

Interviewee: Deloris “Tookes” McCoy; Whitman Cobb; Emma Williams; & Willamia Western

Interviewer: Althemese Barnes & Unknown

Date of interview: Unknown

Date Transcribed: October 18, 2018

Deloris McCoy: I am Deloris “Tookes” McCoy. My family came to Tallahassee in the 1900s. I was born in the Frenchtown area...412 West Virginia Street.

Whitman Cobb: I'm Whitman Everson Cobb. I was born 300 block of West Jefferson; FSU law school is now...raised up in that area my family lived in- from Jefferson to St. Augustine street and umm my mother was Bertha and my father was Willie Cobb and umm my grandmother was Betsy Thomas. Her mother was living when I was small, so I really don't know what year we come here. I went as far back as I remember. FAMU was right here in Tallahassee and when I was raised up that was called the depot area. I was raised up right in that area.

Emma Williams: My name is Emma Lucille Williams. I was born in Apalachicola, Florida. My parents, George Henry, George Henson Wind, Marty Elizabeth Thomas Wind. I came to Tallahassee to attend high school in 1933. I lived on the Bainbridge road right very near the Bainbridge road, Brevard street intersection. My mother knew no one in Tallahassee. My mother knew few people in Tallahassee. I knew no one and of course, my mother had a friend to recommend someone with whom I should live- who's living near the old Lincoln High School. Mrs. Mylie New, who was a widow, lived right around the corner from the school and that's where I lived when I first came and went through high school. I also lived on Virginia Street with a friend while I was in college there, on umm Virginia street. Mrs./Ms. Danes let a lot of children, umm there I think on the corner of Bruno and Virginia. So, I got to know that was another community that I lived in there and of course, later after I went to college, I married and then just before marriage I lived on Osceola street in Tallahassee with my cousin and I married and lived on Brad/Brevard? (don't catch the street name) where I live now.

Willamia Western: I am Willamia Crawford Western. My parents were Reverend P.H. Crawford and Victoria Twine Crawford. My mother was born at 618 West Madison Street on

1900 and I was born in the house next door in 1928. So, my family has lived on Madison Street...

(goes blank)

Interviewer: ...Tallahassee had several business areas. One was the downtown area, one was the Frenchtown area and of course we had the Madison Street area as well as other outlying areas. Downtown was for blacks and white, we both shared it, what can you remember about downtown, Mr. Cobb?

Whitman Cobb: Downtown on Adams between College Avenue and umm Pensacola, right cross, in front from where city hall is now is where the old ____ shoe store was. Behind that was an area of stores and upstairs over that area is where Dr. Basin and Dr. Baker's office were and there was an area, went between the area right behind the stores there was a black barber shop.

Interviewer: Where Dr. Basin and Dr. Baker African-Americans?

Cobb: Yeah, yeah and there was that barber shop and I remember one of there was Mr.

Johnson...James Johnson, I believe was his name, but I don't remember who the other ones were because I worked one summer at the shoes store there, delivering shoes...and umm when you come out from that area and go right down-

Interviewer: All the barbers were what? African American?

Cobb: Yep, it was a black barber shop at that time, but round on Monroe there were white barber shops, but all the barbers were black. See that time, but speaking about black businesses like I was saying in the particular area, down on the way to Dr. Basin and Baker's office was there was a black barber shop downtown and then when you start to see, you remember where the old Burdine drugstore was, when you come from College Avenue and head south soon as you get to the corner and turn right. Be just a before you cross the road vertical to go to St. Hill. Right behind that store that was on that corner, I don't remember what it was, but a black café. Lady, umm, I think they called her Mary (whispering) or something like that, but there was a black café right there...and on the other side of where City Hall is now, the road that curves around Pensacola corner yeah...facing umm-

Interviewer: Is that near (don't catch the name) Kleman[?] plaza?

Cobb: Yeah, it's on the southside of it...facing north and there was a black fish market. It was owned by this fellow named Mr. Long-

Barnes: Mr. Long?

Cobb: Last name Long. I can't remember (can't hear due to phone ringing in background).

Interviewer: And that fish market relocated later, did it not?

Cobb: Yeah when the city start buying that property, he moved down on down to Canal Street. They-umm there was a fish market, a cafe, and a barbershop across the road. Several black businesses moved in that area from-some the Smokey Hollow area and different places.

Interviewer: Ms. Tookes lived in a fascinating part of town. She lived in Frenchtown.

Frenchtown is an area that was settled once by the French but was abandoned and the African-Americans moved into the area and at one time that was the only part of town that we could live in was Frenchtown. What was Frenchtown like? You were on umm Virginia Street and what else was on Virginia Street when you were there?

