marshall, wherever, which means now all that traffic doesn't have to be funneled down Highway 16 to the red light. Because when I say traffic is backed up, if you don't know different ways to get around here, which I do, it's going to take you 15 minutes to get through that traffic light.

Velma Fann:

Yeah. You ran for office. What would your, or did your parents, grandparents, or great-grandfather, would've said? Do you think they ever saw this coming?

Sylvester McManus III:

Well, my dad was the first African-American to run the town commissioner. And, of course, he didn't get elected, but he also told us that there was some white people that rode by one day, that threw a brick at the house. But my dad, was he happy when I got elected? Yes. He was ecstatic. He was really, really happy.

I remember, one time, he and I went to care to see my brother, and then we came back, and I had a meeting that I had to be at, and the train had everything blocked. So, I told him, "I'm going to jump out. I'm going to run the town hall," because I got to go across the bridge. And so, I ran there, and he gets to the meeting, and it wasn't one of our regular meetings. It was like a call meeting. And so, I was in a meeting. I had a baseball cap on. Everybody's sitting out in the audience. He walks in, he walks up to me, and he takes that cap off of my head and holds onto to it. And I'm like, "Oh my goodness, daddy, you didn't have to do that." And then after the meeting, he said, "You don't do that." Ever since then, that stuck with me. Yeah, professionalism.

Velma Fann:

Professionalism.

Sylvester McManus III:

Professionalism, "You don't wear a baseball cap there." But my dad was really proud of me. My grandfather, who was living, was proud of me, and my grandmother. But not only that, people that I grew up with were proud of me, and not for just getting elected, they were proud of me for

what I was trying to do for the community, and what I was trying to do for them, how I would stand up for them. So, not only was my family proud of me, but there was a lot of people in the community that was proud of me.

Velma Fann:

Did you ever think about leaving Waxhaw, or was this just home, home, home?

Sylvester McManus III:

Just home, home, home over me. My brother, he goes here and there, but no, I'm just a homebody. Yeah, never really considered leaving. No, never considered leaving.

Velma Fann:

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Sylvester McManus III:

Well, no. I mean, some people, they complain about the town of Waxhaw now, but the only complaint that you really hear about the town of Waxhaw, you hear about the fast growth. You got houses going up everywhere. And as I know, and a lot of them know, the infrastructure is just not here to be able to handle that.

But the good thing about it now is, if you want to go out to dinner, you don't have to go into Charlotte, you don't have to go into Monroe. There's a lot of shops around here, which I don't go to the shops and things, but I just think Waxhaw right now is a really, really viable town. It's a viable town now. People know about Waxhaw.

One thing that's also interesting, two years ago, I was listening to the radio, and they said, "What city in North Carolina has the longest work commute?" And I thought about that for 10 seconds. I said, "I bet you, that's Waxhaw." So, they came back with the answer, it's Waxhaw. It's changing. It's changing. Yes, yes, yeah.

Velma Fann:

Wow. Well, thank you very much. I enjoyed speaking with you.

Sylvester McManus III:

Okay. Thank you, Fann.

Velma Fann:

Thank you. Bye-bye.

Speaker 3:

So, I guess I'm just going to relax-

Ms. Vivie Miller

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 5, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is June the fifth, 2025, and I am speaking with Miss Vivie Miller for the Waxhaw African-American History Project. Welcome, Miss Vivie.

Vivie Miller:

Thank you so much. Thank you.

Velma Fann:

Would you spell and state your name for us, and your date of birth?

Vivie Miller:

Vivie Miller. Spelled V as in Victor, I-V-I-E. Last name Miller, M-I-L-L-E-R. I was born 2/11/49, and I am 76 years young.

Velma Fann:

There You go. Okay. Are you a Native of Waxhaw?

Vivie Miller:

Yes, I was born and raised here.

Velma Fann:

And what about your parents?

Vivie Miller:

My dad was born in South Carolina. My mother was born here in North Carolina, in Waxhaw. And I was born here in Waxhaw, of course, in my grandmother's house, by the midwife.

Velma Fann:

So, was your grandmother the midwife or midwife came to the house?

Vivie Miller:

The midwife came to the house, and I was going to look for my birth certificate to see if her name was on there, but I haven't had a chance to do that. Actually, I completely forgot about it. But yeah, I was born in her home, a midwife came in.

Velma Fann:

Right. What were the boundaries of the African-American community?

Vivie Miller:

My take on it was what we call the east side.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

It was on this side of the tracks, but closer to town and on the east side, east side. Okay. And then there were some Blacks on the west side on the same side of the track called, it was Sandy Ridge. And so there were some there, and of course, there were those who were out in the country in the more rural areas.

Velma Fann:

And what part of the communities did you stay in? Were you the rich Sandy Ridge or the rural areas? Right in the city?

Vivie Miller:

Right. And I'm about four blocks from downtown, actually.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Describe your community. What did it look like, the houses?

Vivie Miller:

The houses were wood. When we started out there was a material called Silitex, and it was like a siding on the house. And we started out with three rooms. And like I say, my dad was a brick mason, so later on, he and his friends built each other's homes, so they were wood and brick mostly. And that was it. Yeah, wood and brick, except for that Silitex. Back, I mean, that was a long time ago when I was a child. Yeah. We started out with, actually, we started out living with my aunt, and at the time I think there were four in the family, and we all slept in one little tiny room. That was with my aunt. And then my dad bought some land and he built a house. It had three rooms, it had a bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen. And we all, again slept in that same one room. Then the living room, of course, we had the kitchen. And as time went on, he just added more and more and more onto it. Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Is that house still standing?

Vivie Miller:

That's the house I'm living in now.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. Wow.

Vivie Miller:

It was made with, actually old brick, which is really beautiful, because it has black, it has pinks, it has grays, it has all different colored bricks in it. And I believe I was told that it came from a building that burned downtown.

Velma Fann:

Really?

Vivie Miller:

Yeah. On the corner there's a place called Mary O'Neill's, and I think that's where it was. There was a building there that burned down, and so that's where I hear he got his bricks from.

Velma Fann:

I hear quite a bit about Black men being Masons, so that was a skill set?

Vivie Miller:

Was a skill set, but not all. Well, my dad's friends were brick masons. And like I said, there were about five of them, including Lorenzo Massey, and I'm not sure what Mildred's dad did. But there were, my grandfather on my mom's side was a delivery driver for Niven-Price Company, Downtown Waxhaw. My grandfather on my dad's side was with the railroad, and so there were brick masons and people that worked with the railroad. And like I say, my other grandfather was a delivery person for Niven-Price Company in Waxhaw at the time. And most of the women who worked were domestic workers.

Velma Fann:

And what kind of work did your mother do?

Vivie Miller:

She was a domestic worker.

Velma Fann:

And her mom?

Vivie Miller:

She was, well, I'll say a housewife, but she did do some work for a lady in Waxhaw. She did some ironing, and I think sometimes, maybe rarely, maybe some cleaning, but most of the time she ironed for her. That's what she did.

Velma Fann:

Did your parents or grandparents say much about Waxhaw in their day?

Vivie Miller:

No. No, no, no, they didn't. I'm sorry. They did not. The only thing that I can remember my dad saying back in the day was that I don't know if he was working for someone or doing an odd job as a young man, but I remember him saying when he ate his lunch he had to eat it outside on the porch with the dogs. And I looked at him when he was saying, and it was like a mixture of sadness. It was a mixture of anger, so that kind of bothered him. So, he didn't talk about that much. But no, they didn't, because my grandfather on my mom's side, they were not considered poor. He had cows, he had chickens, he had hogs, he had ... And he had a dog. He used to hunt with the dog. So, there was not a food shortage at all. We ate well. And my grandmother, of course, was a good cook, and my mom became a good cook.

But I didn't really think about racism until I was a little older, because back then it was kind of like, well, "This is the way it is. When you start out that way that's the thing, that's the way it is, this is normal." But of course, found out later that of course, it wasn't normal. And one time I used to think, when I was in grade school we'd get books. And they'd have these names in it, and sometimes they would write in them talking, "What's going on here? What did these books come from?" Well, of course, it came from the whites who were handing them over to us. And we were always taught, oh, we have to clean the books. We can't put any marks in them. And I'm thinking, "We are getting them that way."

And so then once there was another time when my parents took us to, it was some type of garden park. I can't remember where it is. I think it was just over the South Carolina line in South Carolina. And we were, I don't know where my parents were at that time, but I was walking down this little dirt road in the park looking at the flowers and stuff. And a car that I didn't hear came up behind me, and they blew the horn, and I jumped. And so I looked back, there was this white family, and they were all laughing. And even then I remember thinking, or maybe later I remember thinking, "I know children can be cruel, but I thought adults knew better." That was my very first thought about that situation. So, I was more or less, I guess I would say just sheltered from that, because I didn't start realizing that until I got older.

Velma Fann:

What schools did you attend?

Vivie Miller:

I went to a school in Waxhaw. It was a Rosenwald School. And I went there up until, I think the sixth grade. And then all of the Rosenwald Schools or Black schools, called Black schools, started going to, we were bused to Western Union now. And of course, it was from one through 12, I believe. And I started there. I believe I was in the seventh grade when I started going to Western Union.

Velma Fann:

And how was that experience?

Vivie Miller:

Which-

Velma Fann:

Going to a predominantly white school?

Vivie Miller:

Going to-

Velma Fann:

Western Union?

Vivie Miller:

Yeah. Well see, it was Black.

Velma Fann:

Oh, that's right.

Vivie Miller:

All Black then. And see, they didn't desegregate until, what was it, '65 or somewhere around.

Velma Fann:

'64 or '65.