Deloris McCoy: Dr. Campbell's Hospital came along in later years and umm I'll tell you some of the families that live in that area. Dr. Campbell's hospital and Dr. Campbell's house-

Interviewer: What was Dr. Campbell's first name?

Tookes: A.O., A.O. Campbell and Mrs./Ms. Yellowhair that had the umm theater in Frenchtown. Nurse McGee, she had a beauty school...umm...Mr. Porter lived in that area.

Interviewer: Who was Mr. Porter?

Tookes: Principal of Lincoln and he lived on, it's now Martin Luther but there was a house father down on-in... what is it? Martin Luther- 500 block that he lived in with...

Interviewer: With Mrs? Who did he live with?

Tookes: You remember that ladies name-

Interviewer: Malek.

Tookes: Malek. All right gong farer in that area, the Jenkins lived on that umm corner and they were from Apalachicola. He was a doctor.

Barnes: A medical doctor?

Tookes: Uhm, a dentist.

Interviewer: Who was on that same street as you? You had the Jenkins house-

Tookes: The Jenkins, then the Tookes house, and then there were the Randolph's, then the Joneses and the Jones little house and then Israel's...

(End of first CD)

Tookes: Uh-huh and next to that was Miss Tanner and next to that was the Israel, that was a painter.

Interviewer: Renown throughout Tallahassee, tell us about the Tookes Hotel. Tell us a little bit about it. Most of us think of holiday inns and our best western and so, tell us about Tookes hotel and the folk who umm were your guest sometime or another.

Tookes: Well, we have in the guest register were many of the renown people that would come to Tallahassee and stay at Tookes hotel. James Baldwin was there, and he did an article that was published in Glamour magazine. I don't remember the date right now, but he wrote an article about Tookes hotel and what it was like rooming there and he must have been writing on some book at that time because he told of his experiences there at the night and during this time it was before air conditioning and he was telling how hot the room and how hot Tallahassee was... and how he had to sit and burn the lights late at night and how you could hear the noise from the outside filtering in through the windows. All of this he put in this article. We had Hattie McDaniel stay there, Duke Ellington, Catholic Calloway and some of these people have signed and we have had the signatures authenticated to said that they are up there, so they are signed in.

Interviewer: And while you're thinking of that tell us who managed your hotel?

Tookes: My mom and we did we all did because as I was telling someone, Monday last week, that you know this was really my mom's extra income and when she knew that there was going to be an- a big activity or something in town, we all had to get up out of our beds because I sleep in the chair. I say, "I'm not, I'm gonna make this money." Wow, it's-it's here so we don't have to sit and sleep in a chair all night.

Interviewer: What did your mother do the other time?

Tookes: She was a teacher, she was an insurance agent, she was a restaurant, she was in all kind of stuff. Umm, I'm not told my kids, my daddy got tired of having to get up out of his bed and he had my mom put his room in the back and said, "Now I'm not getting outta this bed

anymore...This is my room...This is it...I'm not getting outta my bed." So, he added this room in the back.

Emma Williams: Dr. Campbell, my number one child was born in that hospital. It came out and I know exactly when it open because I was hoping it would open it earlier enough for him to come down here. It was something kind of different in Tallahassee.

Interviewer: So what year was this?

Williams: Umm, 1947.

Tookes: There was a bunch of little stores in there between Deluxe and Tampa store. A cleaners and just miscellaneous little stuff.

Interviewer: You're right and many of these were owned and managed by African Americans but some of them were owned and managed by whites. So, it was mixed. We did have umm a mixed clientele down there of ownership I guess, it was close to clientele, the ownership was mixed. Furniture stores, anything we wanted just about what we could do in our own neighborhood. So, while our money circulated in our community much more than it does today-

(Video skips)

Interviewer: And then if we've got interest we've got adventurous we went over twilight zone. Tell us about the twilight zone.

Willamia Western: Twilight inn.

Interviewer: Twilight inn, oh okay.

Western: On Madison Street. When you went down Copeland Street, going south, you come to a dead end and as a child I had nightmares about the shells poster taxed up across the street from that corner. I always thought that those things would go up during the war, but umm right down that street we had umm Louie cleaners. The laundry was on the Main Street and behind it on Madison Street was the cleaners-dry cleaners and then there was Twilight inn and they cook dinner and the ladies from who worked at the laundry had taps and would come and eat there and it would smell so good until the white owners would come and sit down and eat in that café. We were integrated like that. They came in and say, "Hey, so those green smells so good. I just gotta have some." So, they were coming to down and eat.