Vivie Miller:

Yeah. So, I had the option to go to a desegregated white school or stay where I was. Okay, so this was my senior year. So there was no reason, I said, "I'm not switching in my senior year. That wouldn't make sense to me." I stayed at Western Union and I graduated from Western Union. My sisters, however, went to Parkwood.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Did they tell you anything about their experience at Parkwood?

Vivie Miller:

No. I mean, it's really weird, because they never talked about it. And the thing was, a friend of mine who I went to school with and we graduated from Western Union said, "Well, my sister and her sister went to Parkwood." And so she didn't find out, she said until years later when her sister told her all of the things that they had gone through. I don't know if they just didn't want to talk about it or what, but my sister never mentioned that.

Velma Fann:

What did you all do for fun growing up? Where did you go?

Vivie Miller:

And so that's what I had to write about

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

Well, I had to really do a lot of thinking here, but there were slumber parties of friends of mine would come over, and I don't remember that, she had to tell me that. She said, "Mamilyn, that's my middle name. "Don't you remember when we used to come to your house and your mom she's the best cook. She had cooked us things to eat good stuff, cookies and cake and hot dogs and hamburgers. And we would lay in the (inaudible)... Had our little blankets, and we had the best time." "Diane, I don't remember that."

And then another lady who's younger than I am told me, "That yeah, we used to come over to your house and play in the attic." "Really? I don't remember that." But then there was, in high school we would ride to Charlotte, because we had guys in our class who were 18, so they had driver's licenses, and we'd go to these little joints, these little hole-in-the-wall places. And we had one in Waxhaw that I could walk to. I could walk to that one.

Velma Fann:

And what was that one? The name of that one?

Vivie Miller:

I don't know if it actually had a name. Oh, may not have the name. It may not, Rudolph's Place or whatever. We used to call Rudolph. His last name was Higgins. And they used to call him Tony the Tiger, because he was a big guy and he had a light brown complexion, and he would do his little diddly dance around. He was a lot of fun. But we used to go there. And then of course, we had, our school had, we finally got a basketball team. And so, we would go to basketball games and we would travel to other schools too, Black schools, and we would play basketball. And I was a cheerleader, so I went to all of them. Baseball, that was more of an adult kind of thing. But like I said, I only remember the 4th of July baseball games at the Rosenwald School. That was the baseball diamond, just off the school. That's where we went. And of course, we went to drive-ins later on. And before that we had a movie downtown.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

I don't know, but it's where Provisions is now. And of course, we had to sit in the balcony. And we had barbecues and people would come over, my dad would barbecue. We did those kinds of things. And we had, like I said, family trips to the park and my mom would take us fishing with my aunt who loved fishing at the time.

And then my boyfriend had got a car. I don't know how he got that car, but it was a brand-new yellow Ford Fairlane. It was four on the floor, and it had what they call a double synchronizer on the transmission. And I would sit back then, he had his arm around me, and I would get the gears for him, so you could put it in first, then you put it in second. And then because of the synchronize on it, you could put it back in first and get more power, and we'd be cruising. And then there were school plays, and there were community church plays that we went to. What else? And of course, there were the once a year things. Of course, I went to the junior prom and the senior prom.

Velma Fann:

And where were they held?

Vivie Miller:

At our school. [At a venue in Monroe, Prom were not held at the school].]

Vivie Miller:

And our graduation trip was to Atlantic Beach at the time. And of course, Atlantic Beach, there was Atlantic Beach, which was the segregated one for the Blacks. And then there was Myrtle Beach. And so that was really nice. What else? Oh, and while I was in school I drove a school bus.

Velma Fann:

You drove a school bus?

Vivie Miller:

I drove a school bus. Let me tell you, it had the starter in the floor. I don't know if you ever heard that before. You turned the ignition, but then you couldn't start it with the ignition. You just had to turn it on. And then the pedal was on the floor. There was a (inaudible) on the floor, so you had to turn your foot light horizontal sideways to do the accelerator and the starter. And that was started up. You never heard of that?

Velma Fann:

No.

Vivie Miller:

Really? Oh my goodness. You must be a young chick. A young kid. But yeah, and the bus was, I think it was a 19 ... It was old. And they governed, the school bus because children drove them. We drove, the high school students drove the buses.

Velma Fann:

Wow, okay.

Vivie Miller:

Yeah. So we would pick up kids in the morning and take them to school. When we left school they would all get on the bus and we'd take them back home, and then we would go drive home in the bus.

Velma Fann:

Right.

Vivie Miller:

Okay. But the bus was so old. If it was raining and cold outside, I was always afraid that my bus was not going to make it up the hill, because it would cut back so much with the heat, with the windshield wipers. And I was always afraid of that, but it never happened. But high school was interesting. And then of course, in high school, we had, like I say, concerts ourselves. We had a great director of music. She was fantastic. She also taught English, and she taught literature. And at her home, I understand she had a beautiful white baby grand piano.

Velma Fann:

Oh my.

Vivie Miller:

Yes. She was excellent. And she would say "Vivie!" "No, they called me Mamilyn. Mamie, are you not singing the right part?" And of course, I'd sing what whoever was standing next to me! "Just leave. Just leave, Mamilyn. Just go. Just go." And so, we did. It was nice. And if I had to say so myself, we did a great job on our concert. She did a fantastic job. And we would sell tickets to that. And people would just crowd the auditorium, because we were really good. She was a really good teacher, really good teacher.

Velma Fann:

What about churches? What were some of the bedrock churches in the community?

Vivie Miller:

Our bedrock churches were, there were three in town.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

There was Mount Nebo Baptist Church, which is right down the street on the same street where my house is. So I could walk to that one. And that was the church my dad belonged to, because he was a Baptist. Then there was the Methodist Church down Howie Mine Road. And then was, our church was the first Presbyterian, well, it was Shiloh at the time, Shiloh Presbyterian Church. So we had the Baptist, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian churches. Those were the bedrock churches.

Velma Fann:

Did you all visit each other's churches?

Vivie Miller:

Yeah, we did. Not on a regular basis, but what we did do, and we had people coming in from different churches like South Carolina and Charlotte, because we would have, I don't know what they called them, but it was sing-offs. We would have concerts where we would invite choirs from all over. They would come into the church, they would sing one or two or three songs, and then they would leave. Then another one would sing. So, that's what we did. But those were the three bedrock churches in town. And a lot of my friends, I had friends in all of them. And then there was Ebenezer AME Church one of my friends went to, but it wasn't in town. It's just outside of town.

Velma Fann:

So in town, did you go in town much? Did you come into the city of Waxhaw to shop or to sit around? Or what was segregation like, if indeed it was still segregated? What was the race relationship like?

Vivie Miller:

Well, I never had a problem, because, well, my dad was my dad, and a lot of things he would not tolerate. But like I say, we lived about four blocks from downtown. So, we would walk downtown, we would go to the candy store, we would go to what's called the Farmer's Market, which is I think where Maxwells is now. And Farmer's Market. I mean, they had everything in that store. And then my grandfather worked at Niven-Price. And so we would go up there, and he would bring sodas home sometimes. We'd go up there. But other than that there were no clothing stores, no, nothing like that in downtown Waxhaw. There really was no shopping for anybody. Even the whites there was no shopping for.

But the whites, of course, owned the businesses that they did have. The delivery stables, the cotton gins, that kind of thing. And I can remember on the corner, I think that might have been the building that burned down when we got our bricks, I remember going uptown and one evening, and I saw the first colored TV set that I had ever seen. They had it in the window-

Velma Fann:

In the window.

Vivie Miller:

... and they had it on, and I passed by, and I'd just stand there and watch it sometimes. But yeah, it was no problem for us to go downtown to get candy or to buy chips that I remember. I never had a problem. No one ever said anything out of the way to me. Like I said, it was just later on in life when racism really stuck. When I really knew what it was actually. But no shopping other than what I just mentioned.

Velma Fann:

If someone were to ask, what was and is the African-American contribution to Waxhaw?

Vivie Miller:

That is a good question. I'm not sure. I think that maybe they started contributing later, later, much later, probably after I left, because I don't think we considered ourselves a part of or integrated with the town of Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

I see.

Vivie Miller:

We mostly did our own thing. I don't think that there was a great contribution until later on in life. Like my cousin, David Barnes, who became one of the commissioners. And Sonny McManus, I think at one time was one of the commissioners. But as far as the town of Waxhaw itself, other than that, I can't say that we did, because we didn't. I don't think that they recognized us as part of the community, and I don't think we recognized ourselves as part of the community. I have to say that I don't remember a great contribution that we actually made to the town of Waxhaw until later.

Velma Fann:

Until later. So, it was a self-sufficient African-American community?

Vivie Miller:

Yes. Like I say, the ladies, the women worked is domestics mostly in Charlotte. And the men, well, like I say, railroads, some worked in the railroad and brick masons. And I don't think at that time there were any plumbers that I knew of. I didn't know of any electricians. At one time I know my dad was a subcontractor, doing brick mason work. But that was basically, yeah, self-sufficient. And there was a gentleman that was part of, I think he was part of our Shiloh Church, but he's the only, what I call entrepreneur way back then. He had a store right next to it, was a neighbor of the church right next to the church. And I'm sure he had other things, but only thing we bought were cookies and candy and stuff. And then we had another gentleman who was on the other side of the church. After Sunday he would get his little cart out and he would make snowballs, and he would sell snowballs to us kids. Mom would give us a nickel or whatever it was, and he would do that. But that's about it.

Velma Fann:

What would you like people to know about just growing up here? African-Americans, just growing up in this town, in this arena?

Vivie Miller:

Actually, I think I had a really great childhood. My sister that passed away probably would have disagreed. She didn't think that we as a family were as close as she would like for us to be. And my baby sister probably thought we were too close. And I was right in the middle. I enjoyed my childhood, I really did. It was a nice place to grow up in. It was quiet. It was community. At that time I knew a lot of the people there mostly. But I liked growing up here. It is a quaint town, and I would have rather grown up here than in the city.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Vivie Miller:

Big, big city. Because at 16, I went to New York with my aunt, and I was there for a while. And then when I graduated, I went to New York to work during the summer, so I worked there during

the summer. And I would not have liked living there. And it was clean here. It was basically quiet here. A lot of people, I won't say a lot of people, but they grew their own gardens, which was really good food. And this was a nice place to grow into. And I think a lot of people are coming into the town for that reason, because it's small and it's quaint, and we're really trying to keep it that way. But then they're turning it into what they're trying to get away from. And I don't like that. I had a gentleman that passed by the house one day and he said, "Oh, well, welcome to the neighborhood. I'm glad someone's in that house, because it's just too nice a house to just sit there."

And it really kind of irked me a little bit. And so I thought to myself, I should be saying, "Welcome to you. Heck, I was born here. You are an outsider here." But it was a good place. We enjoyed it. Like I said, we just had our friends and that's what we talked with each other. We did things with each other, and it was just a nice, quiet place to grow up in. Wholesome.

Velma Fann:

Wholesome.

Vivie Miller:

That's the word, wholesome. And my parents, I probably couldn't have asked for a better set of parents, especially my mom.

Velma Fann:

We hear about the Rosenwald School. That was the same as Waxhaw Elementary?

Vivie Miller:

I believe it was Waxhaw Elementary. Yeah, it was a Rosenwald School.

Velma Fann:

And then it was Union Spring?

Vivie Miller:

Western Union.

Velma Fann:

Western Union. Okay. We talked about the little grocery stores that were Black owned, the 4th of July.

Vivie Miller:

Baseball and picnics and snowballs, and just a lot of fun. Big event.

Velma Fann:

Yeah, I heard something, someone about a juke joint.

Vivie Miller:

Yep. That was the one that Rudolph, Tony the Tiger, owned.

Velma Fann:

Tony the tiger.

Vivie Miller:

Hole-in-the-wall. Actually, like I said, it was next door to where Gypsy's mom lives. It's not there anymore, but that's where it was. And it was actually right up the street from where the Rosenwald School was.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

Yeah, we did that.

Velma Fann:

What's at that site now where the Rosenwald School was?

Vivie Miller:

Oh, there is a house down there now. I'm not sure if it's on exactly the same spot where the school was, but there is a house there now. And they're built.. if you pass the school, and where the school was and down to the left, they're starting to clear that out. And I saw a couple of houses going up around there, but I don't think there's anything there now except a plaque.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

And that's also right near the baseball diamond, that is where our cemetery is, but there's just a plaque there now for the Rosenwald School.

Velma Fann:

For the cemetery, how far back do you think it dates?

Vivie Miller:

There are probably, there may be one or two. My grandfather's buried there, and he was in World War II, what, II. And I know at Bethel Church there's a revolutionary guy there. Gwen would have to tell you that. But yeah, it's fairly old. There are some old, old people who were buried there. My grandfather, like I said, is buried there. I don't know where my great-grandfather is buried, so...but I'm sorry, I don't have any dates on that. I needed to-

Velma Fann:

That's okay. Check on. That's good. All right. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Vivie Miller:

No.

Velma Fann:

And I thought about the corner, because someone else mentioned the corner where people would congregate and the cars would come to pick, maybe take women to where they needed to go in

Charlotte as domestics. So that was kind of like a community meeting place. Everybody just kind of-

Vivie Miller:

Yeah, somewhere, it must have been uptown where they would just walk to uptown, and then people who had cars who were going in that direction would take them to Charlotte. Because my mom would do that also when she had her car, she would pick people up. And then there was also a place on Highway 16 in Charlotte, just outside of Charlotte, where I don't know if the clients would drop the people off there. But anyway, when they were on their way home on Highway 16, they would stop and pick up whoever was going to Waxhaw on that side of the road. They would just pick them up. And of course, there was the corner where the young boys, young Black boys would hang out on the corner. So, that's the way that was. And I remember in high school, during the summer I took my cousin and I took an extra course at West Charlotte High School. It was algebra. We took an advanced algebra course there.

And so her dad would take us there, and I would get so frustrated, because he would just go like 20 miles an hour the whole way. And I would just, "We're going to be late. That's what I think, because I don't want to be late, I don't want to be late." They were laughing and talking. There were adults in the car, "And please, please hurry. Get us to school, get us to school, please." But yeah, it was a good place to grow up. It really was. Even with racism it was a good place to grow up, because like I said, I was more or less shielded from all of that as my uncle was one of the ones who was shot by the white deputy, the white officer.

Velma Fann:

Now, I heard a little bit about that. Do you want to share that story?

Vivie Miller:

No, I don't want to share that, because there are people who know more about it than I do. And I wish they would come in and talk with you. But my thing wasn't let it run. But my thing was that he, I don't know, I think Luke, which is what his name was, uncle, I think he was, well, the Miller side of the family, they did not take a whole lot of nonsense. Okay. My grandmother on my dad's side, she used to come and stay with us, and she would sleep in the room with me and

sleep in the bed. And she would tell me stories, and she would say, "People would say, 'Oh, Miller children, they're just the meanest children in the world. They're just so awful and mean, bad.'" And my grandmother could cuss like a sailor, okay?

My other grandmother was the exact opposite, just a southern belle, soft spoken. But this grandmother, and I loved them both. They were both just so wonderful. And she would tell me, she said, "Yeah, they would tell me that if I bit the head off of a grasshopper, I'd get a new dress." I never got a damn dress. But she said that I would fight anybody. She tell, "She fight anybody, man, just." And so I think Luke was kind of feisty like that. I don't know what happened between him and the police officer while he was shot. And it was amazing, because I did not know about that until very late in life. And I had cousins younger than I was who knew about it, but their moms would talk about it. But my parents never talked about that. And it could have happened at the time when we had moved to Ohio for a while, and then eventually we came back.

But he was shot, and he could probably have lived had he gone to the hospital right away, because I think he lost a lot of blood. And so, I believe he died in the hospital, he didn't die on the spot, but I think that's what happened to him. And there was another Black guy, I think, who saw it, who was also shot, the sheriff or whoever. The deputy shot him in the back, because he was trying to run away. This is what I'm hearing. And when he fell, the place where he fell was like a service station. He fell into the oil pit. So they did not find him until much later on when it was all drained. And I don't even know if they knew he was there, but if anybody even missed him. But that's basically what I know. And I have cousins who can say more about that, if they would, but they don't really want to.

And I think part of the story is also in the Duncan McDonald House because pictures of my dad are there and my mom, and about our family, about my dad's side of the family and my mom's side of the family too, that they have that in the Duncan McDonald House in [inaudible 00:38:18]. But that's about it.

Velma Fann:

So your family, now, were they prominent because-

Vivie Miller:

Yes, there were some prominent people in Waxhaw. The Masseys were prominent, and the Millers were prominent, because the Millers, like I said, my great-grandfather worked for the railroad, so they had. And my grandfather, like I said, worked for Niven-Price Company. And then of course, he had his own garden. He had pigs, cows, so he was also well-to-do. And there were other well-to-do families in Waxhaw. And I wish I had talked to some people long ago about them, because nobody can tell me anything about them anymore. And let me throw these names in there.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Vivie Miller:

There was Mr. Jack Green, who had the store next to the church. There was a gentleman named Red Grove, and I'm not sure what his real name was, because they called him Red because of his complexion. I think he was with the railroad, but he was well-to-do. And there were Dunlaps and Curetons and Vincents and Vinsons.

So, there were quite a few prominent people, like the Wilsons. What are some of the other names? Barbers. But we just kind of took care of each other. I can remember one, there was a lady named Miss, we call her Miss Etta. And she was an old, old lady, and she was in her house, and I don't think there were any relatives or anything that could help take care of her. And it upset my dad so much, because he took her to the county seat in Monroe to see if he could get some aid for her. And he came back and he said, "We actually had to lie to them to get some aid from." She had nothing. People would take her food, they would do her lawn, they would just help out. And he said, "That was just awful. Just awful." [That she couldn't get aid from the county.]

And then some people I know would lose, they were losing their homes or whatever. And my dad would say, "Why didn't they just let us know that they were losing? We could have helped." But I don't know if it was pride or what. But for the most part we did what we could for each other.

Velma Fann:

That's good. Thank you so very much.

Vivie Miller:

Thank you. I hope I didn't ramble on too much.

Edward “Sid” Walker and Hubert Mills

This interview was conducted on behalf of the State Archives of North Carolina, as part of the Waxhaw African American History Project. This interview was conducted on June 4, 2025. Velma Fann, New South Associates, was the interviewer.

Velma Fann:

I am Velma Fann, historian with New South Associates in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Today is June 4th, 2025, and I am speaking with Mr. Hubert Mills and Mr. Edward “Sid” Walker, also known as Sid. And this is for the Waxhaw African-American History Project. Welcome, gentlemen.

Edward “Sid” Walker:

Okay, thank you.

Velma Fann:

Glad to have you both. So I'm going to just talk a little bit about, and ask you questions about the African-American history here. It's going to be like a walk down memory lane, kind of like a show and tell. Where were places? What was important to us as African-Americans here? So I'm going to start with you, Mr. Mills. Please state your name, your date of birth, and your age. And spell your name for us, please.

Hubert Mills:

Hubert Mills, H-U-B-E-R-T M-I-L-L-S.

Velma Fann:

And your date of birth?

Hubert Mills:

11/14/1950.

Velma Fann:

And your age right now?

Hubert Mills:

74.