Interviewer: What were the cooks back then? Who was in the kitchen? Do you remember that?

Western: Hazel, my mother... we just didn't have one special cook back then.

Interviewer: Your mother was?

Western: My mother would cook. Ummm, my Uncle Teddy when he was...Victoria Klein Crawford...would cook there. Sally Eve Twain would also cook there. It was just a family run business and I had spent most of my Sunday evenings in there because somebody came in put some drinks or something of that nature I would serve and of course, we had the other rooming house. This was a rooming house what it was it. There was a Twain rooming house, but I don't think it had another name in the fact that it's just- a lot of students, A&M students, would board there and go to A&M, you know as (don't catch word)and ummm right next door to the café was the rooming house and then the house in which my mother was born was next to that and my mother was born in 1900. My daddy was about 13 years older, (don't catch this) and he was a- he came from Wakulla and umm of course, she met him, and he went to the service and had to go to war over in Germany and I have letters that he umm wrote her when he was in Germany. They're interesting and I'd like to see them, but I don't have them, and he would always end his letter with, "Go to the mirror and kiss yourself for me." (laughing)...and of course, the next house to where my father built for us, but umm Lula Berny and right on down the street, there was a café-then another boarding house and I can't remember exactly the name of the first to run that boarding house and next to it was a store.

Interviewer: That's not Dan or Purcell, is it? Miss Purcell?

Western: Purcell...Purcell is on St. Augustine-

Interviewer: Okay, then I'm on the wrong street.

Western: St. Augustine and it about...from Copeland Street-that was a whole area of black homes.

Interviewer: Fine black homes.

Western: And everybody in the neighborhood knew each other. The Wards growing up we had family feuds. Growing up together and umm McKinney, Ann McKinney...all those lived on St. Augustine Street and on the corner, there was the Swilley house that have been recently torn down and you'll go down further and that's where you find about a block down the street you find the Purcell (check spelling) house.

Interviewer: Miss Purcell also had a little business? Was it a little store?

Western: Yes, but I can't recall-

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Cobb: One thing a lot of people don't know now right up on the corner from Luther on the corner, was Boulevard, which is not Martin Luther King and umm corner of Boulevard and umm Pensacola, the house of the corner there facing south with the old yellow there had family homes.

Interviewer: Tell me where it was again because I know it moved. I know they moved.

Cobb: You go up, umm passed the funeral home, you go up to the corner of umm Pensacola and which is now Martin Luther King and right across the road, facing south was the Old Gillham family home. Once that house that the old Gillham house was there where Dr. Basin wind-up living, but they- property has been sold. He wind-up living right there on that corner.

Western: And if you come down Pensacola Street before you get to Macomb, you had houses side by side. There was Dr. Baker-

Cobb: Yeah, H.H. Macomb-

Tooke: Dr. Baker was one? On that street?

Cobb: Yeah when he first came to Tallahassee, he lived right there.

Western: Right there and Dr. Baker was next door to him in the next house and then you had the Coleman house-

(Video skips)

Cobb: Several houses on down- several houses on down to the corner was houses owned by umm Professor Riley and right on the corner facing north there was umm Tabernacle Baptist Church.

All agree.

Western: On the corner of Macomb and Pensacola. Right there in the parking area, I believe, was the Civic Center.

(Video skips)

Western: On the corner of Lafayette and Macomb there was Geoffrey Wilson store, I don't if you remember that, but it sat right on a big ditch and then down another couple of blocks, you had homes there and I can't remember but in the next block before you get to Madison Street was one of our first horsemen.

(Video skips)

Western: Right in the struck-on area-

Interviewer: Why you calling that a struck-on area?

Western: Buster Edwards was the black, ummm what you call the man that umm-

Interviewer: Blacksmith

Western: Blacksmith.

Barnes: Why you say struck-on?

Tookes: Well, was it in the struck-on or was it just there? It wasn't in the struck-on-

Cobb: It was really called the back road. Back road is what they called it.

Williams: You not talking about the back roads. Is that what you talking about? The back road.

Western: well those of us who lived down on Madison Street, so close to it, we called it the struck-on. Everybody else called it the back road.

(Video skips)

Interviewer: Any of you remember Colonial Potsdam?

Everyone: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell us a little bit about Mr. Potsdam.

Cobb: He was right up on the corner of ummm...see there were two Boulevard's at that time. Now, see if Boulevard when you come down from where Martin Luther King is now, starting on the (don't catch the name of the street) Street. There's a Boulevard that goes all the way up one block passed Gaines and umm Potsdam house was right next to where the second next to Gaines because there was a service station and he was right back of it.