Velma Fann:

Okay, and the same with you, Mr. Walker?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

E-D-W-A-R-D A. W-A-L-K-E-R, 3/24/1951, 74.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Gentlemen, are you both natives of Waxhaw?

Hubert Mills:

Yes.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Mr. Mills-

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I was in the county.

Velma Fann:

Oh, you were in the county? Okay. So Mr. Mills, let me ask you, were your parents born here?

Hubert Mills:

Yes.

Velma Fann:

Okay. About how many generations?

Hubert Mills:

I would say... I'm trying to think now. Well, my mother and my daddy, my mother originally came out of Lancaster, I believe. I go back there for my grandmother. But my daddy, he was right here in Waxhaw, and I grew up right there on Mill Street, which is still existing now. And I think there's about, right now I'm counting about three or four generations.

Velma Fann:

Wow. So you all have a pretty good footprint here?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And Mr. Walker, what about you? Were your parents born here?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

My mother was born up in the Marvin area.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah. Which then, you used Waxhaw address. Still use Waxhaw address in the Marvin area.

Okay. I was born on in Route 3.

Velma Fann:

Route 3?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

How many generations from my, I can go back to my great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, me, my children, my grandchildren, and my great-grandchildren. That's seven generations I know of.

Velma Fann:

That's seven generations.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

There's four of us now, four generations living now.

Velma Fann:

Okay, very good. So Mr. Mills and Mr. Walker, the boundaries. When I ask people, where were African-Americans living, what were the boundaries? Sometimes people say across the tracks. There's always a division line. So give me an idea of where we were.

Hubert Mills:

Sandy Ridge is one area, which is on Waxhaw-Marvin Road. Then we have what we call the Low End, which is Waxhaw Indian Trail Road. And on that, that's where we had Waxhaw Schoolhouse. And that school ran from the first to about, what, fifth or sixth grade?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Sixth grade at least.

Hubert Mills:

Sixth grade. And all, it was one big building, and they had partition doors, and that's how they separated the class. But then after they tore it down, we was talking about the baseball field. The

baseball field was below it, and now it's called Cemetery Street because they bury on that ball field.

Velma Fann:

Okay!

Hubert Mills:

They use the ball field now for a cemetery.

Velma Fann:

For a cemetery? We're going to come back to that idea. So Mr. Walker, those are pretty much the boundaries you remember of where African-Americans lived in this area?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yes, and I lived on the outskirts at first. I lived up Providence Road, 16th. I lived about five miles from the city, from Waxhaw city limits. Then after that, I moved to what Hubert was saying in Sandy Ridge, which is, that's west of here. And that's where I grew up until 72, when I moved to Charlotte.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But then on... Yeah, that's where it is. But they called Western Union... Western Union, that seems east to me. I don't know. But Western Union school is where I went from the first grade to the 11th grade. I did go to school in South Carolina for a half year until my mother died. Then we moved with my grandmother up Route 3. They call it Route 3. I was born up there in Route 3 area.

Velma Fann:

Well, when we're speaking of when you were born, either born in the hospital or midwives?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I think I was midwives.

Velma Fann:

You know, Mr Mills?

Hubert Mills:

I think I was a hospital. Could have been midwife. But I will tell you this one. I was named after Dr. Craft.

Velma Fann:

Doctor...?

Hubert Mills:

Craft.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, he was popular. He was the only...

Hubert Mills:

All the kids around here that was born had Dr. Craft's signature, because that was the only doctor around here that delivered. And I was named after my uncle, which was named Hubert, and I think Henry, which has been, might've been Craft's name. But I was named after my uncle and Dr. Craft, here in Union County. And like I said, he's on everybody's birth certificate. And I tell you, I was born on Veteran's Day, which is actually November 11th. And I used that as my birthday up until the time I had to get driver license. When I went down to the courthouse, it had the 14th. So I asked my mother, "Mom, are you sure I was born on the 11th?" she said, "Boy, I know when you was born." But long story short, the system was, you might've been born like two days ago, but it might've been two days before it was registered. That's how they figured it.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

Plus that courthouse, Monroe's courthouse was set on fire one time, or caught on fire, and a lot of records were destroyed at that time.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So describe the communities that you grew up in. How were the houses? Were they wood-framed, were they made of brick, or what do you remember?

Hubert Mills:

Wood frame.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Wood frame.

Velma Fann:

Wood frame.

Hubert Mills:

Our house was, my daddy said you could tell every house that this gentleman built. I said, "How can you tell?" He said, "Because there ain't nothing level in it." And we could get up on one end of the house on a tricycle and ride to the other end of the house with our un-level floor. They, all of them wood structures.

Velma Fann:

Okay. And Mr. Walker, with you?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I was all wood structures, and some of the houses, like you said, were un-level, and it made the floor, left cracks in the floors, and you could see down through them and see the ground. But you put rugs over. And that was because of the foundation. They had pillars that they were built on, and those foundations dropped down. And I call them Hubbard, that's what we call it. But like Hubbard said, I was named after my grandfather, which his name was Edward. I never knew

him. He passed away before I was born. And I didn't know that I was named after him, because before I started using Sid, it was Arthur, my middle name.

And I didn't start using Edward until I went, until I graduated from high school and I went downtown to get my birth certificate, because I was having my name changed to the original, from Marbley, which was my stepdad. And I was having, my brother, my older brother had had his changed, so I said I'm going to get mine changed. And I asked momma, my grandmother who raised us, said, "Yeah, you can go do it." Went down, didn't have any problems, got my records, and there it was Edward Arthur Walker, and boom. I mean, some of the older people, some of the people I even went to school with called me Marbley. And that's what I use all the time. All the time. And then when I graduated from school, I had everything changed. And people would call me Sid. We would always give each other nicknames in the country.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

And Sid stuck with me. Some of the nicknames would stick, and some of them would go away, and mine stuck with me. And that's what... I worked for a company for 30 years. I bought millions of dollars worth of equipment and stuff. I signed everything Sid Walker. The only thing I signed Edward "Sid" Walker was my check.

Velma Fann:

That's important.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I met a lot of people, and all they know me as is Sid Walker.

Velma Fann:

Sid Walker. When you talk about where you grew up, was it a close-knit community?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Ours was. And mine wasn't a big community like other stuff. We lived on the outskirts. Matter of fact, where we lived at first, before we moved to Sandy Ridge, the closest Black family to us was maybe a mile up the road. And that's where Claudell on those moved, to Claudell Houston. They moved up there.

Now, before my mother passed away, I remember us staying up there in that house, too. I was little. We stayed up there in that same house. Then we moved to... Because my middle sister was born in that house in 1956. And then we moved to South Carolina. That's where my mother died. And then we moved back to my grandmother's, which was, and we only had only one family, was about a mile away.

When we moved to Sandy Ridge, then we moved around family, like that. And we had family live in Marvin. That's when Mike and them lived in Marvin then. Michael Stitt does. But like I said, we moved to Sandy Ridge, family stopped moving around. We had family. And that's when we'd walk, and we met, Hubert and us, met Ben Davis and Roy Hood and all us, and we would just get together and have a good time.

I can say this, growing up, when we were in high school, Hubert, I don't know if you remember. Hubert and I and Mac and my brother and Robert, we almost became like brothers. Hubert and Mac were the only ones could come to our house. You know, back then, you borrow each other's clothes, and Hubert and Mac was the only one could come to our house and get some of our clothes and we wouldn't be there. Do you remember that, Hubert?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We wouldn't be there. Mom would say, "Go on back there."

Velma Fann:

Y'all were really close.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

And I had some best friends and stuff, but we were close in that thing. I'm not saying... We went places together, but we wouldn't hang out friends. Me, Billy and Jake Crockett and stuff like that. But they would all, him and his brother were the only one could come to the house, and Mama would say, she said, "Go back there," like that.

Velma Fann:

So when you were hanging out or doing things for fun, where did you go? What was open to African-Americans?

Hubert Mills:

What was open to African Americans? Now, Waxhaw school, I'm going back there because baseball, that's something we had. 4th of July picnic. Anytime they had something, they had it down there, what would call the old schoolhouse.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You're going down to the schoolhouse? That's it.

Hubert Mills:

Yep. And Presbyterian Church used to have the summer Bible school. That was important to us too. When we'd get out of school, we'd go to summer Bible school. That was, like I said, the Presbyterian church. But now, the movie theater was something that we could do. But most of the time, I'm trying to think, going was sort of, we didn't go nowhere much because Mama, they wouldn't let you go so far. So I used to walk from my house to that, was called the Low End in Waxhaw, and back. But at that time, there wasn't a whole lot of mingling. I do remember, we used to, Overhead Bridge. We'd come and get up on the Overhead Bridge and watch the train.

Velma Fann:

The Overhead Bridge?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, Overhead Bridge, watch the train go by. But as far as entertainment or whatnot, most of that was limited. It was limited. It was limited.

Velma Fann:

So the Waxhaw School, which streets or what landmarks.

Hubert Mills:

Okay, now I think it's called Cemetery Street, which is off of Waxhaw-Marvin, Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road, which is straight down that road. And that was about the biggest place we gathered there. And other than that, we just sort of stayed with our own group, stay with our... Now, I tell you, I came up with, one of my neighbors was Roscoe and Helen Good, school teachers. Mr. Roscoe was the first Black on the city council here.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

And I used to play with his son. I'd go out to the house, and every morning I'd go out there, he'd be sitting there reading the newspaper. So I asked him, why he read the newspaper? So he said, that's how he got informed about what was going on in the world. So he was getting on up in age and he talking about, I know I heard him talking about retiring, and I said, "No, Mr. Roscoe, don't retire. We need you." He said, "Yeah, it's time for someone to pass the torch." But he was a great pillar to the community, and just, to me, when I go out there, play with him, he was like a second daddy. But he was, well, he was a pillar of this community.

Velma Fann:

When you talk about the movie theater, tell me about that experience.

Hubert Mills:

Okay. You go in the movie theater down here in Waxhaw. You got a ticket before you go in, and you get that ticket and you got to go upstairs, which you could be overlooking, the movie screen was down low. And we had popcorn and whatnot, we get and sit up there and watch the movies. And like I say, I always thought we had the best seats in the house. But after some years and thinking back on it, I found out it was a fire hazard.

Velma Fann:

Fire hazard?

Hubert Mills:

But Waxhaw, and I would go to, Monroe was the same way.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, that's where I went.

Hubert Mills:

Monroe was the same way. You go upstairs because you couldn't go downstairs. That's just the way it was.

Velma Fann:

Yeah, explain that, because sometimes younger people will pick this up and will ask, why did you have to go upstairs?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Well, the white people sat downstairs, and the Blacks had to go up, just like we had to drink out of colored water fountains when we went to the stores and stuff. Some of the stores, well most of the stores here in Waxhaw, in downtown, like the drugstore, you couldn't go in there and sit down out in the open.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

And that was next to the spirit store there. And up there at Farmers, now, they started being open to me when I started working for Rogers, because they'd send me over there sometimes. It was in the Rogers store, called Farmers' Union, or Farmers' Association?

Hubert Mills:

Farmers' Union.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Farmers' Union.

Velma Fann:

Farmers' Union.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But that's how the movie theater was. And later on, once we started getting comfortable in the movie theater to be up top, the Black kids start throwing popcorn down, down, you know, like that, they did.

I remember, I used to, it was his brother Mac, Jimmy Gray, Sam Wilson, Fred Henry, those group of guys. We used to idolize them. We did, we did. I remember when Jim came home from the service, he came home on leave, and we was at a store. I might go off, so you wind me back in.

Velma Fann:

Okay, okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We was at a store in Monroe called Five Point, and they had a restaurant there. We had been out, and we went to that restaurant, and we said, "We have to go around to the window." And Jim said, "No, we going in." So it was about 5:00, so we went in, and everybody was looking at us, because all the white guys that sitting at the bar. And nobody would wait on us. And finally they went to the kitchen and they bought the cook out, a Black guy, older Black man, and he said, "Boys, y'all go around to the window." And Jim said, "Why?" And he said, "Please don't call cause no trouble, just go around to the window and we'll wait on you."

So we went around to the window, and I don't know if you was with us that night or not, but we went around to the window and Jim said, "Get what you want." We said, "Huh?" He said, "Get what you want." So all of us ordered a plate to go. There's about five of us. And we stood there,

and when we saw them fix them plates and they put them in some bags, and Jim said, "Let's go." And we said, "What about the food?" He said, "We are not going to eat this food. I don't be served with no window." And we left and didn't get the food. We didn't pay for it, we didn't get the food. We left. And I didn't go back to that place until somebody told me that Blacks could go in there. And I went in there one time just to see and order some food. And that was the last time I went in that place and ordered food, one time, and I never went back.

Velma Fann:

And that was in Monroe?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

It was in Monroe. It was in Monroe. But we had places here in Waxhaw, you didn't go in and be waited on. But you know what, growing up, it didn't bother me, Hubert, because that's what we used to. It didn't bother me. You rode, they used to pick my grandmother up to go to work for her, and she would always get in the back seat. Had to sit in the back seat. But we knew that's how it was. That's how it was.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We picked cotton. I picked cotton. I don't know if you picked cotton.

Hubert Mills:

I did too.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We'd pick cotton. Truck would come by and get us, we'd jump on the back of the truck, go to the cotton field. You had something called a split term in school, and you was able to get out of school for so long, I don't know how long it was, to pick cotton.

Hubert Mills:

The cotton was picked. Split term is the time that the cotton was ready to be picked or whatnot. In other words, once the cotton was all picked, then you went back to school.

Velma Fann:

Back to school.

Hubert Mills:

You went back to school.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Not much money.

Hubert Mills:

No. Now, I can remember walking the streets of Waxhaw, and if it was two or three people walking together, they expect you to get off the sidewalk. If you walk in the store, first thing that's, "Boy, can I help you?" Or something of that nature. And Mama always taught us, don't never go in the store unless you've got money. Never go in the store unless you've got money. But yeah, like I said, it was just as segregated here in Waxhaw as it was in Monroe. We had a policeman that was very racist. His name was Bill Austin.

Velma Fann:

Bill?

Hubert Mills:

Bill Austin.

Velma Fann:

Austin, okay.

Hubert Mills:

And he used that word, boy, quite frequently. But I never will forget, there was an incident where they said that these two young men whistled at a white girl, and Bill Austin, when they

asked the guy, guy said it was the three of us. But anyway, when they came to my house, I told them I wasn't with him. So one of the guys, he told me, said, "No, he wasn't with us." But I never will forget, he told us now, if it ever happened again, how he was just going just go through the house and everything. But like I said, he was very racist. Name was Bill Austin.

But Waxhaw has come a long way, but Waxhaw has a long way to go. I remember the school bus, white school bus, kids pass by, spit on you. Spit out the window on you. You know what I'm talking about.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Right.

Hubert Mills:

And women had to really be careful. Women had to really be careful. When I went from Western Union over to Parkwood, that was the first integration of the school. And my wife went the first year, which was voluntarily. She went voluntarily.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

That was, what, ninth grade, or before then? It was before the ninth grade, wasn't it?

Hubert Mills:

Must have been about 10th or 11th.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

10th or...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We went after the 11th grade. We went our senior year. That was the only year we went.

Hubert Mills:

Yes, yes, yes. And anyway, the next year, I went. It was mandatory. We had to do it. And I never will forget the lecture we got before we went. His name was G.C. Wilson. He was that guy we had nicknamed Gut.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yep, Gut was...

Hubert Mills:

And Gut said, "Boys, say now, when y'all go to Parkwood, y'all going to think we are the meanest teachers in the world, because boys, they ain't going to ask you, did you get your homework? They ain't going to call your parents and tell her what you're doing. They said they're going to go right on to the next person." And I found that to be true. And I've had the experience to go back to some of my teachers, one of them, Ms. Newkirt, and tell them how I thank them for what they was trying to do. And I think about the things that they taught us and told us to try to keep us safe. I never will forget. I think it was, Kennedy got killed. They shut the school down.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yep. Teachers were crying. Everything was, what's going on?

Hubert Mills:

Because at that time, there was, they were integrated, and they didn't have no school because they were scared there was going to be so much friction. Well, we had some bumps going to school up there with some of the guys, and then some of them we met were pretty good guys.

We used to lay bricks together, all us men together. And this one particular gentleman called me the N-word, and because the brick master teacher had told us to behave ourselves. What happened was, we'd go to Parkwood for school, get on another bus from Parkwood, come back to Western Union, and lay bricks at Eddie Colt's place. So the gentleman, when he called me, I was just going to ignore it. And I think, see, you might've been in that bunch. He said, "You're going to let him get you over like that?" So it was about nine of y'all.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I didn't say anything, but I was looking. I was looking, was he going to let him get away? Wasn't it Darrell? Was it Darrell? Skinny?

Hubert Mills:

No, it was Walter. Walter Young.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Walter Young, yeah.

Hubert Mills:

Walter Young. And they would tell me, say, "Well, you going to get him, we going to get you." So, that's when it happened. But anyway, teacher called me the next day, said, he says, "I hear you and Walter got into it over there." "Yes, that's it." "Don't do it over here on the Western Union side." He said, "If you have any settling to do, settle it over there in Parkwood." But that just basic the way they told us, because we knew that it was a possibility they would shut that program down if anything happened between us or whatnot.

But we had some good days. I never will forget Mr. Johnson. He would take us out on training, to do what we call from the ground up. Maybe helped put in a foundation or something like that.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We went to some contests, too.

Hubert Mills:

Yep. Yeah.

Velma Fann:

So tell me about that. You were laying some foundations here in Waxhaw?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

No, at the agriculture building.

Velma Fann:

Oh.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You would lay your foundations and build a brick. But what Hubert was talking about, when he takes us out to places, we'd do that on the ground, we'd do.

Hubert Mills:

Hollowing out the ground. And normally we laid bricks on a solid concrete floor, air-conditioned, whatnot.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Then you could tear it back up.

Hubert Mills:

Tear it back up.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

When you finished.

Hubert Mills:

But then Mr. Johnson would take us out in the field, and we'd be laying bricks to get that experience, what they call hollowing out the ground. Otherwise, you don't have all this nice straight walls. You got to know how to, what they call hollowing out the ground. But we enjoyed it. We enjoyed it.

Velma Fann:

So were there ever any protests? So when Kennedy was shot, they shut the schools down. What about when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I never got involved in any protests, because I just didn't like it. I didn't think it was safe, and I never got involved in it. Plus, Mama wouldn't let us. And I don't know, was there any protests near Waxhaw ? There wasn't no marching, was it? Because we couldn't come downtown do it.

Hubert Mills:

I'm trying to think. I don't think anything was here, I don't think. But now, Monroe.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Monroe.

Hubert Mills:

Monroe was not. But anyway, I can remember when Martin Luther King was scheduled to come to Charlotte, and I told my Mama, I said, "If he come to Charlotte, I'm going to march." She said to me, she said, "Boy, you know people getting killed." Now, to me, that didn't bother me. I was ready to stand.

Then after Martin Luther King was killed and everything, it was very tense. It was very tense. And I never will forget, when he was in Charlotte, I had a brother-in-law that had the opportunity to meet him. And he was with my sister. He was in such a rush to try to get out there to meet Martin Luther King, he had to laugh about it. Said he stepped in a mud puddle. My sister said, "That's what you get for leaving your wife."