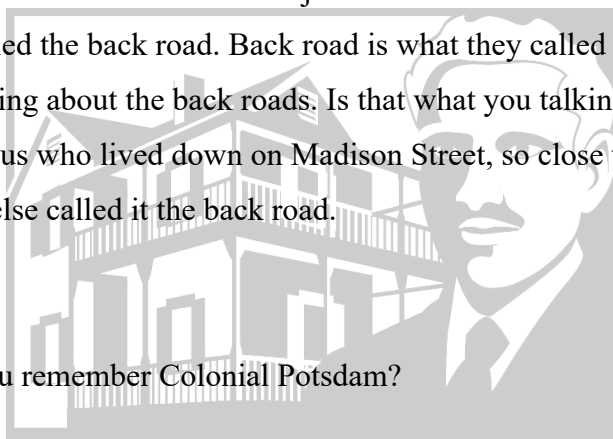
Interviewer: What did Mr. Potsdam do?

Cobb: He was a business man. I don't know what his business was.

Western: He would umm-

Tookes: I think he had a lot rental property.

Western: He had a lot of umm- I think he did a lot of...I think he would accumulated his property when he would help people out of umm jams and things and he would take over, but they would probably kind of mortgage their resources to him or something-



(Video skips)

Western: He was a business man.

Williams: He was a business man. He was an organizational man. He was-people looked up to him. Whether he knew that much, but they looked up to him. His wife taught at old Lincoln. She was one of the teachers at old Lincoln when I was there and the elementary school.

Western: As a matter of fact, my husband proposed to me in the car he stole.

(Video skips)

Interviewer: Another area I was kind of interested in is the African American role in the wars. What can you remember about war time?

(Video skips)

Tookes: The USO were the, where the umm house of Haven or the Haven house on Tennessee Street there. That was the USO. House of- where the...

Western: Right by Leon-

Tookes: Yeah, right where Leon Théâtre was...

(Video skips)

Interviewer: Mrs. Weston's, you mentation that your mother in the first class at Florida A&M during the name change, after the name changed. Was that you? I beg your pardon. Tell us about that.

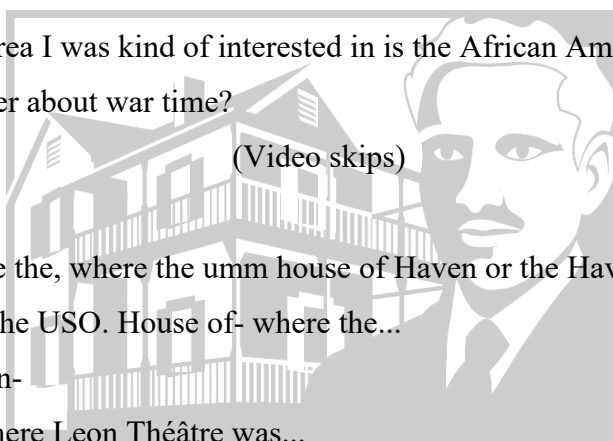
Williams: She-That class, the first year had been Florida Normal Instruct- Florida Normal Institute for Negroes. That was it. 1908. That was on my aunties certificate. On mommy certificate, it is Florida A&M College. That was the first year in 1909.

Interviewer: 1909.

Western: Do you know that, I was told that A&M, that Florida A&M actually started on FSU's campus.

Cobb: That's true.

Williams: It is.



Western: And that is was a white building and my mother would-

Interviewer: It started at Lincoln-old Lincoln and then it was moved to FSU.

Western: And how they put her through the window, one of the buildings, on that campus when she was just a little girl and of course umm that building stood there for during our time until they umm tour it down. We've been able to see that and witness that. You know see that building-

Cobb: Where was that at?

Western: It was on College Park and Copeland, but you look back in the area just to you, if you were going north, there would be to your left.

(Video skips)

Interviewer: Mr. Cobb don't you build houses or something? Is that your profession?

Cobb: Yeah, yeah. I was into umm construction. I had-

(Video skips)

Cobb: There was a company that came to Tallahassee from Atlanta. Billy's construction company...First job I worked with them was built what we call cots on holes at FSU and with this man named Willie and his son John, they were working here and umm-

(Video goes blank)

Cobb: Eight dollars a week and I was working with Mr. Phillip one summer and he went out and he go out into the brick way, and he come home with about four dollars and I say, "Well, that better than nothing. It's a lot." I got interested in it and I found out FAMU High School up there, once you got up in the senior class, you can take masonry. If you wanna, if the mechanical arts department, or go and take physically ed. So, I went mechanical art department, took two years and umm the World War II came along and right after that started, it wasn't any, it wasn't too much building because the government was taking all the supplies-

(Video skips)

Cobb: I done the first phase of the ROTC building for A&M in '58. So, then they did the other end over there, the south end after we finish the umm Coleman library and then we went from there and did umm Cobb Middle school over here. Went from Cobb and did Griffin school.