But yeah, it was very tense. The Robert Williams era. See, I had some... These places, it took place before me. But I had the opportunity to go to country club with him. I also happened to work with...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

He had a book. He had a book.

Hubert Mills:

Mm-hmm. I worked with one of, the woman they say he kidnapped. I worked with some of her people, some of her people. But I was told, don't mention that around certain people. This is on a job. Because so-and-so, they're her people. But yeah, there was the Robert Williams era, and up until this day, a lot of things I didn't know until I just went to the library and got some facts on it, about how it all started. And it all started by his daddy went to his, I'm not going to say who he was working for, and asked for some money to get his car fixed. The white guy slapped him, and that's what triggered it. If I'm not mistaken, I think he was killed. I think so.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I got the book now, but I have to read that part still.

Velma Fann:

Were there any leaders here, civil rights leaders here?

Hubert Mills:

Robert Williams, just about.

Velma Fann:

Okay,

Edward "Sid" Walker:

In Waxhaw?

Velma Fann:

Mm-hmm, In the Waxhaw area. Anybody?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't remember anybody in Waxhaw.

Hubert Mills:

No, I can't remember. In Waxhaw, everybody's got to defend for themselves, but nobody stand out, whatnot.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We were somewhat, I don't want to use the word afraid, because our parents were brave, but they knew that they had a family they had to protect. So we were protected as young kids. So when Kennedy and Martin Luther King and all them got killed, we wasn't allowed to roam the streets or anything, because something could easily happen to you. No way. You could get missing. So we wasn't allowed to roam the streets.

I remember a friend of mine, he was going to Charlotte to a march, and he offered me and Jake to go with him. I said, "Uh-uh, I'm not going there. If Mama find out, boy..." And he went, and the police came and they started running, and he fell, and the police got him. Popped in with a billy, and he went to jail and Mama had to go get him. Went to jail.

I've never been arrested, never had to sit in the back of a police car and be searched. My car never been searched. Now, Bill, the police officer in Waxhaw, Jake and I broke him. We had come from the Low End down to the place. We called him Bill, so it might be the same Bill he was talking about. And he pulled up and he said, "What are you boys doing?" We said, "We need a ride home." And he said, "Where do you live?" We said, "On the Low End. What about getting us a ride?" And he said, "Okay, get in the car." We got in the car, and we was a little bit juiced, and we started talking to him and making him laugh and stuff. And it got so every time we'd walk home from the Low End, and we'd see him, he'd see us, he come, "Y'all need a ride home?" He'd take us home, just because we befriended him, made him laugh and talk and stuff like that. And he knew who we were.

Velma Fann:

So when you all get together to have your own fun, I know there were places we could not go. Where did you go?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Down on the Low End. What Hubert was saying, the schoolhouse near, you remember Rudolph's Place?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, the juke joint.

Velma Fann:

I've heard about Rudolph's Place. Tell me about this juke joint.

Hubert Mills:

The juke joint.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

And then if you wanted something to drink, you went to Mr. Willie Malone, to his house, and he was deaf-mute, and you would push the button and the light would flash, and that let him know somebody was at the door. And that's when you bought that Nick Norton, whew, and Paul Steph. Paul Steph. Yeah.

Hubert Mills:

Remember, he had the shoe shop? He had the shoe shop and the poodle.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Mm-hmm.

Hubert Mills:

Well, anyway, the pool room. We used to go in and shoot pool, and the floors would be sort of squeaky, and we'd be shooting pool with Mr. Malone and he'd take that stick and get, the ball would be rolling towards the pocket. "Yeah, yeah, yeah!" And we thought he was just... Nah, he was making the ball go in the pocket. He was making the ball.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

He had his way.

Hubert Mills:

That's right, he had his way.

Velma Fann:

Where was that? City-wise, down which road do we go to to find them?

Hubert Mills:

Waxhaw-Indian Trail Road, right before you got to the schoolhouse.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

Right before you got to the schoolhouse.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Wasn't it in the back of his house or something?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, he had a shoe shop and a pool room in the back of house. And his nickname was Dummy.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yep.

Velma Fann:

Oh.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, Dummy Malone.

Hubert Mills:

And he got killed. He loved the Atlanta Braves. He love the Braves. He got killed going to one of the Atlanta Braves games.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Got killed in a car wreck.

Hubert Mills:

He'd go all the way to Atlanta, now, being deaf. He'd go down and see the Atlanta Braves. He loved the Atlanta Braves. And he got killed going to that ballgame.

Velma Fann:

Wow. So is his house still standing? Is that anything still?

Hubert Mills:

Yes, it's still on.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

It's still there.

Hubert Mills:

Carl Malone.

Velma Fann:

Carl?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Right around the main street.

Velma Fann:

Is there a cross street? If I needed to find it, is there a cross street?

Hubert Mills:

Yep. If you were to go down Waxhaw-Sandy Ridge Road, it would be...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

About three houses or four houses down from Wesley Chapel Church, isn't it, on the left?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, about three houses down on the left.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You get to the white building, church called Wesley Chapel AME Zion Church. About three or four houses down on the left. Sits right on the road. It's closer than here to that window to the street.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Maybe a little closer.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah. Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Is anyone living in that house now, or is it just him?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

Is Kip? I think Kip still stay there. That's it.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Somebody, last I heard, Kip was in Monroe. Did he come back?

Hubert Mills:

Okay, well, what's the girl's name?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Oh, oh, oh, oh, boy. Her and her brother.

Hubert Mills:

Mm-hmm.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Oh. Oh, man, she'd get me.

Velma Fann:

We come back. We can come back.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

It was his, Mr. Malone's granddaughter.

Hubert Mills:

Thought that Jean was the daughter.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah.

Hubert Mills:

And I'm like you now, as much as I talk about the young man, I can't think of his name of it. But it'll come to me soon.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Okay. So those were two places that you went?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Now what if you wanted to take your girl out on a date, where would y'all go?

Hubert Mills:

You would find the movie. That's about it. Movie theater.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I'd go down to the dances down there at the schoolhouse.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

So the schoolhouse was the place?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

That's right.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You could get down, down there, dancing, and catch some cuties.

Hubert Mills:

Like entertainment. It's like a center. And like I say now, first it was this school.

Velma Fann:

And that was Waxhaw School?

Hubert Mills:

Waxhaw Elementary School.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Now, I never went to school there.

Hubert Mills:

And then after it was closed down, it became like a community center. That's where we knew we got all this activity going on down there. Baseball game, 4th of July. You want to have something, have it down at the Waxhaw schoolhouse. I'll never forget, around the 4th of July, we'd go pick blackberries and get us some money to spend, and I'll never forget the deck pants, that we used to call them. But we looked forward to that. You looked forward.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You bought new clothes.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, for 4th of July.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

For 4th of July.

Velma Fann:

Oh?

Hubert Mills:

You looked sharp.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah. You had to jump sharp. You had to jump sharp. Even, about the last three years it was open down there for baseball, I played baseball.

Velma Fann:

Oh, you did?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But then after, usually we played baseball that morning, you'd go home, catch a ride home, go home and wash up and jump sharp and come back. You had to be sharp.

Velma Fann:

You had to be sharp.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, you had to be sharp. We walked that street, and then we'd come up to the corner up here, hang out on the corner. Never caused any problems. We'd be on that corner and everybody up there would be sharp as a tack. Be sharp and hang out down the corner.

Velma Fann:

Wow. So is the school building still there?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't know.

Hubert Mills:

No, it's gone now. I believe it's gone now.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

I believe it's gone. I think they cleared it off. But like I said, the street is called, I think, Cemetery Street, and the cemetery is down in there, like I said, where we used to play ball at Naughty Bear and keep us on that field.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But you know, Hubert, right behind the ball field was the graves, and it was a few high tombstones, and some of the people that would come down... Because everybody would take their vacation from up north and stuff and come down here to the game. They would be sitting on them tombstones. And we didn't have a fence, because if the bat catcher would miss a ball or foul ball, it went back up in the woods around the cemetery. You ran back up in there and found it. But the cars would be almost lined up to Providence Road right there. I mean, people would come, if I lived in New York or somewhere, you came home for that. It was people from everywhere. People from everywhere.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, 4th of July.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You wouldn't believe it. You would not believe it.

Hubert Mills:

And on the 4th of July, they'd have like, Fort Mill ball team, Pineville ball team, Waxhaw ball team.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Van Wyck.

Hubert Mills:

Van Wyck.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Wayneville.

Hubert Mills:

And we'd play game after game after game after game. So it's an all-day thing.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

All day.

Hubert Mills:

All day thing, then at night, they'd have a band and we'd come back for the band. Yeah, yeah.

Velma Fann:

Well, with all these people coming down, where did they stay? I know they stayed with some family. Were there hotels or boarding houses here?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't think, it wasn't a hotel. Wasn't the one place a rooming place where no Black people could go to? They always used to call it the hotel, but we never knew it was a hotel. Right there next to them highway houses. I never saw anybody going there, but I heard people say that's a hotel, but there wasn't no Black people there. You had to stay with some family members.

Velma Fann:

You had to stay with family?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Or you... And some of them, family was in Charlotte.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah. A lot of them is in driving distance. Or maybe they come out from New York and they be staying with some family, then they come down like that. No, we didn't have no Motel 6 or nothing like that.

Velma Fann:

Tell me about the churches. What are some of the long-standing churches here?

Hubert Mills:

Wesley Chapel is one of them. I think Steele Hill, which is little bit across the line, but it's been here a good for a while now. Piney Grove, it's 150... I think 56 years. And it went, they built three churches.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I remember two.

Hubert Mills:

And one was round, built round, and the scaffold was made out of what they call sticks. And we got pictures of that church, of the gentlemen working on that church.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay.

Hubert Mills:

And then after that one... And I don't even know whether they completed that church, but then they had the other little church out there where the cedar tree was. That's the one that went to before they built the brick church.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I remember that.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

But this year, or maybe last year, we wanted to know about a loved one that was buried and didn't have a tombstone. So our minister got this guy out of Virginia, and he came down with this machine that had X-rayed the ground.

Velma Fann:

Right.

Hubert Mills:

He came out and he did our cemetery. And so, he marked everybody with a grave and no marker. Then I worked loads and got some bricks and sprayed them orange, and then we started numbering them, and it was 189 unmarked graves. That's how many people's out there. Back then, people thought they could bury someone. I remember that place because that rock or that tree, this, that and the other. But over the years, that tree got cut down or that rock wasn't there. So we did do that with 186, 189 bricks that we put out there, and put them on the ground, because we knew that the little orange marker was going to disappear pretty soon. So it is out there now. But that was another one. What's the one around the corner of the Madison Church?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Oh, Ebenezer.

Hubert Mills:

Ebenezer is one of them.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

You can see it right at the top, Ebenezer. The Presbyterian?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, Presbyterian church.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

First Presbyterian?

Hubert Mills:

First Presbyterian, which is down...

Velma Fann:

Oh, yeah.

Hubert Mills:

We didn't have but a few people that had their own business. One of them was Jack Green. He had a little store, you could go get your cookies.

Velma Fann:

Jack Green.

Hubert Mills:

And Kool-Aid. Sometimes you'd get ice cream. Jack Green was his name.

Velma Fann:

And where is that? Or where was that?

Hubert Mills:

Okay, I don't know the name of the street of it now, but it was right parallel with the railroad track, right below the overhead bridge. Right across from Alisa's, what used to be Alisa, that's apartment buildings out there now. But that's where it was. And the Presbyterian church was right there beside it. That called Dunlap? One of them is called Dunlap Street.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't remember, Hubert.

Hubert Mills:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't remember those streets. I remember, know what you're talking about, but I don't remember his name.

Hubert Mills:

But like I said, he had his store. Mr. Long had his shoe shop.

Velma Fann:

Mr. Long?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

William Long.

Hubert Mills:

William Long. Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Is that building still standing?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

For the shoe shop?

Velma Fann:

Uh-huh.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't know.

Hubert Mills:

I don't know. The house might be standing up.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

The shoe shop might be behind. It might be.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

The house is standing, that's for sure.

Velma Fann:

And that's still on that same main road?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

That's the house about four houses down from Wesley Chapel church on the left.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

That's where we was talking about.

Velma Fann:

Oh, yeah. Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Now, some of those guys right then had what would be considered nice, good jobs, because they worked for the railroads. Red Grove worked for the railroads, and Mr. Lee and a couple of those guys worked for the railroads.

Velma Fann:

That was good jobs.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, they were good jobs. Red Grove used to wear that railroad hat.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, he used to wear a railroad hat.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Now, I used to love talking to Red Grove. He would talk you to death. He would talk you to death.

Velma Fann:

Was there a stop here? A depot here?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah. At the end of this street right here, almost the end of it, anyway. Across the railroad track, there was a little white building, and it was called a train station. And if you bought a ticket, that's where you had to get the ticket and everything. I don't think it was, it wasn't big enough to seat you and everything, because I remember we went to Chester one time, you go there and you get your tickets, and then when the train come through, it would stop.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I never rode it.

Hubert Mills:

Never rode it.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But everybody heard about it, but I never rode it.

Hubert Mills:

Every train didn't stop in Waxhaw.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Right.

Hubert Mills:

And to get the message out, if they want to send a message from Waxhaw to Monroe or whichever, it'd be a man sticking a stick out. That's how close the depot was to the train track. He'd hold his little stick out with the message on it. It was two guys on the train to catch it. If the first guy didn't catch it, the one at the end would catch it. That went on for years. That's how they'd send messages from place to place.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I didn't know about that.

Hubert Mills:

Okay. And then...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Oh, he lived in Waxhaw. I lived down there.

Velma Fann:

Oh, okay. You lived there.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Three miles back. By then I was living three miles down Sandy Ridge West.

Hubert Mills:

And then when they tore it down, it's a house over here, maybe two houses before you get to Waxhaw Elementary. They took that, bay one of they used to, and they incorporated in that house. So it's over there, right before you get to Waxhaw Elementary School.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

On the opposite side?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, you'll see it.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I think I know what you're talking about.

Hubert Mills:

Okay. Okay. But that's what they did. But the train was the biggest thing, riding one of them. I never will forget when they was putting the red lights up in Waxhaw, and they couldn't get the red light to work with train lights. So my job working, I'd laugh and say, "Y'all finally got them lights to synchronize." But anyway, the train was a big thing here. I'll tell you today, the bridge that we got now has been remodeled.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

And the city of Waxhaw was going to remodel it, but the city board told them, "No, y'all buy the material, we remodel it. You don't build with no city board." So that's how. Waxhaw furnished the material, and the city board did the labor on that. That's how that happened.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Remember, they shot a movie on the old bridge. What was the name of that movie?

Hubert Mills:

Nell played in it. I know that much.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, and the famous part was the guy running over the bridge with that black cape on. I went to the movies to see it. I can't think of that movie, though.

Hubert Mills:

But was the movie called Nell? One of them was called Nell, after the girl.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But that wasn't the movie.

Hubert Mills:

That wasn't it? But they made several movies in Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

But that was the first one.

Hubert Mills:

But I can't think of this girl's name, but her name was Nail on the TV, on the show. But yeah, I remember that good, because they filmed some in Charlotte, some in Monroe. They went different places.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Different places.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah. Waxhaw was sort of notable with filming going on, with the old history and whatnot.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We had a couple people that was in the Color Purple.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah. Robin Stitt was in the Color Purple.

Hubert Mills:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

And the girl that was our minister of music up at our church, Marvin, she wasn't from here, she was from Waynesboro, but she was our minister of music. She was the one playing the piano in the Color Purple. And she looked around and smiled.

Velma Fann:

Oh, yeah. Okay. That's very good.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

In the Color Purple.

Velma Fann:

Someone told me that they didn't do clothes shopping here in Waxhaw. They may have went to Charlotte, but you said-

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Didn't what?

Velma Fann:

Didn't shop, didn't do too much shopping here in the city?

Hubert Mills:

No.

Velma Fann:

No?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

They went to Fort Mill. My grandmother used to always go to Fort Mill. They used to love Fort Mill. They used to love Fort Mill. They called it Fork Meal.

Hubert Mills:

Fork Meal. Belks. We sell belts here. Now, the first Belk, the Women's Club on it now. But the belts originated out of Lancaster, South Carolina. And if I'm not mistaken, the first Belk might've been in Lancaster. The second Belk was in Waxhaw, and then it went to Monroe. But it was owned by the Belk brothers. One of the brothers, it was a belt, was the barber in Waxhaw. He had a bad foot or something. But he was the barber. But he was the brother to male belt and all over. And like I said, when the Women's Club took over, they had a lot of literature up there, and I was up there doing some work, and I got to reading about the belt. But I helped build up in Charlotte several of the belt houses.

Velma Fann:

Okay. So you were in construction?

Hubert Mills:

I was in construction. Flashing the drywall. And that's what we'd doing, stucco houses and whatnot. And we would do know big old houses, whatnot.

Velma Fann:

You mentioned the barber. Where was the Black barber shop?

Hubert Mills:

Back then? There wasn't no barber. Your Mama.

Velma Fann:

Your mother?

Hubert Mills:

Your Mama. That and a soup bowl.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

And we had, my first cousin, Ronnie, remember Ronnie's kid? He started cutting our hair with scissors. And Ronnie was so good, until people were coming from Waxhaw. People started coming from Monroe just for Ronnie to Cut their hair. And Walter Carter bought Ronnie the first pair of cutters.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, he did.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

He was dating my aunt Lib. He bought Ronnie the first pair of cutters. But he could do it, couldn't he?

Hubert Mills:

He really could.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Everybody would come for Ronnie to cut their hair.

Velma Fann:

And the Black doctor, did he have an office? The one who birthed, brought all the children in? Did he have an office here?

Hubert Mills:

No, he was out of Monroe.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

He was out of Monroe. But he used to make house calls, midwife.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We had Dr. Perry. Mrs. Perry, the second grade teacher sub.

Hubert Mills:

And Hu... I might be getting them wrong, because my uncle was named Henry. But Hu... Well, I got my name from either one of them. Hubert or Henry was the doctor's name. I think it's Hubert Craft.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I think that was.

Hubert Mills:

Henry was...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I just remember Dr. Craft.

Hubert Mills:

Hubert Craft.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I remember that.

Hubert Mills:

His name was on all the birth certificates around here.

Velma Fann:

Well, there was a Dr. Massey. Does anybody remember that name?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't remember Dr. Massey.

Velma Fann:

From way back out there.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't remember Dr. Massey. Dr. Perry used to come to our house. He was out of Charlotte. They did come, and then they give you a sucker. If they had to give you a shot, then you got a sucker if you got a shot.

Velma Fann:

Well, are there any other places you'd like to talk about now? When they picked you up for split terms in school, did they pick you up at school, or did you meet somewhere downtown, or on the roads, or...?

Hubert Mills:

One guy got so good he had a school bus he turned into like a truck, and he would go around picking you up in the school bus.

Velma Fann:

Okay. Picking you up from school, or from your home?

Hubert Mills:

From home.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

No, you come from home. You wouldn't dare go from school. You was too ashamed.