(Video skips)

Cobb: Now, we built several business buildings downtown. You know that right there where the big bank is now, on umm Adams...that tall bank...we built-

Everyone: Barnett.

Cobb: You can drive in. We built that building and umm that building down there on the right, going down umm Appalachia Parkway, just before you go under the bridge-

(Video skips)

Tookes: That's the department of transportation-

Cobbs: Yeah, umm-

Tookes: The DOT building.

Cobbs: Right before you just get to Smoky Hollow.

(Everyone is talking at once)

Cobbs: Yeah we built that building in '55. Dill Carlisle, the governor's mansion and I think it was, after going into general building for like three or four years it took up so much of your time, half of I was working all day (laughs). I decided I would just go back in masonry and I was think about it at the time I was running the floating shop right there and umm a fellow who was driving had a cab company, down umm with those bus station-greyhound bus station and I don't know how he knew me, but he came to me and they were getting ready to build that church around Stadium Drive, that Mormon church. He came to me and asked me about it building it and so I decided I could go head and do that-

(Video skips)

Williams: Another thing we were talking about in Frenchtown, in mentioning the doctors that were downtown, but we don't want to forget Dr. umm Anderson in Frenchtown. He was in Frenchtown. You know upstairs in that room we were going to.

(Everyone is talking at once)

Cobbs: Dennis Matthews lived in that area near the theater. Now, Dr. Anderson was first upstairs over there-

Interviewer: Where Dr. Steven was? Where Dr. Steven was before he moved? Is there were Dr. Steven-

Cobb: No, no, it was on Tennessee Street. Tennessee Street, Dr. Anderson started out upstairs, on that building right there next to the theater was. Then, he later moved around there over the drugstore, on umm...on umm Macomb

(Video skips)

Cobb: A lot of people don't know it, but they also had a theater one time right there in (don't catch the name) called (don't catch the name)

Williams and Western: Really.

Cobb: Yep sure was.

Western: There was a shoe shop round the corner too from (don't catch the name) by Reverend Hatley.

(Everyone is talking at once & Video skips)

Cobb: Now, this can't be that umm, what they had right there on the corner near Carolina and umm Macomb. You call that-it was the most popular café in town-

(Video skips)

Interviewer: Holiday had it.

Everyone: Chicken Shack.

Western: But what about the El Dorado? Wasn't it?

Cobb: Yeah, it started out there.

(Everyone is talking at once)

Interviewer: Those were the places in Frenchtown, but the chicken shack sent many a young men and women to college.

(Everyone is talking at once)

Interviewer: Living in the neighborhood you could see them running in there at nights, that's why they wore suits to school.

Williams: Does anybody remember, if we get back on Adams Street and talking about those alleys up there, did you ever remember Buster Wind?

(Everyone agrees)

Williams: They had a cafe or something up one of those alleys.

Tookes: On umm Adams Street.

Williams: On Adams Street, you know, where here is the supply store here and here's were you come on Saturday and find people sitting out there.

Tookes: Oh yeah, I remember.

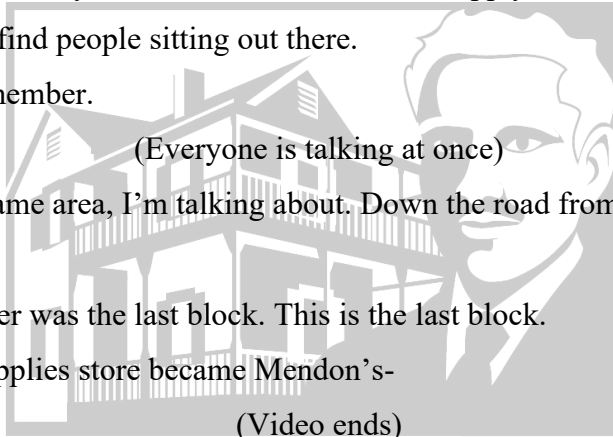
(Everyone is talking at once)

Cobb: And that's the same area, I'm talking about. Down the road from where Dr. Baker and Dr. Basin office was-

Williams: The Dr. Baker was the last block. This is the last block.

Western: Don't that supplies store became Mendon's-

(Video ends)



JOHN G. RILEY CENTER & MUSEUM