Hubert Mills:

Mm-hmm. And I remember on Highway 70 was a school bus, and a young lady, Leslie Davis, got off of the school bus and got across the road and got hit. And she recovered and everything,

but the guy said that the mix-up was, the guy was still using that stop sign. But it actually wasn't a school bus. It was for picking cotton. Was it Ida Seekers? I think it was, Ida Seekers.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Ida Seekers. See, I never picked for him. We picked for Diddy Hudson and all them. They was up around Marvin.

Hubert Mills:

Johnny Bayam. You ever knew him? He was out of Marvin, up in the, what's the name? They call it, the land was so rich, they called it the...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Black Jack?

Hubert Mills:

Black Jack. Black Jack. They called it Black Jack.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Land was black. Dirt was black. Rich dirt.

Hubert Mills:

And what's the name of the road Clebo Audrey lived on?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Crane. No, our church is on Crane Road, and Clebo knows... It's Waxhaw-Marvin Road, because you go out, Crane Road ends on Waxhaw-Marvin. You know where the elementary school is up there?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Remember, Clebo never stayed back off the road up there.

Hubert Mills:

Okay. Well, anyway.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

It was Waxhaw-Marvin Road. The other end of Waxhaw-Marvin Road.

Hubert Mills:

This was sort of funny, the way that road got to be paved, because it used to be nothing but just a wagon rut.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah.

Hubert Mills:

And some guy came down from Washington, a politician, and tried to go down that road, and he got stuck. And this man came with his truck and pulled him out, and he told him, said, "When I get back to Washington, I'm going to do something about this here." And he did, and he got back to Washington. That's how that road got paved, because he saw to it that road got paved.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We never knew who it was, but all we knew was a man from, they said a man from up the road. They would call it up the road.

Velma Fann:

Up the road road.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Man up the road came down and he got stuck, and that's one of the reasons why these roads started getting paved. They never would say what city, because they wouldn't know. They'd say, "He from up the road," and that meant, you weren't from North Carolina, you was up the road.

Velma Fann:

Well, is there anything else you'd like to add or that you want people to remember about places here?

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I think some of us was pretty close-knit. Our parents really looked out for us. Now, I remember when we first moved down to Sandy Ridge, we thought, we used to think Mama was so mean, and when we moved down there then there was Ms. Magana, and we said, "Oh, boy." And then up the street was Ms. Sarah Davis, and buddy, them women would let you... They don't care. If we went up to Ben's house and if Ms. Sarah was mad at them, she would light in on them right when we were there. She didn't care. She didn't care. But when I got older, I went and see, neither one of them had a husband in the house, so they had to be stern like that.

Hubert Mills:

On them boys.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah, them boys, to get us to understand. And after I got a certain age, I said that's why Mama was like that.

Velma Fann:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

That's why Mama was like that. But we used to say, we got Ms. Magana on one end, we down here, and Ms. Sarah Davis up there. But I think the boys became closer-knit than the girls.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, I do. I really do.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Oh, remember when we put that basketball hoop up way back up in the woods?

Hubert Mills:

Mm-hmm.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We used to have it on the side of the house, and we'd make up so much dirt. We didn't have an air conditioner. Mama had that fan in the window, and it just pulled the dust through the window, and Mama said, "Y'all got..." And we'd sprinkle water out there, but still. And she said, "Y'all got to take that goal down." And I remember, me and Lewis and Ronnie, we went. Because we'd go back up in the woods and play, and we said, we know a spot, we think. And we went up there and we cleaned and we cleaned and we cleaned and we cleaned, and we got that place right. Johnny Mac used to come all the way from Monroe, come down there.

Hubert Mills:

Play ball.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Play ball. Back up in the woods. It was about a half mile from the house, and I remember one time we was back up there playing ball, and we were old enough to have insurance. We'd pay the insurance man 25 cents or something, and we had our own little insurance. And we were back there playing ball. We looked up, the insurance man had walked back up there, back up through the woods. He came to collect, and Mama said, "They back up the woods playing ball." And he said, "Where?" She said, "Just keep walking, you'll see the trail and you'll hear." And he followed our trail, and next thing you, know he was standing there looking, just grinning. We were playing basketball. We used to go, did you ever go to the pond?

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

That's where we learned how to swim, in a big old pond behind Ben Davis's house. And it had some cross ties. I don't know how them cross ties got down there, but we'd hold onto them cross ties and it were float in the water. We'd hold onto them and we learned how to kick and dog

paddle. And you do that, do that, do that, do that, until you got enough nerve to turn it loose, then dog paddle. Ben knows, all them could swim. They learned how to swim when they would go to New York to they people. So Ben and Willy, all of them could swim. And that's how we learned to swim, in that pond.

And once you learn how to swim, like a dog paddle, you had to prove yourself. They had a pipe, a drain pipe where it went overflow after the water gets so high, and went down that pipe, then go out through the dam. You had to catch on that pipe and go all the way to the bottom, and to prove that you went to the bottom, you had to bring some dirt back up in your hand. I mean it was down there. That water would get cold down there. That's how you had to do.

Velma Fann:

That's how you had to do.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Nobody ever got drowned in that water.

Hubert Mills:

No, nobody ever.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

We'd look out for each other. We'd pick guys up and throw them over in there and everything. I remember, Billy Barber almost drowned me. I was out there. We walked to the water to get up to here, and I'm out there like that. And Billy jumped in and come dog paddling, and he got tired. Billy was the one who was supposed to come, the first one. And Billy jumped on my shoulders and I went under the water. And I was trying to get him off me and get him off me, and he was holding on. And they threw, I don't know who threw that inner tube back there, and Billy got on that inner tube. And I came up out of there, I got up there and I was coughing and stuff. And when I finished coughing, I looked. He was standing there looking at me. I said, "I'll beat your D.A." I said, "I'll beat you." Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Almost took you under. What about you? Any place that you want to remember?

Hubert Mills:

I was hanging out in them same places.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

But back in the days, as we call them, people looked after one another. I never will forget my mother. "You take this box and you take it down here, sister so-and-so." And as I was walking with that box, I looked down at it. String beans, sugar peas. I said, "We need this at the house." But whatever they had, they shared. They really looked after one another. And the way that they used to get things done farm-wise, when so-and-so's crops got ready, they all pitched in and helped him get his crop in, doing that. Someone else's crop got ready, they all pitch in and help him get their crop, get their crop in.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Kill a hog.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah, same thing.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

People come, the old men come, kill a hog, cut it up and stuff, and give them some of the meat, and give Sister Sally over here that didn't have a husband, had kids. "Take this over. Take this over there." That's just like he was saying.

Hubert Mills:

Waxhaw used to have a gin, also. And on Saturdays I used to love the going to town, gin cotton. I know that I was going to get some peanuts and a Pepsi-Cola, and put the peanuts down in that Pepsi-Cola. But anyway, and it's called, this is right down the street here, the Gin House. Service Station's in front and the Gin House was in the back. And I used to come up there, especially with my uncle on Saturdays, whenever it was, we'd gin our cotton, but we'd get to go to town.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

You'd get to go to town. I do know back in the days, they would teach us not to say, not to be retaliatory toward, you know, somebody say something to you, you just don't say nothing. Because it was bad back then. It was bad back then. So we come a long way around here, in trying to survive. And like I said, Waxhaw now, I made a statement one day, you come to Waxhaw on Sunday, you wouldn't think a Black man live here. That's how it was. Wasn't nobody else downtown.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

If you tell somebody you from Waxhaw, they'll say, "Oh, you're from Waxhaw?"

Hubert Mills:

Now.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah. Because they know how it is. Expensive, the land and stuff.

Hubert Mills:

And we said that parade, people get out for the Waxhaw Parade or whatnot. And we had one parade that was formed right there at that church, and that was the Klan march. And they marched to Waxhaw.

Velma Fann:

Dressed as the Klan? Were they dressed as the Klan?

Hubert Mills:

Oh, yeah. My mother used to work for one of the head wranglers, and he got, this man had gotten up in age, but they pushed him in a wheelchair in the march. Remember Bug Eye? He used to hang out with the brothers.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Mm-hmm.

Hubert Mills:

Bug Eye marched with him too, but like I said, now he hang out with the brothers. One day we saw Bug Eye leaning over in the police car and the fellow said, "Uh-oh, somebody going to jail that night." I said, "Why you say that?" He said, "You see Bug Eye leaning over in that car? He telling them something." But he marched with him. But then when he got down there where the brothers was, he wanted to jump out with the brothers. He said, "Get back in there. Get back in there." But I do remember that now. I was sort of surprised for a church to organize it.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Well, I was in the church.

Hubert Mills:

That's what I'm trying to tell you.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I was in the church.

Hubert Mills:

right there, that church right there. Never will forget it. That's where they would organize it.

Velma Fann:

Which church is that?

Hubert Mills:

I don't know the name of it.

Velma Fann:

The name of it?

Hubert Mills:

Presbyterian? Is it Presbyterian Church? No.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

No, that's not Presbyterian right there.

Hubert Mills:

Okay.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

I don't think. It's still there.

Hubert Mills:

It's still there. The Church still going. I'm going to come up with the name of it. That's what it is.

Velma Fann:

Okay.

Hubert Mills:

And that's where they would form at, and it had, going to Waxhaw with the march and everything.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Mama wouldn't let us come.

Hubert Mills:

Well...

Edward "Sid" Walker:

She knew them guys. "You're not going to Waxhaw."

Velma Fann:

Well, I hope there was some good memories too, here.

Hubert Mills:

Yeah.

Velma Fann:

Sounds like there was, some things. And I thank you gentlemen very much.

Hubert Mills:

All right.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Thank you for having me.

Velma Fann:

Thank you.

Edward "Sid" Walker:

Yeah. Yeah.